

The
OTER

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October 2006

Calendar (League activities in bold)

November 2006

- 1 W 7:00 p.m. **LWVCC board meeting**
Vogelson (Center County) Library, Voorhees,
third floor.
- 13 M 6:00 p.m. County Freeholder Caucus
16th floor, Camden Co. Courthouse, Camden
- 16 Th 7:30 p.m. Regional Equity Public Meeting
Atlantic City. A chance to make a difference!
The goal is 2,000 attendees! See p 3.
- 19 Th 7:00 p.m. County Freeholder Meeting
The Camden Technology Center/Learning
Theater, 601 Cooper St., Camden

December 2006

- 6 W 6:00 p.m. **LWVCC Program Planning**
Join us for our annual feast and program
planning meeting. Please put the date in your
calendar. Details TBA.

Board meeting invitation

This is a reminder that LWVCC board meetings are open to all Camden County League members and prospective members. The next meeting is November 1, 2006. The agenda will include:

1. Providing election services to the Camden Housing Authority.
2. Increasing the number of persons we register to vote each year.
3. Planning for legislative visits.
4. The program series and the governor's participation as a guest speaker.
5. Updates on Running & Winning, and on moderating.

At its Oct. 2006 meeting the LWVCC board:

1. Gave the treasurer discretion about how to reinvest our money market account.
2. Made plans to work with the Camden Housing Authority on monitoring public housing elections.
3. Agreed to pay more national per-member-payments with remaining education fund money.

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CAMDEN COUNTY

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE:



The State Board of the LWVNJ formulated a set of questions for both major party candidates for the New Jersey US Senate seat. These questions have been posted on the LWVNJ website in an effort to foster informed participation in the electoral process.

Both major party candidates participated in the question and answer process, which required a statement of 150 words or less. I have randomly selected three questions that were asked the candidates and suggest that you consider these questions when meeting or speaking with the candidates.

- 1) National Deficit: Please recommend two realistic Congressional measures to control deficit spending and two additional measures that would reduce the national debt. Please include specific estimate of the dollars involved in each.
 - * Briefly outline a strategy for both Congressional and Presidential approval.

- 2) Environment and Energy: Many issues involving clean air, clean water, and land use are national or regional in scope. Do you support maintenance and strengthening of the current environmental protection measures?
 - * If you believe that some of these measures should be revisited please be specific about which measures and what changes you would like to see.
 - * If you accept the scientific evidence of the “global warming”, or “climate imbalance” do you believe that the US should take a leading role in addressing and solving the problem? What first two steps would you propose to be taken?

- 3) National Security: Fighting Terrorism:

Our current “war on Terrorism” seems open ended. Do you agree? Please explain.

 - * How do you see our efforts to compact terrorism developing over the next year? 5 years? 10 years? How would we define and /or recognize progress? Victory?

The candidates’ response to these questions can be found on league’s website www.lwvnj.org. This is a critical election year. Make it your priority to vote on November 7th 2006.

Sincerely, Ann Saunders, President

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization of men and women that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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The VOTER is published ten times a year to keep the membership and public informed of the activities of the League of Women Voters of Camden County. For subscription or membership information call (856) 795-7878.

Regional Equity Meeting: Attendance Urged!

**Become part of the solution on:
Property Tax Reform
Fair Housing That's Fair
& Education**

On November 16, in Atlantic City, the New Jersey Regional Coalition will be holding a major meeting, with many elected officials and a goal of 2,000 members of the public.

The organization will be promoting its reform agenda for low income housing and fair property taxes. See article on this page about recent testimony by the group.

Ed Gracely (gracely@dca.net, 856-629-2869) is the contact person for the Camden County League. For more information and details, you can visit <http://njrcmeeting2006.pbwiki.com/>

This is an important meeting. I certainly plan to go, and I urge as many of you as possible to join me.

Sincerely... Ann Saunders, President



Getting there - Directions!

Camden County Courthouse: Take 676 north to Mickle Blvd. Flow right at the fork (don't go on Campbell Place), then turn right onto 5th street in a few blocks. The courthouse is at 5th and Federal, a block up from Mickle.

Camden, Federal Courthouse: 4th and Cooper, but we generally car pool. Call 856-795-7878 if

you're interested. *About 3-4 blocks from the City Hall PATCO station.*

Pennsauken: Homestead Youth Association: Route 38 west, exit onto Cuthbert toward Merchantville. Pass Courier-Post on Cuthbert (also called Magnolia), then take next little road left. In a block, turn left onto Clayton. Watch for signs.

