



# THE CHESHIRE-WALLINGFORD VOTER

Volume VI – Issue 4

January 2010

League of Women Voters of Cheshire-Wallingford

P.O. Box 394

Cheshire, CT 06410

## *Our Mission*

*The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education.*

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## Presidents' Message

We hope everyone had a wonderful happy and healthy holiday season. Speaking of health, our January 23rd general membership meeting will focus on upcoming health care reform. The Saturday afternoon meeting at Council Chambers in the Cheshire Town Hall is open to the public. We hope to draw a good crowd so invite family, friends and neighbors to this interesting event. We will hold a short business meeting with our membership from 12:30 -1 . Coffee, tea and dessert will be provided. In case of snow, the event will be cancelled with no alternate date.

There is a program bulletin in this Voter which provides details on speakers and their respective professional experience. The Board has put much thought and effort into providing a fair and balanced forum for our members and communities. We hope to see all of you there!

We would like to extend our most heartfelt sympathies to Jackie Sima and her family on the loss of her mother.

*Donna and Kathy*

## Upcoming events:

### January

23. Saturday General Membership meeting – Health Care Reform Program

Cheshire Town Hall Council Chambers

27. Board Meeting – 7:15

### February – No Voter this month

24. Board Meeting – 7:15 p.m.

### March

24: General Membership Meeting - Women in History

31: Board Meeting – 7:15 p.m.

### April

28: Board Meeting

28: SIR – Quinnipiac University

**PUBLIC HEALTH FORUM  
CONNECTICUT HEALTH CARE  
“WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE”**

**CHESHIRE WALLINGFORD LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS**

12:30 to 3:00 on SATURDAY, JANUARY 23<sup>rd</sup>  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS – CHESHIRE TOWN HALL  
84 South Main Street (Rt. 10)

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS POSITION ON HEALTH CARE**

***The LWV promotes a health care system for the United States that provides access to a basic level of quality care for all U.S. residents and controls health care cost.***

Format: A reception followed by a panel discussion, ending with a question and answer session for all in attendance. The public is invited to attend.

12:30 Reception and refreshments

1:00 Program

Kathy Nankin, LWV President Cheshire Wallingford

Patti Flynn-Harris, Moderator

Ellen Andrews, PhD, Advocate for Health Care Reform,  
Connecticut Health Policy Project

Dr. Phil Brewer, University Medical Director for Student  
Health Services, Quinnipiac University

Cynthia Russo, Vice President Patient Care, Midstate  
Medical Center

2:00 Question and Answer

*“Despite having 47 million uninsured Americans, the United States spends twice as much per capita on health care as the other industrialized nations that provide health insurance to all their citizens. And yet we lag behind those nations on all three indicators of healthy lives: high life expectancy, low preventable mortality and low infant mortality.”*

*“In 2007, we spent \$2.4 trillion, or \$7,900 per capita, on health care and we are now projected to reach \$3.1 trillion in 2012 and \$4.3 trillion in 2017 which will represent 20 percent of our GDP.”*

*Quoted from*

***Evolution of The Health Care System In the United States by Rhondda Tewes.***

***Program Objective:*** *The Cheshire Wallingford LWV hopes to provide a platform for a discussion of problems and possible solutions for this challenging issue that affects every American. Join us for a lively exchange of ideas and share a cup of coffee. We look forward to seeing you at Town Hall on Saturday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>.*

## MEMBERSHIP

Please be sure to try to bring a guest, or better yet, guests to our Saturday Health Care Forum on January 23rd. The best way to recruit new members is by bringing friends and acquaintances as guests to one of our meetings. This event should be of interest to many people. We need new members.

Pat Vita

## SAVE THE DATE

What could be better on a cold snowy day in January than thinking about a lovely spring day in May, sipping wine and visiting with friends? Save **May 1st** for our **2nd annual wine tasting** at Elaine & Dick Lau's beautiful home in Cheshire.

*LWVCT asks Senator Lieberman to explain his health care reform stance.*

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December 17, 2009

Hon. Joseph I Lieberman  
US Senate

VIA FACSIMILE

Dear Senator Lieberman:

The League of Women Voters supports a health care system for the United States that provides access to a basic level of quality care and controls health care costs. Our more than 2,200 members of your home state League believe that the current health care system is endangering both our economy and our health and business as usual is not an option.

However, our members and your Connecticut constituents are confused about your stand on the Health Care Reform legislation currently being discussed by the Senate. What specific measures do you support to reform the health care system?

You have stated in your press release of December 15 “that health care legislation must expand coverage, contain costs, reform the way health care is delivered, and impose consumer protection regulations on the health insurance industry.” We concur. However, this is not likely to happen now that the public option has been dropped from the proposal as well as the Medicare expansion.

