



New President Introduced

by Deborah Nelson

A long time resident of Pensacola, Carolann Holmes originally relocated to the area as a ‘Navy brat.’

After graduating from the University of West Florida with undergraduate and master’s degrees in Elementary and Early Childhood Education, Carolann married best friend and “high school sweetheart,” Grant Holmes Jr. Together, they juggled careers for many years: his as a City of Pensacola Public Administrator, and hers teaching in Escambia’s School District and raising three wonderful children.



During that time, Carolann taught fifth, fourth, third, kindergarten and pre-kindergarten grades; volunteered in fourteen schools; served on two school advisory committees; and was twice selected PTA volunteer of the year. She currently stays involved with school readiness through her

work for Escambia District’s Title I Department.

Carolann began getting involved in community activism early on, when she participated in petition drives to make Fort Pickens a National Park. Later, she worked with then District 4 County Commissioner Steve DelGallo to develop Regency Park for neighborhood recreational use. As an experienced grassroots lobbyist for the Florida Education Association and Escambia Education Association, Carolann continues to raise her voice on behalf of children and families.

Indeed, it was that passion for school readiness that brought Carolann to her first LWVPBA meeting, to hear legislators speak. Having taught in Escambia District’s nationally recognized quality pre-kindergarten program, she was keenly interested in seeing how the state would handle the new constitutional mandate.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2007 LWVPBA ANNUAL MEETING

President’s Report

Sharon Barnett, 2006-07 Co-President, reviewed the League's activities during the year and described the complementary working relationship with her counterpart, Janet deLorge. Sharon conducted public meetings and forums, interviews and public speaking activities, while Janet handled internal affairs and attended to myriad League details.

Sharon reviewed briefly the monthly programs and expressed the League's appreciation to the Institute for Human and Machine Cognition for the use of their facility for most of these meetings. (Details of these meetings were included in the 2006-7 monthly Voters.)

The Voter Service Committee was commended for writing questions for both WSRE-TV and the Pensacola News Journal, prior to the fall elections. The League and the Escambia-Santa Rosa Bar Association co-sponsored a judicial candidates' forum where probing questions provided insights about the individuals seeking office. Additionally, explanations of proposed constitutional amendments were made to groups in the two counties.

For the last year, the League has been involved in discussions with the Pensacola City Council on election provisions in its Charter. No final resolution has been achieved, but League representatives continue the efforts to improve the Charter.

Sharon thanked the League for the privilege of serving as Co-President and reminded the audience that this community can develop rapidly and move forward, if we have an active, informed electorate.

Education Committee Report

The LWV Education Committee met monthly throughout the year.

During the fall of '06, the hot topic in Escambia County was the proposed elimination and rezoning of middle and high schools. The School Attendance Zone Advisory Committee (SAZAC) was formed by Escambia County School Superintendent Jim Paul.

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Following the suggested outline for closing middle and high schools, this committee was charged with recommending new school attendance zones.

Members of the Education Committee attended SAZAC planning meetings and closely followed the process when SAZAC presented their proposal to the Superintendent and later, when Mr. Paul accepted the proposal. During this process, members met with School Board member Patty Hightower, in order to become better informed on the dramatic changes facing public schools in Escambia County.

At the February League meeting, the SAZAC committee presented a detailed review of its assignment from the Superintendent as well as the rationale for the decisions it had made. Speakers were Cindy Gerhardt, president of the SAZAC Committee, along with Kevin Adams and Kathleen Lasky, SAZAC Committee members.

At the present time, the Education Committee is studying the mandatory retention of any third grade student in our two county area who scores below Level 1 on the reading section of the FCAT. This is not a small number. In Escambia County, 3,136 third graders took the test with 596, or 19%, not scoring at an acceptable level. In Santa Rosa County, 1,800 third graders took the test with 126, or 7%, failing to make the required minimum score.

Committee members met with Malcolm Thomas, Escambia County's Director of Evaluation Services, and with Vicki Wolfe, Director of Elementary Education for Santa Rosa County. Both individuals provided interesting information on the performance of third graders historically and performance on the current FCAT reading test. This is an on-going study that will continue in greater depth in the coming months.

