

LEAGUE'S LATEST

The League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford

Mary Andrews (at large)

Mary Everett (treasurer)

Sandy Fry (email coordinator)

Doris Hedrick (publicity)

P. O. Box 270191, West Hartford, CT 06127-0191

Elisa McCarthy (voters service)

Beverly Miller (voters service)

Carole Mulready (voters service)

Libby Swietek (membership)

Marlene Wenograd (at large)



ANNUAL MEETING

Tuesday, May 12, 2009, 6:00 PM

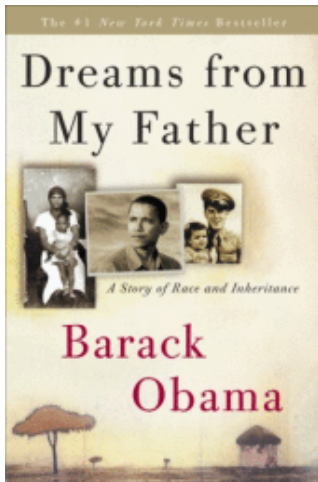
Pond House, Elizabeth Park

Featuring
State Representative, Demetrios Giannaros
On the Economic Crisis and
The Role of Women in the Economy

\$35.00 including tax and gratuity (cash bar)

RSVP: Elisa McCarthy, 523-8161 or Jean Blair, jblair@goodwin.com
by Tuesday, May 5, 2009

**Annual Meeting immediately following program
at which time future plans for the League will be presented.**



Book Discussion

Have you started reading Barack Obama’s “Dreams from My Father”? (It is listed among the ten books most Americans say they have read but haven’t really.) Please don’t be among those.

On April 23rd, the League will be holding a discussion at West Hartford Town Hall, Room 217. It should be a really interesting evening now that Obama has been President for several months.

In Appreciation

On March 14, 2009, LWVGH presented a letter of commendation to League member, Ginny Judson of Wethersfield. It cited her long-time work on voter registration and education. Among other work, she initiated drives in Hartford, Wethersfield and New Britain at super markets. The letter was given to Ginny at a wonderful party celebrating her 80th birthday. People of all ages and from as far away as Montana gathered to remember causes in which she has been active, and still

is. Solar power, the first and second Bottle Bills, land preservation, hybrid cars have all been on her agenda.

Environmental education work comes from her time as a science teacher. Sierra Club, Audobon Society, and CONNPACE were other causes represented. These also found their way into songs created for her by friends and admirers. It was a great celebration and richly deserved

Elisa McCarthy.

Mission Statement:
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.



About Representative Giannaros

Deputy Speaker Demetrios Giannaros was first elected to the Connecticut House of Representatives in 1994. He has been re-elected six times to serve constituents. Prior to his election as State Representative, he was elected to the Farmington Board of Education.

Rep. Giannaros has been recognized for his leadership and significant contributions since his first year in office (1995). During his term in office, he has made a difference for his constituency as a legislative leader:

- **Deputy Speaker of the House** (2/2008 - present)
- **Deputy Majority Leader** (2005-2008)
- **Chairman, Education Committee** (2002-2004)
- **Chairman, Energy and Technology Committee** (1998-2002)
- **Vice Chairman, Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee** (1995-1998)

In addition to his leadership role in the House, Rep. Giannaros currently serves as a member of the:

- Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee
- Higher Education Employment Advancement Committee

More information is available on Dr. Giannaros's website- <http://www.housedems.ct.gov/Giannaros/>

UNDERSTANDING CITY SERVICES: DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Tuesday, April 21, 2009

**Light Refreshments @ 5:30 PM
Program @ 6:00 PM**

**Hartford Public Library
500 Main Street**

Meet the new Director of Development Services, **David B. Panagore**, and hear his vision of the role of the department in the revitalization of Hartford and its neighborhoods. Learn from Development Services staff about the responsibilities of the five departmental divisions: Economic Development, Housing & Property Management, Grants Management, Licenses & Inspections, and Planning. Services include plan review, housing and building code inspection, provision of grants to community-based organizations, zoning enforcement, permitting, business development, provision of financing for housing construction, rehabilitation, and purchase, and more.

