



The West Bay League of Women Voters' **SENTINEL**

serving Cranston, Warwick, East Greenwich, North
Kingstown,
Exeter, West Warwick and Coventry, RI

February 2010

HOT TOPICS PROGRAM SIZZLES!



Warwick's Ecology-Economy Draws 35 to Gregg's Jan. 15

RI Senator William Walaska, LWV-WB President Marie Hennedy, Warwick Mayor Scott Avedisian and LWV-WB Hot Topics Chair Helen Friend pose proudly below at "Down the Drain?" our 2nd Hot Topics event of the 2009-2010 non-election season.

October 22's luncheon at Twin Oaks featured Cranston Mayor Allan Fung speaking on state funding for education; **February's "Quo Vadis, Quonset?" will feature Quonset Development Corporation's Director Stephen J. King at the Sonoma Grille at 7366 Post Road in North Kingstown on Monday, February 22, from 5 to 6:30 p.m.**

Please see the enclosed poster for details. And do **POST IT AT YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY OR SUPERMARKET!**

LWV-WB TO COLLABORATE WITH RI FAMILY LITERACY INITIATIVE

Wanted: volunteers to help in citizenship classes for immigrants preparing for their citizenship test. How about you?

Veteran Leaguers Rosanne Bootz and Carolin Goldman presented this idea to our West Bay Board at its February 1st meeting. Caroline Stouffer has already signed up for a session! Here's Rosanne and Carolin's description of this fine opportunity to promote citizenship:

The Rhode Island Family Literacy Initiative (RIFLI), based at public libraries throughout Rhode Island, offers English as a Second Language (ESL), citizenship preparation and computer instruction as well as children's programming, student resource support and links to library resources and services.

Early in the program's inception the group received a grant from the LWVRI Education Fund. Recently, RIFLI approached the Ed Fund, not for further financial assistance, but for **volunteer assistance in citizen preparation classes**. Carolin Goldman and Rosanne Bootz met with Karisa Tashjian, Literacy Program Director and Larry Britt, Lead Teacher at Rochambeau Library, to discuss possibilities.

Closer to the fall election time voter education such as operation of voting machines and understanding referenda will be useful. After Carolin and Rosanne visited a citizenship class and observed a mock citizenship interview, it was agreed that at this time an opportunity to **practice language skills while discussing current events** would greatly benefit the students. **A six week pilot conversation group is planned to begin March 3rd.**

Carolin and Rosanne will coordinate the program for LWV, Karisa Tashjian and Larry Britt will be available for consultation and assistance. Carolin and/or Rosanne will attend the sessions and would like to have **an additional LWV volunteer for each week. Volunteers may choose to participate in a single session or for multiple sessions.**

The group will meet weekly on Wednesdays from 12 – 2 PM at the Rochambeau Library in Providence for six (6) weeks, beginning March 3rd, ending on April 7th. It is anticipated up to 10 students from the current Rochambeau citizenship class will participate.

Basis for the group conversation will be the ESL monthly newspaper *Easy English News* which will be provided to each of the students and volunteers. LWV volunteers will facilitate a discussion of the articles and topics in the publication. There will be no formal instruction but rather an opportunity for students to practice speaking about topics of interest to them. This will directly benefit the students in the citizenship class to successfully become citizens. Those who pass the citizenship test are often eager to stay engaged in the RIFLI program and continue to learn English and the conversation group will also be of benefit to them.

For further information or to volunteer contact:

Rosanne Bootz 885-5713 rbootz@aol.com
Carolin Goldman 884-7875 green2912@aol.com

West Bay League Offers to Facilitate Warwick Sewer Authority Public Forum this Spring

“Give the public a say” proclaims this editorial in January 26th’s *Warwick Beacon*:

It’s often said that transparency is the mother of good government.
That’s a lesson the Warwick Sewer Authority needs to learn sooner than later....

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Since early last summer, several residents from Governor Francis Farms have spoken out at Council meetings and peppered WSA executive director Janine Burke with questions about the operations, finances, policies and construction methods.

While Burke has been very forthcoming, helpful and willing to meet with residents to address their concerns to the best of her ability—the same can’t be said for the board.

There is no public comment session at the WSA’s regularly scheduled meetings. That means the ratepayers who pay the bills to keep the operation from going bankrupt have no opportunity to ask questions about the operation they’re forced to fund.

And to make matters worse, the WSA’s Web site doesn’t list the home phone numbers of the members of the board. That means a ratepayer with a concern not only can’t get up and speak at a meeting, he also can’t go to the Web site to find a phone number.

Constituents can obviously contact Burke, but in some cases, an answer from a board member directly is required. The executive director is responsible for implementing policy, while it’s the board the ultimately decides on those policies.

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So with our West Bay Board’s approval, its president Marie Hennedy is exploring with WSA Director Janine Burke our facilitating a public forum where citizens can ask questions of and make suggestions to WSA Board members and get clear answers and responses.

The League is especially interested in soliciting proposals to mitigate the effect of mandatory connections within one year, a proviso of the WSA’s acquiring \$47 million in construction funding—for free—from the RI Interceptor Bond Fund. Some grant funds are available to help low income families, but other residents are often caught in a Catch 22. Low interest loans at 2% to be paid over 5 years are limited to sewer connections made in accordance with the Davis Bacon Act; i.e., an EPA regulation requires that workers receive “prevailing wage payments.” So, if it is to be so financed, a sewer connection may well cost more than it would if its workers received lower wages—ironically, the standard that more likely prevails in Warwick.

The WSA public forum’s format may well mirror that of our candidate forums in that audience members would be invited to submit in writing questions or suggestions which would be screened for their conciseness, non-redundancy and issue-orientation.

The event will probably be held in the WSA’s own meeting room (capacity is 65, plus room in the hallway outside), and probably this April. The League does not wish its sponsoring this issue forum to impinge upon its regular bi-ennial candidate forums.

Stay tuned for more details!