



The Anchorage VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ANCHORAGE
PO Box 101345
ANCHORAGE, AK 99510-1345
907-274-8477

MARY ROSENZWEIG, PRESIDENT

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

What a busy couple of months it has been since our last newsletter! First, I would like to thank everyone who came out for the annual meeting in early April. We had a great turnout and managed to work through the business agenda efficiently. The two major items of business, of course, are the adoption of a program for the year and election of officers. The 2007-08 program will remain the same as this past year - we will continue to focus on Legislative processes, health care and citizen rights. Our membership has been active in all three areas over the past two months, so you can read more about each in this edition of the *VOTER*. And before I move on, let me thank **Marie Lavigne, Carol Dickason, Joyce Anderson** and **Kay Lahdenpera** for all their volunteer efforts in leading the effort on these issues during the past year.

The second major item on the annual meeting agenda was election of board members and officers. I would first like to welcome two new Board members: **Donna Grenier** and **Diane Mathisen**. I hope that they will enjoy their time with the Board as much as I am! I also have to say a heartfelt thank you to outgoing board members **Marie Lavigne** and **Marilyn Porter**. League leadership can be a big commitment at times and these women have stepped up to the plate and served well. Thank you again, and I hope that you both will stay engaged with League.

In addition to these major issues, we adopted a budget for the coming year, and closed out the meeting with a presentation from our two Youth Vote student leaders. How absolutely inspirational they were! After hearing their enthusiasm about the Youth Vote project it is no surprise that the Board voted at its May meeting to continue the project with Youth Vote 2008! Thank you **Michaela Hernandez** and **Megan Rawson** for your leadership and enthusiasm. We all wish you well as you head off to college—and hope that we hear more from you in the coming years as two of our newest members!

Right after the annual meeting, a group of us traveled to Juneau for the State Convention. I was joined by member **Je're Toms** as the Anchorage delegates and **Carol Dickason** and **Wilda Hudson**, officers for the State League. We enjoyed our time getting to know other League members from around the state, and touring our capitol city. The state League will report on State Convention activities in their newsletter, but I did want to report that the State LWV budget was reduced through identifying efficiencies in teleconferencing, which subsequently allowed a reduction in our per member payment to the state. This means that more of your dues will be staying and working in Anchorage.

**LWV Anchorage
2007-08 Board of Directors**

Mary Rosenzweig, President
Joyce Anderson, Vice President
Carol Dickason, Secretary
Wilda Hudson, Treasurer
Donna Grenier
V. Kay Lahdenpera
Mary Lou Lawhorn
Diane Mathisen
Barbara Norrell
Pat Redmond

**Contact us at 907-274-8477
www.lwvanchorage.org**

Finally, I would like to remind everyone that it's membership time again! If you haven't already renewed your membership, please do so today so that you do not miss out on any of our activities!

- Mary Rosenzweig

HELP NEEDED - IT'S AWAIC TIME OF THE YEAR AGAIN

Once again League has a table at the AWAIC Summer Solstice celebration at Town Square. This year, the event will be held on Friday, June 15, from 10am to 8pm and then on Saturday, June 16, from 10am to 4pm. Not only is this event fun, it is also another way for League to be involved in our community. Every year, this seems to be the place where League members, old and

new, reconnect - so don't miss out on the fun.

Your help is needed. If you can work for 2 to 3 hours either of those days, please call me at 333-9109 or email bbnorrell@alaska.com. Otherwise, you will be receiving a call.

The Anchorage Chamber Brown Bag Lunch on Tuesday, April 24, 2007 held a lively discussion to recognize National Cover the Uninsured Week. There were approximately 20+ crowded into the small conference room. The topic was "Cover the Uninsured Health Care Forum - Business Community Discussion", which was presented by the Alaska Primary Care Association.

The issue of access to primary care and health insurance is one that hits the business community as many businesses struggle with offering health insurance to their employees.

A panel of three discussed the challenges they encounter with clients/employees who are uninsured. The panel represented Alaska Primary Care Association, Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center and Snow City Cafe.

Nine million individuals in the U.S. are uninsured with 62.3% who are among the working poor. Alaska has twenty-four community health centers that offer service to the under and uninsured. Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center sees 14,000 people a year in 50,000 visits. They charge on a sliding fee scale for their services. In, 2001 - 20% of their clients were without insurance; and in 2004 - 55% without insurance. These health centers are often the primary care givers to not only poor and low-income clients, but clients from various economical levels. Because appointments are made in advance 10% of the clients do not show, which creates difficulties for staff and those clients that were turned away at any given time.

Positive programs discussed were the Anchorage Project for Access to Health Care and the numerous physicians who are donating their services as well as the Denali Kid Care Program which has 7,400 children enrolled in the Alaska program.

A Snow City Cafe co-owner spoke to the difficulties and lengthy research that management had done to try and obtain health insurance for their staff of 35-45 employees. In January 2004, to begin a plan the cost was \$36,000 to cover 50% of health costs; from there it was expected to increase by 20% each year. Small businesses cannot afford such costs even though they feel a dedication to assist their employees with their health care costs. There was discussion on having the restaurant and beverage association to establish a health plan that small businesses could join.