Regional Equity Testimony on Property Tax Reform

Nicole Plett (LWV of Lawrenceville)

Three years of organization-building came to fruition this fall when the New Jersey Regional Coalition (NJRC) was invited to testify before the Joint Legislative Committee on Constitutional Reform on Thursday, September 14, at the State House, on the issue of property tax reform. The NJRC is the umbrella organization for the Central Jersey Regional Coalition (CJREC) [*and the south Jersey group - Ed*] of which our League chapter is a dues-paying member.

Rohn Hein, a resident of Pennsauken and a leader of the organization's South Jersey arm, delivered a powerful, comprehensive statement on regional tax base sharing to the committee. Hein discussed how regional taxation could eliminate disparities between growing and built-out communities, help curb suburban sprawl and reverse the decay of our historic cities.

At the same committee session NJRC national consultant Myron Orfield, a former Minnesota legislator now an associate law professor at the University of Minnesota, contributed expert testimony via videoconference detailing how the Minneapolis-St. Paul area has used regional property tax collection and distribution for 25 years with beneficial results for the region's communities. You can read Hein's eight-page testimony on the CJREC District 15 "wiki" website at: <http://cjrecdistrict15meeting.pbwiki.com/> The committee session and the NJRC testimony was covered in several newspapers including the Trenton Times, the Newark Star Ledger, and Newsday. These news articles are also posted on the CJREC District 15 wiki.

LWVCC Kickoff 9-27-06

About 20 League members and guests gathered at the Cherry Hill Library to learn about the League and hear our guest speaker, Dana Redd, Camden City Council Vice President.



Before Ms. Redd addressed the audience, board member Anne Maiese gave a special presentation to **Esther Gray**, who has been a League member since the 1940's. Esther qualified for her **50-year membership** more than 10 years ago! As a result, she will not have to pay dues and will have full League membership for the rest of her life. An audience member quipped that if she makes the 100-year point, they'll pay back her dues! Congratulations to Esther! See full story (and another picture) on page **xxx**

The League has no records back that far, so if you, or another member you know about, have been in the League a long time (even if not yet 50 years), let us know!

Ms. Redd began her talk by briefly addressing the effect of being a female in politics. She said, in a nutshell, "It's not for the faint of heart"! She has always considered it essential to make a difference and to serve, which she does ably in a variety of venues.

The rest of her talk focused on Camden City. She argued that part of the city's problem is that it has a very poor image -- it needs to market itself better, and play up the many success stories.

Crime is a difficult nut to crack, because poor young people can make more on the street than they can with the other jobs accessible to them. We need to improve the educational process for these young people -- perhaps offer vocational training to those who do not plan to attend college. Then, ensure that the vocations they can pursue afterwards pay a living wage, or any benefits will be lost.

Literacy is low in Camden, and even in the entire county. She cited statistics to the effect that 49% of all adult county residents read at or below a third grade level. They can't read job applications. Even in low level jobs, like housekeeping, they can't read labels and instructions. They may not be able to read *voter registration forms*. She suggested that League members gently offer to read the registration forms to people, or help them fill it out.

After her talk, Ms. Redd took questions from the audience. An interesting evening for all.



50-year membership awardee Esther Gray

by Anne Maiese



On September 27, 2006, at its annual Kickoff, Esther F. Gray was awarded an Honorary Lifetime Membership in the League of Women Voters. This award is given to members who have been with the League for 50 years or more and entitles them to continued membership without dues.

Esther has actually been a member for about 60 years. She joined the League in Camden County in the “early 40’s,” a few years after graduating from Hood College in Fredrick, MD with a degree in economics and political science. Asked why she joined, she said, “I wanted to find people who were interested in the same things I was interested in.”

In the League, Esther found those people and pursued those interests. She worked on the original League study of US trade policies in the 1960’s, as well as later updates, and her colleagues remember her excellent scholarship and presentation skills.

Another major interest was the environment. A long-time member of the Audubon Society, Esther studied a variety of natural resource issues through the years, and represented LWNJ on the Inter-League Council for the Delaware River Basin, a now-defunct group that monitored meetings of the Delaware River Basin Commission. (Other League members were from PA, DE, and NY.)

Esther’s primary interest, however, was voters’ service. She was still registering voters in her middle 80’s, traveling from Collingswood on the Speedline to register new citizens at Naturalization Ceremonies in the Federal Court House in Camden. These civic habits developed early—she says her father took her into the voting booth with him when she was four or five.

