

# Newsletter

## The Many Faces of Election Reform

by Susan E. Rosenbaum

The year 2000 saw the first 100 million dollar presidential election, the first 90 million dollar senatorial election and the first 10 million dollar election for the House of Representatives. Getting elected to a state, federal, or even local office has become increasingly more expensive during the last decade. In order to maintain the integrity of our democracy and allow all qualified candidates the opportunity to seek and run for public office, the American electorate has called for election reform. Two national campaigns that seek to change the direction we're headed include

the Clean Elections Campaign and The Campaign for Free Airtime.

Massachusetts is one of four states in the country that has passed a Clean Elections Law. Vermont passed a similar law recently. Maine and Arizona are the only two states that have successfully implemented The Clean Elections Law; their success has more states eager to follow suit.

Maine passed the Clean Elections Law in 1996 and over one-third of all candidates ran as clean elections candidates in the year 2000, including several incumbents. Maine politicians claimed that the Clean Elections law allowed them to run for office and permitted them to spend more time connecting with voters and less time fundraising.

The Clean Elections Law requires candidates to collect a small amount of money from a specified number of people. Once the candidate reaches this threshold they are not allowed to accept money from private donors. To qualify as a Clean Elections candidate, the candidate must agree to strict spending limits and may not spend their own money. In return, the state agrees to fund the preliminary and final campaigns for that candidate. If the candidate's opponent greatly outspends the "Clean Candidate", the candidate may be eligible for additional funds.

Both Maine and Arizona ran successful clean elections during 2000. In Maine, 54% of the winning candidates

were clean election candidates; Arizona had similar success. Both states saw a large increase in the number of candidates participating in the elections, a greater number of contested elections, and an increase in the number of minorities running for office.

The second nation-wide initiative to ensure the proliferation of democracy is called the campaign for free airtime. The advocates for free airtime want to ensure that all candidates are able to reach the voters. They also want to increase awareness about the ownership of the airwaves. Most people don't know that the airwaves are owned by the general public and that the networks do not pay a dime to use them. It is understood that the networks are responsible for providing information to the public but the networks are shirking their responsibility in order to make more money for themselves. The advocates for free air time want to require the networks to devote two hours each week (one of which would be in or near

*Continued on page seven*

**Election Calendar**

**OCTOBER 16** Last day to register to vote for the State Election. The Election Commission is open until 8 pm on this last day of registration.

**NOVEMBER 4** 12 Noon Last day and hour to apply for an Absentee Ballot for the State Election

**NOVEMBER 5** State Election  
Polls open 7 am to 8 pm

**What's Inside**

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**Statewide Ballot Questions**

Question Number	Topic	LWVM Position
1	State Personal Income Tax	no
2	English only Bilingual Education	no
3	Taxes Funding Political Campaigns	yes

## LWVN Officers and Directors 2002-2003

### Officers

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Election Reform	Susan Rosenbaum	617332-0306
Legislation/ NewTV	Janet Stearns	617559-9987
Fundraising	Ben Weisbuch	617527-3262

### Newsletter

President	Amelia Koch	617244-2647
Editor	Andrea Kelley	617964-4609

### Committee Members

Liz Lieberman	617244-4402
Linda Morrison	617332-6539

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  
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617-964-0014

[www.tiac.net/users/unnewton/LWV](http://www.tiac.net/users/unnewton/LWV)

# Pluses and Minuses

Sometimes being President makes you really happy and sometimes, well, let's just say it has its challenges. On the happy side of the ledger we had a great response to our questionnaire asking what topics our members were interested in. More than sixty members responded. If you still have your questionnaire we would still be glad to receive it. A summary of the results to date is elsewhere in this newsletter. Thanks to Ruth Neiberg, Rose Davis, Bev Spencer, and Pat Acton for their hard work and perseverance.

Also on the plus side, we were able to put together a primary debate for the one contested state legislative race, and it was played quite a bit on NewTV before the primary. Thank you Ann Grantham and Bonnie Carter - it's great to have the debate go so smoothly.

NewTV also continues to work with the League on our Legislative Roundtable. We've had a couple of "hot" shows, one responding to questions from local residents, and another to articles in the Boston Globe. The show is rewarding to be connected with and we would welcome anyone interested in getting involved - on either side of the camera. Remember, NewTV will train local residents in the use of equipment. It would be great for the League to have its own crew.

