



GREEN MOUNTAIN

CITIZEN

Winter 2006/07

How is Homeland Security Working at Home?

In the last issue of the GMC, I gave an overview of the LWVUS' Liberty and Security project. More detail is provided here, particularly the role of local Leagues or even individual members. I really hope that Leaguers in Vermont will participate in the project. As pointed out below, it will give us knowledge of our communities, experience in the study process, and, not least, increase our visibility wherever we take part in this project. If any of you are interested - and as I said, individual Members-at-Large could take the initiative in their hometowns - I have the survey questions available for your use.
Kate

This project is part of the League's engagement in civil liberty and security based on the our commitment to the notion that democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of its citizens at all levels of government, and the citizen's right to know about governmental actions. It is particularly timely given the Gulf Coast hurricane and the apparent uncertainty about what we have been able to accomplish in ensuring out capacity to deal with disasters.

Whether man-made or natural, disasters require the same attention: prevention, response, and recovery. The goal of this effort is to help local

Leagues engage their communities in a conversation about how homeland security is working at home. It envisions a local League committee undertaking an initial survey of key officials who have a responsibility for local security, and presenting the response in to their communities through forums with security leaders that engage community members and/or reports, articles in the Voter, op-eds, letters to the editor, local talk shows, etc.

The project should also help local Leagues to gain a better understanding of how government works, establish personal relationships with officials charged with security, and engage the diversity of the community in a subject that matters very much to all of us. Ideally, it would highlight areas of need, open communications between community leaders and their residents on what is and can be done, and engage citizens in the planning and execution of security measures against both man-made and natural threats. It may also attract new members.

Background: The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was created in response to 9/11 and is made up of 22 agencies, with over-all responsibility for coordinating more than 88,000 different governmental jurisdictions at the federal, state and local levels that have homeland security responsibilities. In its first few years of

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President's Message Winter 2006

First, let me congratulate and thank Ralph Pace on behalf of all of us for the amazing job he did in organizing the October debate by the U.S. House and Senate candidates. As many of you no doubt know, there was a turn-away crowd of more than 800 people at the Paramount Theater in Rutland. The Black River MAL unit also sponsored an essay contest for middle and high school students. The winning essays can be found elsewhere in this newsletter. A video tape of the event is available; let me know if you would like to see it.

Also in this issue is more information about the LWVUS' "Liberty and Security" project. I hope you will read it and become involved. I believe it would be a great way to learn more about our communities and how League studies are conducted. I would be happy to meet with any of you who are interested in learning more about the project.

At our March meeting the board will be discussing program for the 2005-07 biennium, and deciding on the recommendations to be made to convention in May. Please let us know what you think your state League should be doing. It's only a grass roots organization when the grass roots speak up!

We've been working hard on membership in the past few months. Last month I met with a group in Craftsbury. That meeting resulted in three new members (so far), the potential core of a MAL in the Northeast Kingdom. By the time you read this, I will also have met with a group in Rutland. We are eager to have the League established in this important population center. You can help recruit members too, by telling friends and acquaintances about the League and its work, and encouraging them to join us.

Along with the video of the Rutland debate, I have other tapes and publications available for your use. I plan to compile a list of these materials, which I hope will be of interest to you as individuals or units.

And don't forget to check out the new website at www.lwvofvt.org!

Happy New Year!

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Kate Rader, President
Stella Bukanc, Editor

Membership in the League includes a subscription. If you would like to join the League, e-mail, write, or call:

The league of Women Voters of Vermont
P.O. Box 8266, Essex Jct., VT 05451-8266
802-657-0242
e-mail: info@lwvofvt.org

Legislative Day 2007

Wednesday, February 7 has been set for the date of our 2007 Legislative Day.

Information about legislation of interest, the relevant committees and committee chairmen and the names of your legislators will be provided prior to that date. To maximize our effectiveness in the Statehouse, we want members to contact their legislators about the bills of interest, particularly those who are on or

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chairmen of the committees dealing with those bills.

This is the first year of the legislative biennium, so activity at the Statehouse will be less frantic than they were last year. Recognizing that many of you have a distance to drive, no time has been set for arrival in the morning, and you are to use the information provided to attend committee meetings or House and Senate sessions as indicated by their schedule and our interests.

Attendees will gather at noon for a review of our legislative priorities before adjourning for lunch at a nearby restaurant. Please make a point of contacting your legislator(s) before the 7th, and invite them to join us.

The information you need to participate in a meaningful way for both you and our legislators will be available before the event.

2007 Legislative Session for the League

January 2007 marks the beginning of the biennium for our legislature. The State league hopes to follow and lobby for legislation concerning energy, health issues, education finance, the four-year term for governor, instant run-off voting and same day voter registration.

There are five league members in the legislative observer corps. We would certainly welcome more. If you have an interest please contact me at veeg@verizon.net. I am hoping to keep updated information on the league web site when and if that information proves valuable to local league members.

