

THE CAPE COD VOTER

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JUNE 2013

Best wishes for a rejuvenating, wonderful summer on the Cape!

The Voter will be back at the end of August with an array of programs activities.

We'll start the season with a Coast Day celebration and a stimulating General Membership program in September. These are two great opportunities to invite friends to get acquainted with the LWVCCA!

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

My husband and I took a road trip during the week surrounding Memorial Day Weekend that included a visit to Washington D.C and Gettysburg. Each time I travel to Washington, I find it to be a moving and awe-inspiring experience. I am amazed by and thankful for the foresight and conviction of the early founders of our government to forge the constitution and to plan the city and buildings that would create a federal home for this government of the people, by the people, and for the people. As we visited the Capitol and the Museum of American History, the exhibits were reminders of the vast sweep of history in our country and the leadership, initiative, and courage that it took to build this nation. I was reminded of our best moments in history and our worst moments in history and the bravery of common men and women to overcome our worst times and fight for justice and a vision of a better America that more fully recognizes the rights and talents of all.

We had not seen the World War II Memorial before and as we coincidentally found ourselves sitting under the Massachusetts portion of that memorial it certainly did invite reflection on the sacrifice that so many made in World War II. Similarly, a tour of the Gettysburg battlefield, this year's movie Lincoln, and reading two books about Lincoln's life during the Civil War have juxtaposed thoughts about the contributions that great leaders and common men and women make to move this nation forward.

Our own organization, The League of Women Voters, comes from the suffragist movement that gave women the right to vote. From the vantage point of a modern woman it seems strange that this right was ever something that had to be won. It seems strange that presently, some politicians still try to manipulate voting restrictions to inhibit voting. It seems strange that corporate influences attempt to buy elections and legislation to their favor. It seems strange that ideology trumps reason and voters respond to campaigns led by misinformation and distortion. And most of all, it seems strange to watch a Congress in inaction amidst the beautiful columns of the Capitol, more interested in winning the next election than in actually accomplishing something for the American people.

In the sweep of history, and in the march with new generations toward a more perfect union, our organization is as needed now as it ever was. Look at the LWVUS website and see the stands this organization makes to fight for democracy. At the federal, state and local level, our work of common men and women giving voice to democratic rights and intelligent policy matters. Please renew your support and commitment to this vital organization by renewing your membership now. I would so like to include you in our handbook's membership directory before we go to press. I look forward to working with you in the coming year, to add our voice to the important policy issues of our region.

In League,

Karen Mazza

BOARD NOTES - MAY 7, 2013

- Karen Mazza and her committee were congratulated on having a very successful forum on “Money and Politics.”
- Karen asked that every outgoing Board member meet with the person who will be filling their position on the Board to provide a detailed orientation about the position and resource information to make the job easier.
- Four voting members will attend the LWVMA state convention: Karen Mazza, Judy Thomas, Jari Rapaport and Florence Seldin.
- After a lengthy discussion, the board concurred and voted to send a letter to the editor of the Cape Codder regarding wastewater issues in Orleans.
- The Annual Meeting will be held May 9, 2013 at Cobblestone Landing.)
- The Sandwich Unit held an outstanding forum called “The Power of Civic Engagement: What Steps Can You Take?” on April 29th at the Sandwich High School Library.
- LWV Cape Cod Area members were moderators for the following meetings:
 - The School Committee candidates’ night in Sandwich on April 8th,
 - Candidates’ night in Dennis on April 24th,
 - Candidates’ night in Chatham on April 29th.
 - We supplied a moderator for the Chatham Solid Waste Forum on April 25th.
A new moderator training session will be held in the fall.
- Members from the Environment Committee attended the Waquoit Bay Reserve program, "Wastewater Planning Around the Cape: What are the Different Towns Doing?" on April 30.
- The County Government Committee worked with the President to prepare a My View article for the Cape Cod Times on the formation of the Charter review committee. It has been published. We included our consensus position. We will follow the charter review activity and develop another presentation of our views on needed changes, as covered in our consensus for presentation to that committee.
- Karen Mazza has begun the process of contacting Social Studies Department Heads to interview them about current civic education programs and interests they may have for program and student support.

ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting, as promised, provided a welcome opportunity for member social interaction, greeting old and new friends who attended in the gracious setting at Cobblestone Village Club House. The officers and directors for next season were elected. The list is included in this issue. We paid tribute to Carroll Adams who is leaving the Cape with heartfelt thanks for her major contributions to strengthening our League, serving us in every possible capacity.

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

The Environment Committee met on May 16 to hear Doug Fromm founder and executive of Orleans Can. Orleans Can is a wastewater advocacy group formed November 2012 in response to Orleans's clear need to move forward on its Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan. Doug described Orleans history on wastewater and how the Orleans Can advocacy plan – a plan focused on citizen education -- developed and was implemented. Orleans Can provides a model that other towns could adapt as they move forward with their own CWMPs. The website for Orleans Can is very effective: www.OrleansCan.org. Please check it out.

