



THE VOTER

The Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of the Hamptons

Founded in 1977

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January-February 2011

Why We Should Care About Redistricting Reform

During the last election, we heard most candidates for state office repeat that “the New York State legislature is the most dysfunctional in the nation.” Why has this dubious honor been bestowed on New York?

Like many reputations, this one was well-earned. A poll conducted last summer showed that 83 percent of those questioned agreed with the description of the state government as “dysfunctional,” up from 76 percent in December of 2009 and 71 percent in April 2009. That poll further showed that 76 percent of voters disapproved of the Legislature, 51 percent of respondents said that their state senator should be voted out of office in November, while only 36 percent said their senator deserved re-election. The poll said half of respondents also want to oust their Assembly member, compared with 34 percent who favor re-election.

So what happened at the election?

Well, despite the fact that the disapproval rating of the legislature was off the charts, and the national fervor against incumbents was at a fever pitch, most incumbents in the New York State legislature were re-elected. This repeats the pattern of past years, in which incumbent state legislative candidates were re-elected at a staggering rate. According to NYPIRG, over the past 22 years, only 30 incumbents have been beaten in the general elections. How does this happen? One of the reasons is the way in which our state draws the lines determining the electoral districts.

The League of Women Voters of New York State is working extremely hard to convince our legislators that the process we use to determine the electoral lines as a result of the recent census should be determined by a process which meets the following criteria:

- Creates a new, independent citizens redistricting commission that is fairly chosen to draw congressional and legislative district lines. These lines must not favor any incumbent or political party and must employ even-handed and sensible redistricting guidelines that provide for fair and effective representation of racial and language minority groups.
- Ensures adequate disclosure and opportunities for public input of redistricting proceedings and data.
- Preserves and creates an effective mechanism for legislative approval of the independent redistricting commission’s plan.

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GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Corporate Contributions & Redistricting

Hampton Library, Bridgehampton

JANUARY 10 - 7:00 PM

All Are Welcome

WINTER BLAHS LUNCHEON

FEBRUARY 16 - 1:00 PM

Orso at the Southampton Inn

RSVP by February 12: Julia Kayser

KAYKULLEE@aol.com

or 631-324-1498

The League of Women Voters of the Hamptons

Mission Statement

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

Diversity Policy

The League of Women Voters of the Hamptons, in both its values and practices, is committed to diversity and pluralism. This means that there shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the League on the basis of economic position, gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin or disability. The League of Women Voters of the Hamptons recognizes that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision-making. The League of Women Voters of the Hamptons subscribes to the belief that diversity and pluralism are fundamental to the values it upholds and that inclusiveness enhances the organization's ability to respond more effectively to changing conditions and needs. The League of Women Voters of the Hamptons affirms its commitment to reflecting the diversity of the East End.

Membership

Any person who supports the mission of the League may become a member.

The Voter Newsletter

The newsletter of the Hamptons League, *The Voter*, is dedicated to bringing useful information, background, perspective and commentary on public policy issues confronting League members and other community citizens in Southampton and East Hampton, Suffolk County and the State of New York. It explores the work of the League to promote positive solutions, and it empowers people to make a difference in their communities.

The Voter is published eight times a year by the League of Women Voters of the Hamptons, P. O. Box 2253, East Hampton, NY 11937.

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President's Message

I always believe that ultimately, if people are paying attention, then we get good government and good leadership.

- Barack Obama, MSNBC interview, Sep. 25, 2006

Among the things that the League of Women Voters does best is pay attention. As we all are aware from the e-mails and action alerts we receive from national, state and the local league, when legislation relevant to the issues important us is considered, we make our voices heard to our elected officials.

Another way in which we pay attention is through the Observer Corps. This program, in no way new to the League but recently reinstated by the Hamptons, sends our members (or members of the public) into meetings of the Town Boards of Southampton and East Hampton to see what is going on, and to report back to our members and the community about what the Boards are considering and the manner in which they are operating.

The information our observers have given us recently has made the League aware of the issues being considered by our local governments. In so doing, we have been struck by the numbers of times the work of the town boards could have been improved if the town manager/council form of government had been adopted.

