

LWW of Albany County

Educate

Participate

Advocate

April 2007

Audrey Kibrick and Marggie Skinner, Co-Presidents

TOWN MEETING: UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE

Repeating a successful partnership, the Albany County League of Women Voters and WMHT will join with the Capital District Alliance for Universal Health Care, to hold a Town Meeting on **UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE, Monday, April 23rd, 7:30 – 8:30 P.M.**, in the WMHT studio in Troy's RPI Tech Park.

WMHT will videotape the hour-long Town Meeting and televise the show on Monday, May 7, 9:00 P.M.

To register to participate as part of the studio audience, call Star at 880-3400 by April 16th. She will ask for your name, phone number and the organization you are affiliated with. *Seats are limited, so register soon.* Audience members must get to the facility by 7:00 P.M.

The United States is the only industrialized country without a national health plan. How do we get from the patchwork of employer-based, private and publically funded health insurance that covers only a portion of the population, to covering everyone equally with a health care program. Is it time to do away with private insurance and move toward a single-payer "Medicare for All" program? How would the "Health Care for All" proposal work? Are there state initiative sthat are cost effective and that would guarantee health care for everyone?

A distinguished panel, hosted by Benita Zahn, will be present and the audience will be encouraged to ask questions. Here is your opportunity to be a part of a dialogue on an issue that affects all of us.

WMHT's new digital facility is in the RPI Tech Park, 4 Global View, N. Greenbush, NY

Directions: From I-90 take Exit 8, Turn Left on Route 4 North

Continue for 2 miles to R.P.I. Tech Park (this will be on the left)

Turn into the park. Proceed on Jordan Road to the bottom of the hill. The building is at the corner of Global View and Jordan Road. There is an insert in the bulletin with a detailed map.

FROM THE PRESIDENTS

April begins with mischief. It seems that ancient cultures placed April 1 as New Year's Day until Pope Gregory XIII ordered the new Gregorian Calendar to be adopted. Many French were especially resistant to change and people called them fools for not accepting the new calendar and played pranks on them. The day became called "All Fool's Day"

and is widely celebrated around the world by playing tricks on people. For example, in 1996, citizens of Philadelphia were outraged at the announcement made by the Taco Bell Corporation that it had bought the Liberty Bell from the government and renamed as Taco Liberty Bell. The mass hysterics could only be controlled a few hours later when it was revealed to be a practical joke. However, the witty White House press secretary Mike McCurry only answered to the question about the sale that the Lincoln Memorial had also been sold and was being renamed as the Ford Lincoln Mercury Memorial. It's good to be a little crazy.

Then April goes on with lots of downpours to become the initiator of May flowers. We all know the song. But to me April is more than the rebirth of nature, it speaks to new

opportunities that will be coming our way. For LWVAC, springtime can mean the opportunity to evaluate what we did and what we'd like to accomplish not only in the coming summer season but what we consider priorities for the next few years.

To me and Marggie, this is a time for reflection on our term as co-presidents. There is a wonderful slate of nominated candidates for board positions. We, with bittersweet feelings, are delighted with the proposed slate and are certain that all positions will be filled with excited and, best of all, motivated people. You should read about the slate and the proposed new budget (both in this newsletter) and be prepared to vote (maybe even nominate someone) at our annual meeting in May and hear a wonderfully timely program on immigration.

*Happy Spring,
Audrey and Marggie*

League of Women Voters of Albany County Board

Co-Presidents	VP Administration	VP Program	Treasurer	Secretary
Marggie Skinner	Gael Vecchio	Wendy Dury-Samson	Mary Berry	Judy Jarnefeld
489-5311	459-9958	439-1113	439-5679	869-3228
Audrey Kibrick	Voter Service	Membership	Development	International Relations
489-9931	Maggie Moehringer	Susan Coleman	Lori Keegan-Brady	Kay Wilkie
	475-0969	433-9446	475-0396	768-2901
Bulletin Editor	Public Relations	At Large	Local Program	Financing Education
Aimee Allaud	Margaret Sawyer	Jacqui C. Williams	Raymond Blanchard	Betsey Swan
482-2617	783-9424	433-0277	438-0550	426-3711

E-Mail Address: lwwac@crisny.org. Web Site: www.lwvalbany.org

LWV of New York State: 62 Grand Street, Albany 12207, Phone: 465-4162, Fax: 465-0812, E-mail: lwwny@lwwny.org, Web Site: lwwny.org

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan citizen organization that promotes the informed and active participation of citizens in government, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Any person of voting age, male or female, may become a League member.