The Education Committee welcomes new members. If interested in participating, please call Barbara Goggins at 478-2953. Meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month at 4:00 p.m. at Azalea Trace.

Natural Resource Committee Report

During the 2006-07 League year, the Natural Resources Committee concentrated on the issue of Growth Management. The goal was to educate the members and, in turn, to be able to take appropriate actions in the future.

Each month, speakers with expertise on growth management were invited to meet with the committee. The group included: Peter Aluotto, Byron Keesler,

Gregg Strand, Tom Garner, Jeff Moore and Michael O'Donovan.

Committee members attended all of the meetings of the Escambia County Review and Evaluation Committee, which reviewed and recommended changes to the County's Comprehensive Plan. Muriel Wagner, member of the NR committee, served on the County's review committee.

The Committee is reading the Comprehensive Plans and Land Development Codes of Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties for a better understanding of these local documents. Representatives will also attend all Planning Board meetings.

Committee members plan to continue the growth management study in the upcoming year and, in addition, will review and study the local League solid waste positions, specifically with respect to the problems of landfill pollution.

Officers & Directors 2007-08

Officers:

President	Carolann Holmes
1 st Vice Pres.	Deborah Nelson
2 nd Vice Pres.	Betsy Bowers
Secretary	Nancy Lake
Treasurer	Vivian Faircloth

Directors:

Sharon Barnett	Betty Enfinger	Ellen Roston
Dian Parsley	Susan Metzger	Barbara Goggins

Nominating Committee:

Janet Delorge, Chair, Gloria Dawson, Muriel Wagner.

Local Program for 2007-08

1. Education

Study the impact of retention of third graders in the public schools of Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties, as effected by the federal No Child Left Behind legislation.

2. Natural Resources

a. Review and update the Solid Waste and Garbage Collection positions.

b. Study current issues regarding disposal of household, commercial, construction & demolition and post-storm wastes, including resource recovery and waste-to-energy in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties..

c. Support the 1985 Growth Management Act. Defend and strengthen Escambia's and Santa Rosa's Comprehensive Plans in accordance with the Growth Management Act and League Positions.

The membership voted to re-adopt current Local program.

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Highlights, from page 2**Celebration Tree Honor**

A brass plate was added to the Celebration Tree in the State League office by Janet deLorge in recognition of the dedicated service of Vivian Faircloth to both the state and local Leagues. The *Celebration Tree* is permanently displayed in the League office in Tallahassee.

Luncheon Speaker

Lesley Blackner, Palm Beach attorney, serves as chair of Florida Hometown Democracy, sponsor of a petition drive to change the Florida Constitution as it relates to growth management. Blackner reviewed the passage of Florida's Comprehensive Plan, which was designed to assure planned growth in the state. Under this umbrella, each county and/or municipality had the responsibility to design a growth management plan to address local issues, while meeting the overall requirements of the Comprehensive Plan.

Blackner contended that local officials have succumbed to the influence of the development community and, as a result of campaign contributions and personal influence, continue to change local growth management rules. In her opinion, these changes are detrimental to the community as a whole and are the impetus for changing the Constitution.

Florida Hometown Democracy has undertaken a petition drive to require that any further changes in a local growth management plan be submitted to the voters for approval in the next general election. Blackner noted that one-half of the 600,000 petitions have been collected and the project will continue until the end of 2007. While the League has no position on the proposal, Blackner's presentation introduced the topic to Northwest Florida residents and engendered strongly-felt discussion following the talk.

The League of Women Voters thanks Lesley Blackner for coming to Pensacola at her own expense to speak at the June 2 meeting and to Sharon Barnett for serving as her host. ◇

The *Guide to Elected Officials* has been printed! Copies will be distributed widely throughout Escambia and Santa Rosa counties. Contact Janet deLorge at 478-2581 or www.lwvpba.org for additional copies.