**A Neighborhood Training Institute Workshop
NTI is a partnership of the Hartford Public Library and Hartford 2000**

LWVGH EVALUATION REPORT COMPLETED

At the Executive Committee meeting in March, the Evaluation sub-committee submitted its report. The sub-committee worked for several months to meet its charge to evaluate the executive committee model of chapter governance and to suggest options that might be considered in deciding the future direction of the LWVGH.

The report was based on interviews with several LWVGH community partners plus a survey of all members of the Executive Committee. The sub-committee wishes to thank the following volunteers for conducting the interviews and surveys;

- Carol Hamilton (member surveys)
- Marlene Wenograd, Nan Streeter, Doris Hedrick, Sandy Fry, and Carole Mulready (community partners interviews)
- Jean Blair, Karen Rosen, Beverly Miller, Doris Hedrick and Marlene Wenograd (sub-committee members).

The report was discussed at length by the Executive Committee who will provide its decisions to the general LWVGH membership at the Annual Meeting in May. Information will be mailed to members before the Annual Meeting.

2 ★ >> THE HARTFORD

COMMUNITIES: WHAT'S HAPPENING 3-11-09 CT

>> COURANT.COM/CTLOCAL

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS pg 19

Group Seeks To Reassert Its Relevance

By **JOSH KOVNER**
jkovner@courant.com

WEST HARTFORD — The League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford has earned a fair amount of clout over the past 86 years by staking out well-researched, nonpartisan stances on important issues.

For instance, when the debate over the town's financial contribution to Blue Back Square was at its most intense a few years ago, the league came out in support of the shopping/entertainment/office/housing development. It had adopted a position 20 years earlier, in 1985, favoring higher buildings, mixed-use projects and residential construction in West Hartford Center. Blue Back was all of that, so the league came out strongly for it, which helped coalesce support for what is now West Hartford's largest taxpayer.

But the league is at a crossroads: Attract new members and new energy, and tap into a surge in public interest about how government is supposed to work, or begin to fade away.

The league covers metro Hartford, but the large majority of its 120 members live in West Hartford. And a handful of women have done the bulk of the heavy lifting for the group in the past few years, which is why the president's post is vacant now and the executive committee is thinking hard about the best way to divvy up the leadership.

"The key is fostering a greater understanding of what we do," said Sandy Fry, a past president and an executive committee member. "We need to make sure the league captures that energy. We need to grow, to engage in more activities. We're looking for a diversity of ages and backgrounds — thoughtful people who are interested in government and the political process."

Many of the national organization's local chapters are finding themselves in the same place — trying to be as active and relevant as they were in the in the 1970s and '80s with members who are far more likely now to be juggling careers and family than they were 20 years ago, said Jara Burnett, president of the league's Connecticut chapter, based in Hamden.

"I was married in 1959. Even with an MBA, I was expected to stay home. The league was a tremendous outlet for many women," said Burnett. "Now, women work."

She said, though, that public interest in the governmental process has never been higher; and that there have never been more outlets to find and distribute information.

"Those things could work very well for us, but we have to accelerate the effort to make sure we're the kind of organization where young women, and even young men, would not feel lost, and would feel challenged," Burnett said.

Like the Greater Hartford chapter, the league's organization in New London is also taking stock of itself. And the once-dormant chapter in Stamford is in the process of being recertified.

Fry said that the Greater Hartford league has sent out surveys and is seeking input about the chapter's role in the public conversation.

"We'd like to know what issues engage you, whether you value an organization that takes nonemotional, objective positions," said Fry. "We reach conclusions through a consensus of understanding. This enables one voice to have an impact as a member of a group."

