

Newsletter

Sign Up Today To Receive a Redistricting Reform Petition

Please support redistricting reform this fall by requesting and signing a petition that would take away from the state legislature the power to draw district lines and give it to a non-partisan independent commission that would follow strict rules and would welcome citizen input. Also, consider collecting signatures – we are looking for active members who can help us reach Newton’s 3000 signature goal.

Since the 1970’s when the legislature started doing its own redistricting, gerrymandering has been the norm, and the cost is high: unfair political gain; lack of electoral competition;

cronyism; poor community representation; disenfranchisement of minorities Their secretive, partisan, insider process is a serious obstruction of democracy that must be corrected.

As you know from last fall’s non-binding ballot question in Newton, the LWVMA has been working with Common Cause and other organizations to design a better system, based on successful independent commissions in other states. Now we must gather about 100,000 signatures statewide this fall to bring the reform before the legislature in constitutional convention and before the voters.

TO OBTAIN A PETITION:

Go to www.MassFairDistricts.org and click on “*Sign the Petition*”. After filling out a form, you will be put on a list to be mailed the petition in late September, when they are issued.

OR

If you don’t use the Internet, call Beth Lowd at 617-332-1978 to give her your name and address. She will see that you receive a petition.

Your only obligation is to sign and return it. To be more helpful, also ask your family, friends and neighbors who live in Newton to sign it. If you have time, try to fill it up with names!

The web site above also contains lots of information and resources, including the text of the initiative petition, sample letters to the editor, and examples of badly gerrymandered

Massachusetts districts. We have included some of the frequently asked questions with answers in this Newsletter. Reading this information will give you confidence that you can explain why we need this reform.

Beth Lowd will be coordinating teams of LWVN members to collect signatures at the farmers markets, the Harvest Fair, the library, and grocery stores this fall. She’ll be calling as many LWVN members as possible to ask them to help. If you can, try to respond positively! Better yet, if you’d like to help, call her at 617-332-1978.

Together we can end the shame of gerrymandering and move Massachusetts to fair districts that will result in fairer elections. ■

Civil Liberties/Homeland Security

A Local Voices Public Dialogue

October 8, 2005

*Register by
October 3rd*

Are you concerned about how to protect our civil liberties while making our community safe? If so, you are invited to speak your mind in a public dialogue on Saturday, October 8th. A consortium of eastern Massachusetts local League of Women Voter chapters invites the public to a facilitated Local Voices conversation from 10am to 3pm at the Boston Municipal Building, Curtis Hall, 20 South Street, Jamaica Plain. John Cohen, Homeland Security Policy Advisor of the Executive Office of Public Safety, and Russell Chernin of the American Civil Liberties Union will present their differing viewpoints.

Continued on page four

LWVN Officers and Directors 2005-2006

STEERING COMMITTEE

Bonnie Carter	617-969-0686
Amelia Koch	617-244-2647
Ann Grantham	617-964-0333
Sharyn Roberts	617-969-9588
Sue Rosenbaum Spokesperson	617-332-0306

OFFICERS

Clerk	Allison Stoner	617-527-4018
Treasurer	Andrea Kozinetz Holtz	617-964-6490

DIRECTORS

Local Action & Newsletter	Andreae Downs	617-969-7123
Study for Concurrence	Priscilla Leith	617-969-6837
Housing	Roberta Leviton	617-965-0016
Fair Districts	Beth Lowd	617-332-1978
Environment	Martha Richmond	617-244-2076

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Jody Klein, Chair	617-244-4767
Members:	Ruby Ajanee Carol Ann Shea

OFF BOARD SPECIALISTS

Handbook	Robin Maltz	617-969-1554
Human Rights	Holly Gunner	617-964-0767
Legislature Roundtable	Ruby Ajanee	617-243-9888
Local Action	Deb Crossley Co-chair	617-244-7597
Membership	Elaine Reisman Co-chair	617-244-6439
Topic Meetings	Pat Acton	617-965-5572
	Linda Morrison	617-332-6539
Recycling	Barbara Herson	617-964-7463
Web Site	Judy Jaffe	617-969-7427

NEWSLETTER

Editor	Ann Grantham	617-964-0333
--------	--------------	--------------

The LWVN Newsletter is published nine times per year. The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization open to all citizens of voting age. For more information about the League of Women Voters, call 617-964-0014.

