Joint AAUW-LWV Luncheon

A look at the Future for Oneonta City School District

Dr. Michael Shea
Superintendent, Oneonta City School District

April 8, 2006

12 Noon – Waterfront Café at SUNY Oneonta

Reservation Deadline: March 27

Contact Shirley Fioravanti
432-8397

$13.50

President’s Letter

What’s In A Name?

The League of Education Voters – NOT the League of Women Voters - is threatening Republicans in Albany with election reprisals because they have appealed the court ordered financing of education. Although the name sounds the same as ours, it is not. The League of Women Voters also supports the court ordered increase and more equitable financing of education, BUT we do not and will not oppose any individuals running for office.

On a related note – the name of our organization, The League of Women Voters, is under discussion. Our State President, Marcia Merrins, has proposed that the LWVUS study the cost and impact of changing our name. Her preference is to become simply LWV, but her proposal merely recommends finding out if our name discourages men and young people from joining and what would be the financial and other implications of changing.
the name. There has been a lively interchange on the Presidents’ list serve. Some members say that since times have changed, we should change our name to reflect our current membership. Others are concerned that should we do so, we will lose our hard earned reputation, that another organization will be able to then use our “old” name, and that we should put our time and funds into a study of a critically important issue.

I was proud to vote to admit men at the National Convention thirty some years ago, and I will be a delegate to the convention this June. I hope we will be able to send a second delegate. Your delegates go to convention “informed but not committed.” So, what do you think? Should we vote to study a name change? Should we vote for a name change?

Should we vote for a new study? Our League proposed several studies and updates including immigration policies. There has been intense interest in studying immigration across the country, and I fully expect much discussion and lobbying at convention for the adoption of this issue. However, studies have a financial cost and a new study will increase the amount we pay to LWVUS (called PMP – per member payment) perhaps as much as $3 a member. Let me know what you recommend.

Dr. Kang and Dr. Scheele

Dr. Kang discussed the history of domestic surveillance in this country. He noted that by using the USA National Reconnaissance Agency, which was established in 1952, our government has been continually conducting domestic surveillance—and even before that date. Kang cited the efforts of J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI to discredit Martin Luther King using material they obtained through illegal spying. Kang stated that ALL our presidents, except Harding and Coolidge, have violated citizens’ civil liberties. In 1978, Senators Frank Church and Walter Mondale worked to get FISA (Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act) legislation through Congress, the act that requires warrants for domestic surveillance and that our current president has ignored.

Dr. Kang stated, “The public can tip the scale...it must get its act together!” Both he and Dr. Scheele urged that we contact our representatives to oppose the re-passage of the USA PATRIOT Act.

Dr. Scheele reminded us that the Bill of Rights, especially the 1st Amendment, the 5th Amendment (guarantees due process of law), and the 4th Amendment (protects against unlawful search and seizure) are constitutional rights that government cannot take away. He commented that we are in a struggle between two values which we all share: the desire for
and the 4th Amendment (protects against unlawful search and seizure) are constitutional rights that government cannot take away. He commented that we are in a struggle between two values which we all share: the desire for national security and the desire for our civil liberties. Polls have indicated that citizens want to know, want to have more information from government. With the PATRIOT Act it is difficult or impossible to know when we are listened in on, what financial or medical data of ours is being collected, etc., because anyone who is under legal obligation to reveal information (telephone companies, internet servers, doctors, librarians) cannot reveal what s/he has disclosed under severe penalty of law. Warrantless surveillance as now being conducted is a “sweep” with millions of Americans having their e-mails and phone

lines tapped without court approval, according to Scheele.

Citizens have seldom been able to do battle with government directly, but we have fared reasonably well holding on to our civil liberties across our history because historically we have required government agencies to get court approval for their investigative actions. That’s what the FISA law provides for, but the president’s orders permitting warrantless domestic surveillance have stripped checks and balances out of the system.

Dr. Scheele said, “We don’t know and they aren’t telling us!” He suggested more information on this subject is available on EPIC and ACLU web sites.

Did you know that PATRIOT is an acronym?

The official title of the PATRIOT act is "Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism" act.

Peg Hathaway

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**Joint Luncheon with AAUW**

This yearly event will take place April 8 at the Hunt Union, downstairs in the Waterfront Café at 12 PM. The special luncheon for $13.50 includes: sesame shrimp and mango salad, tortellini antipasto salad, grilled lime cilantro lemon chicken breast, stir fried vegetables with brown rice and chilled sherbet in martini glasses.

Dr. Michael Shea, Oneonta’s new superintendent will discuss the status of our school district and talk about his vision for the future of the district.

Reservations must be made by March 27 at the latest. Make the check payable to the Oneonta LWV.