Less happy and definitely a challenge is the decision of newsletter editor Andrea Kelley that nine volunteer commitments plus a job and children is too many, and that it is time for someone else to take over the newsletter as of November. If anyone is willing to work on the newsletter, I would love to hear from you. In the meantime, I want to thank Andrea for doing an excellent job with the newsletter for three plus years. It has been wonderful having this bright, upbeat, energetic, knowledgeable, and capable woman working on our monthly publication.



## Relationship Violence FORUM

The Relationship Violence Action Committee, co-chaired by the Newton Police Department and the Newton Human Services Commission, is holding a Forum on relationship violence.

October 17, 2002 at 7 P.M.

Newton Senior Center

345 Walnut Street, Newtonville

Featured Speakers are: Martha Coakley, Middlesex County D.A., Judy Beals, Executive Director of Jane Doe, Inc., Arah Hall, a Newton native who has authored her own book on her experience as a survivor, four panelists from the Committee who will address: elder abuse, cultural issue, children as victims, and teen dating violence. ■

## Welcome New Members

MEMBERSHIP meetings were held the first week of October with an enthusiastic attendance and lively discussion of the state ballot issues.

Marilyn M. Pettito Devaney  
98 Westminster Ave.  
Watertown, MA 02472  
617-923-0778

Barbara Sims Levy  
210 Nahanton St. #408  
Newton 02459  
617-332-5010

Joan Rastegar  
102 Garland Road  
Newton 02459  
617-965-7117 (home)  
617-965-6162 (work) ■

*Observer Notes:***Board of Aldermen Finance Committee***by Ben Weisbuch and Deb Crossley***September 9  
Newton City Hall, Room 212**

All members present. The committee voted 8-0 to reappoint Loretta Kowal as trustee of the Horace Cousens Industrial Fund; 8-0 to purchase emergency medical supplies to treat for toxic exposure, \$20,000; 8-0 to spend \$63,000 to complete funding of Phase 1 of the Houghton Garden Rehabilitation Project; 8-0 to spend \$23,575 on computer equipment for the Fire Department.

**September 23, Room 212**

Committee Members present (ward): Gerst (1), Ciccone(2), Bullwinkle (3), Stewart (4), Coletti (Chair, 5), Parker (6), Schnipper (7), Lipof (Vice Chair, 8), Lipsitt (ex-officio) Other Aldermen present: Salvucci, Yates

**Vote tallies are listed as:  
For/Against/Abstained/Absent**

All committee members present, joined by Aldermen Yates and Board president Lipsitt. The committee voted 7-0-1 to spend \$1,360 for Coming to Understand Race Privilege program supported by the Newton Human Rights Commission; 8-0 to spend \$10,100 for temporary clerical support; 8-0 for \$10,600.64 to settle a legal claim involving collision between city dump truck and private vehicle; 8-0 to add penalty of \$15 for parking in school drop-off (blue) zone for longer than one minute.

[Ben Weisbuch departs 9:05 pm. Meeting minutes continued by Deb Crossley]

Several items involving tax relief proposals were discussed at length, with Dan Funk of the law department, Assessor's Department Head Elizabeth Dromey, Chief Budget Officer Sandy Pooler, Chief Administrative Officer Mike Roarke and city treasurer Peruzzi

present to answer questions regarding legal issues and implementation. State Representative Kay Khan, as well as many members of the public were present for this discussion, including members of UChAN (Uniting Citizens for Housing Affordability in Newton) and LUCKY S.T.A.R. (Strength Through Allied Resources).

Rep. Khan first provided an update on the status of the aldermanic Home Rule petition, which sought to raise the income cut off defining eligibility for Newton homeowners over 65 to defer property tax. Khan reported that the legislature thought this a good idea for the commonwealth, and that an amendment to the state statute raising the income limitation from its current \$40,000 to \$60,000 may pass in the next session.