**Continuing the Conversation
on Affordable Housing**

Two representatives of the Interfaith Housing Coalition spoke at a special May League meeting. The Rev. Chérie Isakson, Community Development Director, and William D. Compton, Director of Housing for Interfaith Housing Coalition, explained the mission of building communities through the creation of quality affordable homes. To this end, IHC has designed *Journey*, a community focusing on affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households and adhering to principles of *New Urbanism*, as can be otherwise seen in Aragon, Seaside and Celebration.

Affordable housing was in short supply before 2003, and it was difficult to find workforce housing during the same period. Extraordinary pressures were placed on the housing market as a result of the 2004 hurricane(s) which exacerbated the crisis in affordable housing in Pensacola Metro Area.

Prior to the destruction caused by Hurricane Ivan, a family earning \$40,000 could afford a home in Pensacola. Now, the same family would need to earn \$50,000 to afford the same house, if one could be found. During the three year post-Ivan period, area incomes have increased an average of 1% -- not even meeting the standard cost of living adjustment. Two fundamental issues:

- △ Wages remain flat;
- △ Housing prices have stabilized, but at a higher level.

Until these conflicting issues can be resolved, creative solutions must be found. Thus, the Interfaith Housing Coalition has been organized to address this situation.

IHC is working with other organizations to solve the housing crisis. For example, Community Enterprise Investments, Inc. (CEII) provides assistance with low income rental properties, a home ownership program, small business loans and credit counseling. Also, partnerships with local resident service providers, faith-based ministries, financiers and developers are helping to alleviate the shortage of affordable housing.

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Conversation, from page 3

IHC plans for *Journey* to be the first of IHC's transformational communities to be built in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties. The strategy is for mixed use and mixed incomes in the housing that will be built for both rental and purchase in this first traditional neighborhood development near Catholic High School.

IHC Progress to date:

- Purchase of 26+ acres at 3200 W. Avery to build affordable housing
- Input from the community
- Selection of architectural collaboration
- Grants from Bank of America Foundation, Catholic Charities USA, Fannie Mae Foundation, SunTrust, United Way of Escambia, Wachovia Bank, as well as faith-based partners including the Presbytery of Florida, the United Methodist Conference, Olive Baptist Church, the Catholic Diocese, Christ Episcopal Church, and the Jewish Federation of Pensacola. ◇



Construction & Demolition Landfills

At the May 19 League meeting, Wilma Subra, Microbiologist and

Environmental Consultant, discussed problematic Construction and Demolition (C&D) landfills and outlined steps citizens can take to address these problems. In Escambia and Santa Rosa counties, there are three sites having adverse impacts on the environment. These C&D landfills are not regulated by the state, but the County Commissioners can write ordinances to manage them. Traditionally, the C&D landfills are largely 'holes in the ground' and have no monitoring wells nor air monitoring equipment, are not sealed and have no lining. Many landfills contain metal, concrete, bricks, asphalt, roofing materials, plastic, dry wall and lumber which has been treated with arsenic. Hydrogen Sulfide results from wet drywall and has been the major source of health problems around Coyote Landfill in Santa Rosa County. In fact, the State Department of Health recently declared the area around the landfill a "health hazard" after monitoring the air.

Some of the problems with C&D landfills are water leakage, odors and toxic air releases, all of which require monitoring. Siting of landfills needs to be selected carefully to protect the health of citizens and to avoid reduction of property values.

The need for C&D landfills is growing. The amount of debris generated by the hurricanes was huge. It is difficult to move a landfill that is operational. If a landfill becomes an issue in a community, it is imperative that the public become involved and take steps to document problems encountered. Nearby residents should keep a log of their observations, which can be used as documentation when discussing problems with various agencies and County Commissioners. A community health survey is often the most helpful document to see if a landfill has impacted health in the community.

The journal can contain the following observations:

- Presence of birds indicating garbage
- log symptoms, health impact, date, time and address. (One can obtain wind speed and direction from weather station.)
- Show patterns with similarities and differences.
- Document other problems i.e. traffic patterns
- Demonstrate negative impact

One has to have a documented reason to shut down a landfill.

More and more communities are focusing on recycling to resolve C& D landfill problems. ◇



Thank You!

for your contributions to the mission of the League.