**Shirley**

Name ______________________________________ number _______ amount _______

Please send reservations to:
Mrs. Joseph Fioravanti
12 Bugbee Rd.
Oneonta, NY 13820
Money Matters

In a few weeks we will send out letters in our spring finance drive asking individuals and businesses to support our activities. We need to update our list. Please send me the names and addresses of any individuals and businesses you think we should solicit.

Kay

Thanks to The Daily Star for supporting the How to Run for Office workshop with an eye-catching ad, to our local radio stations for frequent announcements and to Marti Stayton, Rich Harlem and Anne Payne for their participation.

Welcome New Member
Please add this name to your membership booklet.

Mary Rab
153 Park Dr.
Oneonta
433-1574
maryrab@aol.com

Diversity Policy

The League of Women Voters of the Oneonta Area, in both its values and practices, is committed to diversity and pluralism. There shall be no barriers to participation in the League. The League of Women Voters of the Oneonta Area recognizes that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision making.

Calendar

March 13 – Board Meeting
10 Walnut St., 7:00 P.M.

April 8 – AAUW-LWV Luncheon
Waterfront Café at SUNY Hunt Union.
Michael Shea, guest speaker

April 25 - Consensus on Financing Education in New York State

MONEY, MONEY – WHO HAS THE MONEY?
HOW NEW YORK FUNDS ITS SCHOOLS AND WHY IT MATTERS

Betsy Swan
LWVNYS Financing Education Co-Chair

Having recently made substantial financial outlays for our annual school taxes, we may be inclined to ask, “Is investment in education worth the money?” “Does the payment of equal rates of property taxes buy equal educational services throughout the state?” To this writer, the simple answers are
• Education is one of the most important investments we as a society make; and
• Payment of equal rates of property tax throughout New York does not and cannot buy equal educational services. In the following article I shall describe briefly how the State currently funds education, explain why our current system of financing education makes it difficult to buy equal educational services throughout the state, and summarize recent research about the cost to both the individual and society of failure to provide an adequate education. For more detailed information and a more nuanced look at education funding, take a look at the Financing Education Bibliographic and Summary materials on the State League’s
website (www.lwvny.org) and the Columbia University Teachers College materials on the cost of failure to provide an adequate education (www.te.columbia.edu/news/article.htm?id=5350, with links to the symposium papers and summaries). Of the League materials, the article, *Money, Money – Who Has the Money?* is especially helpful.

I. HOW WE CURRENTLY FINANCE EDUCATION IN NEW YORK STATE.

New York has traditionally depended on a mix of federal, state, and local funds to finance its schools. The funding mix has varied over time, often as a result of the fiscal health of the various funding units.

Federal aid accounts for approximately 6% of total aid. The State share of education funding has varied over time from a high of 48.1% for the 1968-69 school year to a low of 31.5% for the 1944-45 school year. In fiscal year 2002/03, 16% of state revenue was used to fund the STAR program, 73% came from the General Fund, composed primarily of sales and income tax, and approximately 11% came from a Special Fund supported by the lottery. Property taxes account for approximately 90% of local revenues. Local Boards of Education in all but the Big 5 school districts (New York, Yonkers, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse), levy property taxes on residential and commercial property, subject to voter approval. The finances of the Big 5 school districts, which in 2002-03 educated approximately 42% of the state’s students, are part of the cities’ municipal budgets, so residents do not approve local school tax rates. Each of the Big 5 districts has a constitutional limit on its total municipal budget. The Regents have recommended that the education budgets of the Big 5 districts be made independent of their municipal budgets. Alternatively, the Regents have suggested maintenance of educational effort provision in the municipal budgets. New York City imposes a modified local income tax on residents, a business and financial tax, and a tax on commercial rents. Yonkers imposes an income tax on non-resident commuters. The New York State rate of sales tax is currently 4.25%. Localities are able to levy a sales tax of up to 4%. Eight counties share their sales tax with schools and are legally able to share other taxes. In 2002-03 150 districts received a total of $225 million in revenues from non-property tax revenues. Small city school districts can impose a utility tax of up to 3%, and approximately ¼ of these districts do. Districts whose tax bases are affected by Industrial Development Agencies, business development corporations that are exempt from real property, sales, and mortgage taxes, are entitled to a pro-rata portion of PILOTS (Payments in Lieu of Taxes) paid by these organizations.

