



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEXINGTON

November 5

First Friday Forum

Demographic Changes in Lexington – What Does This Mean?

Lexington is experiencing a dramatic change in its racial composition and age profile as reported by the 2020 Vision Committee's Demographic Change Task Force. We have also become a relatively wealthier and more exclusive community. What does this mean for our Town, and the various Town departments who provide our services?

The Task Force will share the report's findings and the implications for planning and delivery of services at the League of Women Voters First Friday Forum on November 5. Task Force Chair Fernando Quezada and members Marian Cohen and Dan Krupka will discuss how Lexington can maintain a sense of community in light of these demographic changes.

This is the second in a series of 2010-2011 First Friday Forums hosted by the League of Women Voters of Lexington to promote awareness and understanding of public policy issues. Coffee will be available at 9:30 a.m. and presentations will begin at 9:45 in the Community Meeting Room at Cary Memorial Library, 1874 Massachusetts Avenue. The library is easily accessible by Lexpress and from the Minuteman Bikeway. For more information or to carpool, contact the League at 781-862-6435. All League forums are open to the public at no charge.

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LWVL NEWS AND INFORMATION

Election Day Reminder

For a free ride to the polls or to volunteer to drive for the Statewide Election on Tuesday, November 2, call the League of Women Voters of Lexington at 781-862-6498. The League received three requests for rides to the polls during the primary on September 14. Thank you to drivers Diane Bigelow, Pat Costello and Ann Redmon.

Membership Renewal Reminder

Renewal letters and forms were sent to League members in September and the response has been great. There is still time to send in your dues. If you've misplaced the form, you can download another from our website at www.lwvlexington.org or call 781-862-6435 and we'll be happy to send you another.

LWVMA NEWS AND INFORMATION

ELECTION 2010 – LWVMA Opposes Ballot Questions #1, #2 and #3

Ballot Questions #1 and #3:

Question #1 would repeal the state sales tax on alcoholic beverages.

Supporters say this tax puts an undue burden on alcohol sales and will cause sales to go to neighboring states. Opponents cite that the excise tax on wholesale liquor has not kept up with inflation and report that there has been no significant decrease in sales since the tax was imposed in 2009.

Question #3 would reduce the state sales tax on all goods from the present 6.25% to 3%. Supporters state this would rein in overspending by the state, create jobs, and add needed funds to the taxpayer's wallet. The Boston Globe has reported that this would create a \$2.5 billion deficit in the state budget, impacting state services across the board. All four gubernatorial candidates oppose this initiative.

The League's goal is a state and local tax structure that will have an equitable impact on taxpayers and adequately support state services with consideration of the effect on the state and local economies. The League supports the use of certain commonly accepted criteria in judging taxes, particularly equitability, economic effect, flexibility, ease and cost of collection and adequacy of yield; a greater reliance on state-collected taxes to reduce the burden on the property tax; an increase in revenue from the sales tax by broadening its base, continued provision for exemption of necessities such as food and medications, and clothing with a lower limit; and the broadening of the sales tax to include certain non-essential services sold to individuals when taxing those services would meet LWVMA criteria and when the greater burden would fall on those most able to pay.

Ballot Question 2:

Repealing the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Law will reduce the availability of affordable housing for seniors and working families.

Forty-one years ago, Massachusetts passed the affordable housing law to provide homes for seniors and working families. Question 2 this November 2nd is a reckless effort to repeal this law and stop the building of affordable housing in Massachusetts.

- This law created **80% of the affordable housing built** outside of the largest cities over the last decade.
- It built over **58,000 homes** for working families, seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities all across the state.
- Repealing the affordable housing law would **immediately halt** the construction of **12,000 homes**.
- According to a recent study by the University of Massachusetts's Donahue Institute, the affordable housing law has created \$9.25 billion in economic activity in the last decade and nearly 50,000 jobs. These **related jobs and economic benefits** will disappear if the repeal prevails.
- This law set the goal for each community to do its **fair share** to meet the housing needs of its residents. All families should have a choice about where to live.

The Campaign to Protect Affordable Housing is a grassroots coalition of more than **400 organizations and thousands of individuals**. Our coalition includes the **League of Women Voters of Massachusetts** and other civic, business, religious, and academic leaders as well as senior, environmental, housing, and civil rights groups. It does not matter which political party you support - **all four candidates for governor agree** we should all vote no to support this law. Recently the four Catholic bishops in Massachusetts voiced their support of the affordable housing law and declared their opposition to ballot Question

Repealing the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Law will reduce the availability of affordable housing for seniors and working families.
Vote NO on Question #2 in November!