One of the most important issues considered by both boards recently has been passage of their budgets. That process is one of the most important duties of a town board; it is a function that can be greatly improved by the employment of a town manager. Trained in principles of town management, and in a position to gather all pertinent facts from all relevant sources, a town manager can propose budget choices which best serve the needs of the community while taking into consideration the fiscal strictures which limit the choices of the town governments. The town boards, always charged with the power and duty to set policy, are provided with the best possible information upon which to implement those policies and priorities. We intend to expand the scope of the work of the Observer Corps to provide more readily accessible information about the workings of our government to our neighbors through reports in our *Voter* and on our website.

The work of the Observer Corps is basic to League principles. Several of our members have committed to being a part of this work, but we would, as always, appreciate more help. Our eyes and ears are helping our community to pay attention. In so doing, we believe that we are helping our elected officials to provide better government and leadership for all of us. If you want to help, please contact me. Thank you.

Carol Mellor 537-6998

2010 Election Survey:

Machines Perform But Privacy Suffers

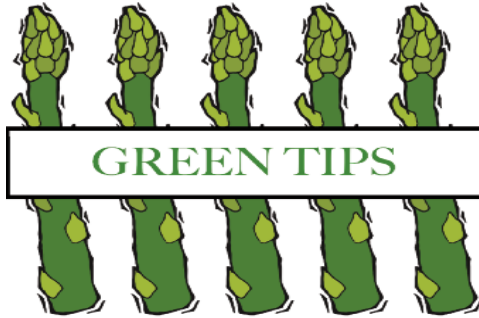
The League of Women Voters of New York State released the results of an online survey of voters' experiences using the new paper ballot optical scanning system that was implemented statewide for the 2010 election cycle. The online survey of 1,072 respondents, from 47 counties including all 5 counties of NYC, showed that the voting machines indeed did perform well; however, the respondents did make note of several inadequacies that the League feels must be addressed to ensure that voters are guaranteed a secure and private franchise. The League's recommendations for immediate action are listed below; the state Board of Elections should move to implement these recommendations before the next election cycle.

- * **Increased Voter Education on the Voting Process**
The State Board of Elections must provide standard template materials which county boards of elections can tailor for their specific needs. Remaining HAVA funds should be used for this purpose.
- * **Increased Training for All Elections Personnel.** The survey showed an immediate need for better trained election personnel. Legislation has passed permitting split shifts for election inspectors and recruitment of younger poll workers. These new laws need to be implemented.
- * **Revision of the Paper Ballot for Maximum Usability by Voters.** There is an immediate need for improving the design of the ballot. Legislation to address the full-face ballot should be a legislative priority and should be introduced early in the 2011 Legislative Session.
- * **Privacy Issues.** Over 20 percent said they did not have sufficient privacy in marking the ballot, scanning the ballot, or were not given a privacy sleeve or instructed how to use it. Poll workers need to be trained that any viewing of the markings on a completed ballot is a violation of the voter's privacy.

As noted by League Elections Specialist, Aimee Allaud, "Improving ballot design, providing better trained poll workers and ensuring privacy in voting are fundamental to our voter electoral system. We must take immediate steps to resolve these problems."

"The League's Voter Survey shows that we need to do much, much more if we're to take full advantage of the State's new voting systems. In particular, the design of New York's ballot must be completely overhauled in order to be fully usable by voters." said Bo Lipari, the League's Technology Director.

The full report is available on the New York State League website: www.lwvny.org.



White Vinegar— The Housekeeper's Helper!

Deodorize Your Sink: Pour a cup of baking soda followed by one cup of hot vinegar down your kitchen drain. Let sit for five minutes, then rinse with hot water.

Clean Counter Tops: Wipe down with rag dipped in vinegar.

Clean Refrigerator: Wipe shelves and walls with a mixture of half vinegar/half water.

Disinfect Wood Cutting Board: Wash with vinegar.

Remove deposits from coffee maker: Run a cycle with one cup of vinegar; then run water through twice to remove vinegar odor.

Submitted by Glorian Berk
Source: www.vinegartips.com

Sustainable Ideas Gathered

With two forums titled "The Steps to Southampton's Future are in Your Hands," the Sustainable Southampton Advisory Committee drew large audiences—in Southampton on October 13 and Hampton Bays on October 18. It was a very unique forum because we were asked for our ideas and—after all the ideas were written on easel paper—we took our 5 blue stickers and voted for the ideas we thought most valuable.