PO Box 610207
Newton, MA 02461
617-964-0014

<http://www.lwvn.ma.lwvnet.org>

September Kudos

Many thanks to the candidates for School Committee and Mona Schwartz, moderator from LWV/ Brookline, for making that special effort to participate in a debate before Labor Day. The cablecast was viewed on NewTV many times prior to the preliminary election enabling voters to make informed decisions.

Thanks also go to Debbie Winnick, LWV/ Needham for moderating the debate of Mayoral candidates directly after Labor Day. We were pleased to have the three candidates present. Members of the studio audience provided questions on a wide range of topics.

In addition to the on camera people, there was a creditable support team of Newton Leaguers, timing, sorting questions, ushering and promoting membership in the League. Special thanks go to all who participated.

The Informational Meeting series initial meeting was hosted by Ruth Neiberg in what is becoming a delightful tradition. Catherine Dowd, LWVM Program and Action VP, clearly presented the Empowering Voters Project. The group in attendance posed excellent questions. Thanks go to all.

It's been a pleasure to have Membership Coffees this month. Elaine Reisman, Membership Co-chair, has been the catalyst, inviting prospective and relatively new members to learn more about the League. Special thanks go to Andreae Downs, Beth Lowd, Robin Maltz and the members of the Steering Committee.

I encourage you all to enjoy your membership in the League through participation. On Sundays, October 16th and 23rd, there will be Candidates' Debates. Help is needed. Call me at 617- 969-9588. I'd love to put you to work.

Sharyn Roberts ■

LWVM FALL PHONOTHON

Monday, October 24 and Tuesday, October 25

The Massachusetts League's major annual fund raiser takes place in October.

Funds raised benefit both the state and local leagues.



Contribute before October 7: 10% of your gift goes to the Newton League. *Have fun and help!*

Take part in a calling session: \$10 goes to the Newton League for every member who participates, and 10% of the funds you raise go to the Newton League.

The LWVM provides training, supper and prizes for all callers.

The Phonothon is scheduled throughout Massachusetts for October 2-25.

Our local host is Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage, Newton – 12 callers per session are needed.

Contact Bonnie Carter, 617-969-0696 or Bonniehcarter@aol.com to reserve your date. She can also provide you with information about other dates and locations which may suit your schedule. ■

Welcome New Member!

MARY ANN DONALDSON
61 Allison Street,
Newton, MA 02458
617 964-1990

maryannodon@verizon.net

Redistricting Questions & Answers

By Pam Wilmot and Beth Lowd

What's wrong with the current redistricting process?

Having elected officials draw the districts in which they will run is like the proverbial fox guarding the chicken coop. The redistricting process is used to box potential challengers out of districts and to design districts that maximize support for those in control of the process. Thanks to the wizardry of computer programs that draw incumbent-safe districts with ease, the current process of redistricting is nothing short of democracy on its head: Elected officials picking their voters instead of the other way around. That's not what democracy is all about.

Redistricting can also be fraught with favoritism: legislative leadership has used it to punish disfavored legislators and reward loyal lieutenants. In the process, communities are fractured, minorities disenfranchised, and districts designed that look like salamanders, snakes, and saxophones. Electoral competition suffers as a result.

How are electoral districts currently drawn?

The State Legislature redraws electoral districts following the U.S. census every 10 years for the offices of State Representative, State Senator, and Representatives in Congress. Redrawing districts, or "redistricting" is required by the state and U.S. Constitutions to maintain the notion of "one person, one vote." Without readjusting electoral districts periodically, population shifts would result in some districts containing vastly more people than others, which would "dilute" some people's votes and give others more influence.

Today, redistricting is conducted behind closed doors on Beacon Hill with little discussion or public input. In 2001, legislators on the House redistricting committee were handed a leadership-designed map 10 minutes prior to the vote and told to vote "yes"—and they did.

How should the redistricting process work?

Redistricting should be conducted without political and racial bias. It should keep towns and communities of interest together whenever possible and should not protect favored legislative leaders. It should not be a tool to punish anyone regardless of political belief or status as a challenger or incumbent. Redistricting should be open to public input and scrutiny from beginning to end. We hope to institute a fairer process.

How will this be accomplished?

