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# League of Women Voters of Newton

# Newsletter

Volume 17, Issue 4

visit us online at [www.lwvnewton.org](http://www.lwvnewton.org)

October 2011

## The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education

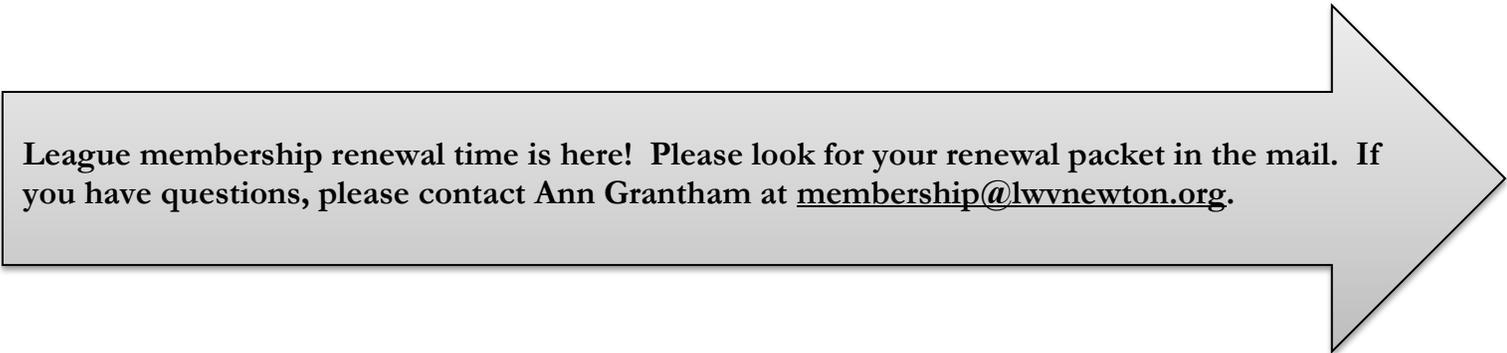
*By Jo Corro*

As we hope most of you have heard by now, the LWV US is conducting a Consensus Study on the Role of the Federal Government in Public Education. LWVN is conducting the following meetings to provide an opportunity for you to become informed and for your voice to be heard.

**Informational Meeting:** In preparation for reaching consensus there will be an informal opportunity for members to get together to discuss the issues and questions on **Monday, October 3 from 7:00-9:30 p.m.** at Newton City Hall in the cafeteria (lower level). This meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss the consensus questions for both *Common Core Standards* and *Equity and Funding*. We are honored that **David Fleishman, Superintendent of the Newton Public Schools, and Ann Koufman, Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning**, have agreed to come and be resources for our discussion. Since there may be interest beyond the League, please invite interested friends and family, especially potential League members. To access the study's background papers, click on [National Study webpage](#) or go to the [LWVN website](#) and click on the National Study link.

**Consensus Meetings:** We will be holding two Consensus Meetings; both will be on **Thursday, October 13**. One meeting will be during our regular topic meeting time and location, at 11:30 a.m., at the NewTV Conference Room, 23 Needham Street, Newton Highlands (bring lunch). We will focus on the Common Core questions. The second meeting will be that evening at 7:00 p.m. in the Newton City Hall Cafeteria, and will focus on the Equity and Funding consensus questions. For those who would like to review the articles you are invited to come to these meetings ½ hour before the meetings start. Copies of the articles will be available for you. You can click on this link [The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education Consensus questions](#) to view the questions or go to the LWVN website and scroll down the home page to this link.

This is a timely issue since there is presently a stalemate in Congress over the Obama administration's blueprint for revising the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Some of the issues in this education study relate to the proposed ESEA. Participating in the consensus reached by local Leagues throughout the country, and put forward by the LWVUS, may help change that dynamic. We hope that these meetings will be well-attended.



**League membership renewal time is here! Please look for your renewal packet in the mail. If you have questions, please contact Ann Grantham at [membership@lwvnewton.org](mailto:membership@lwvnewton.org).**

## OFFICERS & DIRECTORS 2011-2012

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For an **audio version** of this newsletter, call Anne Borg at 617-244-6366.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization. Regular membership is open to all citizens (men and women) of voting age; associate membership is open to young people and noncitizens. Your annual dues give you membership in local, state and national leagues.

For more information about the League of Women Voters, including information on joining us, call 617-383-4598 or visit [www.lwvnewton.org](http://www.lwvnewton.org).