Vee Gordon

Essay Winners



The two student winners of the essay contest sponsored by the Black River Chapter of the League of Women Voters of Vermont and the Rutland Herald are pictured above receiving their awards. The essays were on the political debate held at the Paramount Theater in Rutland this past October. Over 850 people attended the debate that featured major candidates for both the U.S. House and Senate. First prize winner was Sam Hensel-Hunter of Cavendish, receiving an iPod for his efforts, and second prize winner Tarl Warwick, a senior at Mill River HS, who earned a \$150 gift certificate at Staples. From left to right are Ralph Pace, LWV debate coordinator, Hensel-Hunter, Warwick, and Randal Smathers, Editor of the Rutland Herald.

Read their essays at www.lwvofvt.org. Sam Hensel-Hunter's first prize essay is also reprinted in this issue of the GMC starting on page 5.

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operation, DHS focused its grant giving on planning, training, exercises and equipment. It was expecting to shift to prevention and deterrence in 2006, although there may be changes after Katrina.

There are two streams of funding available to communities from DHS (State Homeland Security Grants program and the Urban Areas Security Initiatives). The first is administered through the states and the second direct grants. There may also be state and local funds provided specifically for security and emergency disaster management.

Step One: Form a small League committee to do the interviews and take responsibility for the project. You could use this as an activity to engage new members, or reach out to people in groups that do not normally participate, including college students in planning or political science programs, minorities, etc.

Step Two: Visit www.dhs.gov for an over-all view of its structure and programs. It has a great deal of useful information on it. We hope you will find comparable agencies and information at the state and local levels on their websites.

Step Three: Identify the agencies likely to be engaged in disaster relief in your community and set up appointments to visit them. You can send the questionnaire we are providing for you ahead of time, bring it with you, or adapt one of your own. Generally, people are happy to respond to thoughtful questions about what they are doing if they trust the questioner. Coming from the League should stand you in good stead.

Step Four: The Questionnaire is intended to help League's engage those who have a role to play in local security. These questions are directed primarily to local, state and federal government personnel, but – since 85 percent of

critical infrastructure is privately held – those institutions should also be included. There may be others that particularly relevant to your community, and it is very likely that not all of those listed on the agency list will be of concern.

There are six core areas: leadership structure; planning; training and exercises; equipment; finance; and communications and outreach. The questions are a guide within those areas. You are not expected to ask all of them, but instead to use the questionnaire as a way to establish a relationship with those who are responsible for security, and identify those who can help educate the community through public forums.

Step Five: Host a forum for the community on how homeland security is working, inviting key leaders whom you have interviewed (probably no more than 6). If possible, arrange for television, or other technology to cover the event. You may be able to find co-sponsors to cover the cost and help bring in an audience. Invite the media.

Step Six: Consider writing up what you have learned for others. LWVUS will be sending a short questionnaire on your experience.

In some cases, you will be impressed by the level of engagement of those in charge and the thoughtfulness of their plans. There may be gaps between planning and the capacity to implement them. There may be issues that require more debate – including public debate. And there will certainly be a need to educate the community of what government can and cannot do, and what roles community members might have in our over-all security.

Kate Rader

The Paramount Debate: A Valuable Chance to Get to Know Your Candidates

The League of Women Voters Debate I attended in Rutland on Thursday, October 12, was a valuable experience because it brought out the differences in both opinion and style in the candidates of both races. The leading candidates for the U.S. Senate and House have become familiar faces to Vermonters through their television ads, so it was helpful to see them in an interactive and unscripted event.

When the Democratic candidate for the House, Peter Welch, was on stage he backed up his points with props (newspapers) as well as facts, similar to a trial lawyer. Mr. Welch was also polite and did not strike out viciously when he disagreed with his opponent, even though their positions differed greatly. One example was the issue of the Estate Tax. Mr. Welch wanted the Estate Tax to stay with exemptions for farms, while Martha Rainville wanted to remove the Estate Tax altogether. However, as was argued by Mr. Welch, that would add 1 trillion dollars to the national deficit. Mrs. Rainville was also polite, but her style consisted of shorter straight answers. She has said she wants to have no personal attacks, but she did have some statements that could be considered negative (criticizing her opponent for not signing her campaign pledge and saying he has voted to raise taxes). She also reacted unkindly to being associated with the Republicans in Washington. When Mr. Welch asked if candidate Rainville wanted to stay the course in Iraq she did not accept the phrase, but instead said there was more to be done.

Now to the Senate Candidates: Republican Richard Tarrant up against Independent Bernie Sanders. Mr. Tarrant had different positions from Mr. Sanders as well as a difference in style. One issue about which the candidates had differences was North Korea. When asked in a follow up to a question if it was someone's fault that North

Korea had nuclear weapons, Mr. Tarrant said that agreeing to talk with North Korea would be giving in to blackmail, whereas Mr. Sanders said that the U.S. should talk, and that China has more at stake in resolving the problem than the U.S. The strange thing about Mr. Tarrant's style was that it came in two modes. In one he was attacking Mr. Sanders, and then literally side-stepping closer to Mr. Welch when Mr. Sanders was given an opportunity to rebuke the messages in the Tarrant ads. In the other mode Mr. Tarrant acted cute such as wincing and praying when Mr. Sanders was about to answer a question about the Tarrant ad campaign. Mr. Tarrant also wanted to stop federal overspending, yet he has spent more than 6 million dollars on his campaign.

