

The  
OTER

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November-December 2006

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**Calendar (League activities in bold)**

**December 2006**

- 6 W 6:00 p.m. **LWVCC Program Planning**  
Did you join us for our annual feast and program planning meeting? It was a good turnout! See article at right-->

**January 2007**

- 3 W 7:30 p.m. **LWVCC Board Meeting**  
Vogelson Library, Voorhees

**At its Nov. 2006 meeting the LWVCC board:**

1. Decided to hold a new-member reception in February.
2. Voted to have a guest speaker on a topic of interest at a board meeting, and invite the membership.
3. Agreed to order 125 membership directories.
4. Eliminated pro-rating of dues for members who join midway during the League year.
5. Made plans for the program planning meeting

**Program Planning by the LWVCC**

On Dec 6, about 25 members of the LWVCC gathered at the home of Bobbie Porter for a delicious mix of covered dish entrées and desserts, followed by New Jersey League program planning.

Attendees split into 5 groups, each chaired by an experienced League member. Each group then reviewed several LWVNJ positions, discussed them in detail, and reported back to the group as a whole.

Overall, attendees were happy with LWVNJ positions on issues. The only potential study suggested and agreed to by the group would look into the sale of state properties, especially highways, to private owners, as has been proposed recently. [Interestingly, after the meeting I saw that Pennsylvania is also considering such a sale, and several other states have already done so.... Ed]

Our ideas will be sent to the LWVNJ board, which will compile them and see if any patterns emerge from around the state. At Convention, representatives from around the state will decide whether to adopt any new studies, drop any positions, or take any other actions. Our local meeting is just one part of that process.

We also discussed and agreed to recommend the local positions that appear in the middle of your League directory. These will be presented to the LWVCC Annual meeting for final approval and adoption.

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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CAMDEN COUNTY

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**PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE:**



As we close out another year, let’s renew our commitment as League members to continue to make a difference to the community that we have organized to serve. Each year the political environment and the ecological state of our country become more and more fragile because of the threat of terrorism, war and natural disasters that may be caused by global warming. Now is the time as a League member to become more involved in the task forces that are being promoted by the LWV seeking your participation so that we might make a difference in the lives of others. For example our national league has established a web link to the **LWV Natural Resource** List ([lwv.org](http://lwv.org)) for the purpose of facilitating member discussion, education and debate on issues related to the environment, with an emphasis on global warming and climate change and the use of energy resources. These web sources are being made available by our national League to unite the Leagues in one voice on issues that are important to us all. Regardless of the state we reside in, unified, we can become a powerful voice that can help shape the policies that govern our lives.

Also the National League is requesting participation in Sunshine week. This is an opportunity for local leagues to partner with representatives from The American Society of Newspaper Editors on a project called Sunshine Week 2007, March 11 – 17. This project is an information audit that will require visiting a pre-selected governmental office to review documents related to emergency preparedness, and then record how well the agency responds. The plan is to pair newspapers with local civic groups in order to engage citizens in the audit process. The design of this project encourages public forums, discussion and gives access to issues as well as the substance of the documents requested. These audits will be conducted in early January with the results being released in March.

There is much to be done, for it is our responsibility to promote and encourage active participation in government and to be prepared to act on governmental issues.

Ann Saunders

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**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.**



## 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.

### League member publishes article



LWVCC board member Winnefred Rowell-Bullard saw her article "Academic Labour Conference Provides a New Mind-Set for Contingent Faculty" appear in the American Federation of Teachers Rowan College Newsletter for Fall 2006. Congratulations Winne!

## Regional Equity Atlantic City Meeting - Report

*According to the NJRC website:*

More than 1,500 people braved wind, rain, and a rare tornado watch to help make the New Jersey Regional Coalition statewide public meeting on November 16, 2006, a HUGE success.

The crowd came together at the majestic St. Nicholas of Tolentine Roman Catholic Church in Atlantic City and WON commitments on Property Tax reform, Fair Housing policies, and Equal Education opportunities from New Jersey's top legislators. Read NJRC Policy Positions 2006 here.

Through our efforts Governor Jon Corzine, Senate President Richard J. Codey, and Speaker Assemblyman Joseph Roberts, all sent senior staff members to the meeting to make commitments on their behalf. U.S. Congressman Albio Series and NJ Senator Diane Allen (R-7) were represented by staff members. Majority Leader Assemblywoman Bonnie Watson Coleman (D-15) and Senator John Adler (D-6) sent statements of support to the meeting.

Senator Ronald L. Rice (D-28), Assemblyman Thomas P. Giblin (D-34), and Assemblyman Jim Whelan (D-2) came to our meeting to respond directly to NJRC's call for action on reform. Also present were mayors and city council members from many parts of the state. We commend these legislators for attending our assembly.

The meeting represented a show of force and state-wide unity among people of many faiths and backgrounds working together in coalition. Notable among the large labor presence was the Atlantic City hotel workers' union, Unite Here Local 54, which provided assistance with meeting logistics and staffing.

