



NJ Voter

The League of Women Voters of New Jersey

Winter 2010
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LWVNJ Adopts new instate tuition position and takes immediate action

... **DEBORAH MACMILLAN, Immigration Committee Chair and former LWVNJ President**

The LWVNJ Immigration Committee started meeting even before our national position on immigration was released, and we took instate tuition as one of our early issues. During our study, the original issue of instate tuition at public colleges in New Jersey was expanded to include any state funding based on students attending private colleges. The committee developed consensus materials, conducted a well-attended fall workshop, and worked with numerous local Leagues to make sure the issues raised by our members, by the general public, and by various outside organizations and other groups were fully discussed.

All our larger local Leagues (those with 45 or more members) participated in the consensus process, as did many smaller Leagues and two Member-at-Large units. The results were tallied, explored, and eventually shaped into a position approved unanimously by the state board on a Saturday morning conference call during the winter's first snowstorm. The issues of greatest concern were fairness — that children should not be faulted for the deeds of their parents — and societal benefit from education. Budget and enrollment issues were raised in the study and consensus but were generally less critical as experience in other states has shown minimal impact.



Deborah Macmillan checks the tallies of Local League responses.

NEW LWVNJ POSITION: The League of Women Voters of New Jersey supports extending instate tuition to unauthorized immigrants who graduate from New Jersey's high schools and are admitted to NJ's public institutions of higher education. In addition, if the state funds private higher education for New Jersey students, the League supports including unauthorized immigrants who would qualify for instate tuition at par in the funding formula for private colleges and universities.

When the LWVNJ Board first approved the consensus materials, it set a schedule intended to meet local League needs and still allow advocacy during the lame duck session of the legislature, assuming we reached consensus. We did, and activity was high. An action alert went out to all members on the Monday morning following state board approval. More alerts followed. Because of action by the League and other organizations supporting the instate tuition legislation, the bill was voted out of committee by both the Senate and the Assembly.

Despite this major forward step — no earlier bill on this issue had gotten this far — the bill was pulled from the Senate roster on the last day of the 213th legislative session because there were not enough affirmative votes (*see Advocacy Report on page 3*). We expect that our attention will now move to passing national legislation that could make state bills less essential.




2010 ELECTION DATES

February 20: Fire District Election

March 30: Last day to register to vote in School Board Election

April 19: Last day to change party affiliation for Primary Election

April 20: School Board Election

May 11: Nonpartisan Municipal Election

May 18: Last day to register or change address for Primary Election

June 8: Primary Election

November 2: General Election Day

A complete list of the 2010 election deadlines and dates is listed in the *Citizens Guide* and also on the LWVNJ website under the tab "Elections."

Share your stories with your fellow League members . . .

Does your League have an interesting program or project you can share with us? Please send details to Dottie Dunfee at dunfee@aol.com.

We would also welcome any pictures that you think would be of interest in the *Voter*. You can e-mail your photos or mail them to Dottie, at The LWVNJ, 204 West State Street, Trenton, NJ 08608.

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Thanks to all of our donors who have so generously supported our mission. See pages 4-7.

From the President

... ANNE MAIESE

The LWV of New Jersey has much to be proud of this season. Our members were very active before the November general election registering voters and moderating candidate forums. LWVNJ provided a balanced analysis of the ballot question on borrowing money for open space purchases, and our staff and volunteers assisted many voters via our VOTeline, both before and on Election Day. Many League members worked the polls and others monitored election processes, keeping records of problems voters encountered.

Before the end of February, most local Leagues will be examining our positions on national issues and giving their feedback to LWVUS about any new studies or updates they think are important, a vital process that fortifies our “grassroots” status and provides a way to become more familiar with the issues.

Moderators will work overtime again in March and early April, when school board and municipal candidate forums occur, and a few Leagues will be introducing high school girls to government with the “Running & Winning” workshop.

**From the Executive Director**

...ANNE RUACH NICOLAS

2010 started with a bang! The lame-duck session was fast and furious with votes important to the League. (*See instate tuition article, page 1, and advocacy review, page 3.*) We had a tremendous showing of League support, and I want to thank everyone for their efforts to get legislation moving. We are sure to see exciting changes in the coming year with a new legislative session and a new governor in office. I look forward to working with you to make New Jersey a better place.

2010 marks the League of Women Voters of New Jersey’s 90th anniversary! The LWVNJ state board is planning our celebrations and we have already heard of many planned local League festivities. Email jburns@lwvnj.org to let us know how *your* League is celebrating so we can include your event in our publicity.

Congratulations to the League for its 90 years of educating and informing voters!

**New Challenges to Protecting Voters**

... JESSE BURNS, LWVNJ Director of Communications

The League of Women Voters of New Jersey and the ACLU–NJ, our partner voter protection organization, faced some unique challenges during our 2009 General Election efforts. Legislation aimed at making the absentee ballot application process easier passed in June, leaving the League little time to educate the public about new “vote by mail” procedures. As a result, mail-in ballots joined provisional ballot issues and poor poll worker training on the list of problems we need to follow closely.