## COMMITTEE CHAIRS

### Education Study Committee

Jo Corro  
Lynn Scheller

### Elections Committee

Nancy Criscitiello  
Ellen Glusman

### Environmental Issues

Alison Leary Mooradian

### Environmental Issues

#### Water Subcommittee

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### Newsletter & Website

Lisa Mirabile & Tami Roberts

### Topic Meetings

Jo Corro

### Voters Service/Citizen Education

Bonnie Carter  
Sharyn Roberts

## Voters Service Updates & News

The Voters Service Committee is setting up candidates forums for all contested offices to be held at NewTV on Sunday, October 23, 2011, starting at 11:00 AM and going throughout the afternoon. To view the debate time for your candidate please visit the Newton League website at [www.lwvnewton.org](http://www.lwvnewton.org).

All Newton residents are welcome to be part of the NewTV audience on that day. To ask your questions of the candidates, we ask the audience to arrive fifteen minutes before the forum and hand their questions to the ushers.

We are pleased to have NewTV once again as our co-sponsor and are looking forward to a productive relationship working with Stephen Kessinger, the new Government Access Coordinator for NewTV's blue channel.

We still need forum helpers for Sunday, October 23rd. You have a choice to be a greeter, usher, or question sorter. We welcome your help for one forum or for more if you can.

If you have not done so already, a reminder that the last day to register to vote in this years municipal election is Wednesday, October 19, 2011, by 5:00 pm.

The Voters Service Committee needs helpers for the following activities:

- registering new voters at the Newton Farmers Market;
- registering new voters at the City of Newton Harvest Fair on Sunday, October 16th in Newton Centre;
- helping with the Candidate Forums on Sunday, October 23rd, at NewTV studios;
- driving people to vote for the "Ride to the Polls" on Tuesday, November 8, Municipal Election.

Any Newton League member who would like to help out for an hour or more, please contact Sharyn or Bonnie at [voterservice@lwvnewton.org](mailto:voterservice@lwvnewton.org).

## Letter from the Presidents

Despite trying to wring out a few extra days of summer, LWVN has had a very busy month planning for so many Fall events. First, we are quite excited to be part of the national League education study, “The Role of the Federal Government in Public Education.” LWVN is very fortunate to have members and educators Jo Corro and Lynn Scheller leading the study. Jo and Lynn will hold an information and discussion session on the two main areas of the study (Common Core Standards and Equity and Funding) on Monday, October 3, from 7 – 9:30 p.m. in the City Hall cafeteria. Two separate consensus meetings will be held on Thursday, October 13; the Common Core Standards section from 11:30 am – 1:30 pm, and the Equity and Funding section from 7 – 9 p.m. Please join us for some or all of these meetings!

Many thanks to Chris Steele for his interesting and informative presentation, “What Does Economic Development Mean to Newton?” at September’s topic meeting. Chris is a Newton resident, an occasional visiting professor at UMass Boston and UMass Dartmouth on Regional Economic Development, and a consultant specializing in corporate site selection and economic development. This information on economic development will help LWVN members discuss what they would like for Newton and make informed choices when reviewing and evaluating proposed developments. Please find meeting notes on page 5.

In August, Ann Grantham, Anne Borg and Sue Flicop attended the LWVUS’ Membership and Leadership Development conference in Marlborough, MA. The purpose was to learn how our local League can attract new members and continue our tradition of voters service and local advocacy. Look for membership information at all our events and be sure to talk to your friends about your reasons for being a member!

Speaking of membership, September is renewal time for all members. Please respond as generously as you can to the upcoming notification—we rely on your help to cover the costs of our work and to support our state and national Leagues, as well.

### ***In other news this month:***

Please visit our new exhibit at the Jackson Homestead on LWVN’s 75<sup>th</sup> birthday; information follows this article.

As our members requested, LWVN has sent a letter to Judy Davis, LWVUS Vice-President, about the national television ads this past spring. Please see page 6 to read the letter.

Voters Services is hard at work preparing for the upcoming elections. See the article on page 2 for more information about the debates and the upcoming Voters’ Guide.

Finally, please join us for **our first “office hour”** to share your thoughts about the League. We will be at Baker’s Best on Wednesday, October 12<sup>th</sup> from 9 – 10:30 am and look forward to hearing your concerns and ideas.

In League, Sue and Anne

## 75 Years of History



Seventy-five years of LWVN history are now on display at the Jackson Homestead on Washington Street until January 15! As part of its Newton Salutes program, Historic Newton is displaying photos and memorabilia from the LWVN archives. Be sure to stop by for a glimpse into the incredibly productive and important work League members have accomplished over the years. Jackson Homestead hours are from 11 am to 5 pm Tuesday through Friday, or 12 noon to 5 pm on Saturdays and Sundays.