>> The group's website is at lwvgh.org.

In Memory

On January 27, the Greater Hartford community lost a wonderful friend and advocate in Representative **Faith McMahon**. Although not a member of The League, Faith was remarkably "League-like" in her commitment to community, sense of duty, and consensus-building legislative style.

Faith was elected to the Bloomfield Town Council in 1987 and served as Bloomfield's first female mayor from 1993 until 2002, when she was elected as State Representative for District 15. Her passion was the well-being of the children and elderly in her district, and served tirelessly on a numerous committees and non-governmental organizations on their behalf.

Despite her busy schedule, Faith regularly accepted League invitations to legislative breakfasts, where she shared her compassionate views on issues of the day and discussed upcoming legislative initiatives. From elementary school teacher to mayor to legislator, Faith's was a life of service. A special election to fill her seat was held on Tuesday, March 24th.

Karen Rosen
Katie Reynolds

Item of Interest - Katie organized a forum at Duncaster for residents to meet the candidates running for Faith's seat - a League thing to do!!

Margie Christie of West Hartford, a long-time member of LWVGH, died March 18, 2009. She will be missed as an active member who served as Treasurer for several terms and as Co-President for one term. At her moving memorial service at the Unitarian Meetinghouse, many spoke of her work and her dedication to family and causes. State Representatives Beth Bye and Andy Fleischmann remembered her warm spirit and her tenacity on her issues. You may remember that a few years ago, she and several others presented at the State League Convention. They were then instrumental in establishing the current LWVCT Mental Health position. Their committee's work also formed our local position.

Elisa McCarthy

League member, Dr. Tracey Wilson, gave a media presentation on Suffragettes in CT, 1910-20, co-sponsored with the West Hartford Library. Here are some facts on our sisters of which you might not be aware. Did you know that?

- It took 36 states to ratify the 19th Constitutional Amendment. CT was the 37th. Why? Because Governor Holcombe refused to call a legislative special session until after it passed. "The desire of a few women does not require an emergency (meeting)."
- Katherine Houghton Hepburn (yes, Katie's mom) was active with her husband (a Hartford surgeon) in the social hygiene movement before she championed womens' vote. She was president of the CT Women's Suffrage Association from 1910-11 and 1913-17 with time off for childbearing.
- Emily Pierson from the Group's Pratt Street office talked to colleges, trade unions, women's groups and Socialists. "If women pay taxes, they should vote." "Women are different. We will change things." "The ballot is the chief protection of the weak."
- World War I - If there is no vote, why support the war effort?. By 1917, there were 37,000 members including grange and nurses groups. 94% of the unions supported sufferage.
- With the decision to work on Congress rather than on separate state actions, they picketed in Washington and 140+ women were imprisoned.

National Popular Vote

At the 2008 LWV National Convention, it was voted to do a new study on “The Advisability of Using the National Popular Vote among the states as the method for electing the President.”

The League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford
will hold its consensus meeting on
Tuesday, April 28, in Room 217, West Hartford Town Hall.
There will be a potluck at 6 pm
followed by consensus at 7 pm.

For more information contact Carole Mulready at 523-1771
or cgm1@mulready.biz

BACKGROUND FOR CONSENSUS

The National Popular Vote Compact– A new look at electing the President

The League of Women Voters of the United States is conducting a study on “The Advisability of Using the National Popular Vote Compact among the states as the method for electing the President.” Since 1970, the League of Women Voters position has been that the direct popular vote to elect the President and Vice-President of the United States is essential to representative government (and) that the Electoral College should be abolished.