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| Sherlee Aronson | Miriam Jennings |
| Miriam Birdwhistell | Carolyn Kolb |
| Bette Boddy | Nancy Lake |
| Gloria Dawson | Doris Lea |
| Janet DeLorge | Anne Lett |
| Vivian Faircloth | Ellen Roston |
| Rosemary Hays-Thomas | Pam Schwartz |
| Janice Hervieux | Gregg Strand |
| Hilliard Holbrook II | Jacqueline Young |
| Chérie L Isakson | |

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Your League needs volunteers for the Government Observer Corps. League members who attend governmental meetings provide a valuable service to the community. If you can volunteer just one hour a month (or less frequently), please contact Elizabeth Campbell our Corps Coordinator at 748-3805 or acrew06@aol.com

Mark Your Calendar Now.

A “*Social Issues Gathering*” is scheduled for Tuesday **September 11th at 4 PM** at the John Amos Pastoral Center (11 N “B” Street). Please RSVP to Chérie Isakson, Social Policy Chair, at cisakson@aol.com or by calling 791-6865. Come and discuss the issue that is burning for you – could it become a focus of study or action?

Condolences

The members of the League of Women Voters of the Pensacola Bay Area extend their deepest sympathy to the family of Laurie and Mary Lou McBee on the death of their father and husband.

Board Notes

✧ It is with regret that the local League Board accepted the resignation of Ellen Roston as Natural Resource Chair.

✧ UWF TV-4 will no longer tape & air our monthly programs.

✧ The Board is looking forward to working with new board member, Chérie Isakson who has been appointed Social Policy Chair.

Dues are due for the new League year beginning June 1, 2007. Individual dues are \$50 plus \$25 for each additional household member. Student dues are \$25. If you have not yet paid, please mail your check to League of Women Voters, PO Box 2023, Pensacola, FL 32513.

Great Decisions will meet on Monday **September 17th at 10:00 AM** at Azalea Trace. Dr. Charles Rogers and Dr. Lewis Killian will lead a discussion of “War Crimes”. For information, call 479-3352.

The **Immigration Study Committee** has begun meeting this summer to examine the underlying values and principles regarding immigration, reasons for immigration, current federal immigration policy and the impact of immigration. The questions that will be used for consensus are available on the website now at www.lwv.org. Contact Hal Retting at halbetret@aol.com or 478-8955 to explore this issue with the committee.



VoterWatch - the Congressional Record You Always Wanted

Because the Congressional Record is often not a faithful representation of what occurs on the floor of Congress, VoterWatch, a “nonpartisan nonprofit organization” has created a searchable database of videos of Congress at work. Browse by date or topic, or search by keyword of member of Congress or both at <http://www.voterwatch.org>. ◇

The VOTER

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Established in 1949, the Pensacola Bay Area League of Women Voters is a non-partisan political organization that encourages citizens to play an informed and active role in government. At the local, state and national levels, the League works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Any person of voting age, male or female, may become a member. All members receive the *National Voter*, the *Florida Voter* and this publication.

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LWVUS Website: www.lwv.org

Member News

- ☆ Sharon Barnett was elected to the State board of directors at the ‘07 LWV Florida Convention.
- ☆ Betty Enfinger has been appointed LWVF off-board director for PR.
- ☆ Chérie Isakson has been appointed LWVF off-board director for housing issues.
- ☆ Enid Sisskin will serve on the State League Climate Change Committee.

This is the fourth article of background information for the two year LWVUS study on immigration. Previous parts were printed in the March through May issues of the Pensacola Bay Area *Voter*. Subsequent parts will follow.

References and illustrations for this article can be found with the study material on the website. At LWVUS website (www.lwv.org) click on **For Members** on blue line in the header. Then click on the **Immigration Study**, which is found in the light blue box on the right column, to read all eight articles.

LWVUS Immigration Study

What Motivates Immigration to America?

