



GREENWICH VOTER

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hope the past holiday season was happy for you and yours! It capped an extremely busy season for the League, culminating in a lovely Holiday party on December 5.

The run up to the 2018 elections was fast and furious. We received requests to run voter registration drives from new partners such as the YWCA and Neighbor-to-Neighbor, and we continued working with our traditional allies. Although all these drives, as well as our participation in National Voter Registration Day, yielded few new voters, our members answered questions about voting in general and this election in particular, providing a valuable service to voters.

The debate for the state candidates, moderated by Kay Maxwell of Stamford, brought so many attendees that the Fire Marshal emptied the Town Hall Meeting room of all standees. Fortunately, it was also streamed live by Channel 79 so all those who were sent home could catch at least part of it. Another great success was the student-run debate for state candidates at Greenwich High School. Over 500 students were present at the MISA auditorium, and the debate was also streamed to the independent schools. The students were engaged and enthusiastic! Thank you Joanne Stavrou and her committee for this enormous effort.

Prior to the election, the *Voter's Guide* was published, once again, in the pull-out section of the *Greenwich Time*. It was also posted on the LWVG and *Greenwich Time* websites about 10 days before the election. Thank you, Kathy Burgweger, Marla Laney and Elise Hingson for doing a fabulous job.

Our Program Team has worked hard to present interesting programs. Of special note was the October 2 program on Connecticut Fiscal Sustainability (see summary on page four): a provocative look at the solutions to our fiscal crisis. We look forward to discussing some of the recommendations with our re-elected/elected officials. More stimulating programs are planned for 2019, and we hope to see you there. Bravo to Aya DeSimone, Janet McGuigan and committee for their efforts.

Collecting membership dues for a large League like Greenwich is a huge job. We still have significant delinquencies, despite the valiant efforts of Rita Baker and Barbara O'Shea. Members still unpaid will be removed from our rolls as of January 1. We will miss them, but it is a necessary purging of the ranks.

The Holiday Party was a huge success. The beautifully decorated River House welcomed our state officials and local dignitaries. Food and wine were abundant, and the band played on and on... a good time was had by all. Pamela Toper and her husband George were great hosts!

Looking ahead for 2019...the RTM study implementation advocacy continues. Cyndy Anderson, Jara Burnett and several others continue attending the Governance Committee meetings, usually held twice a month. We have also been meeting with members of the committee, other experts working at solutions to technical issues and we have again touched base with First Selectman Peter Tesei. Thank you to all who attended meetings and made advocacy calls. More will be needed this coming year.

We expect to keep up a schedule of informational programs, return to the brown bag lunches featuring Town departments, participate in Program Planning in February and generally keep the League active and visible. Help is always needed...won't you join us?

I hope 2019 will be banner year for all our members and the League. Happy New Year!

Jara Burnett

Save the Date!

League of Women Voters of Greenwich
Annual Meeting & Dinner

June 5, 2019 • Riverside Yacht Club

Keynote Speaker: ROSIE RIOS
43rd Treasurer of the United States

**League of Women Voters
of Greenwich
2018-2019 Board of
Officers and Directors**

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WELCOME TO THE BOARD



The Greenwich League welcomes Sandy Waters as our Director of Communications. Originally Canadian, Sandy grew up in Cincinnati, OH and became an American citizen in 1974. Majoring in history, she received her BA from Oberlin College and MA from Tufts University. After receiving her degrees, she worked for the Armstrong Cork Company. She and her husband Steve moved to Greenwich in 1977.

Sandy has been active at First Presbyterian Church as Deacon, Elder, Sunday School teacher, Youth Group leader, and committee chair. In the 1980s, she served on the Greenwich YWCA Board and as Chair of its Leadership Council. Active in the Greenwich Public Schools for many years, she and Steve were co-Presidents of the North Street School PTA. She served on the PTA Council Board for five years, eventually serving as President of the PTA Council (1990-1992). She founded a Parents' Association at the Highgate School and became the President of St. Christopher's School Parents' Association in London, UK (1992-1995). She became a Republican member of the Greenwich Board of Education (1997-2005) and its Chair (2003-2005). Most recently, she has served 13 years on the Greenwich YMCA Board, three years as Board Chair (2013-2016). She has also served as a Trustee of Oberlin College.

