



The League of Women Voters of New York State
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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS *of New York State*

State Board Updates: August 2014

Local League To Do's (email: lwvny@lwvny.org or call 518-465-4162)

- Complete and return order form **by Sept. 1** for Voter Guide Part II and call or email office if you want Voter Guide Part I (we have them in the office now); payment must accompany the order.
- Email katrina@lwvny.org with name of person who will be on conference call on Sept. 8 at 7:00 pm to review the materials on the redistricting ballot proposal.
- Distribute registration form for Nov. 13 Day at the United Nations; deadline for registration is Oct. 24.

President's Report/Issues & Advocacy: Sally Robinson, robintwins@gmail.com

The state League recently mailed out to all local Leagues some material explaining the redistricting constitutional amendment that is on the ballot in November; all of the materials are also posted on the homepage of the state website. The state League is strongly in support of this amendment and has been since first passage in 2012. We believe that it will put us in the forefront of redistricting reform in states around the country since in most states the legislature has direct responsibility for drawing the lines. The amendment will:

- Establish an independent commission to draw the lines, in place of the current process of legislators drawing their own lines
- The commission is mandated to hold public hearings and make the information upon which it relies available to the public,
- Establish concrete criteria for the commission to follow which will eliminate gerrymandering or the drawing of the lines to favor or disfavor incumbents, particular candidates or political parties,
- Protect communities of interest and racial and language and minority groups by codifying existing Voting Rights Act language in the state constitution, removed them from vulnerability based on changes in federal law.

You may be aware that some of the other good government groups we often work with are opposed to this amendment. They claim that the commission is not truly independent because legislators have a role in picking its members and that the Legislature will remain the default body for drawing the lines. We believe that this interpretation of the amendment is wrong. We also believe that the independent redistricting process established by the amendment is a significant improvement on the present system and has the real potential to protect the rights of the voters in this state. In particular, the anti-gerrymandering provision is virtually identical to the one used in the recent Florida case to invalidate

congressional lines drawn by the Florida state legislature. The League was the lead plaintiff in that suit, and the lead organizer in getting the anti-gerrymandering provision in the state constitution.

This is not the first time that the State League has advocated for one side of a state constitutional amendment on the ballot in November. In 1997, the League was the lead spokesperson in opposition to the ballot question on a constitutional convention. For more information, see Impact on Issues (see page 3-4 at <http://lwvny.org/advocacy/impact/issues/government/ConstitutionalConvention.pdf>)

We look forward to working with Local Leagues in pushing for passage of this amendment and have asked you to organize a community forum on the issue. We have heard from many local Leagues about their desire to present both sides of this issue. Local Leagues can still opt to present both sides of the issue at forums – in fact, as you will see, the PowerPoint addresses the opposing arguments at some length – but we ask that you make it clear that the state League is supporting passage of the amendment if you hold a public forum. If after consideration of all the material, your local board decides not to support the amendment, your local League can remain silent, but cannot publicly oppose it.

We have scheduled a conference call for local League presidents and/or presenters for your community forum to review the PowerPoint and supplemental materials. The conference call will be held on Monday, Sept. 8 at 7:00 pm. We will use the usual call-in conference system. **Please email Katrina (katrina@lwvny.org) with the names of who will be participating on the conference call for your local League.**

Finally, we are scheduling a conference call for all members who want more information on this issue on Wednesday October 8.

Grassroots Lobbyist, Carol Mellor, camellor@aol.com

All Member Conference Call on Redistricting

Many of our members have questions about the redistricting ballot proposal. We are organizing another Issues Conference Call on **October 8 at 7:00 pm for all members** to discuss this issue. Please advertise this Call to League members and ask them to email me if they'd like to join us.

Local Studies Database

We are embarking on a project to establish a data base of all local studies and positions. Please email Carol Mellor at camellor@aol.com with the following information:

- a. number of local studies
- b. topics of the studies
- c. positions which have been adopted as a result of these studies.

This information will allow us to get started on the project. Thank you for your assistance.

From the State League Office: Laura Ladd Bierman, laura@lwvny.org

Voter Guide Part II

Voter Guide Part II will include candidate information on the statewide level races and the three propositions on the ballot in November. The order form for Part II is attached; **return the form with payment by September 1**; distribution of Part II Guides will be in late September. This Guide is always a bit bigger than Part I because of the amount of information so the cost is a bit higher to offset

the shipping costs. Please remember how popular Part II was last year because of the ballot proposals; make sure you order enough this year as there are 3 ballot proposals again on the November ballot.

The office still has a supply of Voter Guide Part I. Call Katrina at 518-465-4162 if you would her to send you this brochure.

National Voter Registration Day: September 23rd

Many of our local Leagues are organizing activities and voter registration drives on National Voter Registration Day on September 23rd. Please let the state office know what you have planned – and then boast about your success that day so we can share with all Leagues statewide!

