

# Hingham Voter

Serving the Towns of Hingham, Hull, Cohasset and Norwell

November 2007

## HLWV Board

2007—2008

**President:** Julie Strehle**VP Voter Education:**

Deborah Courteau

**VP Advocacy:**

Melanie Quackenbush

**Green Study Co-Chairs:**

Kate Boland, Elizabeth Fetsko

**Secretary:** Victoria Milano**Treasurer:** Marisa Costello**Membership Recruiter:**

Christine Dietterich

**Publicity:** Jerry Elsden**Web Site & Newsletter:**

Lynn Cotter

**Events Coordinator:** Dina

O'Neil

**Advisors:** Cindy Coe, Cathy

Salisbury

## President's Letter

Dear Members,

HLWV has had an active past couple of months, and I thank all of the members who have become involved! We are rapidly growing—the latest count is 63 members and rising, and I welcome the new members to our ranks.

For our first all-member meeting of the year, Deb Courteau organized an informative meeting on The Climate Project (see article in this newsletter). Thank you, Deb!

HLWV also held its third annual New Member Wine & Cheese event for people to learn more about the League. Thank you to Christine and Hans Dietterich for opening their home for this event.

Another training on Observer Corps was held, adding five members to create a pool of 15 trained volunteers. We are covering five town boards now, so look for Observer Corps notes in the next newsletter in January. Thank you to members Pat Facey and Jane Malme for conducting this training for us again, and to Marisa Costello for videotaping the training for future replay. Please contact Marisa at [marisacostello1@comcast.net](mailto:marisacostello1@comcast.net) if you would like to join the Observer Corps.

Congratulations go to Deb Courteau, our VP of Voter

Education, for successfully completing the Moderator Training held by the State League in September. She can now offer her moderating skills at Candidates' Night forums held by other local leagues, which will earn money for the Hingham League. Thank you, Deb!

Speaking of earning money, thank you to Kate Boland and Marisa Costello for representing HLWV at the State Phonathon Fundraiser in October. Together they earned \$40 for participating, and a 20% share of each donation secured by their phone calls.

HLWV will continue its fundraising efforts with a Reusable Shopping Bag, pictured here on this page, just in time for the holiday season. See your order form in this newsletter. The League has committed to selling 300 of these stylish bags, based on a calculation of our membership total times five bags, so we would appreciate your order and help spreading the word to your friends and family! Proceeds from this fundraiser will go towards the publication of the "Know Your Town" booklet and printing of the "Thank You for Registering to Vote" post-cards. Thank you to Victoria Milano and Christine Dietterich for their hard work on this project so far. We will also sell this Shopping Bag at Christmas in the Square on

December 8. HLWV is setting up a table on Main Street at the bottom of the driveway of Old Derby in order to register voters. We'll be there from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

We are also submitting a tree to the Festival of Trees, as part of Christmas in the Square. Jerry Elsden is heading up that effort, so if you'd like to join her in decorating this special tree, please email her at [jelsden@hotmail.com](mailto:jelsden@hotmail.com).

So, we have a lot going on, with lots of opportunities to get involved, so please join us.

Happy Holidays,  
Julie Strehle

## Upcoming Events

### Board Meeting

Tuesday, November 27  
7:30 p.m.  
43 Woodlock Road

### Know Your Town Meeting

Tuesday, November 13  
7:00 p.m.  
7 Park View Drive

### Register to Vote Event

Saturday, December 8  
10am - 3pm  
Christmas in the Square

(Corner of Main & South Streets)



## State League Fall 2007 Conference Recap - By Deborah Courteau

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts recently held its Fall Conference. This year's topic, "Who Pays for Local Government?" affects every resident living in Massachusetts. Discussions centered on why property taxes continue to increase while funding municipal services is a huge struggle.

John Hamill, Chairman of both the Municipal Finance Task Force and Sovereign Bank, spoke about an article he wrote, "Communities at Risk: Fiscal Ties Between the Commonwealth and Its Localities." He focused on the rising costs, limited local aid, and restrictions on raising revenues that are causing our towns and cities to face a serious fiscal squeeze. Residents are paying more and getting less at the local level. Major issues for local municipalities include: dependency on local property taxes, education reform, stagnant local non-school aid, and rising health care costs.

Hamill discussed the many constraints on local municipalities to raise revenue. Uncapping the lottery did help; but those funds have proven unpredictable. There needs to be a partnership between state and the local municipalities. The basic business model of local governments is no longer going to work.

