



**League of Women Voters  
Lawrence Chapter Bulletin  
September 2008**

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**Calendar of Events**

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Details</b>
Sept. 10 Wednesday	5 Penlaw Rd Lawrenceville	7:30Pm	Fall Meeting – potluck dessert meeting at Veronica Pickering’s RSVP 896-0376 
Sept. 12 Friday	Dobbs Auditorium Robertson Hall Woodrow Wilson School Princeton University	8:30am-3pm	Universal Health Care Seminar
Sept. 13 Saturday	Lucy Stone Hall Livingston Campus Rutgers University 54 Joyce Kilmer Ave. Piscataway	9:30-2:30	LWVNJ Fall Workshop
Sept. 20 Saturday	We will be at Isles in Trenton	10:00-2:00	LWVNJ statewide voter registration day
Oct. 5 Sunday	Village Park	12:30-4pm	Lawrence Community Day – we will have a voter registration table
Oct. 14 Tuesday	Lawrence Twp Town Hall open	8:30 am - 8:00 pm	Last day to register to vote or change address for general election
Oct. 28 Tuesday			Deadline for receipt of mailed application for absentee ballot by the County Clerk
Nov. 3 Monday	County Clerk’s office 209 South Broad 989-6750	3pm	Deadline to obtain an absentee ballot application in person
Nov. 4 Tuesday	For map to your polling place: <a href="http://VOTE411.ORG">VOTE411.ORG</a>		<b>General Election Day</b> Polls open 6am to 8pm



## Presidents Message

Once again we look forward to an interesting and informative League year. At the top of our list is our voter registration initiative. Under the leadership of Lois Riskin we have become the “**go to League**” when organizations, clubs and even LWVNJ need assistance. Lois has the master calendar and schedule. If you have an evening or afternoon to spare we welcome and need your participation. Voter Service and, in particular, Voter Registration is truly the heart of the League. It is also a good way to get to know your fellow League members. Voter Registration is important every year but even more critical in a presidential election year and we can help by registering as many voters as possible to ensure a high turnout on Election Day.

We will have our traditional Back to League Night on September 10, 2008 at Veronica Pickering’s house. We ask everyone to try to bring a new member. Details will follow.

The new board held its summer planning meeting and we look forward to a year filled with meetings dedicated to League issues, including Civil Liberties, Immigration, and Affordable Housing. We also plan to have a dinner meeting in the fall, place to be decided.

Two positions remain unfilled. The board decided to reactivate two positions, vacant for some time: Recording Secretary and Action Chair. These can be either board positions or off board. If you are interested please let any board member know. As of January 2009 our meeting will return to the first Monday of the month. Monday has been our traditional meeting night for many years and the overwhelming majority of the board voted to return to that night. We have the first Wednesday reserved at the library through December and felt we should honor that commitment.

I know it is difficult to think about fall while still enjoying the “lazy, hazy days of summer”, but please mark your calendars and come out and support your League.

*Doris Weisberg* 671-0604

## National Night Out



POLICE • COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Edith Pike represented the League with a table to provide registration information at the Lawrence National Night Out at Eggerts Crossing Village on Tuesday, November 5. League has a long involvement with National Night Out, which is a crime and drug prevention event sponsored by the National Association of Town Watch.



## Welcome to New Members

Ewing resident, **Meg Rich**, taught German and English literature on the college level for ten years after completing a doctorate in Comparative Literature from the Johns Hopkins University. She retired from a second and longer career in Rare Books librarianship at the beginning of 2008. Born in Buffalo, New York, she has lived most of her life in New Jersey.

**Geraldine Stachelski** was born in Brooklyn but has spent most of her life in New Jersey. She is widowed with two grown children: daughter in Lawrenceville, son in Brentwood, TN. She was a stay-at-home Mom until her husband died, pursued a real estate career briefly, and then got a real job with the Township of Clark. She eventually became Registrar of Vital Statistics, retired in April, 2006, and moved to Lawrenceville in 2007. She has done a lot of traveling and hopes to do a lot more!

## Special Congratulations to L. Joan Goodman

Joan was recently honored by her college alumni for outstanding service.