Item#303-02, proposing an ordinance to implement M.G.L. Ch 59 section 5K, an enabling provision of the state law which allows communities to offer an annual tax credit of up to \$500 per household for persons over sixty-five who volunteer services to the city at a rate equal to the state minimum wage. The Newton ordinance proposes to limit the initial annual expenditure to \$50,000, to be drawn from the overlay account, which is the reserve established to pay for tax abatements, for city department heads to define specific services needed, and for the human services department to oversee the program. The law department provided an overview of the statute and the ordinance as drafted. General discussion included suggestions that this item could go forward quickly, since it is allowed by statute, as a way of addressing some of the need that is known to exist; others raised concerns about equity, desiring to set more lenient income

limitations, questions regarding liability, ADA compliance, and a desire to establish a tax assistance study commission to examine the range of tax relief possibilities. Chairman Coletti invited the public to speak; several spoke in favor of the city adopting this provision of the item; none spoke in opposition; one suggested that seniors be invited to participate in the process of working out the details.

The item was HELD 7-0-0-1 (Ald. Lipoff left the meeting), to be revisited subsequent to responses received from the legal and human services departments.

Item #264-02 is a request from the citizens' organization, LUCKY S.T.A.R. (Strength Through Allied Resources), and Alderman Salvucci that the city include a check-off within the property tax bill to allow taxpayers to donate to a fund established to assist elderly who need help paying the property tax. Lucky S.T.A.R. group representative Mark Marderosian was asked to elaborate. He first informed the committee that Lucky S.T.A.R. had incorporated as a 501c3 tax exempt non-profit organization, and their private organization has taken in pledges amounting to over \$10,000 for the single purpose of providing property tax grants to homeowners over the age of sixty who express a need for assistance. Members of the Finance Committee expressed concern about the legal and practical issues involved in establishing a city-administered account, such as criteria used to assess need, and whether to define an age requirement. The item was HELD 7-0-0-1 and referred to Programs & Services. ■

## Committees - in - Action

### *E d u c a t i o n*

Focus Increasing high school enrollments, school financing, testing & standards

Members Ann Grantham Robin Maltz  
Susie Heyman Fran Osten  
Jody Klein Beverly Spencer  
Anne Larner Beth Wilkinson

Contact Andrea Kelley 617964-4609  
Andrea Kozinetz 617964-6490  
Co-Chairs

### *H u m a n R i g h t s*

Focus League outreach, relevance and support for the human rights of Newton's diverse populations

Members Sharon Balfour  
Susie Heyman  
Jody Klein  
Linda Morrison

Contact Holly Gunner, Chair 617964-0767

### *L a n d U s e / T r a n s p o r t a t i o n*

Focus Interrelationship between land use and transportation and its effects on Newton & surrounding communities

Members AnnaMaria Abernathy  
Anita Capeless  
Carol Ann Shea  
Lynne Sullivan

Contact Anita Capeless 617969-9483

### *L o c a l A c t i o n*

Focus Various local issues

Members In formation - all welcome

Contact Deb Crossley 617244-7597  
Chair

### *N e w s l e t t e r*

Members Jane Leighton Liz Lieberman  
Linda Morrison Jody Klein

Contact Andrea Kelley 617964-4609

You may call committee contact or a Board officer or director to learn more about current committee work. All are welcome to participate.

# You are Invited... Newton Comprehensive Planning Workshop

A workshop on comprehensive planning for Newton, to be held October 29th, Tuesday, at 7:30 pm at Mason-Rice School, Pleasant Street, Newton Centre will provide an initial opportunity for discussion of the work of the Mayor's Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee.

A 25-member Committee was organized in May 2002 and charged with guiding completion of a comprehensive plan for Newton, and has been meeting regularly since then. The work centered initially on transportation and land use, and is building on A Framework for Newton's Planning and other prior and concurrent planning efforts, including such topical plans as the draft Newton Community Preservation Plan and the draft Newton Recreation and Open Space Plan.

The focal topics of recent meetings give an indication of the flavor of the work: July - "Ideas Blitz: Addressing Newton's Arterial Congestion;" August - "Visual Karaoke: Development Making Good Places;" September - "Opening Pandora's Box: Development Review in Newton." Recent controversies regarding commuter parking, creation of historic districts, control of large-scale dwellings, and zoning change are examples of the importance of having the policy guidance that a comprehensive plan can provide.

The initial expectation has been that the work of the Committee would span two years, with workshops such as this one being held from time to time.

