



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEXINGTON

LWVL NEWS AND INFORMATION

December 3rd First Friday Forum - Lexington's Corporate Citizens

How much do we know about Lexington's corporate citizens? Do we understand the nature of their businesses or their reasons for locating in Lexington? As a Town, we are interested in positive relations with our local companies because they are an important part of our community's prosperity. At the December 3 League of Women Voters of Lexington First Friday Forum, Executive Director Mary Jo Bohart of the Lexington Chamber of Commerce and several local business leaders will discuss current business issues in Lexington.

This is the third 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 on the lower level of 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.

Election Day – Rides to the Polls

For the election of November 2, 2010 the Lexington LWV provided 5 rides to the polls. Our drivers were Tom Griffiths, Barbara Holleman, David Horton, Natalie Riffin and David Rothstein. The League also thanks Liz Andrews who accepted the requests and coordinated the rides.

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.

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Membership: Wendy Manz - wendy_manz@yahoo.com

November First Friday Forum: Lexington Demographic Changes

By Peg Bradley

Marion Cohen and Dan Krupka of the Lexington 2020 Vision Committee's Demographic Change Task Force described the purpose, method and results of the study conducted by the Committee. Lexingtonians and committee members in particular suspected that the character of the population was changing but had no data to support or refute the hypothesis. Thus, a study to quantify the suspected change and to allow Town planners to study the possible effects of that change on Town government and the community began in March 2008.

This study sought to determine the age distribution, race, language use, income and real estate values of the residents. Data were obtained from the 2000 US. Census, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, the 2005-2007 American Community Survey reports, the Massachusetts Department of Education, and by interviews with managers of local government agencies. Obtaining the hoped for information proved difficult. The 2000 Census was too old to show current conditions. American Community Survey data were based on a representative sample which shows general conditions and it, too, was becoming outdated. In addition, as financial advice materials are quick to point out, historical trends do not guarantee future trends; projections from them assume persistence. Although valid quantitative data were obtained, these sources gave no insight into the reasons for demographic change. Data from the 2010 U.S. Census will be released soon and are expected to help in confirming or refuting the results presented.

Lexington's population has been stable at about 30,000 for the last thirty years which doesn't tell the whole story. Between 1999 and 2009 the percentage of residents older than 60 has risen almost 10% and the Asian population has grown from 6% (1990 census) to about 16% (American community Survey). Age distribution shows a large immigration of residents five years old and higher, a peak at 50 to 54 and a steep drop in older residents. Since a similar profile is found in other communities with well regarded schools, it is assumed that education is the driving force. Lexington schools are third in percentage of Asian students (26%) which is seen as a factor in the increase in residents of Asian descent. The African American population has decreased. The Hispanic population is small but stable. Five percent of Lexington students require English Language Learning instruction. There are few data to indicate the number of adults who are not fluent English speakers. The current estimate is about 600 people. Median family income has risen to nearly twice the state median income. House prices also have risen from a 1989 median of 280 thousand dollars to the 2007 median of 677 thousand dollars. Housing prices are seen as less reliable indicators of wealth than income but, unquestionably, the Town is becoming wealthier.

Town government has begun to adapt to the changing population. The police and fire departments have hired Mandarin speakers and subscribed to a telephone translation service; Cary Library has a Chinese and Bengali collection; the schools now have nine fulltime equivalent teachers for English learners; the police have increased services for seniors at risk; human services, planning and housing groups are increasing coordination. If trends continue, more will be needed. The committee plans to review the new data when they become available and continue to explore means to identify and respond to the social forces behind the changes.

From The Lexington Human Rights Committee

On Memorial Day weekend, 1971, Vietnam Veterans Against the War reversely retraced the April 19, 1775 route taken by Paul Revere in a symbolic protest march and dramatic display of "guerilla" theatre. Inspired by John Kerry, the Town of Lexington was the second stop on the march-with the historic Battle Green sighted as a spot for overnight respite. Met by resistance from the Lexington Board of Selectman, the veterans were denied the right to conduct "guerilla" theatre in Lexington and prohibited from staying on the Green overnight. Very early Sunday morning, 458 veterans and townspeople were arrested on the Green and taken to a makeshift jail. The events of that weekend both divided and solidified hearts and minds of patriots on both sides of the issue, and have been documented through films including Unfinished Symphony: Democracy and Dissent, and Struggle for the Green: Democracy and Dissent. This afternoon through panel discussion and selected film screening we will see, hear and interact with historians who have studied, as well as Lexingtonians who lived through that turbulent and telling event in history.