II. HOW IS AID CURRENTLY DISTRIBUTED?

New York State has four methods of distributing state aid for education:

- **Flat grant per pupil.** This aid goes to each district within the state on a per capita basis and is not wealth-geared. This is used for textbook aid, gifted and talented aid, and flat grant operating aid.
- **Wealth-geared fixed amount of state aid per pupil.** Aid is distributed as an allowance amount per pupil equalized in relation to district fiscal capacity. Poorer districts receive more of this type of aid. Formula Operating Aid is distributed in this fashion.
- **Effort or expense-based aid.** This aid equals the State Share, a wealth equalized percentage reimbursement for expenses previously approved by the state. It includes Transportation Aid, Building and BOCES Aids, and a portion of Formula Operating Aid.
- **Tax relief in the form of the STAR program, which is used to reduce local property taxes.**

III. IS THE CURRENT SYSTEM OF FINANCING EDUCATION EQUITABLE?

A. Do New York State Districts Spend Comparable Amounts To Educate Their Children? In general, there is a tremendous disparity in the amount NYS districts spend to educate their children. For the 2002-03 fiscal year, the district spending at the tenth percentile spent on average $6,313 in operating expenses (all funds, excluding transportation aid, building aid, and limited additional expenses) to educate
each student, while the district spending at the
ninetieth percentile
spent an average of $11,769, a difference of
86%. Although the percentage disparity between
the first and ninth decile districts in terms of
spending has decreased over the past twenty
years, it has held relatively constant over the
past six years at between 84 and 88%.
B. Is The Disparity In Spending Related To The
Overall Wealth Of The District?
Wealthier districts, as measured by the value of
taxable property per student within the district
and income per student within the district,
generally spend more money educating each
child. For the 2002-03 school year, the districts
with per student spending in the lowest decile
($6,004) had
average annual real estate valuation per student
of $153,319 and average income per student of
$67,113. The districts in the ninth decile
($10,833) had actual valuation per student of
$604,151 and income per student of $299,657.
Thus, poorer districts must tax their real estate
at a higher rate if they are to raise funds
comparable to those raised by wealthier
districts.

IV. WHAT IS THE SHORT AND LONG-
TERM COST TO SOCIETY OF FAILURE TO
PROVIDE AN ADEQUATE EDUCATION TO
ALL ITS CHILDREN?
A recent two-day symposium at Columbia
University’s Teachers College attempted to
quantify the social cost of failing to provide
children with an adequate education. Among the
startling findings were:
• A high school dropout earns about $260,000
less over a lifetime and pays about $60,000 less
in taxes than a high school graduate;
• The US loses $50 Billion in state and federal
taxes annually from its high school
dropouts;
• The US loses $192 Billion (1.6%) of GDP) in
combined income and other tax revenue
loses with each cohort of 18 year olds who
never completes high school. Increasing the
educational attainment by one year would
recoup nearly half those losses;
• The US could save at least $7.9 Billion
annually in the cost of governmental welfare
and food and housing support programs by
improving educational attainment;
• Increasing the high school completion rate for
all men aged 20-60 by 1% would cut the
annual cost of crime by up to $1.4 Billion
• The demographics of the county are such that
there will be a shortfall of a 7 million
college educated workers by 2012.

V. WHAT CAN BE DONE TO REMEDY
THIS PROBLEM?
Research indicates that there are things that can
increase educational attainment. Among other
things,
participation in model preschool programs has
been shown to reduce dropout rates, boost
academic
achievement, and lower the risk of teen
parenting, drug use and criminal violence. The
economic benefit of such programs has been
shown to be as much as $7 for each dollar
invested, or a return of 700%. The Schools for
New York’s Future Act, which would alter the
way the state funds education and attempt to
implement the Campaign for Fiscal Equity order
throughout the state, would give poorer districts
a more level playing field for those districts
without reducing state aid for wealthier districts.

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Update from LWVNYS
March 2006

Big League Raffle Returns
Back by popular demand!! The 2005 Big League Raffle was such a rousing success that we are doing it again this year. Once again the raffle will be a partnership with local Leagues; most Leagues loved having a raffle without all the hassle of setting one up.

Last year’s raffle netted over $18,000 with over $4400 rebated back to local Leagues. An additional $950 was given to the League that sold the first place prize. Imagine if we had a $50,000 profit from ticket sales statewide. The prize money share would be $25,000 distributed to the lucky winners. In addition, $10,000 would be returned to local Leagues based upon how many tickets each sold, $12,500 would go to the state League to finance statewide projects, and the League that sold the first place ticket would receive $2500 for their local projects. With 6,000 members statewide, this is very attainable.

We will be mailing raffle tickets to every League member in New York State in early April. What could be easier! This is a proven win-win fund-raiser. We hope you make this a really Big League Raffle!

2007 Convention Heading to Westchester
Hot News! The next LWVNYS state Convention will be held May 18-20, 2007 in White Plains at the Crowne Plaza hotel.

If you would like to assist in any way: budget committee, workshops, speakers, silent auction, hospitality, bylaws committee, or as a volunteer at Convention, please contact Marcia Merrins at mmerrins@netsync.net or 716-672-4275.

Also, let your local League know if you are interested in representing it at Convention next year. We need delegates to participate and give your state board direction for 2007-2009!