Committee membership includes four Aldermen and a diverse range of others drawn from all parts of the City. Staff support for the Committee's work is being provided through the Department of Planning and Development. ■

October 29  
7:30 pm  
Mason-Rice School  
Pleasant Street  
Newton Centre

## Results of Unit Survey

by Rose Davis and Amy Koch

THE RESULTS HAVE BEEN TABULATED, THE ENVELOPE PLEASE!

The Unit Committee received 64 responses to the questionnaire sent to the entire League of Women Voters of Newton membership. A big thank you goes to all who responded, and here are the results:

1. A large, positive response for lunch-time meetings.
2. We will have a test run for evening meetings in November, January and February to see if there is an audience .
3. Items for study in order of interest:
  - Election Reform on the National Level - very interested
  - Environmental Issues
  - Affordable House
  - Support of the Health Care Trust Bill
  - Ballot Questions - Pros and Cons

Again, thank you for showing your interest and see you at the unit meetings. See calendar on back cover for other upcoming dates and topics.

**NEXT UNIT MEETING**  
on all three statewide ballot questions:  
**OCTOBER 9, 2002 ■**

## Legislative Roundtable

by Deb Crossley

Senator Cynthia Creem, Representatives Ruth Balser and Kay Khan joined me to tape the September show which first addressed a current local news story, then focused on the recently controversial state law: chapter 40B, also known as the Anti-Snob zoning law.

A front page article in the previous week's TAB "Local Lawmakers Pass Few Laws" had suggested that legislator's performance be measured according to the single perspective of how many bills each had filed and successfully passed through the legislature, and bemoaned the low statistics. During our usual update period, legislators responded to the skewed nature of the article, by describing more fully the roles and responsibilities of legislators, and some of the many ways they go about representing our interests on capitol hill. In particular it was noted that Home Rule petitions were discounted by the article, and that legislative voting records on all of the items that come before them is significant, and ought to be published so that voters can keep track of where they stand.

The primary topic of this show was the "Anti Snob Zoning Law", Chapter 40B, to which numerous amendments have been proposed, as some communities are worried about losing affordable housing as the 25-year term requirement expires, and other communities feel pressured to entertain developments they do not want. Amendments proposed to 40B over the summer session such as including accessory apartments and housing for the disabled in the mix, and extending the affordability requirement from 25 to 40 years, were the result of broad consensus achieved among all sides of the issue, and passed the legislature, only to be defeated by the Governor's veto. During the show we discussed how the law, which has been successful in encouraging affordable housing developments, might be improved when it comes up again next session, whether the definition of affordable housing needs to be modified to reflect current economics, and what else can be done to address the growing housing crisis.

Tune in to the BLUE Channel on NewTV for the full half hour show: Monday Tuesday and Wednesday at 5:30 and 10:30pm. Contact NewTV or the League with your ideas for future topics! ■

## Election Commission

by Nancy Cristiello

It is clear that over the summer, the Election Commission was making a great effort to insure that the September 17th State Primary and the General Election on November 5th go smoothly. Peter Karg, Election Commissioner, was successful in recruiting election workers and even had a small stable of back-up workers in case of no shows. Press releases were printed informing voters of the last date to register for the primary, announcements were on NewTV, and post cards informing voters of their polling locations were mailed out to all registered voters.

All worksheets for Poll workers were updated and an excellent training session was held on September 10th, featuring explanations by Mary Walker of the Secretary of State's Office, an obvious "old hand" in the election business. Since the Green and Libertarian parties will be on paper ballots, Karg, with singular imagination, was able to replace (for free) several of our non-functioning ballot boxes from those discarded by the town of Marlborough. He was also able to borrow 31 temporary polling stations for those Green & Libertarian paper ballot voters, from the Town of Brookline which has now gone to electronic voting.

To expedite the reporting of election results, Karg reserved three extra rooms in City Hall to accommodate getting the information out to the public in as timely a fashion as possible. In addition, a large screen was planned to be in the Aldermanic Chambers, displaying results. The input of results was coordinated with help from Dick Walsh's Information Technology department. Although the Mayor has indicated that the budget will be very tight next year, Karg brought on eighteen extra people for overtime to help with the expected election night pressures.

Two items dealt with over the past several months remain of interest. A snafu occurred with Newton's recent redistricting that neglected to count the number of people in the Chestnut Hill Towers, thereby changing some voters from Ward 6 to Ward 7. The problem stems back to the 2000 Federal Census count, upon which Newton redistricting was based. The City's Law Department has been in touch with the Federal Census Bureau, and it is awaiting a determination.