This newsletter is published by the League of Women Voters of Albany County, 12 Coventry Road, Glenmont, New York 12077 and mailed to League Members. The frequency of publication is as follows: one mid-summer issue followed by nine monthly issues from September to May.

Notes on the work of the Immigration Study Team

As part of the work of the new Immigration Study Team, led by Ann Brandon, Kay Wilkie and Bonnie Beard met with Molly Short and her colleague Bobbi-Jo on March 13th, in order to learn about current work at USCRI Albany (US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants - Albany Field Office), and to identify major concerns facing immigrants and refugees in our region, and nationwide.

In summary, major challenges confronting immigrants and refugees currently include:

1. "Material support" to a terrorist, as defined by the US Patriot Act, has an incredibly broad application, and is preventing many deserving people from being considered eligible for refugee status.

A sample scenario is a woman imprisoned and/or raped, then forced to cook for a terrorist group. That activity would be considered to have provided "material support" and would render the individual ineligible for legal refugee status.

Although the US Dept. of State is providing waivers for some defined groups, the bias is to deny refugee status as US officials are now being held *personally* responsible for any potential terrorist/s that slip through immigration inspection.

2. A huge backlog: There are an estimated 50,000 refugees currently in the pipeline. In 2002, in the wake of 9/11, only 11,000 persons were granting entrance. While gradually increasing, only about 40,000 were admitted in 2006 despite an approved cap of 70,000 annually.

3. Restrictions have tightened around obtaining legal documentation for those currently in country.

An example includes anyone having entered the country illegally – regardless of when – and currently married to a US citizen, even with children, is subject to deportation with little recourse for obtaining legal status from within the country.

4. Detention Center: A prison-like facility in the state of Texas currently serving to hold those with legal issues; including families and children.

5. Main countries of origin for refugees: Burma, Afghanistan, Central Africa, Iraq, Turkey (attached: UNDP list of origin countries of over 30 refugees)

6. "Real ID = Green Card": New regulations and requirements for Drivers' Licenses are proving extremely problematic and difficult to interpret. The aggregate amount of documentation required to obtain a driver's license is high for US citizens, let alone for refugees and newly arriving immigrants. Applicants with more than sufficient proof of identification are being turned away and told to return when they have a green card. These increased restrictions have resulted in adversely affecting the general atmosphere surrounding the process for both the immigrant/refugee applicant and the service provider (e.g. DMV, DSS, etc.).

With a current staff of 7 collectively covering 12 languages, USCRI is serving major clusters of refugees including Burmese in Rensselaer County, Afghanis in Schenectady and a broad mix of groups in Albany County which, with the best social services, is the preferred resettlement destination. Specific Issues confronting the organization and the local community currently include:

1. Some significant service gaps relating to language and translation services. Regional service providers tend to lack awareness of DSS (Department of Social Services) regulations regarding refugees in general, and of Title VI requirements to provide translation services in particular.

For examples, hospitals tend to lack adequate language services which have become especially problematic in birthing rooms where the "language line" services (translations provided by a national translation telephone line) are not available.

Counseling services for victims of rape, torture and other traumas particularly in French.

2. ESL (English as Second Language) in schools is currently insufficient, frequently lumping together multiple students with widely divergent needs and experiences. In addition, students needing ESL are often taunted and/or harassed, with teachers not provided and/or unable to provide adequate resources or respect.