The presentations, after an introduction by Supervisor Anna Throne-Holst, were led by Advisory Committee member, Dorothy Reilly. Dorothy cautioned that we could only present positive ideas and build on each other's comments—no saying, "No, that won't work." The ideas were categorized into whether they would affect the economy, the environment, energy or social factors. The results of this process are not in yet, but judging by the people who attended the meeting and the volume of reasonable ideas, there is definitely hope for progress in implementing some of the proposals.

Judy Roth 283-0759

Voter Services Committee Report

Our Very Active Fall Season

Thanks to a number of members who volunteered, we were able to spread the word throughout the East End about the new voting machine procedures. We also sponsored several important candidate debates, and provided relevant information and forms about the newly streamlined absentee ballot application. The following is a compilation of those efforts. We are proud to have provided these services, which are central to the mission of the League.

Voter Registration and Distribution Of Information about New Voting Machines

Volunteers provided material and spoke about new voting procedures and equipment at post offices, popular markets and community events such as Sag Harbor Fest and the Anti-Bias Task Force Picnic as well as other community locations, numerous debates and meetings. We developed several visual aids to help this educational effort, including:

- * Adaptation and presentation of a Power Point tutorial
- * Development and production of a television presentation at LTV studios in East Hampton. Distributed to local television stations in East Hampton, Southampton, Riverhead, Shelter Island and Southold
- * Development, preparation and distribution of a hand-out with visual explanation about successful completion of an election ballot.

Voter Education/Voter Service

- * The Board of the East Hampton Library asked the LWVH to help organize and conduct a special referendum vote on whether the community supported the addition of a wing to the library. Twelve LWVH members volunteered their services to help the event run smoothly.
- * We distributed LWVNYS Voters Guide 2010, PART I in September and October and PART II in October to libraries, town and village municipal buildings, civic association and senior citizens locations, doctors' offices and at candidates' debates
- * Throughout the year, we responded to queries on the LWVH phone
- * In September and October, we also responded to telephone queries on the County Phone

Candidates Debates

From February to October, we sponsored seven debates, including between candidates for:

- * Southampton Town Council (special election to fill vacancy)
- * Tuckahoe School Board
- * Hampton Bays School Board
- * Mayor and Trustee of Westhampton Beach
- * New York State Senate, 1st SD: Ken LaValle & Jennifer Maertz and State Assembly, 2nd AD, Fred Thiele & Richard Blumenthal

A Congressional debate was planned, but cancelled and the League attempted to sponsor a debate in September among the three candidates for Republican nomination for Congress.

Anne Marshall 537-3257



TOP Asking the candidates a wide range of questions from press and public at the LWVH State Senate and Assembly candidates debate on October 25 at Southampton's Rogers Memorial Library were, left to right, Southampton Press editor Joe Shaw and Sag Harbor Express editor Bryan Boyhan.

ABOVE NYS Assembly candidates Richard Blumenthal (R), left, and Assemblyman Fred Thiele, Jr. (Indep.) debated many state and local issues.



Suffolk County Post Election Brunch, November 7

The 18 LWWH members attending the County League's November 7 post election brunch participated in a review of new NYS paper ballots, privacy sleeves and scanning machines. Left to right are Joy Cordery, Joanne Samborn (hidden from view), Glorian Berk, Naomi Epstein, Julia Kayser, Libby Hummer, Elaine Sorrentino, Barbara Jordan, and Susan Wilson, who made the brunch arrangements for LWVSC. Also attending were Estelle Gellman, Arlene Hinkemeyer, Mireille Lister, Ursula Lynch, Anne Marshall, Carol and Richard Mellor, Ann Sandford and Jerry Korman. Photo by Arlene Hinkemeyer.



Holiday Party, December 13

LEFT Festively attired and enjoying the League's holiday gathering on December 13 in the Fireside Room of St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Hampton Bays were, left to right, Judi Roth, Jacqui Lofaro and Susan Wilson.

RIGHT The party raised over \$900 for the Peconic Community Council's Maureen's Haven program for the homeless. LWV President Carol Mellor held the basket of donations while treasurer Eموke Forman related how her church was the first on the East End to begin housing and feeding the homeless on winter nights. Photos by Arlene Hinkemeyer.



