



League of Women Voters of Natick Newsletter

Spring 2005

Volume 2, Issue 2

President's Message

It's hard to believe the "new" LWV of Natick is well into its third year already! The past two years have flown by in a whirlwind of activity including candidate forums, educational programs, fundraising events, and a fabulously successful mock election at Natick High. Next on our agenda: we are considering doing a study so that we might take a position on a local issue that may be of concern to Natick voters. Undertaking a study is a rigorous process that can only occur with the consensus of our membership. We are currently soliciting suggestions for study topics (please see the column in this newsletter for more information on the study process).

If you have been hoping or wanting to get more involved with the League, now is the perfect time to do so! Please remember our March membership meeting (this coming Sunday, March 6th) and the June annual meeting (date forthcoming) are both excellent opportunities to touch base with your League as well as influence future League activities. As always, our monthly Board meetings (generally the second Tuesday evening of each month) are open to any member who would like to attend. We are always looking for volunteers, and have a wide variety of volunteer needs, for both short term projects (such as the Spelling Bee team) and for longer-term projects (such as joining our Board of Directors). Remember that many hands make light work, and will make our local League more responsive to the needs and interests of our members and the wider community.

We look forward to seeing many of you as our busy Spring calendar of events unfolds, and learning what direction you would like to see LWV of Natick take over the course of the coming year.

Sincerely,

Mary Avalos
President

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LWV of Natick to Sponsor Candidate Forums

The League of Women Voters of Natick will sponsor two forums to bring the candidates running for Town Selectmen and School Committee to Natick’s voters. Candidates will have the opportunity to outline their stance on important issues and address questions from members of the community.

<p>Thursday, March 17, 2005, 7:30 pm <i>7:30 Selectmen candidates</i> <i>8:45 School Committee candidates</i> Morse Institute Library ~ 14 E. Central St.</p>	<p>Monday, March 21, 2005, 9:30 am <i>9:30 Selectmen candidates</i> <i>10:45 School Committee candidates</i> Kennedy Senior Center ~ 117 E. Central St. <i>Hosted by the Kennedy Senior Center</i></p>
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Both events are free and open to the public.

For those unable to attend, the March 17 forum will be rebroadcast on Natick Pegasus, the local government cable channel. Please check your program guide for dates and times.

The Natick League’s website has a link on its main page to help voters locate their precinct and polling place. The website may be accessed at www.lwvnatick.org; click on the link on the home page that says, “What’s my precinct? Where do I vote? Click here to find out.”

For more information, please contact Mary Avalos at 508-651-7899 or visit our website at www.lwvnatick.org.

Membership Meeting and Fondue Party, March 6!

The Natick LWV will hold our semiannual membership meeting on Sunday, March 6, 2005 from 2-4 pm at the home of Laura Senier and Ken DeIPapa, 38 Pitts Street.

Come chase the chill away with a tart and luxurious cheese fondue and a lush and velvety chocolate fondue, and catch up with what your League fellows have been doing this year.

In addition to enjoying fondue and each other's company, we have some local League business to discuss. An important role played by local Leagues is in the way they study issues of local, regional, or national importance and make recommendations for action. The League cannot take a position or recommend action on an issue before studying it. Come enjoy some fondue with your fellow League members and learn more about what a League study entails.

Please RSVP by March 3 to Laura at 508-653-7927 or by e-mail at laura_senier@brown.edu.

LWV Fall Conference Looks at Voting and Voter Impact

Last fall, two of our members, Lucia Frenkel and Margie Packer, attended the LWV of Massachusetts annual fall convention. The overall theme of the conference was the importance of voting and the impact of voter participation. Guest speakers addressed some of the most pressing issues facing the country in the next four years such as health care, education, the economy, and homeland security. The keynote speaker was Martha Coakley, District Attorney for Middlesex County. Coakley spoke about the prison system and the state's efforts to reintegrate prisoners into society upon their release.

Attendance at state conferences is open to all League members and is usually free (or there may be a registration fee for those who wish to stay for lunch). "The panel discussions and workshops were very informative and allowed us to get a good insight into how voting and voter participation impact the nation, the state, and our local communities," said Packer. "I encourage everyone to take an opportunity to attend one of the conferences or events put on by the state League if possible."

Frenkel agreed, adding, "It's also a great opportunity to network with members of local Leagues from the surrounding communities, and find out what issues they are organizing around and get ideas about programs and events that may also be of interest to our members."

The LWV of Massachusetts is sponsoring a "Day on the Hill" event this March (see story elsewhere in this issue).

Volunteers Sought to Serve on Annual Budget Committee

The LWV Executive Board seeks volunteers to serve on our annual budget committee. The Budget committee works to draw up a budget for presentation to the membership at the annual meeting. Time commitment is minimal. Interested parties should contact Margie Packer at 508-655-3229 or packer3@comcast.net or Maria Waller at 508-655-5938 or mcnwaller@comcast.net.

League of Women Voters of Massachusetts to hold Day on the Hill

The state chapter of the League is having their annual Day on the Hill event on Wednesday, March 23, 2005. The Massachusetts LWV hosts this event every year so that LWV members can mingle with their legislators and members of other local Leagues from around the state. This year's theme is "Beyond Election 2004: Every Voice Heard, Every Vote Counted." Governor Mitt Romney, Speaker of the House Salvatore DiMasi, and State Secretary William Galvin will make presentations.