Coast Day: George Heufelder, Director of Barnstable County Department of Health and Environment, will be in charge of arrangements for a LWVCCA tour of the testing site for wastewater issues at the Mass Military Reserve this September. The Massachusetts Alternative Septic System Test Center (MASSTC) “began in 1999 for the purpose of testing new and innovative onsite septic system technologies. The initial emphasis was on those systems purported to remove nitrogen from wastewater. Today, the Center serves not only as a generator of third-party treatment data and information, but has become a premier research and development site for new ideas in onsite treatment.” We’re hoping for either Friday, Sept. 20 or Saturday, Sept. 21, 2013. Please pencil in these two dates (with a question mark) and wait to hear confirmation in the September *Voter*.

The next meeting of the committee will be in October. Any members with an interest in the environment, and particularly wastewater, are encouraged to call either League president Karen Mazza or committee chair, Judy Thomas, to volunteer or ask questions. *Thank you.*

Judy Thomas

WE SING TO OUR“UNSUNG HEROINE”

Member Florence Seldin was among those honored at the state house in May as “Unsung Heroines”. According to the statement, “The Unsung Heroines are women who don’t always make the news, but who truly make a difference in the lives of others on a daily basis.” Florence was among 4 Cape women on the Cape who were nominated by members of the Cape legislative delegation for their contributions to their communities and organizations they serve. Florence is a past president of the LWVCCA and continues to be very active here and on the state level. She is currently serving her second term as Chatham Selectman, and has been a member of the Cape Cod Commission Board and currently is on the Water Collaborative Board. She has been particularly active in working for low and medium housing in Chatham and elsewhere. She continues to serve on the Board of the Community Development Partnership. Actually, we at the League sing her praises every day! Included also were Darcy McGrail of Cataumet, Dorothy Savarese of Harwich Port, Pearl Wolfson of Yarmouth.

COUNTY NEWS

County Executive for fiscal year 2014 – The Commissioners are preparing to appoint an interim Executive to serve a one year contract in the coming transition period which will see a number of changes developed in the strategic planning process as well as some decisions related to possible restructuring of county government.

Charter Review Committee—The committee has held its first two meeting and is planning 2 two meetings a month, first and third Wednesdays, at 5:30pm, through October. Videos are available as are minutes on the county website. The first meeting was organizational and specified an open look at all presentations, and agreed to tackle structure first, since they felt other items would depend on recommendation in this area. June 5th was set as the initial meeting to include public comment. Written comments will be accepted throughout the process, but public comment will only be allowed at specified meetings. The aim is to have recommendations finalized and presented to the legislature before Thanksgiving.

The County Governance Committee presented League views on June 5th, which included a statement of our consensus on county structure. Our committee will follow the charter review process closely and comment as appropriate.

Jari Rapaport, co-chair, County Committee

LWVCCA HIGHLIGHT – New Member, Patricia Ryle

Patricia “Pat” Ryle currently splits her time between Humarock (where she raised her children) and Dennis. Pat’s adult children and “grandcats” live in the Boston area. No stranger to the Cape, Pat has been vacationing here since the 1980s. She retired in 2002 from the Holbrook school system, after teaching for 30 years (mostly middle school students).

After retiring, Pat, who is a competitive Master swimmer, was the assistant swim coach at Bridgewater State University. Personally, she has done the Provincetown swim three times, as well as the Brewster swim. After four years with Bridgewater, Pat worked with Jack Conway Realty Company out of Hingham.

Other interests include all genres of film, stating that she is a real film buff. Pat also has a strong interest in Irish literature and is excited to be taking a course on Oscar Wilde at the Cultural Center of Cape Cod in Yarmouth.

When asked about why she joined LWVCCA, Pat stated that she has always been interested in what the League does. While in real estate, she was the co-chair of the government committee for the Board of Realtors – a perfect segue into League activities.

Having attended our recent annual dinner meeting, Pat expressed excitement with the LWVCCA’s focus on mental health and our active participation in youth services – both of which go hand-in-hand. She feels that these are issues in all communities; that we cannot point fingers at any one community or region when it comes to mental illness. As a parting comment, when discussing involvement in LWVCCA, Pat states, “If we don’t participate, we shouldn’t complain.” We look forward to Pat’s active participation with the LWVCCA, and warmly welcome her to the League and the Cape.

Interviewed by Joan Craig of the Membership Committee

LWVMA CONVENTION 2013 KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Meira Levinson, PhD

Meira Levinson, associate professor of education at Harvard Graduate School of Education, was the featured speaker at the 2013 LWVMA convention. Based on her 2012 book, *No Citizen Left Behind*, which plays on the concept of the federal education program "No Child Left Behind," Dr. Levinson proceeded to show convention attendees precisely how a large percentage of citizens are currently "left behind."