The second part of the program was a panel discussion on what can be done to help cities and towns. Leslie Kirwan, Secretary – Office of Administration and Finance, discussed how the state could help: by allowing municipalities more freedom to raise their own revenues through local meals taxes or hotel sur-

charges, and by closing corporate loopholes. Unfortunately, these solutions are currently mired in legislation and are not yet the law. Kirwan also discussed the issue of rising health care costs. In 2006, over 104 towns in Massachusetts spent more than half their revenues on health care costs. Residents are not seeing value for their money, and are moving out of state. Kirwan thinks revenue diversification and raising some taxes as crucial to the sustainability of Massachusetts.

Geoffrey Beckwith, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) also believes Massachusetts cannot sustain the current

*Support of the local towns is vital to economic growth and attracting new businesses. If towns cannot sustain themselves, residents will leave the state, and new businesses will not be attracted here, which creates a major impact on the economy.*

quality of life in our municipalities. Support of the local towns is vital to economic growth and attracting new businesses. If towns cannot sustain themselves, residents will leave the state, and new businesses will not be attracted here, which creates a major impact on the economy. Currently, municipalities receive only 26% of state revenues. Cuts are dramatic and devastating. Aid to towns has been reduced by \$600 million since 2002. MMA suggested a revenue sharing plan for the state where over five years, the state will give 40% of tax

revenues to local government for both education and non-school programs. This would allow towns to reduce dependency on the property tax and to allow towns to be both fiscally and economically competitive over time. Economies will thrive and residents will live at a higher level; people will not leave.

Thomas Scott, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Superintendents Association discussed the significant increase schools continue to face in mandatory programs which they have no choice but to pay for – especially Special Education. Mandated programs also mean more bureaucratic paperwork. And not all of these

programs are money well spent. An example given was the cost of mandated special education transportation at \$190 million per year. All regular education transportation in this state costs \$190 million per year, but is not mandated. A better way must be found for special education transportation. There has been a \$1.3 billion gap between what the schools are spending and what they're receiving since 1993.

Mayor John Barrett, III from North Adams, Mass. discussed how the personal state tax decrease in 2002 actually hurt

state residents. A decrease from 5.6% to 5.3% took over \$1.4 billion out of the revenue stream. A downturn in the economy at the same time made the situation even worse. Governor Romney balanced the state budget on the backs of the cities and towns – and their residents. Barrett also discussed the difficulties he has in dealing with unions, who continue to dictate what happens in state budgets. An example he gave was the recently passed legislation that mandated raising the pensions for former town employees who were injured on the job to \$30 more a month. That was fundable. But the legislature went further after being lobbied by the unions and made this retroactive to the point where a town must now pay the employee up to \$20,000 more per year. Where does a town get this extra money?

So, we have all this gloom and doom about schools not able to meet their budgets, public utilities budgets (police and fire) being cut too often, an infrastructure that has been brought to such a low level that the cost will greatly increase over time because municipalities are now just barely sustaining, and with local budgets too thinly and narrowly balanced. What do we do? Voters have repeatedly shown they will stay home unless the issues directly affect them. People must be made to care in order to vote. There are 351 towns and cities in Massachusetts. The public is not necessarily upset at the idea of someone raising their taxes. They are upset at the increasing inaction and gridlock.

The consensus of the day was

*Fall Conference Recap  
Continued from Page 2*

that business leaders and educators will need to educate the residents of Massachusetts. The non-government level of leadership must lead to tell the people more clearly what is going on. Political leaders are not seen as completely altruistic. Also, further reliance on property tax is not feasible. It makes it impossible to bring in new growth. As the most regressive of major taxes, we cannot rely on it. The focus needs to be elsewhere. Tax-exempt properties (churches, museums, schools, hospitals, Veterans' halls) all provide economic stimulus, but unfortunately are also a great burden on municipalities. Perhaps if they are charged more on water and electricity – some payment in lieu of property taxes – municipalities would have additional revenue.

How do we know how fiscally solid our town is? How are they handling these issues of balancing the school and non-school budgets? We, as League members, must recognize the importance of how our local government is funded. And, more importantly, it is our responsibility to make sure residents know and understand these issues.

MassBenchmarks – 2006. Full report available at [www.mapc.org](http://www.mapc.org) – Hamill Commission Report.

[www.mma.org](http://www.mma.org) under Position Papers

## First Annual All Member Meeting - The Climate Project

The Climate Project, presented to us on September 18 by Mr. Wilson Rickerson, was a detailed report of the slideshow that was highlighted and shown in An Inconvenient Truth. The Climate Project is a non-profit organization with the mission of increasing public awareness of the climate crisis at a grassroots level throughout the United States and abroad.