## LWVN Supports an Expanded Bottle Bill

By Alison Leary Mooradian

Since the Bottle Bill's inception in 1983, over 30 billion containers have been redeemed in Massachusetts, contributing to a healthier environment, cleaner and safer communities, and a stronger economy. But as consumers' tastes change, the bottle bill must be updated to keep up with our times. The current bill seeks to expand the bottle bill deposit to cover all containers of non-carbonated beverages such as juice, teas and sports drinks. The LWV Newton and the LWV MA sent several members to the State House hearing in July to support "An Act Updating the Bottle Bill" (HB 890/SB 1650), with Newton's own Senator Cynthia Creem as the lead sponsor.

No other program can match the bottle bill's recycling rate, which hovers around 80%. The cost saving benefits of the bill to cities and towns across the Commonwealth is considerable. It significantly reduces litter and litter clean-up costs. Some 200 communities are in favor of the bill. The bottle bill enhances and complements curbside recycling programs, deals with the problem of "on the go" drinks, which often end up as litter or trash. Massachusetts municipal leaders overwhelmingly agree that an expanded bottle bill is the best way to reduce municipal costs, increase recycling rates, conserve resources and ensure litter free parks and other open spaces.

Very effective testimony for the bill also came from a trio of independent redemption center owners. They have had no raise in 21 years, and are struggling to stay in business. They stated that the bottle bill never laid

anyone off, in fact it creates jobs. The bottle bill works, and would be even more effective if the distributors and retailers supported them instead of fighting them every step of the way.

Opponents of the bottle bill, including the Retailers Association of Massachusetts, argue that it is a difficult, costly, and complicated system. Instead of expanding the bottle bill, the industry association and trade groups support repealing the program all together and focusing efforts to boost curbside recycling as a way to reduce waste going into landfills. But this short-sighted and self-serving approach pushes all the costs onto communities, giving businesses a free pass. In-store collection is intended to complement, rather than replace, curbside recycling. Having both programs is proven to maximize recycling efforts.

The next step is to move the bill out of the Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy Committee with a favorable recommendation. You can help now by contacting your Representative and Senator, and asking them to contact the Committee Co-Chairs Senator Benjamin Downing and Representative John Keenan. Ask them to urge the Co-Chairs to schedule a vote on House Bill 890 and Senate Bill 1650 before October.

Meanwhile Bottle Bill supporters are not waiting for the Legislature to Act. The coalition has filed the paper work to begin the process of adding the question to the 2012 statewide ballot.

### "A Terrible Idea" seeks endorsement

By Mary Adelstein

Initiative petition number 10, a proposal to apply a 2 1/2 percent limit to water and sewer rates, has been certified and may be gathering signatures soon. It proposes that municipalities and water and sewer districts not be able to raise annual rates more than 2.5% without a 2/3 override vote. The petition was filed by the National Ballot Access Corporation in Georgia, a for-profit corporation that has promoted libertarian causes such as anti-affirmative action laws and casino gambling initiatives. This company appears to have been sued repeatedly for fraudulent signatures gathered by paid solicitors on initiative petitions. It's unclear how this law would apply to a state authority such as MWRA, nevertheless the authority is strongly opposed. Jeff Beckwith of the Massachusetts Municipal Association calls it "a terrible idea."

## Meeting Notes: Economic Development 101

There are many different ways of defining and using the term economic development. Newton has defined it in the Comprehensive Plan, and can apply it by making decisions that balance community need against economic benefit by:

- Preserve the fiscal stability of the City;
- Provide both shopping and cultural activities;
- Support economically sustainable development and workplace opportunities that allow residents to work close to home;
- Enjoy benefits from our geographic place along the “Innovation Corridor,” basically Route 128 from Norwood to Burlington;
- Improve the quality of life and enhance the character of the community.

The Comprehensive Plan also identifies two different kinds of centers: village centers, which tend to be smaller with businesses intended to serve residents; and regional centers, which site on key transportation nodes and serve a broader, more regional context.

In particular, the benefits of village centers include providing: neighborhood character; access to local shopping and cultural resources; family-oriented retail; a minimum of auto trips. The challenges include traffic, parking availability, and vacancies or poor mix of stores. It can also lead to activities that the community doesn't want (especially with a poor mix of stores), as well as more noise, trash, etc.