LWVH Board Meeting Summary

Held on December 1, 2010

INFORMATION ITEMS

- * Carol Mellor reported that she had attended UN Day along with League member Jenice Delano and that information on the microfinance presentation is on the state website (lwwny.org).
- * LICF Grant: Carol updated the status of the grant to support the voting machine education program, noting that the funds have been received.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- * Holiday Party, Monday, December 13. This year's beneficiary is Maureen's Haven. Barbara Jordan will speak about this shelter for the homeless.
- * January 10 members meeting, Hampton Library in Bridgehampton, 7 p.m.: As Carol has been unable to recruit a speaker on the topic of the Citizens United case, the board agreed that Carol could be the presenter. Judi Roth volunteered to lead the discussion on redistricting.
- * Printing *The Voter*: Sally James, Joy Cordery, Judy Samuelson and Maura Lester updated the board on Madison Printing. The company has decided to increase the printing charges to the League to market rates, since during the past five years, we have paid about half actual costs. The group is negotiating with Madison as well as seeking other vendor bids.
- * NYS League Convention, May 20-22, in Albany: Carol reviewed a number of ways the state would like to see LWVH participate in its programs. For example:
 - As "state coaches," for which training will take place March 26-28. Their purpose is to enhance communications among local, the state and the national leagues. The work includes coaching two or three leagues in our area.
 - The state is eliciting names of candidates for state board (holds six meetings a year in Albany).
 - Member Initiative participants. State seeks workshops to be presented by local League members at the convention (this was the origin of the Hot Topics luncheons).
 - State is asking for suggestions of workshop topics members would like to hear at the convention.
 - Finally, the state is asking for donations to their silent auction. Last year, LWVH donated a "Hamptons Basket." Our response is due February 15.
- * Transparency in Southampton Town Government. Ursula Lynch, a member of the Observer Corps, reported on the lack of support for the principles of transparency in Town Board meetings. The concerns were last minute resolutions proposed to change the Supervisor's 2011 budget and the issuance of a press release about the

appointment of a senior town manager services administrator before the board had voted on the candidate. At the Nov. 30 meeting, 13 members of the public criticized aspects of the processes used. In response, Carol proposed that members of the Observer Corps, with a representative from the Government Committee, meet to draft a letter to the Press addressing issues of process, namely, the use of the phrase Town Manager according to a definition that differs from the League's, but quoting the League as the source, and, second, transparency in government deliberations. Judi proposed that members watch the video of the town board meeting and form positions.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- * Nominating Committee: Chair Naomi Epstein stated that the committee's work has been completed.
- * Special Events: Sue Wilson reported that a fundraising postcard will be mailed in January.
- * Membership: According to Arlene Makl, membership stands at 187 with ten new members for the year. The annual "Winter Blahs" luncheon will probably be on February 16.
- * Natural Resources: no report
- * Voter Services: Anne Marshall reported that she will be meeting with members of the Board of Elections as part of the debriefing of the election. It was noted that the machines were 100% accurate.
- * Government: Naomi reported that she will speak to the Sag Harbor CAC on the town manager role in local government and that her committee has three other scheduled speaking engagements. The East Hampton Town Board and the Business Alliance are both supportive.
- * Observer Corps: see above
- * Education: no report
- * Health: no report
- * Publicity: Arlene circulated copies of recent publicity.
- * Website: Judi reported that the site name has been changed to lwwhamptons.org. She is also adding information about new members to the site. Carol suggested adding Observer Corps reports, as well as noting the purpose of the group.
- * Hot Topic Lunches: Terri Levin Davgin reported that the first luncheon will be on Jan. 19 at the American Hotel; tentative future dates are March 16 and April 13. Hot Topics Committee includes Terri, chair; Jane Lapple, Jane Dell, Arlene Makl, Judi Roth and Mary Blake.

Next board meeting date is January 5 at 5:30 p.m. at the Bridgehampton National Bank.