Mr. Sanders made genuine and sensible statements which also seemed heartfelt (since they included stories with a connection to his friends and family.) Mr. Sanders also gestured to quiet his supporters, something none of the other candidates did. Mr. Sanders was also the subject of criticism from several unpleasant members of the crowd, one of whom was saying that Mr. Sanders should respect the President's positions. Mr. Sanders was against repealing the Estate Tax and slammed the Bush Administration for many of its faults. Mr. Sanders' style consisted of strong intelligent points and even stronger rebuttal. Of both races, the Senate is the most heated due to the amount of money that Mr. Tarrant has spent as well as the tone of the advertising campaign that he has run.

Another aspect of the debate that was interesting was the way the candidates seemed on stage as compared to their appearance on their television ads. Mr. Tarrant is serious and makes certain points in his ads, but that sense of seriousness faltered on stage when he was pretending to

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cower. Mr. Sanders' ads reflect a grassroots element to his campaign with appearances from Ben Cohen, Willie Nelson, and everyday Vermonters. On stage, Mr. Sanders raised his voice more than he did in the ads, but he was still thoughtful. All in all, he appeared quite similar to his ads. Mr. Welch has had had two different genres of ads. One group was less serious and included his dog Pepper. The other genre was more serious and was slamming the Bush Administration and the conservatives in Washington. Mr. Welch brought a little of both worlds into the debate, but the overall appearance was different because he used newspapers as props as well as posed questions to his opponent. Last, Mrs. Rainville was more or less the same in the debate as she was in her ads. The only difference was that she was not introduced as an independent as is touted in her ads, but as a Republican.

The overall impression I got from the debate was that the ads from the candidates portrayed them rather accurately, but seeing them in an unscripted environment helped voters to become better informed. Before voting, though, Vermonters should research the candidate they wish to support to ensure that that person is right for them in style and opinion.

Samuel A. Hensel-Hunter
Grade 7th, Home schooled
Faculty member: Will Hunter
Address: 414 Center Road
Cavendish, VT 05142
802-226-7610

LWVCEN Hosts Forum on Democracy, Politics, and the Media

On October 17th, with the State House as location, LWV Central Vermont hosted a forum on democracy, politics, and the media and its impact in our state. Guest panelists were Tom Slayton, editor of *Vermont Life Magazine*, Chris Graff, formerly of the Associated Press, and Candace Page from VPR's *Vermont This Week* and the *Burlington Free Press*. LWVCEN board member and Voter Service Chair Susan Clark served as moderator.

In her opening remarks, Susan Clark began by noting that today, about one-third of Americans use the Internet as their primary source of news. She also remarked that a study done by Indiana University showed that young people get their news from Jon Stewart on the "Daily Show" which is fake news. Further, she stated, Senate candidate Rich Tarrant would be spending \$25.13 in advertising for every voter in the November election.

Tom Slayton asked the question "What is the function of the press"? The Jeffersonian ideal of an informed citizenry was that information had to come from many sources in order that democracy could work. Given that there is no dominant newspaper in Vermont, people have the advantage to be exposed to a variety of opinions from a plethora of regional publications, unlike in New Hampshire where one newspaper, the *Union Leader* dominates with its generally conservative slant. Tom noted that the *Union Leader* almost single handedly brought to an end the Presidential candidacy of Edmund Muskie in 1972. He also faulted the media for lack of news analysis.

Candy Page has seen many changes in news media. She sees good coverage of state politics but necessary economies taken by newspapers

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because of competition from other sources and changes in ownership has led to a dearth of local coverage. Stories of government process don't seem to interest readers. In response to a question from an audience member as to how greater corporate ownership of all media seems to have led to less press freedom and more slanted coverage of events (Clear Channel was mentioned), she emphatically responded that while that was more of an issue in the broadcast media, newspapers continued to be independently controlled by their editors and local staff, not the political leanings of the corporation. The purchase of the Burlington Free Press by Gannett

has made it a better newspaper, she maintains. Chris Graff noted that it really depends on the corporation. Tom Slayton sees it as a much greater problem in broadcast media. Former Vermont AP correspondent Chris Graff sees a time in the future when newspapers will disappear because of decreasing circulation. He believes that Vermont's newspapers will survive longest because of close community connections. Newspapers are giving readers more of what they want which is not necessarily the news. Some newspaper chains are not very interested in covering local news. On the positive side he sees greater access to news given the greater availability of politicians to the news media.

Calendar

February 7, 2007	Legislative Day, State House, Montpelier
February 17, 2007	LWVVT Board Meeting, Randolph
March 17, 2007	LWVVT Board Meeting, Randolph
May 19, 2007	LWVVT Convention
June 2-3, 2007	LWV Quad States Training for Local and State League Board Members, Saco, Maine