Joan spent many years at Princeton High School as an active and nurturing English teacher and newspaper advisor. She was a member of Lawrence Township Board of Education and has been serving on the boards of her townhouse complex and the Lawrence Friends of the Library, as well as on the town's Human Relations Committee. Over the years Joan has volunteered for many social justice causes, such as writing newsletters for three groups, visiting women in area nursing homes, working at two stores for the needy and assuming a leadership role in a peace group. She devotes much time to St. Ann's Church as a sacristan, Eucharistic Minister, and as a member of the Arts and Environment Committee. In addition, she contributes through song, participating in two church choirs, one of which she founded. She served as Reunion Booklet Editor for the 2003 reunion and is currently serving as class co-president.

*We would appreciate hearing such news about any member so we can spread the word.*

## Mercer Crossings Education Committee By Edith Pike

The Mercer County Planning Department in 2004 obtained funding for a study to evaluate current conditions and recommend plans for the revitalization of the economically depressed area bordering Lawrence, Ewing and Trenton. This 800-acre site, now designated "Mercer Crossings," includes portions of the Princeton Pike, North Olden and Spruce Street corridors. The study, done by the prestigious Urban Land Institute, offered many suggestions, including mixed-use development, retail and entertainment facilities, public spaces for indoor and outdoor gatherings and attractive pedestrian-friendly streetscapes.

Central to the implementation of the plan is the cooperation or "buy-in" of the three communities in developing uniform regulations regarding zoning ordinances and land use in the area. Currently underway is a study addressing "Traffic Safety, Site Access and Smart Growth Zoning across Municipal Borders." Input from various stakeholders and the general public has been solicited. If the vision of a sustainable environmentally friendly Mercer Crossings community is to become a reality, citizens of the three townships must become involved in the process.

Historically the League of Women Voters has encouraged citizen involvement in community affairs. It seems appropriate to set up an ad hoc committee to educate our members about this unique opportunity to become part of a forward-looking project, which could enhance the entire region. Interested persons are invited to contact Edith Pike (883-1428).

## New Jersey Regional Coalition

**By Nicole Plett, LWV Liaison**

The NJ Regional Coalition helped bring together a diverse crowd of more than 500 members of congregations, civic organizations and unions from around the state to join with prominent political leaders on July 17, 2008 to witness Governor Jon Corzine's signing of Housing Bill A500, co-sponsored by House Speaker Joseph J. Roberts Jr. and Majority Leader Bonnie Watson Coleman. The signing ceremony for the bill that abolishes Regional Contribution Agreements (RCAs) and reforms the Fair Housing Act took place at the Ethel R. Lawrence Homes in Mount Laurel, an affordable housing complex named in honor of the community leader whose fight against exclusionary zoning led to the historic Mount Laurel Decisions of 1971 and 1975. The 2008 housing bill requires all municipalities to comply with the NJ Supreme Court's historic Mount Laurel ruling and provide affordable housing within their borders.

For the NJ Regional Coalition (NJRC) and affiliated members of the Lawrence League of Women Voters, the bill signing is the culmination of a three-year community organizing campaign to end RCAs. Signed into law in 1985, RCA's allowed municipalities to transfer up to 50 percent of their affordable housing obligation to another town. Widely condemned as undermining the intent of the Mount Laurel decisions, RCAs were seen as a "necessary evil", impossible to eliminate because of the powerful interests that supported them.

David Rusk, one of the nation's leading urban policy consultants and a national consultant to the NJRC, told the enthusiastic crowd at the July 17 ceremony that "Assembly Bill 500 is the most important housing reform legislation enacted in the nation in the past two decades. And it's one of the most significant community organizing victories ever – thanks to the hard work of the New Jersey Regional Coalition."

NJRC was launched in 2003 at a statewide meeting hosted by Rutgers University and attended by then Lawrence LWV President, Adele Vexler, and other members. Martin Johnson, founder and president of Isles Inc., helped initiate the founding of NJRC and currently serves as its board president. New

Jersey is one of the top five racially and economically segregated states in the U.S.

"NJRC was created in response to a growing recognition that we in New Jersey were growing further and further apart from each other," says Johnson. "We realized that this growing apart was being driven by sprawl and over-development. This includes flight out of the cities and older suburbs, abandonment of urban neighborhoods, bad housing policies that concentrated poverty in the poorest places, and a property tax system that was pitting town against town in a perpetual race to the bottom."