Born in Camden in 1915, Esther lived there for 32 years before she moved to Collingswood. She worked for RCA as a secretary in the law department, with responsibilities similar to today’s paralegals, and remembers what a great city Camden was, feeling saddened by how it has changed.

Of her membership, Esther says, “The League gave me much more than I ever gave the League. I’ve enjoyed every single minute of my time with you.” Considering how much she always contributed, that says a lot. We are very, very proud to have her with us.

Notes from the LWVUS



League Urges Congress to Support Electronic Disclosure Filings

The LWVUS joined with other national reform organizations in a letter to the Senate this week, urging passage of S. 1508, the "Senate Campaign Disclosure Parity Act", which would require electronic filing of Senate campaign finance disclosure reports under federal campaign finance laws. Currently, all federal candidates, party committees and federal political action committees are required to file their campaign finance disclosure reports electronically — with the sole exception of Senate candidates who are still filing paper reports. To read the full letter, go to the LWV web site (www.lwv.org). Under the "Take Action" button, click on the link to campaign finance reform. The letter on Senate disclosures is there, dated September 26, 2006.

Take Action Now Against Warrantless Wiretapping!

The House is considering a bill that would legalize the National Security Administration's (NSA) warrantless wiretapping program. The Electronic Surveillance Modernization Act, H.R. 5825, would seriously jeopardize the civil liberties of ordinary Americans and threaten the checks and balances of our government by expanding the domestic surveillance powers of the President. Take action now! Visit the LWVUS web site (www.lwv.org), click on the "Take Action" button, and the link to civil liberties. The alert is there.

US Senate Race Read what the Two Major Party Candidates have to say!

The LWVNJ created a list of twelve questions (some with several parts) for the two senatorial candidates. They range from domestic to foreign, immigration, poverty, terrorism, education, and more!

The candidates answered all of the questions, and their answers are posted online at:

http://www.lwvnj.org/news/events/2006_NJ_US_Senate_Candidates_Questions.pdf

Or, just go to <http://www.lwvnj.org> and look for the bold red **Q & A of NJ US Senate Candidates** in the box on the right.

LWVNJ Editorial Piece on the Cancelled Senatorial Forum

For 86 years the League of Women Voters has worked diligently to preserve the integrity of the electoral process by educating voters and preparing them to make informed choices at the polls. The League's nonpartisan candidate debates have played a unique and critical role in giving voters the opportunity to directly compare the candidates side by side and to learn where they stand on the important public policy issues they will face as our representatives.

On Sunday, October 15 the voters of New Jersey should have had the opportunity to watch a televised debate between NJ Senator Tom Kean, Jr. and US Senator Robert Menendez, sponsored by the League of Women Voters of New Jersey Education Fund, WPVI-TV and WABC-TV. The voters did not get that opportunity because, although Tom Kean, Jr. agreed to the debate back in August, a letter was faxed to the League office from his campaign manager less than two weeks before the debate was scheduled for broadcast stating that unless Robert Menendez would agree to an additional debate on NBC's "Meet the Press", the Kean for Senate campaign "would not be accepting any further debates." We were stunned.

How could a candidate in such an important election unilaterally cause the demise of a debate that he agreed to do having claimed in the press that debates were so important to him? And what about the voters?

To set the record straight this was not the first roadblock from the Kean campaign that the League came up against while trying to finalize the details of this scheduled debate. The League has sponsored more than 25 televised debates over the past 30 years featuring candidates running for state-wide office. From this experience, we know that there are always production details that must be negotiated between the candidates. These issues, however, cannot be resolved when one campaign takes the unusual steps of missing the only scheduled meeting among the two campaigns and the sponsors; phoning in a demand for a change to the set design; and then retreating in silence.

Despite these roadblocks, Tom Kean, Jr.'s demand about the set design was resolved in his favor. In the end, the demise of the League debate was not a case of the negotiations breaking down. This was a case of Tom Kean, Jr. receiving all that he asked for in the negotiations and then immediately taking the extraordinary step of using a totally unrelated excuse to withdraw from the debate.

This tactic begs the question of whether Tom Kean, Jr. ever really intended to participate in our debate. It is easy for any candidate to say "I would have participated in a debate if only the other candidate would have..." It is a lot harder to go on record in front of a camera right before an election and reveal one's ability to express ideas and one's grasp of complex issues.

For the sake of the voters, Tom Kean, Jr. should have honored his commitment to participate in the League of Women Voters debate and faced that camera.

Danze Burnham
Executive Director
League of Women Voters of New Jersey

Deborah Macmillan
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