One West Coast community ran an “I wish it were...” project to hear from the community. They put a sign up on empty storefronts that began “I wish it were...” and community members could write on the sign what type of store they felt was missing. This signaled to the real estate community and potential store owners/service providers what the community was ready to support and provide a predictable demand and income. This idea excited those in the Newton community who attended this educational presentation. Newton itself has been hit less hard by the recession, and so there is still plenty of demand to support new businesses.

Bigger development sites that could form regional cen-

ters can alter a city like Newton. They need to be supported by the region, not just what Newton can support by the behavior of its own residents. This means a disruption of the existing urban fabric and neighborhoods; an influx of traffic from outside the city; a strain on city services and infrastructure, such as schools, fire, roads and sewers.

We need to look at economic development in a regional context, since our community has opportunities and challenges that businesses consider as part of a larger map. These areas include where their workforce would/could live; where mass transit it; where local hospital, colleges or other support is; the ease of access to venture capital, etc.

Looking more specifically at Newton, businesses see a city that is: diverse; in one of the most dynamic and cultural regional in North America, an excellent place to live; and within easy car and public transit access to education and employment institutions. It is not just a bedroom community outside Boston, nor an urban city. Additionally, Newton is not independent of its own surroundings.

When looking at population density along with employment density information from the Massachusetts Economic Development Plan, we see that there are a large number of people who travel through Newton to large centers. Newton can benefit economically from this traffic by trying to capture it in areas such as Riverside or Wells Avenue. This provides the regional population with an opportunity to commute shorter distances and to experience more job opportunities. Newton can be more proactive in bringing in business on its own, since it is not part of a regional economic development agency, despite there being several in Massachusetts.

Companies and developers choose communities through a process that starts by determining what the problem is they are trying to solve. There are many facets that makes an area desirable, such as: increased market access in New England; access to university talent; cost of labor; proximity to different business partners; access to transportation; availability of utilities; quality and availability of real estate and facilities:



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS NEWTON**

September 13, 2011

Judy Davis  
LWVUS  
1730 M Street, NW, Suite 1000  
Washington, DC 20036-4508

Dear Ms. Davis:

Though it has been several months since the uproar over the LWVUS ads in Massachusetts regarding the Clean Air Act, our local League in Newton wanted to contact you with our reflections. In particular, the members at our annual meeting in June specifically requested we convey to you the breadth and depth of their opinions as well as any repercussions that have occurred.

Our League neither condemned nor supported the TV ads that were aired--primarily because the opinions of our Board and our membership were so varied, ranging from complete support to utter anger, sadness, and shame. These feelings were expressed both privately to our co-presidents and Board as well as publicly at our annual meeting and in our local newspaper. The tenor of the ads meant we lost the opportunity to educate and explain the current challenges to the Clean Air Act, since the conversation "buzz" was not about the intended topic, but rather focused on a politician.

The direct results to our specific local League have been mixed. We gained a few new members and the respect of some citizens in Newton, while repelling others. Gatehouse Media, Inc., the parent company of our local newspaper, the *Newton TAB*, has refused to publish our annual Voters Guide as editorial content as they have done in the past, though they will reconsider this choice for those other communities with spring elections and town meetings. While this situation could perhaps be the inevitable result of League positions and a new political environment in Massachusetts, our working relationship with the *Newton TAB* had been collaborative. The two organizations have co-sponsored events and discussions of importance in our community. The *TAB* had also been generous by including and highlighting our letters, op-eds, commentaries and Voters Guides.

We appreciate the new guidelines that LWVUS has set out in an effort to avoid similar situations in the future. We hope to repair and rebuild any damaged relationships, but can only do so if we are properly prepared for national (and state) campaigns.

Very sincerely,

Sue Flicop and Anne Borg

Co-Presidents, League of Women Voters of Newton, MA

**LWVN is on Facebook!**

**LWVN is now on Facebook! Come visit our page at [www.facebook.com/lwvnewton](http://www.facebook.com/lwvnewton).** You'll see a new "facebook widget" on our web page, too. Please "Like" our page, share posts, and spread the word! And let us know of any information, photos, or anything else that we should add: [info@lwvnewton.org](mailto:info@lwvnewton.org).

*Economic Development, continued from page 5*

local business environment and taxation; and the quality of life, including the schools, housing, cultural amenities, desirability of the area.

The companies then collect data on a number of communities, and start cutting out those that end up at the bottom of the list. This becomes an iterative process that begins to include data on items such as type of housing, accessibility to schools and hospitals, etc. Once the list is a reasonable length, the businesses go into field and see the communities up close by talking to people there. Then a decision is made.

