

The **OTER**

VOLUME 43 NUMBER 10

November 2004

Calendar (League activities in bold)

November 2004

- 16 Tu **3:00 p.m.*** County Freeholder Caucus
16th floor, Camden Co. Courthouse, Camden
- 17 W 10:00 a.m. **Voter Registration**
After the naturalization ceremony,
Federal Courthouse, Camden.
- 18 Th 7:00 p.m. County Freeholder Meeting
The Camden Technology Center/Learning
Theater 601 Cooper St, Camden NJ
- 20 Sa 8:30-12:15 **LWVNJ workshops, part 2**
Growth Study update. Ewing NJ (just north of
Trenton). See page 4.

December 2004

- 1 W 6:30-9 **Holiday Party/Pgm Planning**
Home of Bobbie Porter
- 14 Tu 6:00 p.m. County Freeholder Caucus
16th floor, Camden Co. Courthouse, Camden

- 16 Th 7:00 p.m. County Freeholder Meeting
Harry Williams Building
Broad and Black Horse Pike, Runnemede

January 2005 Happy New Year!

- 5 W 7:30 p.m. **LWVCC Board Meeting**
Location TBA

At its Oct. 6, 2004 meeting the LWVCC board:

1. Passed a resolution thanking Rosemary Leach for outstanding work on the Kickoff.
2. Agreed to running a moderator training session, perhaps in January.
3. Agreed to work on asking the speaker on the Patriot Act at the LWVNJ workshops to present in south Jersey, perhaps in February.
4. Agreed to plan a broad-based meeting to discuss regional equity issues after the threat of bad weather ends, perhaps late March.

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CAMDEN COUNTY

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

As League members, we can certainly feel very proud of our role in the recent election. By working very hard, and partnering with many other groups, we registered a record number of voters, educated many people about election procedures, and helped get out the vote. The huge turnout was very gratifying, something we strive to achieve for every election. During the two months before the election, our LWVUS President, Kay J. Maxwell, toured 20 cities in eight states, meeting with voters, election officials, and the media. She took part in over 90 interviews (including ones on all three major national networks, CNN and MSNBC). The League and other election reform advocates distributed over 750,000 copies of the League's *5 Things You Need to Know* card, and on the day before Election Day, it was downloaded from the League's Web site over 40,000 times. We had a very positive, public influence on the process.

As I look at our local impact, I especially want to thank Winnefred Rowell-Bullard. She mailed dozens of letters to find multiple registrations sites. She melded our volunteers with others from Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Alumnae, Inc., the teacher's union at Rowan University, and teachers and students at two campuses of Camden County College. She had the ongoing job of scheduling workers at each site, often staying the whole time to make sure someone was there. The final count of registrants was almost 800, and most of them were contacted by phone before the election. Congratulations, Winne!

Congratulations also to Rosemary Leach, for coordinating the travel, lunch, and tours for our Kickoff trip to Trenton on October 16, a very complicated process. If you missed it, you can read an account of the event on page 3. Everyone agreed it was a great success. (She and the membership committee have also pushed our membership above 100!)

Now we need to concentrate on issues. We will be examining our League's positions on issues in New Jersey during the Program Planning part of our Holiday Party. Everyone—please plan to come to Bobbie Porter's home at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, December 1, for a pot-luck buffet, courtesy of the officers and board. Then we'll get down to "business" about 7:30 p.m. Remember, a grass-roots organization *must* have input from as many of its members at possible. I really hope to see you there!

Proud to be a member of the League,

Anne

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.

The League of Women Voters of Camden County, LWVCC

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Kickoff Teaches History

By Renée Robbins

A most unique Kickoff for the LWV of Camden County began early on October 16 as 25 members and guests boarded the new, shiny River Line train at Pennsauken. We enjoyed the scenic trip through Palmyra, Riverton, Riverside and Bordentown, along the Delaware River.

When we arrived in Trenton, we transferred to the #601 bus and soon arrived at the Old Barracks Museum. This was built during the French and Indian Wars, and it served as a Continental military hospital from 1777 to 1783. There we became part of an interesting reenactment. We were “mustered” into the army by an enthusiastic sergeant and given a lesson in firing a musket, being warned not to “go off half-cocked” and to “watch out for a flash in the pan of the musket.” We were marched to the infirmary, and while waiting for the doctor to inoculate us with smallpox vaccine, we listened to a Tory officer berating us as traitors to King George, elucidating all the reasons we should have remained loyal. It isn’t often that we encounter a coherent and passionate speaker on the American Revolution taking the British side!

We then walked to the LWNJ office on State Street for a delicious box lunch. The historic, recently renovated building is beautiful, with a tile fireplace and lovely chandeliers. Its location is also ideal for contact with state government.

Our post-lunch tour of the State House was quite interesting also. Magnificently restored, it features a gold dome, marble floors and historic

paintings. We were able to see the governor’s office, the rotunda and the legislative chambers. Our guide was very informative and the building was truly inspiring.

Returning on the bus and the train, we all declared it a really enjoyable and informative experience. Kudos to Rosemary Leach for her perfect planning and execution.