Summarized by Judy Samuelson 267-3055

Membership Committee Report

Plenty of League Activity

Even with Many Members Gone for Winter

The winter months are known to be quiet in The Hamptons. The summer people have left, the winter people have gone to a warmer place, so who's still here? Lots of us! Enough so that the LWVH has meetings of substance; we have our annual Blah's luncheon in February; and this year we are starting a new event, called Hot Topic Lunches. The Hot Topic Lunches, to be held about every six weeks during the cold months, consist of lunch at a fine restaurant, an interesting speaker plus opportunity to meet new people and reacquaint yourself with old friends. The lunches will be open to both members and nonmembers, so be sure to bring friends.

LWVH's Geographic Reach

For a long time LWVH was perceived as "League of Women Voters of East Hampton." Several years ago, complaints were lodged about not having meetings or get-togethers further west. Then about two years ago, the LWVH Membership committee started a campaign to recruit more members. We are on the road to success, but we aren't there yet.

One way to support this east/west parity would be to seek co-chairs of the membership committee—one from east of the canal, the other west—working together to implement the committee's goals, distribute materials and represent needs unique to their area. I believe if we have a western membership co-chair we will attract members from the west and we can represent them in a more timely manner and better integrate them into the LWVH. These are my extended goals for the new year.

Arlene Makl 324-8662



Our Inaugural Hot Topics Lunch January 19 at Noon

Cold winter days getting you down? Warm up at our first in a series of Hot Topics Lunches! Organized by the League of Women Voters of the Hamptons, these winter events combine good food, socialization, stimulating conversation and an opportunity to hear from experts on a variety of intriguing and informative topics.

The elegant American Hotel in Sag Harbor (at 49 Main St.) is the venue. Guest speaker Rodney Yee will speak to us about the art, meaning and practice of Yoga. Recognized as "the most sought-after yogi in America," Yee has appeared on Good Morning America, Oprah, and on PBS's The Practical Power of Yoga. He teaches at the Yoga Shanti Studio in Sag Harbor.

The cost of \$25 covers the event. Pay cash at the door or mail your check, made payable to American Hotel, to LWVH, P.O. Box 2253, East Hampton, NY 11937 RSVP no later than January 12 to LWVHLUNCH@gmail.com or 631- 324-4637

Join us for this not-to-be-missed enjoyable afternoon. And bring a friend—or two!



LEFT LWVH Program on East End Drug Court

The League's November 8 program at the Westhampton Library featured "The Last Fix: An Addict's Passage From Hell to Hope." The documentary, produced and directed by former LWVH president Jacqui Lofaro, chronicles the journey of three convicted East End drug offenders—a man, a woman and a teenager—who opt for a tough and pioneering East End drug court instead of prison. Present for the post-film Q&A was Southampton Town Justice Deborah Kooperstein (in photo), one of the presiding drug court judges. Photo by Arlene Hinkemeyer.

New Optical Scan Voting Machines Get High Grades

In the midst of the excitement and uncertainty over the outcome of our local Congressional elections, which turned out to be the last one decided in the country, it was easy to lose sight of an important question: How did our new machines do on their first major test in a general election? The League of Women Voters of the Hamptons embarked on a major educational campaign to help assure that voters would be ready for the new machines, but were the new machines ready for the voters? Happily, we can report that the answer is a fairly resounding “Yes.”

As the result of several factors, voters and candidates in Suffolk County had to wait several weeks for the certified results of this election. First, provisional and absentee ballots, including those from the military, which have always been counted by hand, are now counted at the Board of Elections. This particular count could not be finalized until November 24, which is the deadline for the military absentee ballots to be returned.

Change to Paper Ballot Optical Scan System Delayed Certification of Results

The paper ballot optical scan system requires a mandatory step up audit in which the ballots filled out by the voters and cast in certain selected scanners are hand counted. Current law requires that there first be a mandated 3% audit of the scanners, stepping up to a 5% audit, then to a 12 % audit, and finally to a full hand recount if needed. Each step up is required if there is a discrepancy in the hand counts and the memory chip in 10% of the audited scanners, or if a candidate’s rank moves by 1/10 of 1% in his/her race as a result of the hand count.

The machines to be audited are selected randomly and the way they are selected is decided before Election Day. Witnesses, including the candidates and political party representatives, are informed of the day, time and place of the selection, and the audit begins on the day of selection, according to NYS Election Law.