By Patricia Hatch

Little is more extraordinary than the decision to migrate ... the accumulation of emotions and thoughts which finally leads a family to say farewell to a community where it has lived for centuries, to abandon old ties and familiar landmarks, and to sail across dark seas to a strange land ... There were probably as many reasons for coming to America as there were people who came ... Yet it can be said that three large forces – religious persecution, political oppression and economic hardship – provided the chief motives for the mass migrations to our shores. They were responding, in their own way, to the pledge of the Declaration of Independence: the promise of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”¹

President John F. Kennedy’s words summarize what migration theorists label “push” and “pull” factors that motivate individuals to leave their homelands. Religious persecution, political oppression and economic hardship are classic “push” factors. And, for many who fled their homelands over the past three centuries, the United States has offered the corresponding “pulls” of religious freedom, freedom of thought and speech, and economic opportunities.

Historical Motivating Factors

Religious Freedom: History affirms that some of this nation’s earliest settlers – the Pilgrims and Puritans in Massachusetts; Roman Catholics in Maryland; Huguenots in the Hudson River Valley and South Carolina; and Quakers in Pennsylvania, for example – were motivated to immigrate largely by their search for religious freedom.

A few centuries later, from the mid-1800s through the mid-1900s, several waves of Jewish immigrants fled religious persecution and political oppression in the Russian and German states and came to the United States. Under the Displaced Persons Act, approximately 85,000 Holocaust survivors were admitted to the U.S. after World War II.

Freedom from Oppression: Historian Chuck Wills, discusses political oppression as one of the “push” factors in immigration.

America, governed under the freedoms established by the Constitution, has been a sanctuary for people fleeing oppression. Dissidents, trouble-makers, radicals, they have been labeled many things. They are those who have taken a stand against tyranny and injustice; those who have spoken out against inequality, often in the face of intimidation. Barred from their homelands as enemies of the state, they have come to America – a haven where their voices will not be silenced.²

British political activists of the early 19th century, the German “Forty-eighters” in the middle of that century, and Cuban and Hungarian dissidents in the 1950s, are examples of a few of the groups that tried to reform the governments of their homelands, but came to this land of unmatched constitutionally-guaranteed freedoms when their best efforts at home were thwarted.

More recently, others fled volatile conflicts such as those in Guatemala and El Salvador during the 1970s, ‘80s and early ‘90s.

Economic motivation: Economic hardship has been a powerful “push” factor for many groups. The Irish potato famine of 1845-47 is a good example. The famine led to the emigration of approximately 500,000 Irish to the U.S., accounting for more than half of all immigrants to this nation during the 1840s.

Beginning in the 1880s, extensive economic changes in Europe stimulated the “Great Wave” of immigration to the United States that would last until 1914. Population increased dramatically due in part to the wider availability of a variety of foods and better diet and life expectancy. Furthermore, agriculture was becoming commercialized, the factory system was developing, and new means of mass transportation such as railroads and steamships became more accessible and affordable. This excerpt from a text on the history of the times describes the situation:

The increasing need of growing cities like London, Budapest, and Berlin for foodstuffs encouraged farmers to acquire more land in order to expand production for distant markets. But commercial rather than mere subsistence farming stimulated the rise of large estates and increased the overall price of land. Small owners or aspiring owners found it increasingly difficult to acquire sufficient land to support themselves... With less land to transmit, young people had less reason to wait for the landed inheritance once needed to start a family... Earlier family formations, in turn, meant that women gave birth over a longer portion of their lives

and more children were born. People of modest means then began to move in search of opportunities at home and in the United States... 3

From the very earliest days, economic opportunity in America, even in the absence of economic hardship in the homeland, has been a “pull” factor. The 1607 settlement at Jamestown, Virginia, appears to have been a colonial economic experiment - an attempt to make a profit by exploring and exploiting the resources of the area, and exporting goods to the motherland.