Today the NJRC is a diverse organization of urban and suburban faith groups, civic organizations, and labor unions all calling for fundamental fairness in state and regional policy. Since 2004, the Lawrence League has been a member of NJRC and many members have volunteered their time to attend its local and statewide public meetings and leadership training sessions. Since being recruited by Adele Vexler as LWV liaison to NJRC, I have been NJRC's volunteer media coordinator and serve on its board of directors. Coalition members have mobilized around key regional issues affecting the health of local communities: housing affordability, property taxes and municipal funding, education and immigrant rights.

Over its short life NJRC has developed pragmatic solutions to the problems of municipal fragmentation and competition and the regional disparities in housing, tax base, poverty and education. NJRC works with a team of national experts that include: David Rusk, author of "Inside Game" and "Cities Without Suburbs," Myron Orfield, a metro-equity expert, former Minnesota state senator and Brookings Institute scholar, and Dr. John Powell, director of the Kirwan Institute on Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State University.

"The RCA victory could not have happened without people from every walk of life coming together to work persistently for change," said Paul Bellan-Boyer, chair of the NJRC Housing Task Force and Parish Deacon at St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Jersey City. "Assembly Speaker Joe Roberts and Majority Leader Bonnie Watson Coleman deserve tremendous credit for having the vision and the courage to lead this long-needed reform through the Legislature, but the NJRC created the political climate that made this victory possible".

## **Updates On Felons Rights in New Jersey and Existing law in Florida** by Joan Tomlin, State Voting Rights for Felons Committee

The Wall Street Journal reported in their March 2008 edition, an article entitled Felon's **Voting Request Pile Up**; The Florida Clemency Board has restored voting rights to nearly 75, 000 residents. This was due to the efforts of governor Charlie Crist, after a slow process that stirred controversy. Nearly 95,000 requests to vote are still pending in Florida.

The current right for felons to vote was revamped to include only non-violent offenders that must have completed their prison term, probation and parole. Some Florida critics feel this current plan by Florida's clemency board is too broad and that voting rights should be decided on an individual basis.

In the United States 5.3 million citizens are unable to vote, because of felony convictions. Due to the differences in state laws, restoring these rights will be difficult. Maine and Vermont are the only states that allow felons to vote while incarcerated. There are efforts in many states to advise ex-felons who may be eligible to vote, but because of complexities and disinformation cannot.

Florida churches are hosting Rights Restoration sessions, and other organizations are holding rallies, to inform felons of changes that affect their right to vote. State attorneys and public defenders are also holding community meetings to explain to ex-felons how they can vote.

While ex-felons in New Jersey can vote upon completion of parole, the (ACLU) American Civil Liberties Union supports a bill that would allow people on probation and parole to vote. Hundreds of thousands of people are out of prison but denied the right to vote, because they are still under probation or parole supervision. A disproportionate incarceration rate is for people of color. Many felons who have completed parole are not aware that they have the right to vote.

On April 26, 2008, in an effort to continue to educate the public about the rights of felons to vote, the ACLU of NJ and the Unlock the Vote Coalition sponsored a **Conversation on Race and Voting** at Liberty Science Center. The keynote speaker was Dr. Clement Price of Rutgers University Institute of Culture, and Modern Experience. Dr. Price recounted the history of the fight for voting rights in New Jersey and across the country.

Louise Murray, vice president of Programs for LWV of N.J, moderated a panel discussion on Race and Voting. This lively discussion was followed by a documentary made by students of Dr. Price, entitled **Unlock the Vote**. This film screening examined the realities of felon disenfranchisement.

The program concluded with a lively discussion by two ex-felons and community representatives. One interesting fact that one female panelist shared is that registering to vote was the last thing on her mind upon leaving prison. We also learned that on parole for life means that a felon probably committed a murder and can never vote.

## **Corrections for Pink Membership Booklets**

Barbara Hallows' phone is 924-1009 (not 924-1099)  
Jim Cleak's is 882-4447 (not 882-1447)  
Add "Mimi" to Miriam Levin's name – she prefers that

### **Added Email Addresses:**

Thomas Hitch – [ThomasHitch@mns.com](mailto:ThomasHitch@mns.com)

Mimi Levin – [tscets@comcast.net](mailto:tscets@comcast.net)

Jim Cleak – [Jim.Cleak@multisponsor.com](mailto:Jim.Cleak@multisponsor.com) (in addition to home email that's in booklet)

### **New Member:**

Geraldine Stachelski  
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