3. Fraudulent “notarios” services are a growing problem in the Capital Region. Notarios are typically for-profit storefront businesses that deceptively claim to provide documentary and other services for immigrants and refugees. Trust is gained through the use of native languages.

These are just a few of the issues facing international newcomers to our region that should be highlighted to the broader community in order to improve understanding and appreciation of circumstances and actual service delivery. Part of a nationwide network based in Washington, DC (<http://www.refugees.org/>), USCRI Albany is encouraged to seek regional collaborations in addressing some of these issues.

Refugees by country of origin (thousands)

People who have fled their country because of a well founded fear of persecution for reasons of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group and who cannot or do not want to return. *Country of asylum* is the country in which a refugee has filed a claim of asylum but has not yet received a decision or is otherwise registered as an asylum seeker. *Country of origin* refers to the claimant’s nationality or country of citizenship.

HDI Rank	Country	2005 !
141	Sudan	693
169	Burundi	439
167	Congo, Dem. Rep. of the	431
109	Viet Nam	357
100	Occupied Palestinian Territories	350
99	Azerbaijan	234
161	Angola	216
92	Turkey	170
130	Myanmar	165
157	Eritrea	144
81	China	124
44	Croatia	119
62	Bosnia and Herzegovina	110
93	Sri Lanka	108
135	Bhutan	107
65	Russian Federation	103
158	Rwanda	100
96	Iran, Islamic Rep. of	99
77	Ukraine	84
170	Ethiopia	65
70	Colombia	60
122	Tajikistan	55
147	Togo	51
171	Chad	48
172	Central African Republic	43
176	Sierra Leone	40
145	Uganda	34
108	Indonesia	34
153	Mauritania	32
134	Pakistan	30

Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2006

<http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/statistics/indicators/211.html>



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ALBANY COUNTY

March 15, 2007

Mr. Matthew Clyne
90 State St.
Albany, NY 12207

Dear Mr. Clyne:

The League of Women Voters of Albany County congratulates you on your appointment as Democratic Commissioner of the Albany County Board of Elections.

Over the years, the League has developed a positive and, we think, mutually supportive relationship with the Board and its commissioners in serving the voters of Albany County. In these times of change in the elections process and the technology and procedures that support it, we would like the Commissioners to continue to think of us as partners, and to draw on our services and support.

Mr. Graziano and the Albany County Legislators are well aware of the League's research and study into the efficacy of the various technologies proposed for replacing Albany County's voting machines, and those in the rest of the New York. As the testing and certification process continues, we would be very happy to personally discuss the League and its partnering organizations' views on the options. As you probably know, the League and New Yorkers for Verified Voting firmly believe that New York counties should standardize on one technology - a single statewide voting system using paper ballots, precinct based optical scanners, and accessible ballot marking devices. Our research and review of the experience in other states indicates that this technology is secure, accurate, accessible, verifiable and cost-effective.

Whatever the outcome of the technology selection process, we will continue to work with both commissioners of the Board of Elections in a positive and constructive fashion to serve the voters of Albany County. Please accept our congratulations, and we will look forward to working with you and Mr. Graziano in the future.

Very truly yours,

Marggie Skinner, Co-President (489-5311)
Audrey Kibrick, Co-President (489-9931)
League of Women Voters of Albany County

CC: Mr. Graziano
Aimee Allaud - LWV of NYS, HAVA Specialist (482-2617)

Universal Health Care: How do we get there from here?

The League of Women Voters and the Capital District Alliance for Universal Healthcare have joined with WMHT to present a Town Meeting to discuss how we get from a patchwork of employer-based, private and publicly funded health insurance that covers only a portion of the population, to covering everyone equally with a universal health care program. The panel will include Dr. Paul Sorum of the Capital District Physicians for a National Health Program, Mark Dunlea of Hunger Action Network, Tom Hilliard of the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, Rebecca Elgie of the Tompkins County Health Care Taskforce, and Peter Elitzer of Peter Harris Clothes. Benita Zahn will host the program and field questions from the audience.