When tobacco became the major colonial export, early settlers contracted with merchants to supply voluntary and involuntary indentured servants to work the fields. These servants, mostly from Europe, were offered the opportunity to become landowners after serving a number of years. On the other hand, Africans, who were brought forcibly to the new land, were considered the property of their employers, and few were accorded rights and opportunities. Ronald Takaki reports that 75 percent of the colonists came as servants during the 17th century. 4

Shortages in the labor market have at times led American employers to recruit foreign laborers aggressively. For instance, during the mid- to late 19th century, southwest growers and railroad companies sent paid agents into the interior of Mexico to offer free rail travel and cash advances as incentives to local peasants to come north. This triggered a sizable rural labor outflow that eventually became self-sustaining. 5

When news of the California Gold Rush reached China nearly 25,000 Chinese migrated to California, where they established themselves, providing services to the miners as cooks, launderers and basic laborers. Later, many of them and their relatives found work on the Central Pacific Railroad.

Recent Immigrants

What motivates more recent immigrants to the United States? This question is especially important now that Congress is poised to consider making substantial changes to the U.S. immigration system. Efforts to establish a more secure and orderly system have a better chance of succeeding, if reasonable avenues are provided for accommodating these motivations within the broader context of America’s values, foreign policy and national interest.



Humanitarian Protection: A small percentage of each year’s admissions – approximately 5 to 10 percent in any given year – continue to be persons seeking humanitarian protection from persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion. These are the criteria set forth in the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Act. After being interviewed by U.S. government officials abroad, those who are found to meet these criteria are granted legal refugee status prior to entering the country.

After the Vietnam War and in the years immediately following passage of the Refugee Act of 1980, most refugees came from Southeast Asia. Russian Jews were also granted refugee status in large numbers in the ‘80s and ‘90s. More recently, the refugee population has diversified considerably to include persons from Kosovo, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Congo, Somalia and Myanmar, among others.

Individuals or families who request humanitarian protection at a port of entry, or apply for such status while in the United States, may be granted asylum if they are found to meet the criteria. Only a small percentage of those who apply for asylum are granted this status.

In 2005, 53,738 persons were admitted to the U.S. as refugees, and 25,257 others already present in the U.S. were granted political asylum. These numbers stand in sharp contrast to the 246,878 persons granted employment-sponsored visas in 2005 (22 percent of the total new immigrants in that year), and the 649,201 persons who obtained lawful permanent residence as family members of U.S. citizens or permanent residents (58 percent of the total admitted in FY 2005.) 6

Family Reunification: In 1965, the Hart-Celler Act abolished race-based prohibitions to immigration and created a new policy that emphasized the reunification of immigrant families. It allocated 74 percent of available visas to spouses and children of legal permanent residents and adult children and siblings of U.S. citizens. Spouses, minor children and parents of U.S. citizens were exempted from the family preference category quotas. During the past ten years, more than 200,000 persons per year have been admitted to the U.S. as beneficiaries of family preference visas.

Family unity is one of the most powerful motivators among current immigrants. In practice, then, how effective is current policy at reuniting immigrant families? For

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spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens, the wait to reunite is often less than a year. However, many legal permanent residents (“green card holders”) are not so fortunate. These individuals, who have themselves waited for years to enter the U.S. legally, often precede their spouses and children to the U.S. in order to find work and housing and save money for air tickets for the rest of the family. They soon learn that family preference category visa quotas and processing backlogs can delay the legal reunification of their family in the U.S. for many years. For example, the spouse or minor child of a legal permanent resident from Mexico can expect to wait more than a decade to receive a visa to enter the U.S. 7

Faced with the prospect of being separated for more than a decade during their children’s formative years, some immigrant parents and spouses take desperate measures to try to reunite sooner. They would overstay visitor visas (before consular officials began routinely denying visitor visas to the spouses and children of legal permanent residents) or pay smugglers to bring the family members into the U.S., the latter often at great risk to the safety of the family. Few realize that this action will eventually force them to choose between remaining indefinitely in legal limbo or risking their family unity yet again; once the long-awaited visa becomes available, they are required to return to the American embassy in their homeland to continue the visa process, but another law prohibits the re-entry to the U.S. for ten years of anyone who has been in the U.S. out of status for one year or more.

Some family preference categories are so incredibly backlogged that family members may die before a visa becomes available. Siblings of U.S. citizens currently wait for more than a generation, 16 to 30 years, for visas.