Philly Fox News 29 and NJN News also braved the (always newsworthy) weather to cover the NJRC assembly.

To read the entire report, go to <http://njrcmeeting2006.pbwiki.com/>

I was there - it was impressive! Ed Gracely

## Regionalization Consensus Information and Questions Available

There are several useful documents on the LWWNJ web site relevant to school regionalization. Now is a good time to begin learning about the topic. One reference is a report of a detailed summary done by the committee. Here are some highlights from its executive summary:.

In April 2005, League members attending the LWWNJ Convention voted to examine the issue of school regionalization in New Jersey. Faced with higher property taxes and public pronouncements that regionalization is more efficient than New Jersey's customary "home rule," League members decided that it was time to study and reevaluate our existing position on this subject. This paper is the result of a yearlong study.

New Jersey residents pay the highest property taxes in the nation, and per pupil spending on education is among the highest in the nation. In addition New Jersey has a large number of school districts that keep the cost of providing public services higher than if some services were provided cooperatively. For these reasons, it has been proposed to reduce the number of school districts by regionalizing schools. . . .

### **Financial Issues**

Several researchers have reported that savings would result from incorporating constituent districts of a limited purpose district into an all-purpose district. That is, a high school regional district would absorb the K-8 districts which individually feed to it resulting in one larger all-purpose regional district. There has been no definitive study of the possible savings since there are relatively few mergers of this type. Eliminating superintendents, business administrators and other administrative staff may result in overall savings. . . . It should be noted that projections are not guarantees: one unknown factor in every regionalization (or deregionalization) is how salaries of members of the collective bargaining units will be affected. Since 60-80% of school district expenses are composed of those salary and benefit packages, this is a fairly large question mark. In addition, although the overall budget may be decreased by regionalization, the proportional share of the tax allocation of constituent districts may change, resulting in winners and losers. . . .

### **Educational Issues**

A larger district may provide benefits that a smaller district might not be able to provide including a more diverse curriculum, more qualified teachers and administrators, better staff development opportunities and a fully integrated curriculum. However, a regional school with buildings not located in each municipality might result in less public support, as it might not be seen as "our" school by some community residents.

Read the full report! See a slideshow! Both are in pdf format, which everyone should be able to read. They are on the LWWNJ website, [www.lwvnj.org](http://www.lwvnj.org), in the members section. Or, go directly to: <http://www.lwvnj.org/members/regionalization.shtml>

## Notes from the LWVUS



### THE LEAGUE IS MAKING NEWS...

#### **Ensuring Millions of Voters Had the Information They Needed**

The League's new Web site, [www.VOTE411.org](http://www.VOTE411.org), was a huge success! In just 10 days, nearly 4,000 Web sites were linked to VOTE411.org and the site received almost a million visitors, who reviewed over 4 million pages of information. VOTE411.org also hosted over 200 Voters' Guides, providing voters with information on state and local candidates and ballot measures. In addition, League members nationwide distributed nearly 1.5 million [5 Things You Need to Know on Election Day](#) cards. These gave voters simple steps to take before and on Election Day to make sure their votes were counted.

#### **Calling for Meaningful Congressional Ethics Reform**

In the days following the 2006 Election, LWVUS President Mary G. Wilson stood at the forefront of a group of leaders calling for meaningful congressional ethics reform. At a November 9th press conference, [Wilson led a number of coalition groups](#) in urging House Speaker-elect Nancy Pelosi to act quickly and decisively to enact true ethics reform in the House of Representatives. Late last month, Wilson also [submitted an opinion piece](#) to Washington, D.C.'s *Roll Call* newspaper urging the new Congress to enact real reforms, specifically calling for an independent enforcement process.

#### **Speaking Out Against Warrantless Wiretapping**

The League continues to work against congressional proposals that would "rubber stamp" the National Security Agency's warrantless wiretapping program by expanding the domestic surveillance powers of the President. In addition to urging citizens to [tell their senators](#) to vote "no" on this legislation, the League [sent a letter](#) to Senate Judiciary Chair Arlen Specter (R PA) raising concerns about S. 4051, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Oversight and Resource Enhancement Act. To read more about the wiretapping issue, check out the article, [Who's Watching Whom?](#), submitted by the Brennan Center for Justice for publication in the Fall issue *National Voter*.

#### **Supporting Decisive Action Against Global Climate Change**

The League also worked this month to shed light on the issue of global warming, joining other organizations [in calling for immediate action](#) to curb the worst effects of global warming by enforcing reductions in global warming pollution and promoting clean and efficient sources of energy.

#### **Advocating the Passage of the D.C. Voting Rights Act**

The D.C. Voting Rights Act, significant legislation that would grant citizens of the District of Columbia their full voting rights in the House of Representatives, is making its way through Congress. We continue to need your help in making sure the rights of all citizens are protected! [Take action today](#) by urging your Representative to support the D.C. VRA.