



# Eastern Mass OWL

## Fall Newsletter The Voice of Midlife and Older Women



### Calendar

**October 20, 2010:** Next OWL meeting, noon to 1:00 in room w-3-99 at UMass Boston Wheatley Bldg.

**November 2, 2010:** Vote on Election Day

### Reasons your vote is important in the 2010 election

**Your vote counts:** A well informed woman's vote is priceless in the face of millions donated to campaigns for mass media advertising. No matter how much money you have your voice can be heard by casting your vote.

**Question 3:** In Massachusetts an effort is being made on the 2010 ballot to reduce state sales and use tax rates from 6.25 percent to 3 percent. This would mean dramatic cuts to local health, safety, care, and educational services which would negatively affect the lives of all women in Massachusetts. Eastern Mass OWL encourages you to vote "NO" on question 3.

**Limited resources:** in tough economic times resources are stretched ever thinner and hard decisions about where dollars are spent have to be made. The priorities of people elected for local and federal government positions directly influence where public funds are distributed. One of the most important things we can do to determine how money will be spent is to vote.

**Opposition:** Did you know that one of the main objectives of negative campaign ads is to discourage the supporters of opposing candidates from voting? Negative campaign ads are designed to take away your desire to show up to vote if there is any chance you might vote for the opposing candidate, and the more effective these negative advertisements are, the more they are used. Don't let advertisements silence your voice!

**Social Security:** The debate over reforming Social Security is heating up with the report from the Commission for Fiscal Responsibility due out in December. Those elected officials for United States Congressional seats will be determining what happens to the Social Security program. OWL supports maintaining the principles of the Social Security system as an important means of preventing millions of women from living in poverty and opposes the privatization of Social Security. Help make sure the program remains by voting for a candidate you know supports preserving Social Security.

-Kim Johnson

## OLLI/OWL Boat Trip Report

The Narration was simply wonderful, the microphones worked and we got a terrific summary of the Islands that we visited. We learned about what the film industry had to do to make one of the Islands ready to make it seem factual for the



movie "Shutter Island" which was filmed there. We received a history of the Boston Light. There were about 87 people on board and they were a mixture of OLLI and OWL members. It was a great experience. Those islands have quite a history.

-Edris Kelley

## Eastern Mass OWL By-Laws Passed

Eastern Mass OWL members unanimously to pass our by-laws and they have been submitted to OWL National. Thank you all who worked on creating the by-laws and to all of those who voted.

## STRONG Women

Sometimes we lose track of the sacrifices that we have benefited from. This is the story of our Mothers & Grandmothers who lived only 90 yrs ago. Remember, it was not until 1920 that women were granted the right to go to the polls and vote. The women were innocent and defenseless, but they were jailed nonetheless for picketing the White House, carrying signs asking for the vote. And by the end of the night, they were barely alive. Forty prison guards wielding clubs and their warden's blessing went on a rampage against the 33 women wrongly convicted of 'obstructing sidewalk traffic.' They beat Lucy Burns, chained her hands to the cell bars above her head and left her hanging for the night, bleeding and gasping for air. They hurled Dora Lewis into a dark cell, smashed her head against an iron bed and knocked her out cold. Her cellmate, Alice Cosu, thought Lewis was dead and suffered a heart attack. Additional affidavits describe the guards grabbing, dragging, beating, choking, slamming, pinching, twisting and kicking the women. Thus unfolded the 'Night of Terror' on Nov. 15, 1917, when the warden at the Occoquan Workhouse in Virginia ordered his guards to teach a lesson to the suffragists imprisoned there because they dared to picket Woodrow Wilson's White House for the right to vote. For weeks, the women's only water came from an open pail. Their food--all of it colorless slop--was infested with worms.