Jobs and a Better Standard of Living: Wage disparities and buying power in their homelands as compared to those levels in the U.S. provide strong motivation for many who seek to come here for employment. Nancy Foner points this out in her history of immigration to New York City.

America holds out the promise of political and cultural freedom – and material abundance. The magnet for professionals as well as the less skilled is the chance to earn higher wages and maintain a better standard of living than was possible at home... Consumer goods that are taken for granted by people at all class levels in the United States, like telephones, refrigerators, and automobiles,

are beyond the reach of the... lower class and not a certainty for the middle class either. 8

In the earlier centuries, individuals in other nations had limited knowledge of life in America. Today, the pervasiveness of mass communication and mass marketing has made those in the developing world acutely aware of amenities that are out of reach in their homelands. 9

Furthermore, the internet and social networks based on earlier immigrants provide information about work opportunities in the U.S. that entice the ambitious.

According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), one out of every seven people working in the United States in 2004 was born elsewhere; a decade earlier only one in ten was foreign-born. Furthermore, the CBO projects a slowdown in total labor force growth triggered by the retirement of the native-born time line-boom generation. 10

If the American economy needs immigrant workers in addition to native-born workers to sustain healthy growth and national prosperity, and if there are tens of thousands of workers eager to emigrate, how does the current U.S. immigration system make it possible for American businesses to hire these willing workers?

As of January 2007, an employer applying for a typical worker who does not hold an advanced degree or have demonstrated ability in one of the designated “shortage occupations” (Schedule A Workers and Priority Workers) would need to wait a minimum of four and a half to five years after all paperwork is approved by three government agencies successively (Department of Labor, Department of Homeland Security, Department of State) before visa processing could begin. The causes for this lengthy delay are quotas and backlogs. 11

This particular time line assumes that there are no delays for post 9/11 mechanisms. A routine FBI name check, for example, has been known to sideline applications for two to three additional years. It also fails to take into consideration an overwhelmed bureaucracy with multiple incompatible databases and no accountability.

All this, of course, presupposes that the prospective immigrant and prospective employer have found each other. A typical worker, without an advanced degree or skill in a shortage occupation, has no legal way to enter the U.S. to seek employment, other than through the sponsorship of an employer.

Because few businesses are able to anticipate their workforce needs five years in advance, the cumbersome

labor certification process is ill-suited to the needs of American business or to the motivation of potential immigrant workers.

Frustrated by lengthy delays in the legal process, many businesses in need of workers have connected outside the parameters of the law with unauthorized immigrant workers in search of employment in the U.S. Author and researcher, Michele Wucker indicates what she sees as the crux of the problem:

America's problem is not immigration itself, but how immigration occurs – that is, whether people come desperately across the border or give up in disgust at the failure of our bureaucracy and laws, or whether they can reasonably expect that the United States will make it feasible for the workers we need to comply with its immigration laws and to welcome them into our society, as they work hard and participate in the civic life of their adopted communities.

The current immigration system is inefficient, with little accountability, and contradicts itself at every turn. Many businesses are forced to choose between breaking the law and closing down. Congress can pass laws that take months or years for immigration authorities to put into effect. The body of law is so big that even few immigration officers fully understand it, so it is almost impossible to apply without running afoul of some technicality. As a result, too many applicants have to file repeatedly, wasting everyone's time and energy. Furthermore, decisions made by harried, overworked consular officers may be capricious, yet are not subject to review...

...the only way to end illegal immigration is to implement a system that allows the people our economy needs to come here legally. An increase in legal immigration – not indiscriminate, but based on a carefully thought-out approach to matching legal immigration with our country's needs – will reduce the number of people coming illegally. By taking business away from clandestine traffickers and eliminating the tremendous waste of energy that undocumented workers put into getting around obstacles, such a policy would rechannel labor and resources into productive economic activities here and in immigrants' home countries. 12

Network-Driven Immigration: Portes and Rumbaut suggest that development of immigrant networks that established new expectation:

To the extent that migration abroad fulfills the goals of individuals and families, the process continues to the point that it becomes normative. When this happens,

going abroad ceases to be an exceptional affair and becomes the "proper thing to do," first for adult males and then for entire families. At some moment, networks across international borders acquire sufficient strength to induce migration for motives other than those that initiated the flow. People then move to join families, care for children and relatives, or avail themselves of social and educational opportunities created by the ethnic community abroad...