The National Popular Vote Compact (NPVC) proposal would guarantee the Presidency to the candidate who receives the most popular votes without amending the Constitution to eliminate the Electoral College. Under the NPVC, all electoral votes from the states that enact the bill will be awarded, as a bloc, to the presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. It would take effect only when states cumulatively possessing a majority of the electoral votes (270) have enacted this agreement in substantially the same form and the enactments by such states have taken effect in each state. [The (short) complete text of the *Agreement among the States to Elect the President by Nationwide Popular Vote (the NPV Compact)* can be found at www.lwv.org/npv]

Every Vote Equal: A State Based Plan for Electing the President, the reference work published by National Popular Vote, goes into considerable

detail about the Electoral College, history of challenges, constitutional issues, interstate compacts, legal issues, and the Compact language itself. The struggles of the Founding Fathers regarding election of the President are touched upon below and detailed in Chapter 2. The book can be read online. www.nationalpopularvote.com

The history of methods of electing the President has been marked by a lack of conviction on how to best accomplish this important piece of representative government.

“In 1787, the Constitutional Convention considered a variety of methods for electing the President and Vice President, including election by: state governors, Congress, State legislatures, popular vote, and electors. The delegates debated the method of electing the President on 22 separate days and held 30 votes on the topic. As described in George Edwards’s recent book: “The delegates were obviously perplexed about how to select the president, and their confusion is reflected in their voting.” Ultimately, the delegates never made a decision and “turned the question over to a committee ... [which] recommended selection of the president by electors....” The method of choosing electors was turned over to the states. Article II of the Constitution says: “Each State shall appoint, **in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct**, a Number of Electors...”

In a challenge to the constitutionality of electors chosen by the states, the Supreme Court ruled in the 1893 case of *McPherson v. Blacker*: “In short, the appointment and mode of appointment of electors belong **exclusively** to the states under the constitution of the United States.” This basically attests to the constitutionality of the electors acting as outlined in the compact.

[The following section is from a LWV background paper.]

An additional constitutional underpinning of the NPV is the Compact Clause (*Article I, Section 10, Clause 3*), which permits states to enter into legally enforceable contractual obligations to undertake agreed joint action with other states. Interstate compacts are typically used to address problems that concern more than one state—the states which are affected enter into a compact (contract) which regulates their actions, ensuring uniform response by the states to address their mutual concerns. These contracts are typically enacted through the passage of identical legislation by the compacting states.

Under the state legislation proposed to establish the NPV, the popular vote counts from all 50 states and the District of Columbia would be added together to obtain a national grand total for each presidential candidate. Then, state elections officials in all states participating in the plan would award their electoral votes to the presidential candidate who receives the largest number of popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. As a result, every vote in all 50 states and the District of Columbia would be equally important in presidential elections. The NPV Compact plan would take effect only when it has been enacted by states collectively possessing a majority of the electoral votes. The 270-vote threshold also corresponds essentially to states

representing a majority of the people of the United States.

The compact contains a six-month blackout period during which no state can withdraw from the compact. The blackout period starts on July 20 of each presidential election year and runs through the January 20 inauguration. Interstate compacts are contracts. It is settled compact law and settled constitutional law that withdrawal restrictions—very common in interstate compacts—are enforceable because the U.S. Constitution prohibits a state from impairing any obligation of contract. The legislation contains other procedural provisions that would ensure the smooth functioning of the agreement. For example, one clause addresses the possibility of a tie in the national popular vote. If there is no national popular vote winner, each state chooses the electors for the candidate who has won that state. The full text of the compact, supporting and opposing arguments, and the Consensus questions are available at www.lwv.org/NPV.

The League of Women Voters has developed a chart which summarizes the pros and cons in four pages. Request a copy by contacting Carole Mulready at cgm1@mulready.biz

Copies of the questions will be presented at the Consensus on April 28. Basically, they ask members to determine if the compact is achievable. Can the compact succeed constitutionally? Will it require Congressional consent? Are the enforcement provisions sufficient to assure smooth running of the compact? Is uniformity of voting systems of prime importance? Is it more important to achieve the goal of national popular election of the President or amend the Constitution to abolish the Electoral College? Is the Compact achievable?

The Consensus Committee – We look forward to seeing you.