While you made it clear that you opposed the numerous forms of public option being proposed, your support for expanded Medicare was a matter of record in our state. We were optimistic that this proposal would be one that you would champion. You have now been instrumental in having that reform strategy eliminated from the bill. ([http://www.connpost.com/ci\\_13996897](http://www.connpost.com/ci_13996897))

We are writing to you today to request a face-to-face meeting with you to discuss your stand on the health care reform in general and to find out more about the reasons for your strong opposition **to a public option which the League has supported**. We have been attempting to set up such a meeting for quite some time but were unable to do so. We believe that a thorough discussion is needed so that we can understand your position and inform our membership accordingly.

Specifically, we would like to have answers to the following questions:

What specific measures do you support to expand coverage to those Americans who are uninsured?

What specific measures do you support to contain costs?

What specific measures do you support to reform the way health care is delivered?

What specific measures would you agree to that impose consumer protection regulations on the health insurance industry?

Like most other Americans, members of the League of Women Voters of Connecticut believe that it is imperative for the Senate to pass a comprehensive Health Care Reform bill this year. As our Senator, we counted on you to be a powerful force for making that happen. We are disappointed and need to know why that didn't happen. We understand that scheduling a meeting will be difficult at this time as the Senate continues to be in session. However, we would appreciate a response at your earliest convenience, explaining your stand during the recent discussions and negotiations.

Sincerely,

Jara N. Burnett  
President

***LWVCT Opposes Proposal to Require  
Local School District Funding of Charter Schools***

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Date: January 4, 2010

To: State Board of Education Members

From: Katherine Wilson, School Finance Specialist, League of Women Voters of Connecticut

I am writing to you today on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Connecticut to express the League's opposition to Proposal #2 in the State Department of Education's Charter School Proposals, as presented to you at the December 2, 2009, Board meeting.

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut supports a system of public education funding that makes available to each community financial resources sufficient to provide a suitable program of educational experiences to each child. We believe the state should fund through grants to towns 50% of the overall statewide cost of public elementary and secondary education and that those funds should be distributed in a way that recognizes both the relative ability of different communities to finance schools from local resources and the various factors that influence the cost of educating different children.

Proposal #2 violates each of these broad principles.

By requiring local school districts to take over fiscal responsibility for charter schools and by contemplating no increase in ECS grants, it would reduce the already insufficient funds provided to towns by the state for local public education. The state contributed only about \$2.4 billion, or 33%, of the total \$7.2 billion operating cost of local public elementary and secondary education in Connecticut in 2008-09, well below the 50% share supported by the League and espoused by the State Board of Education itself in the early days of ECS. In fact, the state has never achieved the 50% cost share intended when the ECS formula was developed. Given this history and

the flat-funding of the ECS grant in the current biennial state budget, the tuition payments required under Proposal #2 would represent the complete diversion of these resources away from local public education to state charter schools, now and into the foreseeable future.

Because charter school students tend to reside in Connecticut's least wealthy school districts, Proposal #2 also would place this burden disproportionately on many of those communities least able to pay. In 2008-09, for example, 78% of state charter school students came from our 31 poorest towns. If this proposal had been in effect that year, Bridgeport would have had to divert \$10.6 million, or about 4% of its already strained budget, from its own schools to pay tuition for its 1,026 charter school students. Greenwich, meanwhile, would have been required to pay only \$10,306, or about .007% of its budget, for its one charter school student, and other wealthy towns like Avon, Essex, Ridgefield, and Woodbridge, who had no charter school students, would have paid nothing. Thus, this plan not only diverts resources away from local public schools, it diverts them unfairly from schools that need them most.

Furthermore, charter school students are not and will not be numerous or concentrated enough to produce a reduction in school districts' costs commensurate with the tuition payments required under Proposal #2. It takes the exodus of about 20 students from a single grade in a single school to reduce that school's need for teachers by one, and even that improbable event does not appreciably reduce a school's administrative or maintenance costs. Thus, even if charter school enrollment should rise dramatically, school districts' costs are unlikely to fall proportionately.

The League urges the Board to reject this flawed proposal that would shift approximately \$50 million in education expenditures from the state to towns and would disproportionately affect poorer communities. We hope that you will instead continue the Board's traditional advocacy of a greater state share in the cost of local public elementary and secondary education.

Thank you for your service to the state and to the school children of Connecticut.

cc: Mark McQuillan, Commissioner of Education

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**LWVCT Urges Reduced Cut on PEGPETIA Fund CGA Appropriations Committee**

**December 9, 2009 Public Hearing**

**Comments by Pua Ford, Media Specialist**

**League of Women Voters of Connecticut**

**Support preservation of the PEGPETIA program**

The League of Women Voters believes that community access television channels – for public, educational, and governmental programming – must be adequately protected, promoted, and funded, regardless of the provider of TV/video services to Connecticut residents.

We urge you to reduce the amount to be swept from the Public, Educational and Governmental Programming and Educational Technology Investment Account (PEGPETIA), when you consider the budget deficit mitigation. Another withdrawal of \$2.3 million will seriously harm a program that has supported open government, free speech and educational initiatives at the local level. We recognize that the budget situation is grave and that every agency and program must reduce spending, but this program should not be cut back as hard as proposed.