This event is open and free to all League members. The program begins at 9:00 am with a light breakfast in Nurses' Hall. The main program will begin at 10:00 am in Gardner Auditorium.

For more information, call 617-523-2999, send e-mail to lwmva@lwmva.org, or visit the state's website at www.lwmva.org.

LWV of Natick to Hold Voter Registration Drive at Natick High School

We are planning a voter registration drive to be held at Natick High sometime in April, to help register new voters and to set up our college bound seniors with absentee ballots. Date and time are still to be announced, but if you are interested in helping, please contact Moira Munns at mamarg@aol.com or at 508-655-6462.

Help Us Spell Success!

For the past two years, the LWV of Natick has sponsored a team in the Natick Education Foundation Annual Spelling Bee. We're looking for volunteers for this year's team. Come out to support two worthy causes: your local League and the NEF!

The spelling bee will be held on Monday, May 9, 2005, at 7:00 pm in the Natick High School cafeteria.

For more information or to volunteer, contact Maria Waller at 508-655-5938 or by e-mail at mcnwaller@comcast.net.

Initiating a Study: Program and Action!

In the two years since we re-established the League's presence in Natick, we have focused our efforts on voter service and education programs (such as candidate forums, the mock election at Natick High, and special programs on current topics such as the recent election on waste disposal). Another important area of League activity lies in adopting a study program, in which we take a position on an issue of local, regional, or national importance and recommend a program of action to address that issue. Before the League can take a position on an issue, however, it must initiate a formal study.

Briefly, the study process is as follows. The League board solicits ideas for a study topic from the membership. From this pool of ideas the board selects a topic and presents it to the members for adoption at the annual meeting. Once a study topic has been adopted, a study committee is formed. This committee takes on the work of formulating questions to be answered, gathering facts, and presenting information to the League membership. In conducting the study, the study committee may conduct interviews, review printed documents, and hold community forums and panel discussions to educate our members and the community about the importance of the question. In keeping with the League's reputation for nonpartisanship, the study committee is charged with ensuring that all sides of the issue are represented fairly and objectively.

On the basis of this information, our League members must then arrive at a consensus on the question in order for our League to take a position and to act on it.

We are currently soliciting ideas for a study program topic. As examples, other local Massachusetts Leagues have recently studied tax abatement (LWV of Medfield), the Community Preservation Act (LWV of Falmouth), and policies on multi-family housing (LWV of Westford).

Please consider serving on a study committee. This is a great opportunity for any League member to learn in depth about an issue we face at the local, state, or national level. Moreover, because the League of Women Voters has a strong reputation for nonpartisanship and has developed a well established procedure for executing a study in a thoughtful, comprehensive, and fair way. Taking part in a League study and shaping the League's position on an issue are thus an important way to influence issues that are important to our community.

Please send or phone your suggestions to Joan Craig at 508-651-2556 or JoanMCraig@comcast.net or to Maria Waller at 508-655-5938 or mcnwaller@comcast.net

Volunteers Needed to Serve on LWV Executive Board

The nominating committee (Maria Waller, Erica Ball, and Harlee Strauss) are seeking volunteers to serve as officers and directors for the upcoming year. The positions are as follows:

The Officers: President (two-year term), secretary (one-year term), and treasurer (two-year term).

Board of Directors: Director of voter service/citizen education (two-year term) and director of legislation/program (two-year term).

If you are interested in serving on the board, or if you would like more information regarding specific positions, contact Maria Waller at 508-655-5938 or by e-mail at mcnwaller@comcast.net.

Calendar

Date	Event
Sunday, March 6, 2005 2:00—4:00 pm	Membership Meeting and Fondue Party Laura Senier’s House, 38 Pitts Street RSVP to Laura at 508-653-7927
Tuesday, March 8, 2005 7:30 pm	Board Meeting Police Station Community Room All members welcome!
Thursday, March 17, 2005 7:30 pm	Candidate Forum: Spring Town Election <i>7:30 Selectmen candidates</i> <i>8:45 School Committee candidates</i> Morse Institute Library ~ 14 E. Central St.
Monday, March 21, 2005 9:30 am	Candidate Forum: Spring Town Election <i>7:30 Selectmen candidates</i> <i>8:45 School Committee candidates</i> Morse Institute Library ~ 14 E. Central St.
Wednesday, March 23, 2005 9:00 am: Breakfast & Registration (Nurses’ Hall) 10:00 am: Program (Gardner Auditorium)	LWV of Mass event, Day on the Hill “Beyond Election 2004: Every Voice Heard, Every Vote Counted” Massachusetts State House
Tuesday, March 29, 2005 Polls open 7:00 am – 8:00 pm	Town Election
Tuesday, April 5, 2005 7:30 pm	Board Meeting Police Station Community Room All members welcome!
April 12, 2004 7:30 pm	Spring Town Meeting begins Natick High School
Tuesday, May 10, 2005 7:30 pm	Board Meeting Police Station Community Room All members welcome!