In Suffolk County, 1,433 scanners were used in the election. Therefore, 43 scanners (the initial required 3%) were audited. All the ballots cast in those scanners were counted by hand. From all reports, the audit showed the machines to be 100% accurate.

The mandated random step up audit is an important step in the voting process to make certain that the scanners are accurate and the votes were counted correctly. The LWVNY (as well as New Yorkers for Verified Voting) was instrumental in making certain that a mandatory audit was enacted into NY State Election Law. The percentage of machines to be audited was considered as well as the discrepancies that would trigger a step up audit. Some people are questioning the time it takes to conduct this audit. Others are questioning the expense. What is the cost of democracy? What are we willing to pay in time and money to make certain that the votes are counted accurately?

The step up audit process weighed these factors. This is the first time in New York State that we are able to see if the votes cast on Election Day were counted correctly. Although we always assumed that the levers did this, we could never be certain since there was no paper trail. Now, if needed, we can.

Some candidates and parties questioned the results of this elections and called for full recounts. Their concern was increased by differences between the called-in results to the BOE and the results retrieved from the memory chips from the scanners. These discrepancies seem to be the result of human error, which has also occurred in past election night reporting from the lever machines. Considering this year’s changes, including a new election system, long receipt tapes for poll workers to read rather than totals on back of lever machines, new forms to be filled out, and poll inspectors as well as workers at the BOE working even longer hours, it is not surprising there were some errors.

Parties and candidates have always been able to ask for a recount via judicial procedure; this procedure is still available. In the meantime, however, we must acknowledge that the machines worked well and accurately, and that for the first time, Suffolk County residents have concrete proof that our voting machines correctly counted the votes cast on election day.

Based on a report by Judie Gorenstein, President of the League of Huntington and Voter Services Chair of the LWVSC

January-February 2011

Note: Meeting dates and times are published several weeks in advance and are subject to change. Please contact the Chairs or visit our website at www.lwvhamptons.org for updates. If you don't see a meeting for a committee of interest, contact the Chair of that committee. Contact information is listed on last inside page of The Voter and on the website, www.lwvhamptons.org.

January 4 - 10:00 AM Tuesday	Natural Resources Committee	Arlene & Alan Alda Room, Hampton Library, Bridgehampton. Contact Glorian Berk 283-2638.
January 5 - 5:30 PM Wednesday	Board of Directors Meeting	Bridgehampton National Bank, Montauk Highway, Bridgehampton. Members and guests welcome.
January 10 - 7:00 PM Monday	General Membership Meeting	Current Issues in Elections: Corporate Campaign Contributions and Redistricting. Hampton Library, Bridgehampton.
January 19 - Noon Wednesday	Hot Topics Lunch	American Hotel, 49 Main St., Sag Harbor Contact Terri 324-6437
February 2 - 5:30 PM Wednesday	Board of Directors Meeting	Bridgehampton National Bank, Montauk Highway, Bridgehampton. Members and guests welcome.
February 16 - 1:00 PM Wednesday	Winter Blahs Luncheon	Orso at the Southampton Inn Contact Julia Kayser 324-1498
TOWN BOARD MEETINGS		
January 6 - 7:00 PM	East Hampton Town Board Meeting	Town Hall Courtroom, 159 Pantigo Rd., East Hampton
January 20 - 7:00 PM	East Hampton Town Board Meeting	Town Hall Courtroom, 159 Pantigo Rd., East Hampton
February 10 - 7:00 PM	East Hampton Town Board Meeting	Town Hall Courtroom, 159 Pantigo Rd., East Hampton
February 24 - 7:00 PM	East Hampton Town Board Meeting	Town Hall Courtroom, 159 Pantigo Rd., East Hampton
Dates Not Available At Press Time. Please Check Website For More Information.	Southampton Town Board Meeting	Town Hall Board Room, Southampton Town Hall, 116 Hampton Rd., Southampton

Editorial

REDISTRICTING WHY WE SHOULD CARE *Continued From Page 1*

These recommendations are found in “The Case For Redistricting Reform: A Briefing Paper Examining New York State’s Redistricting.” The report is endorsed by the New York State League and other good government groups including the Citizens Union Of The City Of New York, Common Cause and the NYS Public Interest Research Group. Here is the executive summary of this report. The information can also be found at the New York State League of Women Voters website (www.lwvny.org)

“Reformers have long argued that the method the state uses to draw legislative and congressional district boundary lines is undemocratic and in need of reform. These sentiments are echoed by the public, which overwhelmingly supports redistricting reform. This report examines the negative consequences that result from New York’s redistricting practices and proposes reforms.

