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LWV Bulletin, March, 2007

League of Women Voters of the Huntington Area

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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF HUNTINGTON

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March 2007 Bulletin

**SPECIAL
COLLECTIONS**

MARCH 12 MEETING ON EDUCATION

The League's March 12 meeting at the Enslow Park Presbyterian Church will feature Dr. Karen Larry, from the WV Department of Education speaking on "The 21st Century Learning Initiative and the Future of Teaching and Learning in West Virginia". She will also talk about No Child Left Behind. Before Dr. Larry's speech, the League will provide a finger food buffet at 5:30. The March meeting is designed to promote membership in the League. After the speech and Q and A, we will offer opportunities to those attending the meeting to find out more about the League.

Please invite your friends to our meeting. An elevator is available for those who have difficulties with climbing stairs.

DR. KAREN LARRY

Dr. Karen K. Larry is the Executive Assistant to the State Superintendent of Schools and has worked for the state department of education since 1987. During her years at the WVDE she has been involved with the WV Principal's Academy and provides technical assistance to educators, community people, and nonpublic school educators. She also attends advisory councils' meetings for the superintendent and administers a number of programs. Formerly she was a teacher in the Barbour County schools.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

According to the January 25 issue of the *New York Times*, President Bush is calling for changes to the 2002 passed No Child Left Behind law. Margaret Spellings, the Secretary of Education, wants to give students in failing schools more options and ensure that neediest schools have the best teachers.

Under the present NCLB law, schools are required to test students and reading and math annually in grades three to eight, and establishes penalties for schools that fail to attain progress. Penalties can include shutting down these under achieving schools. It is estimated that there are 1,800 schools across the country that fail to meet targets.

Ms. Spellings suggests "that allowing local officials to close failing schools and replace them with charter

schools would give children new options. Charter schools are publicly financed but freed from many of the regulations that apply to traditional neighborhood schools." She also said that "local superintendents would also be helped if they could transfer teachers in their districts to help improve poorly performing schools, even if union contracts banned such moves." Some members of Congress oppose these proposals because 1) allowing superintendents to override contracts would undo collective-bargaining agreements; 2) the federal law would circumvent state laws on charter schools; and 3) they oppose taxpayer-financed vouchers for struggling children.

However, some of the administration's proposals have more support - establishing a "federal fund that would give extra pay to teachers who are most effective in raising children's test scores, or who agree to teach in the neediest schools; and allowing districts with failing schools to first offer children tutoring before allowing them to transfer."

A Dec. 8, 2006 *New York Times* editorial listed reasons that NCLB has minimally erased the achievement gaps between rich and poor students. "The law was supposed to remake schools that serve poor and minority students by breaking with the age-old practice of staffing those schools with poorly trained and poorly educated teachers. States were supposed to provide students with highly qualified teachers in all core courses by the beginning of the current academic year. That didn't happen. Given what's at stake, the teacher quality provision of No Child Left Behind deserves to be at the very top of the list when Congress revisits the law."

Other issues (From the *NY Times*, February 11) pertain to recent immigrants and special-education students. Some critics say that these groups should not have to meet the same standards at the same pace as other students and are pushing for more flexibility in testing. However, most believe that these groups still must be part of the accountability system.

"Roughly 10 percent of special-education students, those with the most severe disabilities, take alternative tests, easier than the regular exams." But critics say the tests still are too hard for some children and do not reflect lessons typically taught to severely disabled students. In addition to the 10 percent who get the special test, the Education Department is

considering allowing about one-fifth of the rest of the special-education students to take alternative tests. These tests are expected to be harder than the ones given to the first group but easier than the typical tests.

"The government exempts immigrants enrolled in U.S. schools for less than a year from taking reading tests and allows students to take tests in their native language for up to three years. States, however, have been slow to develop tests in other languages."

THE 21ST CENTURY LEARNING INITIATIVE
(from the WVDE website)

West Virginia became the second state in the nation to join the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. Governor Joe Manchin, along with the West Virginia Board of Education, state legislators, educators and other community members signed a statement of support indicating their commitment to 21st century learning. The Partnership's framework puts a special emphasis on critical thinking, problem solving, communication skills, global awareness and business literacy.

What are 21st Century skills? To help educators and the community answer that question the WV Department of Education established the Learning Community Digital Resource, a powerful tool for group and individual learning about the creation of 21st century schools.

As part of the federal No Child Left Behind Act, WV also established 21st Century Community Learning Centers programs to provide academic enrichment opportunities to (a) meet state and local student standard in core academic subjects; (b) offer students a broad array of enrichment activities that can complement their regular academic programs; and (c) offer literacy and other educational services to the families of participating children.

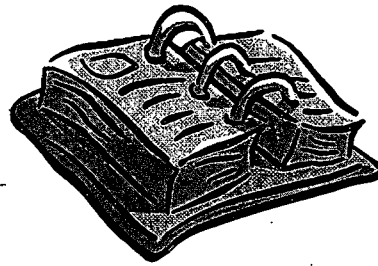
The West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) makes competitive local grants (based on available federal funding) to eligible organizations to support the implementation of community learning centers that will assist student learning and development. Eligible applicants are public and private agencies, city and county governmental agencies, faith-based organizations, institutions of higher education, and for-profit corporations.

LWV is a nonpartisan organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Membership in the League is open to women and men of voting age. Annual dues, not tax deductible, are \$40 individual, \$55 for two in one household and \$24 for students.

To join, send your check to: Ann Spear, Treasurer, 706 Ridgewood Road, Huntington, WV 25701

LWV Huntington Area
Jane Husted, Editor



March 12, 5:30 pm, Enslow Park Presbyterian Church, Finger Foods Buffet, Dr. Karen Larry, "21st Century Learning Initiative and the Future of Teaching and Learning in West Virginia"
COMING UP – Annual meeting in April. TBA.

BERNICE STEIRN

We pay tribute to a wonderful woman, Bernice Steirn, who died on February 21. Bernice's accomplishments were varied – she was a reading specialist, docent at the Huntington Museum of Art, volunteer at Ronald McDonald House, pillar in the B'Nai Sholom Congregation, and wife and mother. We are fortunate that Bernice was a League member for many years and we delighted in being her friends and hearing her opinions on the issues of the day.

RIDES TO LEAGUE MEETINGS
If you would like a ride to a League meeting, please contact Mary Anderson, 523-2032.

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