Networks are established not only between migrants and their kin and friends in countries of origin but between migrants and their employers. Every time a building contractor or a restaurant owner approaches one of his migrant workers for a referral, every time the manager of a corporate chain contacts one of his cleaning subcontractors for additional services, they mobilize networks running deep into Mexico, Central America, and other sending nations.

The fit between the needs of thousands of U.S. firms for manual labor, and the motivations of Mexican and Central American workers to take these jobs as a means to fulfill their life aspirations is so strong as to defy any attempt at repression. Build fences at strategic places in the Mexico-U.S. border, and the flow just moves elsewhere, braving the desert and death, if necessary; deport an unauthorized worker with a stable job, and he will find a way to return to it. 13

Conclusion

Given the multiplicity of powerful motivations driving immigration to the U.S., effective restructuring of the U.S. immigration system is challenging. The "push" factors of religious persecution, political oppression and economic hardships in many "sending countries" persist. But, if the first six years are any indication, the "pull" factors of family reunification, economic opportunity and well-established immigrant networks will be the dominant motivations of the 21st century. Congress needs to develop, and Homeland Security needs to implement, an immigration policy that creates orderly, dependable, accountable and timely channels for acknowledging these strong motivations within the broader context of America's values, foreign policy, and national interest.

Patricia Hatch, LWV-Howard County, MD, is a member of the LWVUS Immigration Study Committee

End Notes:

1. John F. Kennedy, *A Nation of Immigrants* (New York, Harper and Row, 1964)
2. Chuck Wills, *Destination America* (a companion volume to the Public Broadcasting System documentary series by the same name) (New York, DK Publishing, 2005)

Please see Immigration End Notes, page 10

Immigration End Notes, from page 9

3. The Reader's Companion to American History, Ed. E. Foner and J.A. Garraty (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1991)
4. Ronald Takaki, A Different Mirror (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1993) p. 54.
5. Alejandro Portes and Ruben G. Rumbaut, Immigrant America: A Portrait, 3rd edition. (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2006)
6. "Legal Immigration to the United States Increased Substantially in FY 2005," Migration Policy Institute, October 2006
7. State Department Visa Bulletin, April 2007, http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletin/bulletin_3169.html Note: In order to get a more accurate picture of the true length of wait for visas, it is necessary to check the advance of priority dates in each category over a period of months. For instance, the priority date for spouse of a legal permanent resident from Mexico is not advancing even a week in a month's time; therefore the wait may be four times the seven years that viewing one month's bulletin alone might suggest.
8. Nancy Foner, From Ellis Island to JFK (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000)
9. Portes and Rumbaut, p. 355
10. "Role of Immigrants in the U.S. Labor Market," Congressional Budget Office, November 1, 2005.
11. State Department Visa Bulletin, January 2007, http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletin/bulletin_3100.html
12. Michele Wucker, Lockout: Why America Keeps Getting Immigration Wrong When Our Prosperity Depends on Getting It Right (Cambridge, Perseus Books Public Affairs, 2006), pp. 231, 234.
13. Portes and Rumbaut, p. 277

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New President Introduced, from page 1

"That issue got me to my first League meeting," says Carolann, "but I have since discovered many other local, state and national issues that impact our community. League members have kept me involved, and offered stimulating conversation, respect for differing views, acceptance and warmth."

Carolann's late mother, Anne Russo, was a League board member in the '60s.

"Imagine my feelings when I found friends of my parents, colleagues of my husband's, and my respected peers in education participating," she says.

"I still recall my mother's advice to research LWV "Pro and Con" statements to understand issues, and LWV sponsored debates for candidate positions," Carolann recounts. "I am proud to be associated with an organization that is still respected for thorough, nonpartisan research and balance.

"I am honored and humbled to serve as your president this next year." ♦

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