Mr. Rickerson addressed the scientific evidence of the climate change and climate crisis that we have recently seen in just the last decade. He discussed how the increase in carbon dioxide and methane has “thickened” our atmosphere and in doing so has warmed up our planet, other-

wise known as “global warming”. The conflicting question is not so much “Is it happening?”, but more “To what extent is it happening?”. He spoke about the top three reasons for its cause 1) population increase 2) industrial/ technological revolution and 3) our way of thinking. And concluded the presentation with its future impact on our world and how we, as individuals and

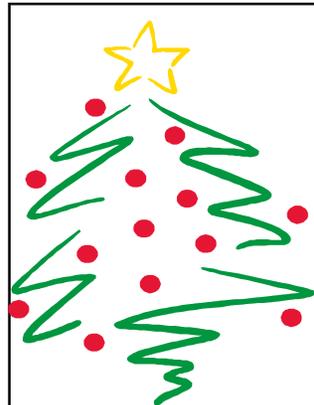
citizens of our communities can positively affect change in stabilizing or even decreasing global warming.

If you are interested in learning more about The Climate Project, you can visit [www.theclimateproject.org](http://www.theclimateproject.org) or contact Wilson Rickerson at [wilson@rickersonenergy.com](mailto:wilson@rickersonenergy.com) for any questions.



*Deborah Courteau, HLWV VP Voter Education and speaker of The Climate Project, Wilson Rickerson, share a good laugh.*

## Festival of Trees



Yes, that's right! We will be entering a tree this year to the Annual Festival of Trees part of Christmas in the Square (December 7 & 8). And we need your help!

Jerry Elsdon is heading up the tree decoration, and has come up with a theme that is near and dear to the League's heart...A “green” theme. She is dreaming up

ornament ideas such as a birdhouse or gingerbread house, round ornaments using bottle caps, stars sewn using discarded knit sweaters, maybe a garland of something recycled.

For her efforts, Jerry desperately needs your recycled materials: Styrofoam trays (cleaned), aluminum trays, cereal boxes, bottle caps from both water bottles and regular bottle caps. Also, any red and/or white sweaters being tossed. She will pick up these items at your houses.

To donate these materials, or to join her in creating this special tree, email Jerry at [jelsden@hotmail.com](mailto:jelsden@hotmail.com).

Thanks for your help!

## Register to Vote

The HLWV will be hosting a Register to Vote table at this year's Christmas in the Square event on Saturday, December 8th from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The table will be located on the corner of Main and South Streets at the bottom of the driveway of Old Derby. This will also be a great opportunity to sell our new reusable shopping bags to the public.

If interested in helping out, please contact Victoria Milano at [vmilano1@hotmail.com](mailto:vmilano1@hotmail.com).





The Hingham League  
of Women Voters



# The Hingham League of Women Voters Proudly Announces its 2007 Reusable Shopping Bag Fundraiser

Dear Hingham League of Women Voters Supporter,

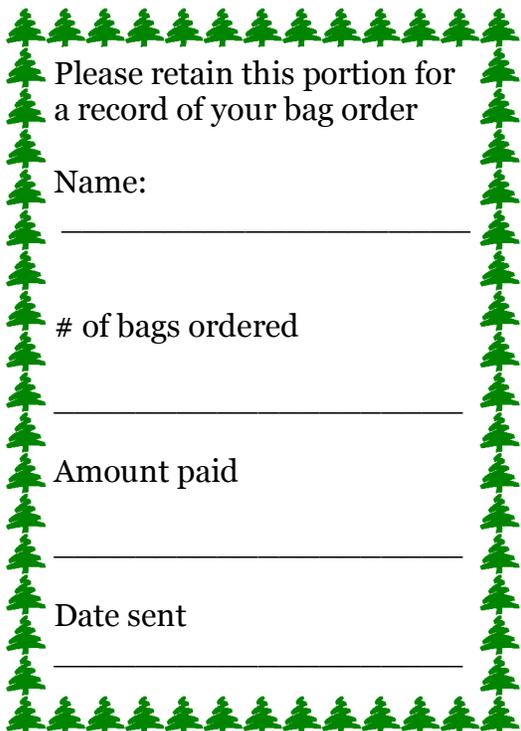
Looking for the perfect Holiday gift for all the shoppers in your life? Do you want to be conscientious about the environment and inspire others to be aware? You can support the Earth and the Hingham League of Women Voters at the same time: Introducing the League's stylish, lightweight, completely biodegradable, canvas shopping bag. It's the perfect size for the grocery store and other shopping trips.