Redistricting should be taken out of the hands of self-interested legislative leaders and put it into a non-partisan independent redistricting commission guided by strict standards. These standards would become part of our state constitution and would require that:

- Towns and neighborhoods within cities be kept intact and not split between multiple legislators.
- Districts be compact and contiguous.
- Addresses of candidates, including current elected officials and potential candidates should not be part of the calculation.
- Districts uphold the federal voting rights act and not reduce minority representation.
- All aspects of the process be public, including all meetings and documents.
- Citizens should be able to submit maps and provide public comment on any proposals.

Finally, all aspects of the Commission's work would be open and public, unlike the Legislature, which is not subject to the open meetings or public records laws. As they say, sunlight is the best disinfectant.

Has this worked in other states?

Yes. Eleven states conducted redistricting through a commission in 2002, and the average competitiveness of the districts, 70.4 percent, was significantly higher than the roughly 50 percent rate of competition produced by legislative bodies. In Massachusetts our competition rate has been a shockingly low 33 percent. That means that more than two-thirds of our elected officials have no challengers whatsoever. Last year, we did have more competition because Governor Romney recruited many former business colleagues to run for legislative office. But given their 0% success rate, this is unlikely to happen again.

Informational Meeting on Newton North High School

On July 7, 2004, the school committee voted to build an entirely new Newton North High School. Since then, there's been a lot of heat and not a lot of light around the project.

**WEDNESDAY,
OCTOBER 12,
11:30A.M.-1:30 P.M.**
*at the home of
PAT ACTON*
*Come with your questions
(and your lunch!)*

Nick Parnell, Commissioner of Public Buildings, will attend our LWVN Informational Meeting and shed light on what's ahead in the Newton North High School Project. ■

SAVE THE DATE

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2005

Register by October 12. See Calendar

Burlington Marriott

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS CITIZEN EDUCATION FUND

Presents

FALL CONFERENCE 2005

FEATURED SPEAKERS:

Gracia Hillman

Chair, Election Assistance Commission

Barbara Arnwine

*Executive Director, Lawyers' Committee
for Civil Rights Under Law*



Continued from page one

Civil Liberties/Homeland Security

A broad diversity among facilitators and participants is being sought. A free lunch will be provided to all participants who register by Oct. 3rd. A few more facilitators who can attend the training September 29th at 5 pm are also needed. To register for either role, please call Dotty Burstein at (781) 729-7357 or email pmuldoon@lwwma.org.

The League of Women Voters wishes to foster a public dialogue about the balance between civil liberties and homeland security through broad-based community conversations. Ten conversations have already been held across the country. This priority-setting discussion for the greater Boston area is in anticipation of the Senate debate about the sunset provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act. The local leagues involved include Arlington, Belmont, Boston, Brookline, Waltham, Watertown, and Winchester.

"In this post-September 11th world, it is important to understand the possibility for tension between our civil liberties and the security of our nation at the federal and local levels," said Patricia Muldoon, the chair of the State LWV

Administration of Justice Committee. "This consortium of Leagues is thrilled to bring this conversation to the eastern Massachusetts region. It is important for our communities to have the opportunity to learn about and discuss these issues and understand the ways in which citizen voices can be heard. People want to talk about civil liberties and homeland security, and Local Voices provides them with an arena for this discussion," "We invite broad public participation in these forums – diverse voices on this subject need to be heard. We hope to increase citizen understanding of how these issues are handled at the local level, and to encourage members of the public to learn how to interact with local government in regards to these topics. Through Local Voices, citizens of our community will be helping to shape the discussion of this topic both locally and nationally."

Curtis Hall is close to the Forest Hill Orange line stop and on the 39 Bus Route and has free parking. For directions, go to <http://www.cityofboston.gov/bcyf/search.asp>. To learn more about the results of other Local Voices public dialogues across the country, go to www.lwv.org. ■

Redistricting Questions & Answers

Continued from page three

How would members of the commission be selected?

The redistricting commission will have seven members who are appointed in a three-step process to ensure fairness.

- IN THE FIRST STEP, three members are directly appointed as follows:

Who Makes the Appointment	Who They Can Choose
The Attorney General <i>One Appointment</i>	A retired federal or state judge who lives in Massachusetts.
The Secretary of the Commonwealth <i>One Appointment</i>	An expert in civil rights law.
The Governor <i>One Appointment</i>	A dean or tenured professor from a private college or university in Massachusetts, who specializes in government or law

- IN STEP TWO, the four state legislative leaders (Speaker of the House, Senate President, and both Minority Leaders) each nominate three Massachusetts residents for the commission that meet the criteria below.
- IN THE FINAL STEP, the three directly appointed commissioners appoint one of the three nominees forwarded by each legislative leader.