It is well known that an important factor in maintaining New York State’s political culture is Gerrymandering, i.e., the practice of allowing the majorities in both houses to draw the district lines every 10 years. In effect, this practice allows legislators to choose their voters, rather than the voters choosing their legislators. Historically, governors, who must ultimately approve the legislation containing the proposed new district lines each decade, have done little to change to the status quo.

Politically motivated mapmakers exploit weaknesses in state law to further their efforts to “rig” district lines in favor of the majority parties in each house and the re-election prospects of incumbents. As lawmakers begin to consider how to reform the state’s previous redistricting approach, it is important to examine the effects of the most highly partisan redistricting techniques, which taken together, reduce competition and ultimately, diminish government accountability.”

Six Findings of the Case For Redistricting Reform

1. Only 29 of 212 state legislative districts (14 percent) have been drawn within one percent of the “ideal size.” The ideal size is the size of a district if each legislator represented the same amount of people as other legislators in their house. In a representative democracy, ensuring districts of similar size ensures fair representation.

2. Only 25 of the 212 state legislative districts (12 percent) were drawn to have a similar number of major party enrollments. The enrollments in the rest favor one party or another by a wide margin. This small number drastically limits the number of competitive elections in New York. This lack of competition helps insulate lawmakers from the wishes of their constituents.

3. Mapmaking practices have allowed for the creation of district shapes that ignore the state’s constitutional requirement that districts be compact.

4. Mapmaking practices have been used to remove significant electoral threats that challengers posed to incumbent legislators.

5. From 1980 through 2008, nearly 3,000 state legislative general elections were held, yet in only a tiny fraction of those races (39) were challengers successful in knocking out incumbents. This staggeringly high re-election rate is a direct consequence of New York’s system of legislative redistricting.

6. As seen above, New York’s redistricting practices make it incredibly difficult for challengers to succeed. As a result of mapmakers’ efforts to limit electoral competition, incumbents win – and win big. From the general elections in 2002 through 2008, over 65 percent of Senate winners won by more than two to one or greater. Nearly 75 percent of Assembly winners won by that margin or greater. Roughly five percent of races were close.

The Report’s Recommendation

The authors concluded that an independent redistricting commission is needed to create fair legislative districts in New York State and to ensure that the state’s districts adhere to the principle of one person, one vote and that the primary goal of mapmakers is to reflect the interests of the general public, not the political parties and legislative incumbents.

The issue of redistricting will be explored at a member meeting on January 10. Please join us!

Carol Mellor 537-6998

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*Now There's A Simple, Easy-To-Remember
Address For Our Website*

Get breaking news, follow our activities and get the scoop on voter information, natural resources, local and broader governmental developments, health care and more from our website. Just go to:
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Join Us at Our Annual Winter Blahs Luncheon

Greet your league friends, meet new members, enjoy great food!

February 16, 2010 1 p.m.
Oso, at the Southampton Inn
Southampton Inn, 91 Hill Street, Southampton

RSVP by February 12: Julia Kayser
(KAYKULLEE@aol.com or 631-324-1498)

Welcome New Member

Karen McNamara
East Quogue
631-653-0605

While attending the League luncheon at the Inn at Quogue as a guest, Karen realized becoming a member would put her in touch with "bright, articulate women interested in local, national and international affairs." At the LWVH gathering she also learned about other activities she now wants to pursue, such as going on hikes led by our trail-blazing director Glorian Berk. Karen, who has enjoyed a 30-year career in the financial industry, lived and worked in Manhattan until 2001, when the 9/11 terrorist attack led her to pull up stakes and move full-time into what had been her East End weekend home. She currently works weekdays as a financial advisor at Gilford Securities and weekends as a real estate agent at First Hampton Realty, both based in Westhampton Beach. As a League member, she says, she would "be happy to do volunteer work and offer my financial expertise."

Marsha Kranes

The Voter

League of Women Voters of the Hamptons

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<http://hamptons.ny.lwvnet.org>

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