

# News From *Your* State League

Update from LWNYS

January 2008

## National Popular Vote: Update

Last May, delegates at the LWNYS State Convention voted to study the question: Should NY State join the Compact for a National Popular Vote? On October 31, we were informed by our LWVUS liaison, Xandra Kayden, that we "would not be able to take action on any position resulting from the study" based on this study. Because of the enthusiasm expressed by Leaguers across the state, the LWNYS Board directed two members of the former state study committee to lobby Leagues across the country to recommend adoption at Convention 2008 of a National Study entitled "The Advisability of Using the National Popular Vote Compact among the States as a Method for Electing the President."

The LWNYS website is a source of valuable information on this topic, including an explanation of the National Popular Vote Compact, and the history of the Electoral College and how it works.

## Legislative Priorities 2008

The LWNYS Advocacy and Issues Committee thanks local Leagues for their input on the Legislative Priorities process. The Board of Directors approved the following as Legislative Priorities for 2008.

1. Good Government
  - Redistricting
  - Campaign Finance Reform
  - Legislative Procedures
  - Election Law & Procedures
  - Voting Technology
  - Court Restructuring/Judicial
2. Cost Effective & Accessible Health Care
3. Energy and the Environment

A brochure listing these Priorities will be available in January. It is an invaluable tool when lobbying your representatives and as information for current and prospective members.

## Statewide Voter Service Source

This year's Ida Trager Regional Workshops included discussion of how the state League website might include

comprehensive Voter Service information. If it can be linked easily from local League websites, we will be able to provide excellent Voter Service resources without duplication of effort by local Leagues across the state.

## HAVA Update

The US Department of Justice has filed suit to require NYS to comply with HAVA by the September 2008 election and to expand ballot marking devices for the presidential primary in February 2008. The League, New Yorkers for Verified Voting, and NYPIRG argue that DREs are a failed technology that should not be part of any remedial plan and that compliance should be phased in and lever machines allowed until 2009 – to do otherwise would impair the very rights that HAVA is designed to protect.

The interrupted certification process will be re-started under a new independent testing authority, Systest. They will begin simultaneous testing of both DREs and optical scanners with ballot markers. It is hoped that testing will be completed in early spring.

## Lead Poisoning

The State Coalition to End Lead Poisoning has achieved passage of the Childhood Lead Poisoning Primary Prevention and Safe Housing Act in the state Assembly and is garnering support of the bill (S6350) in the NYS Senate.

Today, lead poisoning must be fought on a new front – lead contamination of toys and other children's products. Many have been found to have lead levels above the maximum recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics. We need to get the offending products off store shelves. Parents and grandparents must read labels to see if the item is made in the USA, and presumably safe, or in China, where safety standards have come under fire.

## Campaign for Fiscal Equity

The Court of Appeals allowed both sides a partial victory. Statewide

funding for schools was increased by about \$2 billion, but the important help this gave to the poorest urban and rural school districts was reduced by the "give-back" to rich Long Island districts to provide some property tax relief.

## Smart Growth Cabinet for NYS

Governor Eliot Spitzer has created a Smart Growth Cabinet to review state agency spending and policies to determine how best to discourage sprawl and promote smart land use practices. It will coordinate cross-agency activities and develop "smart growth" policies that cater to New York's unique regional needs.

"Smart growth is smart business", said Governor Spitzer. "As our economy and population grow, it is vital that we ensure the development of vibrant, livable communities."

## Alternatives to Incarceration

The League of Woman Voters has a position against mandatory minimum sentencing for non-violent drug offenders. Currently NYS has a wide variety of programs which divert such offenders into treatment programs as an alternative to incarceration.

The Federal Supreme Court has just ruled that the disparity in sentencing between drug offenders sentenced for crack as opposed to powdered cocaine is unconstitutional. Many federal prisoners are now eligible for immediate sentencing relief.

The League continues to support drug law reform and the elimination of mandatory minimum sentencing for non-violent drug offenses.

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**GET INVOLVED!**

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