Sandy and Steve have three grown children who are married and proliferating, six grandsons to date. One son, James, lives in Greenwich with his family. The other two families live in Raleigh, NC and Dallas, TX. Sandy enjoys Masters swimming, playing the piano, reading, and current events.

IN MEMORIAM

We lost a wonderful former President of the Greenwich League (2002-2004) in 2017. Joyce H. Young died on October 9, 2017 in Salt Lake Utah after a brave battle with cancer. Joyce was an attorney and community leader in Greenwich for many years. She earned a BS in Journalism and International Affairs from the University of Colorado and a JD from Fordham University. She was an Assistant Town Attorney for the Town of Greenwich Law Department and joined Goldman Sachs after relocating to Salt Lake City.



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. It was founded in 1920 as an outgrowth of the 72 year struggle to win voting rights for women.

LWVUS CONVENTION

The League of Women Voters of the United States held its 53rd National Convention in Chicago, Illinois, from June 28 to July 1, 2018. The theme of the convention was “Creating a More Perfect Democracy.” The theme reflected the importance of the long-time mission of the League – to protect voting rights, to register, encourage and empower voters, to fight against voter suppression, illegal gerrymandering and prevention of voter access.

Workshops and information sessions were held on Redistricting, Open Primaries, League Fund Raising, Refugee Advocacy, Climate Change Impact, Get Out the Vote Strategies, The National Popular Vote, Engaging New Citizens, Gun Violence Protection, Building Leadership for the Future, Use of Social Media, Engaging Youth, Health Care in a Democracy, and Using an On-line Voter’s Guide. There was a special emphasis on the League’s initiatives to support the use of the Popular Vote as a way of electing a President.

Of great interest was the information session about the state of the League

since the last convention, which was two years ago. Since that time, there has been a large increase in membership and in membership participation at this convention. In the budget presentation, we learned that we moved from an expected budget deficit of \$448,100 to ending with a surplus of \$5 million, all part of personal contributions to the League in recognition of the important work we are doing during a time of so many challenges to our democracy.

One of the keynote speakers was Rosie Rios, the 43rd Treasurer of the United States. She was very well received as she described her efforts to publicly recognize women’s contributions to public life. She is trying to place a portrait of a woman on the face of U.S. currency and supports efforts to place statues of women who have made a contribution to our history, yet have little public recognition.

Of special importance to our League was the presentation and workshop conducted by our own Deidre Kamlani (Board member and Program Committee head), titled “Improving Civics Education

with the Harvard Case Study Method.” In her presentation, she described our League’s pilot program, in partnership with our own Greenwich High School and other schools, and with Harvard Business School Professor, David Moss, to present a case study from his book, *Democracy: A Case Study*. This program was attended by League members, Harvard Club of Fairfield County participants, and high school students. They read the case study ahead of time, which was on the topic of state vs federal rights, and then participated in a structured, spirited discussion about the issues.

Deirdre’s presentation was attended by over 300 people (the room could not hold them all) who wanted to replicate the model in their own League. They asked all kinds of questions and offered many ideas about how to apply and use the model to facilitate civics involvement.

In the future, we hope many more members of the League of Women Voters Greenwich will attend our State and National Conventions.

Caroline Adkins, Delegate

STUDENT MEMBERSHIP NEWS

The Student Membership program continues to make inroads with the youth in Greenwich. The last few months saw several successful voter registration drives, participation in local debates, and attendance at LWVG activities. Future plans include creating school based LWV Clubs which will be led by and for students.

There is no doubt that Connecticut (CT) faces big challenges as it works to restore a healthier economic environment, but the co-chairs of the 2018 CT Commission on Fiscal Stability and Economic Growth are optimistic that, with the right actions, our state will return to prosperity. On Tuesday evening, October 2, the co-chairs of the 14-member non-partisan Commission addressed an assemblage of interested citizens at the Greenwich Library Cole Auditorium with specific recommendations for making it happen, as outlined in the Commission's March report.

Commission co-chairs Bob Patricelli and Jim Smith discussed the report, which was well received by Governor Malloy and other state officials. Bob brings to this ambitious study more than 50 years in leading roles in healthcare, the federal government and civic engagement, while Jim – Chairman of Webster Financial Corporation and Webster Bank – served at Governor Malloy's appointment as co-chairman of the Commission on Fiscal Stability and Economic Growth.