When one of the leaders, Alice Paul, embarked on a hunger strike, they tied her to a chair, forced a tube down her throat and poured liquid into her until she vomited. She was tortured like this for weeks until word was smuggled out to the press. So, refresh my memory. Some women

won't vote this year because - why, exactly? We have carpool duties? We have to get to work? Our vote doesn't matter? It's raining? Last week, I went to a sparsely attended screening of HBO's new movie 'Iron Jawed Angels.' It is a graphic depiction of the battle these women waged so that I could pull the curtain at the polling booth and have my say. I am ashamed to say I needed the reminder.

All these years later, voter registration is still my passion. But the actual act of voting had become less personal for me, more rote. Frankly, voting often felt more like an obligation than a privilege. Sometimes it was inconvenient. My friend Wendy, who is my age and studied women's history, saw the HBO movie, too. When she stopped by my desk to talk about it, she looked angry. She was--with herself. 'One thought kept coming back to me as I watched that movie,' she said. 'What would those women think of the way I use, or don't use, my right to vote? All of us take it for granted now, not just younger women, but those of us who did seek to learn.' The right to vote, she said, had become valuable to her 'all over again.' HBO released the movie on video and DVD . I wish all history, social studies and government teachers would include the movie in their curriculum I want it shown on Bunco night, too, and anywhere else women gather. I realize this isn't our usual idea of socializing, but we are not voting in the numbers that we should be, and I think a little shock therapy is in order. It is jarring to watch Woodrow Wilson and his cronies try to persuade a psychiatrist to declare Alice Paul insane so that she could be permanently institutionalized. And it is inspiring to watch the doctor refuse. Alice Paul was strong, he said, and brave. That didn't make her crazy. The doctor admonished the men: 'Courage in women is often mistaken for insanity.' Please, if you are so inclined, pass this on to all the women you know. We need to get out and vote and use this right that was fought so hard for by these very courageous women. Whether you vote democratic, republican or independent party - remember to vote. History is being made. Hard to believe this could be accurate? Check out <http://www.snopes.com/politics/ballot/womenvote.asp>

It took these women to start the fight for women's right to vote, now it's up to us to continue that fight for equal representation. We forget what a privilege voting is for us. Let's honor our grandmothers by always voting.

## Eastern Mass OWL Meeting Minutes for 9.16.10

Greater Boston's last meeting was held and we have now merged. Kay was given Greater Boston's OWL wall hanging.

Treasury report:

-Total assets \$7,175.10

-Total liabilities & equity \$7,175.10

-Net income \$1,842.79

-Membership update as of 8.27.10: 131 members, 70 paid up.

We'd like to hold a few meetings in Brookline so members from all areas

can more easily attend, we are looking for a volunteer to organize those meetings.

Policy update:

- Paid Sick Leave didn't pass, another state bill with have to be submitted.

- OWL got a lot of press from Alan Simpson's letter in response to Ashely Carson regarding Social Security.

- We'd like to add an education piece regarding Social Security.

- Young people may believe Social Security will disappear and so may not take interest in the issue.

- We will talk to local organizations and form an alliance so when the report comes out in December, we will be ready.

- Recorded by Lorilei Michaud Richardson

## Letters to US Senators and Representatives Regarding Social Security

Mollie Feeney wrote letters to all our U.S. Senators and Representative stating OWL's position on Social Security. We got one reply so far from Congressman Bill Delahunt, he writes:



I want to thank you for your letter regarding the importance of Social Security funding. I appreciate hearing from you.

For 75 years, Social Security has been a promise to the American people that if they work hard and pay their fair share, they will have a financially secure retirement. In communities across this country, Social Security benefits are often the only source of income helping families maintain a decent standard of living. As co-chairman of the House Older Americans Caucus, I appreciate the role that Social Security plays in safeguarding the livelihoods of retirees. Cutting Social Security benefits further than they are already being cut by raising the retirement age from 65 to 67 would create needless hardship for millions of vulnerable Americans. To this end, I am pleased to inform you that I recently signed a letter to President Obama strongly opposing any plan that would harm the benefits and structure of Social Security. Rest assured that I will continue to work with my colleagues to oppose any legislation that compromised the value of Social Security benefits.

Again, thank you for writing and please continue to keep in touch about this or any other matter of concern.



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