Guidelines are written into the law to promote the selection of commissioners who will meet goals for fair redistricting:

The Goals	Guidelines to Meet Them
Experience and Expertise	Select commissioners on the basis of civic involvement and knowledge of redistricting, civil and voting rights, government, demographics, statistics, elections, and or law
Diversity	Select commissioners who reflect diversity in geography, age, race, gender, and ethnicity
Insulation from Political Pressure	Elected officials, their employees, and registered lobbyists are not eligible. Commissioners may not run for office until after the next round of redistricting (10 years).

Would the Legislature have any role at all in redistricting?

Yes, they would have the opportunity to comment on and to vote on three successive plans put forward by the commission. They could not amend a plan. The public would also have a three week comment period after the publication of each plan. If the Legislature has not accepted any of the first three plans, the commission would establish a fourth and final plan.

Are our Newton legislators in favor of an independent commission?

Senator Creem and Representatives Balsler and Khan are co-sponsors of a bill that would make this change. ■

Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

My Email address may be shared with State and National LWV

- I would like to join the League of Women voters of Newton. Enclosed is my check for \$55 payable to LWVN.
- Lifetime membership \$1000**
- I would like to receive materials about the League.
- I would like to be contacted by a League member to talk about LWVN.

Mail this form (and your check, if joining) to:
Andrea Kozinetz Holtz at 8 Stoney Brae Road,
Newton Highlands, MA 02461



JOHN T. BURNS
INSURANCE AGENCY, INC.

Auto - Home - Business - Life

803 Washington Street Newtonville 617-332-1840



The Ground Round Restaurant
One First Avenue
Needham, MA 02494
781-444-6360

VETERANS TAXI

TRANSPORTATION
Everywhere You Want To Be.
Now Accepting



So... Don't Leave Home Without Us.

Call

527-0300

OPEN 24 HOURS



Keep the FREE.
Get rid* of this!



- FREE checking**
- FREE standard checks**
- FREE ATMs**
- FREE debit card**
- FREE online banking**
- FREE online bill payment**

No fine print!

Call us today at:
(617) 527-6090



Auburndale • Newton Highlands
Newtonville • Nonantum
Waban • Wayland
www.village-bank.com



VANTAGE GRAPHICS

Commercial Printing

Direct Mail • Brochures • Newsletters • Publications

sales@vangraph.com

617.796.9900

General Contractors



CUSTOM BUILDING SOLUTIONS INC.

Custom Renovations & Additions New Homes

PO Box 620301
Newton Lower Falls, MA 02462
617-964-5964 Phone
781-659-6586 Fax

BYGGMEISTER, INC.

KITCHENS • BATHS • ADDITIONS • DECKS



Paul Eldrenkamp
617 527-7871

*Our politics may lean to the left,
but our work...NEVER!*

Newsletter Sponsors

Stephen P. DesRoche, P.L.S.
President

NEPONSET VALLEY SURVEY ASSOCIATES, INC.
Land Surveyors & Civil Engineers

Phone: 617-472-4867
Fax: 617-472-2682
Beeper: 781-649-0664

95 White Street
Quincy, MA 02169



Garden City Homes, Inc
324 Walnut St.
Newton, Massachusetts
Business (617) 969-2121
Fax (617) 527-2973

Carol Ann Shea
Owner Broker

Each Office Is Independently Owned And Operated



P i e r c e C o n w a y D E S I G N

visual communications

508.651.7902
design@pierceconway.com

Election Dates

Municipal Election Day
Tuesday, November 8, 2005



The Newsletter is a communication tool for our Newton League. Communication needs to be timely and for several years our Newsletter has been arriving at a snail's pace. This edition has been mailed to you First Class. We trust that you are learning about all the activities coming up in the month of October and have time to make plans to participate.