Bob opened the presentation (co-sponsored by the League and Greenwich Library), by saying "We are engaged in a grand experiment in civics education and doing it in a rainstorm – the general election."

Jim stressed that government must stimulate economic growth, but not at the expense of the safety net of our "rainy day fund." Among other things, he said, "We need to look at neighboring states and competitive states so we can learn from that and make good recommendations that will stimulate economic growth. This will lead to higher revenue growth, which will fund expenses and lead to greater prosperity and quality of life. We can't rest on our – dwindling – laurels."

As of today, Jim stated:

- CT is losing revenue. Our economic competitiveness has collapsed over last 12 to 15 years. Our deficits are growing at about \$500M/year because of the cost of funding the liabilities that were taken on by legislatures and governors past. Our growth has lagged the national and regional rate. We need to stabilize the base before we can grow. We've had negative growth 9 out of 10 years (the worst in the nation).
- Our personal income is in the bottom quintile. We are losing revenue and we have massive unfunded liabilities and debts. We are off the charts when it comes to personal income tax.
- CT has a mismatch of labor supply and demand.
- We now have \$100B in unfunded liabilities.
- CT has negative GSP growth. We've left \$50B of growth on the table in the last 10 years."
- Approximately 350 CT families pay 12% of all personal income taxes. People are leaving CT. "And when they leave the state, it makes a lot of noise," Jim said. "They take their families, they take their philanthropy, they take their companies, they take their future away, because we haven't stepped up to face our fiscal challenges."

To tackle these ambitious challenges, Jim concluded, "We need to remake the government on every level," adding, "This requires some level of reliability and certainty that long term, things will be ok."

What's the Fix

1. Reform Taxes:

- Pro-growth, revenue-neutral tax reform. Take over \$2B out of personal income tax at all brackets; lower tax rates from 18 to 30% in the various brackets and make that up with expansion of the base and sales tax and a small increase in corporate taxes. We are likely to modify that recommendation, lowering the corporate income tax rate while doing some other things. We would also lower top rates in the personal income tax system.

- Get rid of the estate and gift tax. "The juice isn't worth the squeeze," Jim said. We are only one of 13 states that still has this. It doesn't pay for itself.
- Broaden Sales tax base. Sales tax in CT currently covers very few services, even though over 70% of our economy is services (vs. goods and retail).

2. Enhance Savings: Take \$1 billion out of the state's \$20B general fund through:

- Optimizing revenue
- Improving efficiency
- Enhancing revenue collecting.
- Restructuring teachers' retirement system to reduce unfunded liabilities.

3. Renegotiate Labor Agreements:

- Decades of unfunded liabilities is the biggest fiscal issue we have. The state is currently shouldering \$70B in teacher/state employee-funded liabilities.
- One idea – Dedicate proceeds of state lottery to teachers' pension budget (\$7B).
- Take other income streams and dedicate them to the state employee pension scheme.
- Raise minimum wage.
- The next governor must reopen state employee deal cut in 2017 for 10 years.

4. Build the Labor Supply: Make a significant infusion of new state funds into STEM scholarships and STEM-educated loan forgiveness for millennials who work in the state for at least five years.

5. Implement Tolls: "Tolls are not a tax, they are a user fee," Bob stressed, adding, without fixing the state's transportation infrastructure, we're not going to get significant economic growth. In addition, he noted, "Life needs to be about the long-term, with more reliance on rail and ports."

What the presenters referred to as "Version 2.0" of the Commission's report will be completed later this year and issued as guidance for the new governor and the new general assembly.

A lively Q&A followed.

SECOND HARVARD CASE DISCUSSION FOCUSES ON MARTIN LUTHER KING AND VOTING RIGHTS

Back by popular community demand, the League of Women Voters of Greenwich together with the Greenwich High School Social Studies Department hosted its second annual Harvard Case Discussion on November 13. Local area schools, including teachers and students from Brunswick, Greenwich Academy and Rye Country Day School, also participated. The sold-out audience, evenly split between students and League members, enjoyed a lively and engaging discussion expertly moderated by GHS teachers Karen Boyea, Jessica Keller and Steve Swidler. The case took participants through the post-civil war period of Reconstruction through the 1965 March on Selma, examining the evolving strategies employed by the African-American community to secure and protect their voting rights. Audience members were also invited to step into the shoes of civil rights leaders in the 1960s and make decisions about how to best advance the goals of their movement at that pivotal moment in history.