Legislation that was discussed included SB 160 - a state health insurance plan patterned after MA/ME/VT/PA/CA. and legislation to increase the current eligibility for Denali Kid Care from 150% to 175% (which subsequently passed - SB 27). Also discussed was establishment of a Medicaid buy-in for the disabled as many disabled individuals do not work because they will lose their medical coverage.

This Forum proved interesting and the attendees were vocal in sharing their concerns and experiences regarding the current health care they have received in Anchorage.

-Kay Lahdenpera

Have you been missing out?

If you have received this newsletter by mail, you may be missing out on important news!

Meeting announcements, action alerts and member updates are frequently sent by e-mail and we don't want you to be out of the loop

If you have not already provided us with your e-mail address, please do so today. E-mail us at league@lwvanchorage.org

OUR IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE NEIGHBORS – OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

As the national League looks at the issues, rights, concerns and protections for non-citizens living, working and contributing to our communities, the LWV of Anchorage on May 3 presented an informative panel presentation examining the health, education, literacy and employment opportunities and challenges for Anchorage's immigrants and refugees. It was co-sponsored by Bridge Builders of Anchorage.

Karen Ferguson, Director of Refugee Assistance and Immigration Services (RAIS), a division of Catholic Social Services, spoke on the various categories of immigrants (documented, undocumented) and refugees (political and asylees) and the differing support given or not given to the various categories. Antonio Huaiquivil, spoke on employment challenges, and Toc Soneoulay spoke of her family's experience as refugees.

RAIS provides a bridge for clients from their former life experiences to the new skills required for success in the United States. In fiscal year 2006, RAIS served 147 refugees or asylees new to the U.S. now living in Alaska. The program assists clients in obtaining a lifestyle that has sustainable financial support, and in which the family's basic needs are fully met on a long-term basis. Immigration counselors are available to assist clients with naturalizations, work permits and applications for lawful permanent residency (green cards).

Polly Smith, Executive Director of Anchorage Literacy Project, spoke about literacy issues and support available. Joan Fisher, Executive Director of the Anchorage Neighborhood Health Clinic presented information on health needs and services available through her agency. Also available was a listing of resources "Immigration 101: The Basics" including books, DVDs and other items.

(Continues next page)

Continued from page 2...

Ultimately, League members across the nation will come to consensus on the values they hold related to immigration. From this consensus will come a position the League will use for years to come to affect national policy. Helping to form Program in this manner may be League members' most important role. We invite you to fully participant in this Immigration study. Another forum focusing on becoming a citizen will take place this fall.

For more information and background papers, go to www.lwv.org and click on "Projects". Or, if you do not have computer access, call me at 278-6343 and I'll get you a copy. -Carol Dickason

Thank You! to our 2007 Contributors January - May, 2007

Jane Angvik
Esther Wunnicke
Diane Mathisen
Mary Lou Lawhorn
Mary Rosenzweig
Carol Comeau
Tina DeLapp
David & Janet McCabe
Arliss Sturgulewski

**And please remember—if you haven't done so already,
it's time to renew your 2007 membership!**

ETHICS ADDRESSED DURING 2007 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

With the new administration came a new focus on legislative ethics. Board member **Joyce Anderson**, who serves as the administrator for the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics, spent a lot of time in Juneau during the 2007 session as a major participant in a process that ultimately resulted in the passage of ethics reform legislation. Joyce has kindly provided us with this recap of the major highlights of that legislation.

Lobbyists:

- Required ethics training
- Increased restrictions on lobbyists gifts to legislators and legislative employees and executive branch department heads and employees
- Prohibits spouses and domestic partners of legislators from lobbying for pay
- Prohibits certain high-level executive branch officials from lobbying for one year after leaving their position
- Prohibits persons with certain felony convictions from lobbying

Disclosure laws:

- Legislators and legislative employees must disclose all boards on which they serve
- Financial disclosures
 - Legislators and public officials must file a financial disclosure within 90 days of leaving office
 - Financial disclosures require more details
 - More executive branch employees required to file
- Electronic filing of financial disclosures
 - Legislators and legislative employees must file ethics disclosures within 90 days of leaving office or service
 - Electronic filing of campaign disclosures

Legislative Ethics:

- Required ethics training
- Additional restrictions on gifts legislators and legislative employees may accept

- Prohibits legislators from receiving outside compensation for legislative, administrative, or political work
Provided operational efficiencies for the Select Committee on Legislative Ethics

Executive Branch Ethics:

- Provided additional guidance for blind trusts
- Specified when a financial interest in a business is significant
- Increased restrictions on employment after leaving service
- Prohibits use of state aircraft except when use is incidental
- Requires the governor, before granting executive clemency, to disclose any interest in the matter and obtain an ethics opinion from the attorney general

General Ethics:

- Forfeiture of certain pension contributions when an official is convicted of certain felonies in connection with official duties
- Failure of public servants to report bribery they know about is a crime
Prohibits agreements to exchange campaign contributions to elected officials or candidates for changing their votes or positions on a matter

This legislation, **HB 109**, closed some loopholes in current law that have been major issues over the last couple of years, tightened the restrictions on certain actions by public and elected officials which could potentially be a conflict of interest and increased accountability for some disclosures. Overall, the final version of **HB 109 (SCS CSHB 109 (fin) am S)** created a starting point for improved ethics guidelines for the State of Alaska. However, there is always room for improvement in the area of ethics.

- Joyce Anderson