The biggest setback to our efforts occurred in September when a New Jersey Supreme Court decision banned all exit polling and voter education within 100 feet of a polling site. In the past, the League and the ACLU–NJ were stationed at polling sites to offer assistance to voters who had questions or were not allowed to vote. Volunteers would offer “Voters’ Bill of Rights” palm cards which include the voter hotline number (1–800–792–VOTE). The new regulation made it difficult for our poll monitors to talk to voters because at many sites the 100-foot zone is outside of the parking areas.

The League and the ACLU–NJ had to switch gears and focus our efforts on helping through the voter hotline. Unfortunately, low voter turnout meant fewer calls than in past years. Without many poll monitors making direct contact with the voters, it made it more difficult to track voter complaints.

The calls we did receive related to problems we have seen in the past, including voters not being given provisional ballots, not receiving mail-in ballots or sample ballots in time for the election, and poor poll worker training. Our work protecting and educating voters is far from finished.



Kate Benner, a senior at Princeton University, volunteers for the Voter Protection Project on Election Day.

Save the Date – April 10**Alternative Energy Conference**

Local Leagues will present their research reports on 6 different alternative energy options—solar, biomass, geothermal, wind, wave and nuclear. A keynote speaker and expert panelists will follow these reports, speaking on other forms of energy not covered by our local Leagues.

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The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League of Women Voters is a nonprofit membership organization functioning on local, county, state and national levels.

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LWVNJ and the 213th Legislature... **SANDRA MATSEN, Advocacy Coordinator**

The 213th New Jersey Legislative session ended in a flurry of activity on January 11 and the 214th Legislature was sworn in on January 12. Any proposed legislation which did not pass in the 213th session must start again from scratch in the 214th.

"Lame Duck" Session

The two months after legislative elections (and in 2009, a gubernatorial election) is a time when anything can and often does happen. During this lame duck session, there is great pressure to get bills passed before the legislation has to start all over again. It is a time when controversial bills are often heard in committees and moved to the floor for a vote.

LWVNJ took action on both of its new positions during the lame duck session. The **Instate Tuition for Unauthorized Immigrants** bill was released from both the Senate and Assembly committees on January 4. The League presented testimony at both committee hearings and, along with the New Jersey Regional Equity Coalition and the New Jersey Immigration Policy Network, turned out a lot of individuals in support, including a contingent from the Lawrence Township LWV. In an all out attempt to garner the votes needed for passage, League members responded to action alerts targeting six senators who did not plan to vote in favor.

The League also testified in support of our new **Voting Rights for Parolees and Probationers** position. This bill was released from the Assembly committee on January 4. A third bill we supported, which sets the copying price for public documents at ten cents a page, was scheduled for a vote on January 11.

Unfortunately, all three bills were not brought before the full assembly or senate on the last day of the session and will have to start anew in the 214th session.

213th Session Recap

This past two-year session brought us a new school funding formula, authorization of \$3.9 billion in school construction funding and a high school redesign process. The League was unsuccessful in its call to raise income taxes to address the state's fiscal problems and its opposition to the constitutional dedication of another .5% of the sales tax rate. We were disappointed in the failure to renew Clean Elections after many years of sustained effort.

The League successfully supported the elimination of the death penalty in New Jersey and changes in affordable housing legislation. We were pleased with the progress made on many of our voting issues by the Department of Elections after its move to the Secretary of State.

Looking Ahead

For the 214th session, the League must strategize on where best to put our advocacy resources. With a small office staff and volunteers, we will need to be selective, knowing we cannot evaluate and act on every piece of legislation where we have positions.

It seems fairly certain that the focus of the new legislature and governor will be on fiscal matters. It also seems fairly certain that there will be less spending for everything from schools to safety nets as well as fewer or smaller departments in state government to oversee programs. The coming legislative session will be challenging. The League will need to choose to advocate for legislation where our resources permit and our voice can make a difference.



Dawn Clarke, LWVNJ board and Nicole Plett, LWV of Lawrence Township President, in Trenton to lobby for the Instate Tuition bill.

Tributes

Tributes are contributions made to the LWVNJ or the Education Fund in honor of or to remember special friends, family and colleagues.

In memory of Toussia Pines

LWV of Northern Valley

In memory of Charlotte Karp

Edith Frank

In memory of Joan Palin

Norma Grossman

Ruth Rosenberg

Helen Heumann

Alice and Seymour Feder

Sylvia Weisbrot

In honor of Doris Weisberg's 75th Birthday

Marie and Don Curtis

In honor of the state office in gratitude for all that they do

LWV of Mountain Lakes

In honor of the Voter Protection volunteers

Anne and Mario Maiese

In honor of Louise Davis and Roberta Spray for moderating Wayne's candidates' nights

LWV of Wayne

In honor of Brendan Byrne

Ruthi Byrne

In honor of Fran Lieb's special birthday

Barbara King

Amazon.com offers LWVNJ percentage

- Need to purchase a birthday gift, a shower gift, or that book you've been dying to read?
- If you do it through **Amazon.com**, a small percentage will be donated to the LWVNJ!
- You must click on the Amazon button on the League homepage — www.lwvnj.org — before shopping so that Amazon credits our account accordingly. Thanks for "shopping" with the League.

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