The League in Hingham is energized and wants to continue to offer and expand its programs. Your participation in this fundraiser will support the "Know Your Town" booklet project, continue to allow us to send out "Thank You for Registering To Vote" postcards and host our annual "Candidates' Night" forum.

We invite all members to pre-order these shopping bags. We also ask that you forward this offering to all of your friends and family who are supporters of the environment and would like to support the Hingham League of Women Voters. HLWV will also sell these bags at Christmas in the Square on December 8 in front of Old Derby on Main Street from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The price for each canvas bag, measuring 12x17x6 (with a 7-inch gusset) will be \$8, or 3 bags for \$20. Bags will be available for delivery starting in the first week of December. League volunteers will deliver your bags to your home in the delivery area of Hingham, Cohasset, Hull and Norwell. If you live outside this area, we would be happy to mail bags to you via UPS, with a \$15 shipping charge.

Thank you for your support,  
Victoria Milano, Shopping Bag Fundraising Chair  
781-740-1816



Please retain this portion for  
a record of your bag order

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

# of bags ordered  
\_\_\_\_\_

Amount paid  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date sent  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Order Form

Please send in this form with a check made out to  
Hingham League of Women Voters to:  
Dina O'Neil, 7 Park View Drive, Hingham, MA 02043

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

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Canvas Bag	Quantity	Price Each	TOTAL \$
Single Bag	_____	x \$8	= _____
3-Bag Set	_____	x \$20	= _____

(Add \$15 Shipping per address if outside delivery area)

\$ Amount enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you!** Questions, call Dina @ 781-749-8450

# HLWV Membership Form

## May 2007 – May 2008

Send to:  
 Marisa Costello  
 43 Woodlock Road  
 Hingham, MA 02043

Name \_\_\_\_\_

2<sup>nd</sup> Member \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email\* \_\_\_\_\_

\*We need your email address so we can alert you from time to time about a League meeting or let you know when a new Voter newsletter is on our website\*

- Individual \$50.
- Household \$75. (\$50, first member; \$25 second)
- Full time student \$25.
- CONTRIBUTION \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- PAYMENT ENCLOSED \$ \_\_\_\_\_

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization encouraging the informed and active participation of citizens in government. It influences public policy through education and advocacy. We never support or oppose any political party or candidate. We are delighted to get help from our Members. Below is a list of activities in need of your help. Please check or circle any items with which you can assist:

\_\_\_\_\_ **Voter Education**

- \* Help run Candidates Night
- \* Register voters
- \* Pass out "I Voted Today" stickers at the polls

\_\_\_\_\_ **Advocacy**

- \*Municipal Finance Study
- \* Green Study Committee
- \* Report on Town Boards with Observer Corps
- Compile town data for the "Know Your Town" booklet

\_\_\_\_\_ **Social Event Planning**

- \* Plan All-Member meetings, including Annual Meeting

### LWVM AFFORDABLE HOUSING STUDY - CONSENSUS MEETING

The Affordable Housing Consensus Meeting for the Braintree Area League and all Leagues in Region 8 will be held on **December 4 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.** Recognizing the pressing need for more affordable housing in Massachusetts, the LWVM Convention, 2005, adopted a study with the following scope: To evaluate legislation, regulations and programs in Massachu-

in providing affordable housing and propose a new position through consensus or concurrence. The committee has focused on major Massachusetts legislation that enables development of affordable housing in the state.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING CONSENSUS QUESTION**  
 What changes to Massachusetts laws are needed to more

successfully encourage the production and retention of affordable housing? In discussing this question please consider the following:

- Reasonableness and fairness of current eligibility for purchase or rental of affordable housing in Massachusetts.
- Methods of counting affordable housing units under Chapter 40B.
- Duration of affordability

restrictions on housing units – in perpetuity, in perpetuity with some provision for reversion to market rate, or for a specified time.

- Effectiveness of state incentive programs for smart growth, including Chapter 40R and 40S.

If you are interested in attending, please contact Julie Strehle at [ja.strehle@verizon.net](mailto:ja.strehle@verizon.net).

**HINGHAM LEAGUE OF WOMEN  
VOTERS**

30 Ward Street  
Hingham, MA 02043

*Democracy: The more you use it,  
the better it gets!*



*Check it out! Details inside.*