*Continued on page seven*

## Membership Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

- I would like to join the League of Women voters of Newton. Enclosed is my check for \$50 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

**PRISCILLA M. LEITH, MBA**

162 Islington Road  
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*Continued from page five*

## Election Commission

The second item was the appearance of representatives from two companies who presented their versions of electronic voting systems. Our machines are 35 years old, and in light of the mishaps of the 2000 election and some of the problems with ballot boxes, Peter Karg is investigating those systems that are in use at present time, and will have more information after a Statewide meeting of City Election Commissioners over the summer.

I spoke with Peter Karg two days after the election and his feeling was that things had gone well with the implementation of all new procedures. Newton outdid the rest of the state in the percentage of registered voters who actually voted: 40% locally compared to 28% statewide. He expects 70% in November. He emphasized that poll workers will definitely be needed in the November election due to moves away, etc. and urges League of Women Voters members to participate. One can work as few as four hours, but it is hoped that people would be able to stay longer. The pay is \$8.25 per hour and it really is fun. Take it from a veteran!!! ■

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

*Continued from page one*

## Election Reform

prime time) to candidate issues and discussions in the month before an election. The campaign also wants the networks to provide qualifying candidates with vouchers to run a limited number of free ads on television and radio. These vouchers would be financed by a small spectrum usage fee on the broadcast industry.

If you would like to help, the local chapters of the League of Women Voters are gathering signatures to call for Free Airtime. The signatures must be collected prior to January 1, 2003. If you are interested in participating in this campaign or other issues regarding election reform please contact Susan Rosenbaum at [DSR2@rcn.com](mailto:DSR2@rcn.com) or call the League office at 617-964-0014. ■

## LWVN CALENDAR

### October

- 1 Tuesday, 9:30 am, *New and Prospective Member meeting*, review of state Ballot Questions, at Maltz
- 2 Wednesday, 7:30 pm, *New and Prospective Member meeting*, review of state Ballot Questions, at Reisman
- 5 Saturday, All Day, *State League Fall Conference*, Minuteman Vocational Ed School, Lexington
- 9 Wednesday, 11:30-1:30 pm, Unit meeting: *All Three Ballot Questions, Pro and Con*, at Doris Lelchook's home, Village Falls Condominiums, 183 Oak Street, 210C, Newton (617) 244-3752.
- 16 Wednesday, 7:30 pm, *Bilingual Education Ballot Question Forum*, Memorial Spaulding School, 250 Brookline Street, Newton
- 16 Wednesday, *Working Board/Newsletter Deadline*
- 17 Thursday, 7 pm, *Relationship Violence Forum*, at the Newton Senior Center, 345 Walnut Street, co-chaired by Newton Police Department and Newton Human Services Commission

- 29 Tuesday, 7:30 pm, *Discussion Forum on the Comprehensive Plan for Newton*, Mason Rice School, Pleasant St., Newton Centre
- 30 Wednesday, *Board Meeting* at Sue Rosenbaum's

### November

- 5 Tuesday, *Election Day*
- 6 Wednesday, *Working Board*
- 13 Wednesday, *Newsletter Deadline*
- 13 Wednesday, 11:30 am-1:30 pm, Unit meeting: *Support of the Health Care Trust Bill*, w/Barbara Sullivan, LWVM specialist, at N. Crowley's, 77 Kirkstall Road, Newtonville (617)965-0818
- 14 Thursday 7:30-9:30 pm, Unit meeting: *Support of the Health Care Trust Bill*, at Rose Davis's 209PA Commonwealth Ave, Newton (617) 244-9502
- 20 Wednesday, *Board Meeting* at Ann Grantham's

### Proposed Spring Unit Meetings

*Programs Subject to Change*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • January 8, 2003 11:30-1:30 pm   | • February 13, 2003 7:30-9:30pm <i>Affordable Housing</i>                         |
| • January 9, 2003 7:30-9:30 pm<br><i>Election Reform at the National Level: A Study</i> | • March 12, 2003 11:30-1:30PM<br><i>LWVMA Election Reform Study and Consensus</i> |
| • February 12, 2003 11:30-1:30pm  | • April 9, 2003 11:30-1:30pm <i>What Was Super Doma?</i>                          |

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