With the 2012 general election demographic data now available, Dr. Levinson reported for the first time blacks voted in a higher percentage than did whites. In 2010, 66% of whites voted, in 2012, 62% voted; in 2010, 67% of blacks voted, in 2012, 68% voted. In that same election, 48% of Latinos voted and 47% of Asian citizens showing that among immigrant citizens a significant portion do not exercise their franchise to vote.

When income and education are also considered huge gaps are revealed: only 50% of citizens who earned less than \$30 thousand voted; only 64% of those earning between \$30-75 thousand voted, while 77% percent of those earning above \$75,000 voted.

Not surprisingly a similar pattern follows with the level of education attained: 38% of those without a HS diploma voted; those with a HS diploma who voted were 40+%; those with a college degree who voted were 78%.

Dr. Levinson remarked that we tend to "naturalize" [make normal], rationalize and explain away these unsurprising trends -- engaging in what she labels as a very "undemocratic" behavior and system. The surprising (to this listener) data comes from Europe, Asia, Africa, Central and South America where the disparities are only 5-10% while in the US the disparities are 30-40%. Further, as recently as ten years ago, the US did not have these great disparities. What has happened? Unions, all kinds of organizations including houses of worship were typically pulling new citizens and poor people into the system. These groups, the professor says, are all but decimated now.

Dr. Levinson made the claim that the bottom third of the population has no one representing their views in Congress. [As I remembered and reflected on recent past and current campaign rhetoric, I hear the emphasis being on the "middle class" and workers.]

The civic empowerment gap is how Dr. Levinson labels this phenomenon. She advocates that in the same way the national academic achievement gap was made a national shame through the "No Child Left Behind" program, this country has a similar obligation to reduce the civic empowerment gap.

The challenge laid before the League of Women Voters and others is great. We need to work increasingly with young people in voter registration. We must increase our collaboration with other groups to get the work done, expanding our vision downward to young people and outward to people of diversity because as a nation we are increasingly segregated by education, economics and culture. Importantly, Dr. Levinson stressed, **once somebody votes, they begin to think of themselves as voters and are more apt to continue the practice.** This is why it is so crucial to get 18 year old registered and voting as well as the newly naturalized.

In the Q&A, Dr. Levinson stated that civics must be taught in new, more interactive ways woven in to the curriculum at many levels. Further, hours off or a day off on Election Day will increase voter turn out.

Youth outreach and civic education are part of LWVCCA priorities. One way to follow up on the priority and take advantage of Dr. Levinson's work would be to read and study her book. A League Book Club has been suggested as an attractive idea for League members -- current and potential. *No Citizen Left Behind* might be a great book to start with this fall with perhaps a book club site in the lower Cape and another in the mid-upper Cape region. Please let me know if you have interest.

Judy Thomas

LWVMA Convention News

Our delegates found it stimulating to meet fellow LWV members from other parts of the state and learn about their very interesting initiatives to carry out league Here are the major action decisions. See the lwmma.org for more detailed information.

New Study Approved:

Massachusetts after Citizens United. SO WHAT DO WE DO NOW? The study will consider whether or not the League's existing campaign finance positions are adequate to meet the challenges of Citizens United and related Supreme Court decisions, and if not, what additional positions are needed.

Action Priorities 2013-2015

- Improving elections, including, but not limited to, voting systems, election financing/money in politics, voter registration, and engagement, and opposition to voter suppression efforts.
- The environment, including but not limited to, reduction, reuse and recycling measures; measures to address climate change; and comprehensive water management.
- Civic education and engagement, including, but not limited to, encouraging civic education our schools and civic engagement in our communities and our state and municipal governments.

IMPORTANT: RETURN BY JUNE 28, 2013 TO BE IN THE HANDBOOK!!

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Please print your contact information clearly so that we can improve the accuracy of information in our member handbook.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Town: _____ **Zip Code:** _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Membership dues are \$35 for first time members and \$55 for renewals.

Checks are payable to: LWVCCA

Mail to: Ira Seldin

321 Deer Meadow Lane

Chatham 02633

LWVCCA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS 2013-2014

Officers:

President: Karen Mazza

Co-vice presidents: Mary Jane Byrne, Marilyn Gullet

Co treasurers: Ira Seldin, Milt Levy

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Environment: Judy Thomas

County Government: Jari Rapaport, Nancy Curley

Youth Service: Karen Mazza

Health Care: Joan Bernstein

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Harwich: Kathleen Vogt

Dennis: Rhondda Tewes

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Yarmouth: Jan Hively

Barnstable: Phyllis Walsh

Orleans: Freddie FitzGerald, Pam Herrick

Sandwich: Renate Sands

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