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.*

Program Planning: This meeting is at a member's house (Bobbie Porter). It is intended for members and prospective members. If you're one of those, you can call Bobbie Porter (she's in the membership book) or the League line (856-795-7878) for directions.

Runnemedede: Harry Williams Building: At the corner of Broadway and the Black Horse Pike (Route 168). Take 295 to Route 168 south. Pass the turnpike entrance. Just below it is Broadway. Look for the building around there.

Program Planning and Party Come and Participate!

Date: December 1, 2004

Location: Bobbie Porter's house

Purpose: Provide advice and guidance to the LWVNJ on positions to retain and drop, and to consider our local program.

Party? Yes! the first hour is dedicated to eating and socializing. And there is food present throughout. Come and renew acquaintances, chat with friends, discuss politics, etc...

Who is invited? This is a League activity, so members and prospective members are welcome. It is not open to the public.

Program planning is an important step in the process whereby the League develops and maintains its positions. Local Leagues consider whether certain positions are out of date or should be reviewed, and offer comments to the state League (this year) or national League (in odd numbered years). The board of LWVNJ (or US) considers this feedback very carefully as it formulates its goals for the upcoming biennium.

At convention, it is common for organized groups of attendees to vigorously and articulately promote a program item of interest, such as a new study. Options for doing so are defined by whether or not there was support expressed for the idea in program planning meetings, like ours.

At the local level, program planning is an important opportunity for League members to learn about our organizational positions and to get a good sense of the scope of League interests.

Hope to see you there!

November 20th Workshop Planning for Growth Update

The LWVNJ Natural Resources Committee will present a panel of experts and a workshop as a resource for the LWVNJ "Planning for Growth in New Jersey" study. The other topics originally scheduled for this workshop have been postponed for future dates to allow the Natural Resources Committee to focus our attention on the League's current natural resource positions.

The workshop will take place on the morning of Saturday, November 20th, at the Brower Student Center of the College of New Jersey, Ewing Township. The cost of the workshop is \$25 after November 5 (like, now) and includes breakfast and materials. Registration is from 8:30-9:00 and the workshop will conclude at 12:15.

To register: Mail completed form with a check for \$25 (includes breakfast and all materials) to:

LWVNJ, 204 West State Street, Trenton, NJ 08608

Please register as soon as possible.

Name _____

Telephone _____

Fax _____

Email _____

Street/Box# _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

League of Women Voters of _____

Regional Equity Report -- Major Meeting in October!

On October 21 a gathering of south Jersey residents concerned about sprawl, housing, and property taxes took place at the Cherry Hill Hilton. Estimates range from 350 to over 500 ordinary citizens coming out to express their desire for change in the system.

Rev. Dr. A. B. Frazier gave an overview of the concerns of the coalition. A few highlights:

Our property taxes are some of the highest in the country. They are too high on everyone in New Jersey, but they are the highest in the lowest income communities. ... Residential suburbs like Pleasantville, Sicklerville, Blackwood, or even Cherry Hill are seeing a steady increase in their taxes as costs go up, but the tax base is going elsewhere... Because of our dependency on property taxes, towns in our region are forced to work against those things we might consider good. ... Our tax policies favor urban sprawl, abandonment of our downtowns, exclusion, and segregation.

Our housing policies reinforce many of these same problems. The wealthiest towns, that have captured so many of the jobs and so much of the tax base in recent years, have the least amount of housing affordable to low income working people. ... The towns and cities that have experienced the greatest job loss and economic decline are where the low income housing is concentrated. This concentrated poverty is what breeds high crime, failing schools, and other social ills.

In New Jersey, we are blessed to have the Mount Laurel decision, the landmark court ruling that made open housing the law of the land. ... But the Fair Housing Act, passed by the legislature in 1985 [to implement Mt. Laurel] left a glaring and cynical loophole... called regional contribution agreements or RCAs, that allow wealthy towns to pay poor towns to take their affordable housing obligations.

He concluded that we've been waiting 30 years for property tax reform and 30 years for towns to provide housing opportunities to all people. That's long enough!

So, what does the group propose to reform the system? Tax base revenue sharing would allow nearby towns to share some of the tax benefits of new construction, so they can cooperate to attract "ratables" to the region, instead of competing to get them. Less dependency on the local property tax to pay for schools would reduce the urgency of increasing the local tax base to provide critical revenues. Affordable housing obligations should be linked to growth in housing and also in jobs. RCAs should be abolished -- let wealthy towns build low income housing in their midst. Finally, the establishment of a regional impact council to discuss and recommend on matters of interest to the region would be valuable. [I learned today that the council has now been created. Success one!]

After presenting each issue, the speaker called forward several elected officials who were in attendance to put them on the spot -- would they support the efforts of the coalition in this or that area? Unfortunately, a scant few officials actually came. Those present were pretty supportive, but many were absent. As the organization grows, it hopes to put increasing pressure on elected officials to hear our voice and respond.

League members will be hearing more about the South Jersey Regional Equity Organizing Project!