



The West Bay RI League of Women Voters' SENTINEL

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

JULY 2011



LUNCHEON at Chelo's on the Waterfront --Tuesday, July 12 at 1 p.m. --
to feature our 3rd Annual Reading Aloud of 1912's provocative one-act comedy
"ELECTION DAY"

Do come to West Bay LWW's Dutch-treat luncheon at Chelo's on the Waterfront (on Masthead Drive, off Post Road in Warwick's Cowesett) on Tuesday, July 12, at 1 p.m. Having chatted over cool drinks, selected our roles (see descriptions below) and placed our food orders, we'll celebrate summer by reading aloud -- at about 1:30 p.m. -- from copies of Emily Sargent Lewis' suffrage play "Election Day."

Privately printed in Philadelphia in 1912 and reprinted in *On to Victory: Propaganda Plays of the Women's Suffrage Movement* (ed. Bettina Friedl, Boston: Northwestern UP, 1987), "Election Day" tells the tale of nine characters. Which role, if any, would you like to read this year?

- Mr. and Mrs. Richard Gardner (a businessman, he'd rather play golf than vote; a socialite and our lead, she's an anti-suffragist),
- their 21 yr. old daughter Dorothy (sweet & spunky) and 10 yr. old son Dick (a male chauvinist brat),
- Dorothy's ideal suitor Mr. Thomas Randolph (1912's McDreamy), and Mrs. Gardner's suffragist sister Mrs. Carter (prototypical LWW-er?!),
- and three servants: waitress Mary (a walk-on), and Augustus White "a negro who takes charge of the Gardner's furnace," and the wise if near-illiterate washerwoman Katy Casey (both cameo gems).

Just come (no reservations needed). And do bring your friends!

Dues Are Due!

Please find enclosed (or coming by snail-mail if you receive this newsletter on-line) your 2011-12 Membership form. Many thanks in advance for your annual dues and donations!



Sad news—first via Helen Abrams:

“**Evelyn Fleisig** passed away the week of June 6 in Knoxville, TN where she had been living for the past eight years. Evelyn was an active member of the Warwick League in the 50's, and after living in Puerto Rico for several years she returned to Cranston and rejoined the League where she became active again as a board member, poll runner, and a member of several committees. After the Cranston League became part of the West Bay League, Evelyn served as the co-editor of the Sentinel; She once said: "Once you take on a job for the League, you have it for life." We remember her for her many interests, her warmth and sense of humor. Evelyn was 93.

“When I called **Elizabeth Temple**, who was a good friend of Evelyn, Elizabeth's daughter told me that Elizabeth is battling cancer, and is very ill.”

Elizabeth's daughter soon wrote to Marie, as follows:

Dear Mrs. Hennedy,

As President of the League of Women Voters of West Bay, R.I., I (Chris Brannon of Charlestown, Nw Hampshire) wanted to let you know that my mother Elizabeth Temple is in Springfield, Vermont's Health and Rehabilitation Center. She is suffering from liver and gall bladder cancer and refusing chemo and surgery.

Since she's 91 years old, her doctor supports her decision, and I horribly and regretfully have to respect her wishes. Please hold her in prayer as she has served the league well for decades. She wants NO visitors or phone calls.

Thank you,
(Mrs.) Christine Brannon

[The Springfield VT Health and Rehabilitation Center is located at 105 Chester Road, Springfield, VT 05156.]

And, as you may well know by now, **Muriel Flood** of North Kingstown died last month, followed in a few weeks by her dear husband Les. Millie Plouffe and Carolin Goldman attended on June 19 their memorial at the Wickford Yacht Club. How well many of us remember Muriel's recalling what it was like to be a Leaguer during the McCarthy era in the '50's when teachers were being required to take loyalty oaths....

God speed to all.



May 23 Annual Meeting Breakfast Features U.S. Senator Jack Reed

After a delicious full breakfast served at 8:30 a.m. and a report from and discussion with U.S. Senator Jack Reed from 9 to 10 a.m. (see subsequent article), our 2010-11 Annual Meeting was held on Monday, May 23, at three huge, white-draped tables in Chelo's Restaurant on Post Road near the airport in Warwick.

Once we'd bid goodbye to about 15 guest colleagues from Newport, South Kingstown/Narragansett, Bristol and Providence, Marie Hennedy called our meeting to order at 10:20 a.m. We first accepted her President's and Voter Service Chair reports (all such reports are printed in our Annual Report) and Recording Secretary Charline Kochhan's minutes of our 2009-10 meeting which had featured U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse at a Quiddnessett Country Club dinner.