Most Americans agree that they are paying too much for health care and not necessarily getting what they pay for. Costs continue to spiral and it is estimated that 20% of the gross national product in 2015 will be spent on health care (it's now at 16%).

All other industrialized countries arrange for health care for their citizens at far less cost than we pay in the US. They spend 50% or less per person on health care and cover all the people. Some countries have a single-payer system where the physician or hospital bills a government or quasi-government agency for all services to patients, eliminating the vast paperwork that physicians in this country face in dealing with a multitude of insurance companies. Other countries have salaried physicians who are paid directly by the government, a system similar to the Veteran's Administration Hospitals in this country.

In the US, only 85% of the population has health insurance and it is estimated that 15% of the people who do have insurance are underinsured – they do not have adequate coverage if they were to suffer a major medical problem. It is estimated that 50% or more of the bankruptcies in this country have excessive medical bills as their primary cause. In addition, many Americans feel locked into jobs they would rather leave but can't because of the fear of losing health insurance benefits.

Single-payer advocates say we are spending 25-30% of every healthcare dollar on the excessive administrative costs and profit making of the private health insurance industry. Medicare, on the other hand, has administrative costs under 5%. If the US were to go to a single-payer system and cut the billing and paperwork costs of health care, they say, about \$300 billion per year would be freed up to cover the uninsured and underinsured.

HR-676 is a federal bill that establishes a single-payer "Medicare for All" system. This program would cover all medically necessary services including primary care, inpatient care, outpatient care, emergency care, prescription drugs, durable medical equipment, long term care, mental health services, dentistry, eye care, chiropractic and substance abuse treatment. Patients would have their choice of physicians, providers, hospitals, clinics and practices. No co-pays or deductibles are permitted under this act. Locally, Congressman Mike McNulty and Maurice Hinchey are among the seventy-five congressmen who have signed on to this act.

Another plan, "Health Care for America" has been proposed by Jacob Hacker, a Yale professor who says we can maintain the private for-profit system of health insurance while offering a Medicare-based plan to those

who choose it. Over time he feels more people and businesses will elect to choose the lower cost Medicare-based system and private insurance will be used for extra services not provided under Medicare. His proposal is part of a recent book *The Great Risk Shift* and a position paper entitled “Health Care For America: A proposal for guaranteed, affordable health care for all Americans building on Medicare and employment-based insurance.”

There are also initiatives in many states to provide health insurance for all through various methods, including state subsidies to the uninsured, tax credits, or by mandating that people buy health insurance at somewhat reduced rates. New York has a bill in the Assembly to establish a Legislative Commission on Health Care Reform to examine, evaluate and make recommendations concerning mechanisms for providing comprehensive, affordable, quality health coverage to all New Yorkers while controlling costs and ensuring freedom of choice for consumers. The Commission would have two committees, one on universal publicly financed health coverage and one on expanding traditional health coverage.

THE LEAGUE GOES TO THE THEATER! Save May 10th!

When: Thursday, May 10th 8:00 P.M. performance, 6:30 P.M. reception

Where: Albany Civic Theater, 235 Second Avenue,
Albany, NY

What: “OF MICE AND MEN” by John Steinbeck

Two drifters, George and his friend Lennie, with delusions of living off the “fat of the land” have just arrived at a ranch to work for enough money to buy their own place. Lennie is a man-child, a little boy in the body of a dangerously powerful man. It’s Lennie’s obsessions with things soft and cuddly that have made George cautious about who the gentle giant, with his brute strength, associates with. His promises to allow Lennie to “tend to the rabbits” on their future land keeps Lennie calm, amidst distractions, as the overgrown child needs constant reassurance. But when a ranch boss’ promiscuous wife is found dead in the barn with a broken neck, George is faced with a moral question of how to deal with the situation.”

Come and enjoy a night out with League friends for this Albany County League annual fundraising event and patronize a local arts institution, Albany Civic Theater!