Here are three things you can do right now:

- Link to www.protectaffordablehousing.org, follow us on Facebook and Twitter and tell your friends to join in.
 - Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper urging the defeat of Question 2 and urge your elected officials, neighbors, and family about the need to vote “no” on 2 to support the primary affordable housing law in Massachusetts.
 - Donate to the campaign at www.protectaffordablehousing.org
- For more information or for other ways to be involved, contact Carol Marine at

REMEMBER TO VOTE NOVEMBER 2

DEMOCRACY IS NOT A SPECTATOR SPORT!

State League Fundraiser

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts Annual Campaign, formerly known as the Phonathon, began September 13. This annual event is the most successful fundraiser for both the state and local Leagues - the income generated represents approximately 30% of the Massachusetts League and Citizen Education Fund budgets. It is also a fund raiser for our local League because we will receive ten percent of the donations our members mail in before October 15.

The LWVMA needs member support to continue the programs members approved at Convention 2009 for the two years through 2011, including:

- Restudy of the LWVMA transportation position which is now underway. New committee members are welcome.
- Being an active voice at the State House in support of LWV priorities and alerting members when more voices are needed.
- Playing an active role to support local Leagues as they plan and hold candidates' forums for the many legislative and Congressional races.
- Co-sponsoring forums with local Leagues for candidates running for statewide office: Governor, Lt. Governor, State Treasurer and State Auditor.
- Hosting membership trainings in 3 locations convenient for local Leagues; a complete workshop on membership recruitment will be included in each event.

Please be aware that LWVUS is conducting its telemarketing appeal in late September /early October. Members are certainly free to contribute where they wish, but should be aware that both campaigns will be happening at the same time.

LWVMA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

LWVMA Strategic Plan

We have begun work on a strategic plan for the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts. Input from local Leagues and local League members is essential and we invite you to participate in this process in the following ways. First, we would like to have representation from large and small Local Leagues across the state and are inviting you to recommend members to participate on the Strategic Planning Committee. The second is to attend a focus group where we will be reviewing questions and ideas with members. Dates for the focus groups will be sent out soon and we would like to encourage you to attend so that we can include your thoughts and ideas in our findings and recommendations to the board and ultimately to the membership next spring.

This project is being managed by LWVMA board member Terry Yoffie and will be directed and driven by the LWVMA Board of Directors with the objective of defining the priorities and agenda for LWVMA for the next two to four years. The results of this project will be presented to the members at the biennial convention in June 2011.

If you are interested in joining this effort or have questions about the process, please contact Terry Yoffie at tsyoffie@yahoo.com or 617-965-1796.

LWVUS PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I hope you have been reading my blog. I returned to Atlanta earlier this week, energized by my experiences during this first leg of my multi-state tour. Having taken a few days off to process all that I learned, I am struck by two things: (1) that anonymity is the enemy of truth in almost every case, including electioneering, and (2) even the most informed voter can be easily distracted by well constructed efforts to change the terms of a debate.

With regard to anonymity, we need look no further than the false information being put out by special interests with regard to health care reform. And, as the New York Times recently reported, these special interests can hide their identities by donating to nonprofit groups with innocuous sounding names with no duty to reveal the names of their donors.

This is the direct result of the Citizens United decision, which was represented to a group of knowledgeable League members in Phoenix two weeks ago as an effort by the U.S. Supreme Court to strike a blow for the little guy struggling to make sense of complex federal regulation. A panelist made this characterization with a straight face, and only one person in the room challenged it. Moreover, the other panelists did not challenge it!

There has never been a time when the League was needed more than it is today. Not only do we need to inform the public of the true facts of the issues in our communities, but we need to inform ourselves. Even as we arrange forums and do our best to present balanced information, we need to be prepared to challenge absurd assertions and outright falsehoods.

Tomorrow I return to the road, first to Wisconsin, then on to Illinois, Ohio and South Carolina. Now, you can follow me via RSS feeds. Please sign up and follow me!

In League, on the road again and blogging,

Elisabeth

Watch for LexMedia's replay of the LWVL October First Friday Forum "What Are We Doing About Our At-risk Youth?"

Dates to Save:

October 7 – Fall Kickoff – Samuel Hadley DPW Building

October 10 – Local Food Celebration - Interfaith Garden, 5 Harrington Road – 12 Noon

October 13, 2010 - Last day to register to vote for the November 2, 2010 election

November 2, 2010 – Statewide Elections

November 5, 2010 – First Friday Forum