Cost is an issue, of course, but in the context of what a business receives for its investment. In general, Massachusetts is expensive but organizations receive a lot for their investments.

What is Newton doing now about economic development? The city is paying attention at both the local level and regional level. Many different groups, from elected officials, to the Newton-Needham Chamber of Commerce, to groups like Newton Villages are evaluating Newton's desirability. Issues like zoning reform, barriers to small businesses, and sustainability are all important. The City itself is starting EDSAT, an economic development self-assessment test developed by economist Barry Bluestone at Northeastern University. This looks at how the community is to work with, from the business perspective.

Overall, the term economic development in Newton means:

- Create economic prosperity and an attractive living environment;
- Capitalize on Newton's strength as a desirable residential community and a top-notch business location;
- Optimize the interaction between its residential and commercial constituents;
- Provide for high quality of living environment and excellent public services;
- Provide convenient access to shopping, restaurants, work places, entertainment and cultural activities; and
- Develop tax revenues and jobs in commercial corridors and transportation hubs to assure Newton's future prosperity.

## **"I Wish This Was"**

**"I Wish This Was"** Committee Opportunity: At the fascinating topic meeting on Economic Development, speaker Chris Steele mentioned a program called "I wish this was," developed by Candy Chang, where removable stickers are put on empty storefronts for people to provide input on what they would like to see in their community. If you are interested in seeing this program come to Newton, please contact [info@lwnnewton.org](mailto:info@lwnnewton.org). With volunteers, we can make this happen! For more information on "I Wish This Was," see: [iwishthiswas.cc/more](http://iwishthiswas.cc/more).

## **LWV Wall Calendars for Sale**

Contact Priscilla Leith if you'd like to purchase an LWV appointment wall calendar (produced by the LWV of Missouri). They're \$5 each, and feature a colored silk cord for hanging on the wall. Contact Priscilla at 617-969-6837 or [islpris@verizon.net](mailto:islpris@verizon.net).

## **Welcome New Members!**

Kathryn Battillo West Newton  
Jean Chaisson Auburndale  
Josh Krintzman Newton Lower Falls  
Bob Persons Auburndale

# LWVN CALENDAR

## OCTOBER

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| <p>3<sup>rd</sup> Mon., 7:00-9:30pm, <b>Education Consensus Study Discussion</b>, Newton City Hall Cafeteria (basement level).</p> <p>5<sup>th</sup> Thurs., 9:45-noon, <b>Archives Morning</b>, First Baptist Church Basement, Newton Centre.*</p> <p>5<sup>th</sup> Wed., 7:00pm, <b>LWVN Board Meeting</b>, Anne Borg's house.</p> <p>12<sup>th</sup> Wed., 9:30am-12noon, <b>Archives Morning*</b> - First Baptist Church basement, Newton Centre</p> <p>12<sup>th</sup> Wed., 3:00pm, <b>Transportation Forum Planning Meeting</b>, NewTV Conference Room, 23 Needham St.</p> <p>13<sup>th</sup> Thurs., 11:30am-1:30pm, <b>Consensus Meeting - Role of Federal Government in Public Education, Part 1 – Common Core Questions</b>, NewTV Conference Room, 23 Needham St.</p> | <p>13<sup>th</sup> Thurs., 7:00-9:00pm, <b>Consensus Meeting - Role of Federal Government in Public Education, Part 2 – Equity and Funding Questions</b>, Newton City Hall Cafeteria (basement level).</p> <p>17<sup>th</sup> Fri., 9:00 am. <b>Environmental Issues Committee</b> meeting. Mary Adelstein's house.</p> <p>19<sup>th</sup> Wed., 9:30am-12noon, <b>Archives Morning*</b> - First Baptist Church basement, Newton Centre.</p> <p>23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday, October 23, 11:00am-6:00pm, <b>Municipal Election Candidates' Forums</b>, NewTV Studios.</p> <p>26<sup>th</sup> Wed., 9:30am-12noon, <b>Archives Morning*</b> - First Baptist Church basement, Newton Centre.</p> |
|--|---|

*\*Archives Mornings: Please call Linda Morrison at 617-332-6539 if you are planning to attend.*

→ *Don't forget to check our online calendar for any late-breaking changes! [www.lwvnewton.org](http://www.lwvnewton.org)*

## Keep up with the workings of the Board of Aldermen!

Read the *LWVN Docket Digest*, available each week at [www.lwvnewton.org](http://www.lwvnewton.org).

## League of Women Voters of Newton

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