Price: \$20.00

LOOK FOR MORE DETAILS IN MAY BULLETIN

New Member Coffee—Thanks to all who came out on Saturday, March 10!

The Albany County League hosted a new and prospective member coffee at Perfect Blend Café on March 10. League board members Audrey Kibrick, Wendy Dury-Samson (and daughter Nora), Ray Blanchard and Maggie Moehringer presented information about League activities and opportunities for getting involved. Voter registration, our immigration study, and charter schools were all of interest to this group.

Attendees were recently-joined members Maureen Cooley, Carolyn Miller, Pat Zima, June Hanhner, Jackie Paredes, and Jennifer Best.

We’re looking forward to meeting them at future events and joining us in promoting citizen participation in government.

Proposed Nominations for 2007-08 LWVAC Board

On Board

Co-President	Maggie Moehringer
Co-President	Lori Keegan-Brady
VP Program	Jacqui Williams
VP Action	Amy Pollard
VP Administration	Gael Casey-Vecchio and Judy Jarnefeld
Treasurer	Mary Berry
Secretary	Linda Brown
Membership	Susan Coleman and Audrey Kibrick
Voter Service	Wendy Dury-Samson
Development	Lori Keegan-Brady
National Government	Edith Allen
State & Local Govt.	Raymond Blanchard
International Relations	Katie Henrickson
Public Relations	Margaret Sawyer
At-large	

Off Board Specialists

Information Specialist	Don Kennedy
Environment	Laura Whalen
Social Policy	Courtney Burke
Poll Reporting	Marggie Skinner
Bulletin Editor	Laura Bierman
Bulletin Distribution	Annette Argyros
Speaker's Bureau	Raymond Blanchard, Barbara Bartoletti
Budget Committee	Mike Durocher
Website Administrator	Jennifer Stromer-Galley
Nominations	Courtney Burke

PROPOSED 2007– 2008 BUDGET

EXPENDITURES	BUDGET 06-07	ACTUAL 02/05/07	PROPOSED 07-08
A. OPERATING COSTS			
1. General Supplies	200.00	23.00	200.00
2. Postage	175.00	186.00	200.00
3. Misc. Expenses/Grants	100.00	348.00	100.00
Subtotal	475.00	557.00	500.00
B. BOARD & ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES			
1. President	50.00	-	50.00
2. Administrative Committees			
a. Publicity/website	150.00	172.00	100.00
b. Finance	175.00		175.00
Drive/Development			
c. Membership	350.00	173.00	350.00
Subtotal	725.00	345.00	675.00
C. DELEGATES, TRAVEL & AFFILIATIONS			
1. State Convention	3,000.00		-
2. National Convention		3,000.00	3,000.00
3. Annual Meeting	2,000.00	200.00	2,000.00
4a. Potluck	300.00	141.50	300.00
4b. Luncheon	1,200.00	1,208.65	1,200.00
5. Affiliations	100.00	25.00	1,125.00
Subtotal	6,600.00	1,375.15	7,625.00
D. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE LEAGUE			
1. State PMP	3,750.00	2,880.00	3,900.00
2. National PMP	5,000.00	5,478.00	5,350.00
3. Local fundraising	500.00		500.00
Subtotal	9,250.00	8,358.00	9,750.00
E. BULLETIN			
1. Supplies	1,300.00	1,063.00	1,700.00
2. Postage	500.00	200.00	400.00
Subtotal	1,800.00	1,263.00	2,100.00
F. EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES			
1. Program Study	300.00	99.85	300.00
2. Voters Service		584.00	
a. Facts for Voters	350.00	230.00	200.00
b. Candidate Meetings	300.00	-	100.00
c. Voters Guide	-	-	-
3. Student Sponsor	-	-	500.00
4. Special Projects			100.00
Subtotal	1,050.00	913.85	1,200.00
G. PROGRAM ACTION	100.00	-	100.00
GRAND TOTAL	20,000.00	12,812.00	21,950.00