When:

Sunday, November 21 from 2:00 – 4:00

Cary Hall 1605 Massachusetts Avenue

Free and open to the public

OBSERVER CORPS INVITATION**League Volunteer Opportunity**

Anne Frymer has done an excellent job of observing and reporting on the School Committee meetings for the past few years. Now Anne has moved on to a new role and we thank her for her past commitment.

The League always needs people to observe local town board and committee meetings. If you'd like to learn more about how Lexington operates, volunteer to be a League observer. You can either attend meetings in person or watch from home and write up a brief summary of the proceedings for the Bulletin. It's okay if you can't cover every meeting. We welcome occasional reports, as well.

We currently need observers for the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, and School Committee. If you have a particular area of interest, or can recommend someone, contact Pat Costello at patcostello@rcn.com.

These reports are crucial to keeping League members informed. Please consider volunteering your time.

LWVMA NEWS AND INFORMATION**Candidates' Forum**

Lexington Town Moderator Deborah Brown moderated a "Candidates for statewide offices, 10th Middlesex District and 4th Congressional District forum" at Lasell College on Sunday, October 17, 2010. The forum was sponsored by the LWV Newton and the LWVMA.

LWVUS PRESIDENT'S CORNER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 3, 2010

www.lwv.org

ELECTION 2010: SECRET MONEY, INCIVILITY LEAVE LASTING IMPACT

League Calls on Congress to Fix Secret Cash in American Elections

Washington, DC – The League of Women Voters of the U.S. reflected on the midterm elections today, expressing grave concern about the conduct of the 2010 elections.

"The impact of election 2010 goes far deeper than which party controls the House or the Senate," said Elisabeth MacNamara, national League President. "The tens of millions of dollars in secret money spent in this election are a recipe for scandal. Voters were overwhelmed by millions of dollars in negative ads but didn't know who paid for many of them. Pay-to-play politics won't change until we know who the special interests are who are pouring money into our elections," she said.

"This election demonstrated the critical need to improve our governmental structures," said MacNamara. "Because of the failure of Congress to act, there are no disclosure requirements governing the huge amounts of money that the Supreme Court recently turned loose in American politics. Voters will be hard pressed to know if their elected officials are in Washington to serve the public interest or the special interests."

"The incivility and tone of the 2010 campaign reached a disturbingly new low in American politics," added MacNamara. "Not only was this evident in the advertising, but we also saw it in candidate debates and forums and in the public discourse."

"The League calls on Congress to pass the DISCLOSE Act, which would restore transparency to U.S. elections by requiring disclosure of corporate and union spending in candidate elections. We also call on Congress to preserve and extend ethics enforcement. With the election awash in special interest money, it is no time to cut back on the enforcement of ethics standards in Washington."

"The money poured into recent elections has been unprecedented. The League believes that voters, not money, should be at the center of our democracy," concluded MacNamara. "We will continue our decades of work in helping citizens debate the issues in a civil and effective way and fighting for transparency, accountability and disclosure in America's elections."

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Membership in the League is open to men and women of all ages.

LWVUS LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

DISCLOSE Act Rejected

From the LWVUS

Despite all our efforts, especially the hard work by the Leagues of Women Voters of Maine and Massachusetts, the DISCLOSE Act failed by a 59-39 vote. The League lobbied to support the Act, which would have partially restored transparency to U.S. elections by requiring disclosure of corporate and union spending in candidate elections.

The League of Women Voters of Maine's event to encourage their Senators to support the bill received wide coverage from national press and press in Maine. The League issued a statement; sent a letter to the full Senate; and sent a letter with coalition partners to Senators Snowe and Collins of Maine and Brown of Massachusetts, urging them to support the DISCLOSE Act. We focused on these three Senators' crucial votes, but they didn't come through.

The fight continues as we expect the legislation to be brought to the Senate again in a lame-duck session after the November elections.

What you can do – Contact your representatives in Congress:

Brown, Scott P. - (R - MA)

317 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING WASHINGTON DC 20510
(202) 224-4543; scottbrown.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/emailscottbrown

Kerry, John F. - (D - MA)

218 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING WASHINGTON DC 20510
(202) 224-2742; kerry.senate.gov/contact/

Markey, Edward J. - (D - MA)

2108 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING WASHINGTON DC 20515
(202) 225-2836; <http://Markey.house.gov>

We welcome Bulletin articles from members. If you'd like to submit an article for the January 2011 Bulletin, please send it to Bulletin Editor Nancy Corcoran-Ronchetti at Nancor1106@gmail.com by December 22.

Dates to Save:

November 21 Lexington Human Rights Committee

December 3 LWVL First Friday Forum



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