**For those of you who live green,
we have another option.**

Join our LWVNSaveTrees listserv and you will receive an electronic message to view the Newsletter as soon as it is posted on our website. It's your choice. Continue to receive a printed copy in the first class mail or send a blank e-mail to:

LWVNSaveTrees-subscribe@yahoogroups.com
and save trees. ■

LWVN CALENDAR

October

- 1 Saturday, 12 noon, **LWVM Region 5 Meeting**, Arlington. Contact Sharyn Roberts, 617-969-9588.
- 8 Saturday, 10a.m. to 3 p.m., **Civil Liberties/Homeland Security**, facilitated Local Voices conversation at the Boston Municipal Building, Curtis Hall, 20 South Street, Jamaica Plain. Dotty Burstein at (781) 729-7357 or pmuldoon@lwvma.org.
- 12 Wednesday, 11:30a.m.-1:30 p.m. **Informational Meeting /aka Unit Meeting**, Newton North, special guest Nick Parnell, at the home of Pat Acton, 48 Miller Rd., 617-965-5572, Brown bagging encouraged.
- 12 Registration Deadline for LWVM Fall Conference. All League members invited. Registration fee, \$25, includes lunch. Contact LWVM at 617-523-2899.
- 16 Sunday, **Harvest Fest**, Noon -5 p.m. Newton Centre Green. To participate contact Sharyn Roberts, 617-969-9588, Sharyn@neovana.com (Rain Date, Sunday October 23rd.)
- 16 **Candidates Debate**, 5p.m., Aldermen-at-Large, NewTV Studio, 90 Lincoln St. Contact Bonnie Carter, 617-969-0686.

- 18 Tuesday, 7:30p.m., **Local Action Committee meeting**, at the home of Andreae Downs, 854 Chestnut St., Waban, 617-969-7123.
- 19 7:15 p.m., **Board Meeting**, at the home of Sue Rosenbaum, 121 Winslow Road, Waban, 617-332-0306. Chair Bonnie Carter

8:00 p.m. Last hour and day to register to vote for the November 8, 2005 Municipal Election.
- 22 Saturday, **LWVMA Fall Conference**, 9:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., Burlington Marriott
- 23 Sunday, **Candidates Debates**, 5pm Ward Aldermen, School Committee and Mayoral. NewTV Studio, 90 Lincoln St. Contact Bonnie Carter, 617-969-0686.
- 24 Monday, 5:30 – 9:00 p.m., **Phonothon**, Thanks to Coldwell Banker for the use of their office. Contact Bonnie Carter, 617-969-0686, training, supper and prizes provided.
- 25 Tuesday, 5:30-9:00 p.m., **Phonothon**, Thanks to Coldwell Banker for the use of their office. Contact Bonnie Carter, 617-969-0686, training, supper and prizes provided.
- 27 Thursday, 6:30 p.m. **Working Board / Potluck** at the home of Ann Grantham, 46 East Side Pkwy., Newtonville, 617-964-0333. Chair Bonnie Carter.

November

- 2 Wednesday, 12-1p.m., **Local Action Committee** meeting at the home of Andreae Downs, 854 Chestnut St., Waban, 817-969-7123.
- 8 Tuesday, **Municipal Election Day**, Polls Open 7a.m. - 8 p.m.

NH Neighborhood Council Election Day, Polls Open 7 a.m.-8 p.m., NewTV conference room, 90 Lincoln St, Newton Highlands. Poll Workers needed. Contact Sharyn Roberts, 617-969-9588.
- 9 Wednesday, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., **Informational Meeting**.

7:15 p.m. **Board Meeting** at the home of Beth Lowd, 38 Hobart Rd. Newton Centre, 617-332-1978. Chair, Bonnie Carter
- 17 6:30 p.m. **Working Board / Potluck** at the home of Ann Grantham, 46 East Side Pkwy, Newtonville, 617-964-0333. Chair, Ann Grantham
- 28 7:30 p.m. **LWVN Environmental Committee/Green Decade Energy Action Plan Forum**, What We Can Do, Druker Auditorium, Newton Free Library. Contact Martha Richmond, 617-244-2076.

Legislative Roundtable



For current schedule log on to www.newtv.org

League of Women Voters of Newton

PO Box 610207
 Newton, MA 02461
 617-964-0014
www.lwvn.ma.lwvnet.org

What's Inside

- Redistricting Reform*1
- Civil Liberties/Homeland Securities*1
- Steering Committee*2
- Phonothon*2
- New Members*2
- Redistricting Q&A*3
- FallConference/*
Empowering Voters Project4
- Informational Meeting*4
- Think Green*7