INCOME	PROPOSED 06-07	ACTUAL 02/05/07	PROPOSED 07-08
AA. MEMBERSHIP DUES	8,500.00	1,520.00	8,800.00
BB. CONTRIBUTIONS			
1. Member	150.00	1,781.90	1,000.00
2. Fund Drive	3,000.00	4,626.90	3,500.00
Subtotal	3,150.00	6,408.80	4,500.00
CC. OTHER FUNDRAISING			
1 Annual Meeting	1,700.00		1,700.00
2 Potluck	150.00	85.60	150.00
3 Luncheon	1,000.00	1,294.00	1,000.00
4 Events	1,000.00	10.00	900.00
Subtotal	3,850.00	1,389.60	3,750.00
EE. OTHER INCOME			
1. Bulletin Ads	-	-	-
2. Poll Reporting	3,000.00	1,733.00	3,000.00
3. Speakers Bureau	100.00	-	-
4. Misc. Income/Grants	100.00	110.00	500.00
Subtotal	3,200.00	1,843.00	3,500.00
FF. BANK INTEREST	500.00	137.38	250.00
Subtotal	19,200.00	11,298.78	20,800.00
(TO) FROM RESERVES	800.00	1,513.22	1,150.00
GRAND TOTAL	20,000.00	12,812.00	21,950.00

Membership 2006–2007

Join & Make a Difference

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

e-mail _____

- Individual membership \$45/year
- Household membership \$60/year
- Student membership \$15/year
- Contribution in support of my local league
- Please send me more information

Mail to : League of Women Voters of Albany County
P.O. Box 611 Slingerlands, NY 12159

Or contact: Susan Coleman Tel: 433–9446

Letters.....

we get letters (we hope!)

Express yourself! We are starting a new column for the bulletin. Let me know your ideas and opinions...keep it short and to the point, and primarily on League issues. Mail your letter to Aimee Allaud, Editor, LWVAC bulletin, 85 Melrose Avenue, Albany, NY, 12203, or 85aimee@nycap.rr.com. Bulletin deadlines are the board meeting each month, generally the first Tuesday of each month.

Welcome our new members

Jennifer Best	Albany
Maureen Cooley	Delmar
Patricia Zima	Slingerlands

TEA WITH LEAGUE FRIENDS

What: Enjoy a Spring Break with colleagues from the Schenectady LWV

When: Tuesday, April 24th, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Where: Women’s Club, of Albany, 725 Madison Avenue, (just above S. Lake Ave.)

Why: Get to know our friends and colleagues in the Schenectady League, talk about topics of common interest in the region and possible collaboration, share information on the Immigration Study which both leagues are engaged in, and anything else you want to bring up!

(This is a no-fee event, but we need a few contributions of “goodies” for the tea table. No reservations required, but if you can bring something or need further information, please call Marggie (489-5311) or Audrey (489-9931)

UPCOMING EVENTS CALENDAR

Tues. April 3, 5:45 p.m.
LWVAC Board Mtg.
Albany Public Library
Washington Ave., Albany

Mon., April 9
Albany County Legislature
County Courthouse, Albany
6:30 public comment
7:00 meeting

Tues., April 17, 7:00 P.M.
Immigration Study
Ann Brandon's home
64 Salisbury Road, Delmar
439-4332

Great Decisions Discussions
Thurs., April 19, 5:30 p.m.
ICCR, Council of Community
Services
272 Broadway, Menands
To register, call 229-9037

Town Meeting at WMHT Studios
Monday, April 23
Topic: Universal Healthcare
7:00 P.M.
(see articles)

Tuesday, April 24
Women's Club of Albany
Tea with League Friends
(see article)

Thurs., May 10
8:00 P.M.
Albany Civic Theater
LWVAC Fundraiser

Thurs., May 24, 5:30 P.M.
LWVAC Annual Dinner
Normanside Country Club
Delmar

The League of Women Voters of Albany County
P.O. Box 611
Slingerlands, NY 12159

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