Post-event survey results were excellent. The three GHS teachers who trained under Professor Moss at Harvard were all highly rated. 93% of participants said that they would recommend the case method to other schools and civic groups, with more than 80% enjoying the session and looking forward to the next one.

The impact on civic behavior and attitudes was also positive and meaningful: 64% of participants said that they would be much more likely to approach future political conversations more constructively, especially when presented with an opposing point of view; 38% would be much more likely to get involved in politics and 26% would be much more likely to vote.

Participants voted overwhelmingly for the next case discussion to be about the struggle for women's rights, from suffrage through the ERA. The timing is particularly good for that case, since 2019 can serve to kick off the League's centenary (along with the centenary of the 19th amendment).



ELECTION SEASON ACTIVITIES

National Voter Registration Day

For the second consecutive year, volunteers from the League of Women Voters fanned out at locations across Greenwich on National Voter Registration Day, September 25th. Activities included voter registration, confirming registration status and providing information and key dates for absentee balloting.

National Voter Registration drives were conducted at Greenwich High School, YWCA and Boys & Girls Club Greenwich. Members also staffed a week-long voter registration drive at Neighbor-to-Neighbor and a special one-day event at Byram Schubert Library on October 9th. In total, 27 registrations were collected and many voter registration forms were handed out.

In addition to registration activity, the event garnered significant press coverage, with a front page article in the *Greenwich Time* (September 25, Greenwich High Students Register To Vote for the First Time) detailing LWVG efforts connected with National Voter Registration Day.

Special thanks to Cathy Fineman Steel who helped to coordinate many of the events and to all our volunteers who helped staff the events.

Debates

Wednesday, October 10 at Town Hall: LWVG hosted two consecutive Debates. The first was for candidates for Connecticut State Senate District 36 and the second was for Candidates for Connecticut House of Representatives District 150 and District

151. Unfortunately, because of over capacity, many disappointed attendees had to leave by order of the Greenwich Fire Marshall. The debate was broadcast live on Channel 79 and subsequently on our web-site, which received an unprecedented number of views. Lesson learned – we must find a larger venue next election season.

Sunday, October 21: We co-sponsored with other local Leagues a debate for Candidates for Representatives to the U.S. Congress from Connecticut's 4th District. The Wilton League of Women Voters organized this debate.

Friday, November 2: We coordinated a student run debate at Greenwich High School with all of the 2018 local Candidates. The debate was run by Aaron Hull's We the People Team. The students were responsible for introduction, format, questions and timing. The debate was attended by over 500 students with a live feed to area independent schools. The students were so engaged, every candidate had a cluster of students asking them questions after the debate. We were very happy to have a part in providing so many students with the experience of a democratic debate.

The *Voter's Guide* was published digitally on our website and a paper copy was available early in November. This enormous undertaking was completed with the much appreciated effort from Kath Bergweger, Jara Burnett and Marla Laney.

And finally, as always, we planted our EXERCISE YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE ON ELECTION DAY signs throughout town.

Join the LWVG!

It's easy! Join online through our website, www.lwvg.org, using PayPal OR you may download a membership form and mail it with your check.

Your membership is important because it helps us continue our educational and advocacy work. Together, we can make a difference!

Holiday Party at the River House



The LWVG had a festive and fun Holiday Party on December 5. The event was held at the beautiful River House which was decorated in sparkling holiday fare. Many thanks to Executive Director Donna Spellman and her team for all their help.

Our President, Jara Burnett, welcomed everyone and introduced our State delegation members, Alex Bergstein, Fred Camillo, Livvy Floren and Steve Meskers, who updated us on their plans for 2019. First Selectman, Peter Tesei, was also in attendance.

Laura Kaehler and her band, Accousticats, played great music and really enhanced the atmosphere of the party. Many thanks to our Board who provided flowers and Proseco for holiday toasts. Members brought an exciting mix of holiday treats and a good time was had by all.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREENWICH
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