LWV in Search of New Home
After much thought and discussion, the State Board voted at the last meeting to sell the current League headquarters and look for new space in the capital district. Although the Maiden Lane building has served the League well for nearly 20 years, the State Board thought that accessibility issues, coupled with the expectation of needed repairs in the not-too-distant future made this an optimum time to sell.

The League received several competitive offers and has gone to contract with an expected closing date sometime in March. The League will rent the current space after closing until a new home is found. A committee has been appointed to analyze the benefits of leasing versus buying a new building and to search for new space.

State League Starts Search for New Executive Director
Executive Director Rob Marchiony will be leaving us this August. Rob will be graduating from law school in May, and has been hired to serve the Supreme Court, Appellate Division, Third Department as an Assistant Appellate Court Attorney.

The State League board has formed a search committee and has started to advertise the position. The committee will start interviewing applicants in mid-March and continue until the position is filled.

If you know of anyone who is qualified and might be interested in the position, please encourage them to contact the state League office for more information at 518-465-4162, or via email at lwvny@lwvny.org.

This summer, LWVNYS will also be looking for an additional staff person to coordinate special projects!

Join the State League at the Freihofer's Run!
Be sure to mark your calendars for the "Freihofer's Run for Women" in Albany on Sat. June 3, 2006. The LWVNYS hopes to establish a major presence at this annual event and increase League visibility with LWV t-shirts for our runners, walkers, volunteers, and spectators. Plans include coordinating housing with local League members for those attending from out of town. Details will follow, but you can learn more about this annual women's event at www.freihofersrun.com.

New LeaderSpark Programs Underway
As part of the Students Inside Albany program, five local Leagues are implementing the LeaderSpark leadership-training curriculum for high school students starting in March. Participating Leagues are Albany, Shelter Island, Schenectady, Geneva, and Saratoga.

We hope to expand this program to more Leagues in coming years, so please take the opportunity to visit one of these Leagues' programs, or better yet, participate as a volunteer facilitator!

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF NEW YORK STATE
35 Maiden Lane
Albany, NY 12207-2712
(518) 465-4162
Fax (518) 465-0812

Web Address: www.lwvny.org
e-mail: lwvny@lwvny.org
GET INVOLVED!
TO: Action Chairs, Issues & Advocacy/Lobby Chairs, Program Chairs
FROM: Jane Chase, Off-Board Specialist, Lead Poisoning
P.O. Box 404, Penfield, NY 14526
E-mail: jchase@frontiernet.net

MAKING LEAD POISONING HISTORY

As 2005 ended, efforts to prevent New York’s children from being lead poisoned continue to advance. Legislation in the United States Senate, New York State Legislature and in the City of Rochester provide ample evidence that the focus on the public policy initiatives is shifting from treating children who are poisoned to preventing poisonings by making sure that children are not poisoned by their home environments.

In the City of Rochester, lead poisoning prevention advocates expect agreement on a local law that will require periodic inspections to ensure that lead-based paint in older housing is not deteriorating into lead chips, flakes and dust—the primary source of lead poisoning for children.

At the state level, the Coalition to End Lead Poisoning in New York State, of which the League is a Steering Committee member, continues to grow, recently adding the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, Kids Against Pollution and Citizens Environmental Coalition to its list of more than 20 groups. In addition, the issue of lead poisoning prevention will be the subject of an all-day symposium at Albany Law School highly respected Government Law Center on March 16, 2006.

The 2006 legislative session will see the Coalition to End Lead Poisoning in New York State press for primary prevention legislation—a bill based on the Coalition’s recommendations. The key to childhood lead poisoning primary prevention strategies is to ensure that landlords of older housing properly maintain their buildings. The legislation will obligate property owners to make regular inspections and will require the State and local health departments to design and implement intensive prevention plans in communities that have had significant numbers of children with elevated blood lead levels.

Congress also is showing renewed interest in the issue of childhood lead poisoning. Senator Clinton has signed on as a co-sponsor of legislation that would provide tax credits for property owners who take steps to prevent paint from deteriorating. While the League and the Coalition to End Lead Poisoning in New York State analyze this and other lead poisoning prevention proposals, all these initiatives point to the momentum that is building for comprehensive programs to prevent childhood lead poisoning.

The League in Rochester has been an active participant in the Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning, advocating for local legislation and the routine inspection of older homes for the presence of lead. Promoting lead safe homes in all communities across the state should be the priority of all local Leagues.

As your representative on the Coalition to End Lead Poisoning in New York State, I want to encourage Leagues to use Rochester’s successes as an incentive to participate in our statewide efforts to pass legislation protecting our children from lead poisoning. For more information about lead poisoning and how to get involved, please contact me at jchase@frontiernet.net.