We had heard from staff at the Department of Public Utility Control that the next sweep of \$2.3 million would cause the grant program to be suspended. We urge you to ask that department how much is needed to keep the program going, even at a reduced level.

Recently a legislator described the funds to be swept as “unused pots of money.” PEGPETIA is certainly not unused. Since the grant program was started in June 2008, the following communities and schools received grants from the Department of Public Utility Control for the improvement of community access television programming and for educational technology:

- Wethersfield Community TV
- Wilton Public Schools
- Stafford Public Schools
- Wethersfield Public Schools
- Town of Wolcott
- Cheshire Board of Education
- Wallingford Public Access Association
- Citizens TV (*New Haven, Hamden, West Haven*)
- Enfield TV
- Connecticut State Library
- FairTV of Fairfield
- Wallingford Public Schools
- Wallingford Govt. Access TV
- East Haven Public Schools
- Children’s Community School, *Waterbury*
- West Hartford Community TV
- Greenwich Community TV
- East Haven Public TV
- Branford Community TV
- North Haven Community TV
- Darien Public Schools
- Tri-Town Cable TV Govt. Access Committee (*Granby, East Granby, Hartland*)
- Somers Public Schools
- Simsbury Community TV
- Skye Cable XIII, *Waterbury*
- Rocky Hill Community TV
- New Haven Public Schools
- MetroCast (*Waterford, East Lyme*)
- Manchester Board of Education
- Windsor Community TV
- Southington Board of Education
- Norwalk Community TV
- Town of Glastonbury
- Meriden Board of Education
- Nutmeg TV (*Plainville, New Britain and nearby towns*)

Besides the above-listed entities, freelance and nonprofit producers have benefited from the program also. When towns and schools lack resources to improve their programs and communications, the independent producers are the ones who fill in the gaps.

The DPUC commendably does not give money away freely. For the 66 applications reviewed between June 2008 and April 2009, \$1,668,649.81 was awarded and \$3,035,235.18 was denied. Besides these, another dozen applications await decisions—requests totaling \$550,716.18. Money has been available to sweep into deficits because the department has been careful with its guidelines. As with other good grant programs, applicants have to state their case.

The fund has been cut, as have many others in state government. As described in CGS § 16-331cc(c)(1), the taxes feeding the PEGPETIA fund were reduced by half as of October 1, 2009. It will take much longer to rebuild this fund to a useful level.

**An investment account that is continuously cleaned out has nothing to invest.**

The needs of the state are great. The League of Women Voters respects the burden you have in addressing them. We know this is not the only fund considered for reduction or elimination. We urge you to consider a

smaller cut to the fund to enable the continuation of a program that has supported open government, free speech and educational initiatives at the local level.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment today.

Sincerely,

Pua Ford, Media Issues Specialist  
8 Valley Road, Bethany, 06524  
203-393-2184  
203-305-4068



## Celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the LWVCT!

The Education Fund is planning a series of events beginning in January 2010. Here's a sneak preview of what's coming - save the dates!

- **January 27 – Feb 8, 2010** – online auction of items ranging from restaurants, to hotel stays, to specialty chocolates to spa services. Log onto the LWVCT website to see items donated to date:  
<http://www.lwvct.org/events/auction-items.htm>
- **May 16, 2010** – celebratory benefit tea with a one-woman show “*Susan B. Anthony – The Invincible*” to be held at the historic Keeler Tavern in Ridgefield. The feisty activist comes to life- circulating petitions, getting arrested, and challenging legislators. Letters, speeches and diaries reveal her wit and intellect. Great mother-daughter event!
- **June 27, 2010** – benefit performance of “*This Old Hat: Patriots of Liberty*” Danbury Music Center. Winner of the 2005 DAR Nutmeg Award, Actress Patty Carver in a tour de force performance portrays 5 female patriots of liberty: Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Betsy Ross, Deborah Sampson, Harriet Tubman and Amelia Earhart. Program appropriate for children from grade 3 and up. A great grandparent/grandchild event – and bring the boys with you!

Also in the works are author events, comedy performances and film nights. Keep a lookout for more details in mailings and on the website in the months ahead. Stay tuned!

LWVCTEF is a 501c3 tax deductible organization. All contributions are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowable by law.

[www.lwvct.org](http://www.lwvct.org)

Cheshire Community Theater will perform **Room Service** on Stage at the Thorp Auditorium on Friday, January 15, and Saturday, January 16, at 8 p.m. There will be a Sunday matinee, January 17, at 1 p.m.

**League of Women Voters of Cheshire-Wallingford**

P.O. Box 394  
Cheshire, CT 06410

LWVCW@lwwct.org  
www.lwwct.org/lwvcw



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**JOIN THE LEAGUE**

*Make your check to LWV Cheshire-Wallingford.*

*Please detach and mail with check to Elaine Lau, Treasurer, 239 Jinny Hill Road, Cheshire, CT 06410*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Dues for LWVUS, LWVCT & LWVCW (\$55.00) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Each Additional Household Member (\$25.00) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL** \$ \_\_\_\_\_