Caroline Stouffer's Nominating Committee report led to our electing for two-year terms 2nd Vice President Mickie Bonneau, Treasurer Millie Plouffe, Corresponding Secretary Jane Rankin, State and Local Issues Director Helen Abrams, and Appointed Directors Helen Friend and Helen Taylor. Since our previous 2nd VP Caroline Stouffer will now serve as our Membership Chair, Lilian Hempel was elected to fill Caroline's unexpired term on the Board.

Gratefully we then accepted Treasurer Millie Plouffe's fill-in membership report (holding steady at 39) and adopted her proposed budget. In this non-election year, we plan income of \$2619, expenses of \$2701 and thus anticipate a deficit of only \$82. (In contrast, despite our \$3200 LWVRI Education Fund grant to underwrite 10 local candidate forums in 2010, we experienced then a deficit of \$691.09—paid for by savings drawn down from our no-longer-available Projo poll-running earnings.)

Mickie Bonneau then led a discussion of her report as Chair of LWVRI's 2-year RI Education Funding Study, an effort which began in West Bay three years ago. It culminated in a statewide consensus later accepted at LWVRI's June 4th Convention. Locally, we then adopted Mickie's and Colleen Azzaro's proposal to study Charter Schools: their definition, criteria, structures, student-selection methods, purposes, funding sources and means of accountability.

Finally, we amended our by-laws' Article III, Section 2 (A) to incorporate LWV national's striking the term "honorary" from the term for our life members. (There's nothing insubstantial of "honorary" about 50 years of League service.) We adjourned just before Chelo's opened for lunch at 11:30 a.m.

A Report of U.S. Senator Jack Reed's Address

We live in “extraordinarily difficult times,” given two unfunded wars, mounting deficits due to massive tax cuts and expanded entitlements, and our having come “perilously close to financial collapse” with record unemployment rates and housing foreclosures.

Balancing the federal budget is a lot more complicated, Senator Reed noted, now that China has more than emerged as a world economic power and baby boomers have begun twenty years of massive retirements. Medicare/Medicaid face such enormous nursing home bills that the days of “most every family’s having a grandparent in a hospital bed in the living room” may return. Social Security’s solvency is threatened by far more retirees’ far greater longevity and the “bifurcation” of our wages. While high incomes have soared, the low and middle incomes that support Social Security have declined.

In response to Beth Candas of the South Kingstown/Narragansett League’s urging Senator Reed to cut subsidies to oil companies, he noted that they had even refused in Congressional hearings to spend not \$3,000 but \$17,000 for thorough oil platform inspections. In response to her desire to share equally our tax burdens, he noted that instead of asking “all to pitch in after 9/11,” two major wars were launched without budgetary funding, and taxes for the wealthy were cut. Asked by LWV-West Bay’s Helen Friend why he voted recently to retain tax cuts for the wealthy, Senator Reed described it as the tradeoff of a “typical vote in Washington,” one that retained tax cuts for the middle class and stimulated the economy at a still crucial time.

Massive yet anonymous corporate political contributions authorized by the Supreme Court’s Citizens United decision have had an “astounding” impact upon Congressional elections, Senator Reed commented in response to Caroline Stouffer’s inquiry. A Constitutional amendment may be needed, he said, to cap election spending and disclose each ad’s actual source; thereby ideas or “what constituents think” might have somewhat more weight than does money.

Stopping fraud is “not all it takes” to make healthcare reform work, he replied to Warwick’s Leo Garrity; basic structural reforms are needed. For example, he noted, getting preventative care to an uninsured 55 year old diabetic could vastly reduce Medicare costs when he or she turns 65.

Janet Carroll’s inquiry about Title I education funding evoked the Senator’s endorsement of not confrontation but collaboration between teachers and administrators.

Finally, when Cranston’s Mickie Bonneau cited a *New York Times* article on banks’ holding the largest number of foreclosed properties, Senator Reed replied that “Not enough has been done” to modify mortgages and limit bonded indebtedness. Terming the federal Comptroller’s Office’s announcing a 90-day study of such banks “a non-event,” he noted that our economy can attain “no real traction” until housing is stabilized. Now, 28 percent of American homes are “underwater,” i.e., worth less than their mortgages. Still, he can “see both sides”: a sudden resettlement could sink basic capital worldwide, and he looks with hope to a civil or criminal suit by New York’s Attorney General.

The West Bay League of Women Voters thanked Senator Reed sincerely for sharing his views with us. We also presented him with an honorary membership, for which he thanked us.