United Nations Day

The annual League Day at the United Nations will be held on **Thursday, November 13**. All members, family and friends are invited to join us for a fun and educational day. The day includes a tour of the UN building, lunch in the Delegates Dining Room and a briefing by key UN experts. The topic this year is “Water for Life” the UN International Decade for Action 2005-2015.

From the "Water for Life" website, <http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/background.shtml>:

Water is essential for life. No living being on planet Earth can survive without it. It is a prerequisite for human health and well-being as well as for the preservation of the environment. However, four of every ten people in the world do not have access to even a simple pit latrine; and nearly two in ten have no source of safe drinking water. Every year millions of people, most of them children, die from diseases associated with inadequate water supply, sanitation, and hygiene. According to the World Health Organization, each and every day some 3,900 children die because of dirty water or poor hygiene; diseases transmitted through water or human excrement are the second-leading cause of death among children worldwide, after respiratory diseases. Water scarcity, poor water quality, and inadequate sanitation negatively impact food security, livelihood choices, and educational opportunities for poor families across the world. Water-related natural disasters such as floods, tropical storms and tsunamis exert a heavy toll in human life and suffering. And all too regularly, drought afflicts some of the world's poorest countries, exacerbating hunger and malnutrition.

Beyond meeting basic human needs, water supply and sanitation services, as well as water as a resource, are critical to sustainable development. It is a major source of energy in some parts of the world, while in others its potential as an energy source remains largely untapped. Water is also necessary for agriculture and for many industrial processes. And in more than a few countries, it makes up an integral part of transport systems. With improved scientific understanding, the international community has also come to appreciate more fully the valuable services provided by water-related ecosystems, from flood control to storm protection and water purification.

The registration form is attached and will be posted on the state League website. Encourage all to join us on November 13 at the United Nations.

Vote 411: Marianna Stout, marianna.stout@att.net and

Victoria Melillo, Victoria@lwvny.org

Vote 411 is LIVE

Vote 411 went live this week for select primary races! Candidate information is available for candidates in the primary races for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, select NYS Senate and Assembly

seats (in NYC area, Westchester County and greater capital region), and select local primary races in Westchester County. A press release was distributed and is attached.

Links to Vote 411 are posted on the state League website. One link allows people to enter their address and find information about races in their area; the other link provides a list of the races that are currently posted on Vote 411 in New York State. Even if you are not covering primary races in your area, you may want to start advertising the link on your website as it does have information on the Governor and Lieutenant Governor primary races. Candidate information for the November general election won't be live in Vote 411 until later in September.

The state League will be covering the following Senate & Assembly races in the general election, with assistance from many local Leagues:

- Senate Districts 47, 48, 57 & 58
- Assembly Districts 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 116, 117, 118, 119, 132, 139, 148, & 150

Additionally, thanks to the 36 local Leagues organizing Vote 411 for races in their area this year:

- Albany County
- Broome-Tioga Counties
- Brookhaven
- Buffalo/Niagara
- Cazenovia
- Cortland
- Geneva
- Hamptons
- Huntington
- Mid-Hudson
- Nassau ILO (covering 5 local Leagues)
- North Country
- NYC
- Rensselaer County
- Rochester
- Saratoga County
- Schenectady County
- Smithtown
- Suffolk ILO
- Syracuse
- Wayne County Unit
- Westchester ILO (covering 10 local Leagues)

We also thank the other local Leagues who are helping us to contact candidates and encourage their participation. We can't do it without you!

Check out Vote 411 for candidate information in your area – and spread the word about Vote 411!

Women's Equality Coalition and Pay Equity,

Barb Thomas, bkoeppicust@gmail.com and Lois Haignere, haigner@nycap.rr.com

Given the recent appearance of the Women's Equality Party, it is important to note that, *despite the commonalities of the names*, the Women's Equality Coalition (WEC) and the Women's Equality Party are absolutely separate entities. The new party creates another party line for candidates to run on and moves women's equality up on the list of campaign issues.

At candidate meetings and events, please ask candidates about their positions on the Women's Equality Act agenda items such as Equal Pay (i.e. employers being prohibited from firing or reprimanding employees for sharing salary information), Human Trafficking, and Reproductive Choice.

Also please ask them their position on the bills that LWVNY has long championed concerning equal pay for traditionally female job titles which are still being undervalued by the market as an historical hold over from centuries of sexism.

The Women's Equality Coalition is moving to expand its membership to include groups supporting paid family leave. If you have groups in your community actively supporting paid family leave consider including them in your upcoming events.

The Coalition met in early August and will be meeting again in September to begin outlining the legislative agenda for 2015. The League of Women Voters of New York State is looking forward to working again with this Coalition.

Membership: Dare Thompson, darethompson@gmail.com

Workshop on Membership and Leadership Development, Tarrytown

Thanks to the efforts of Susan Schwarz, President Mary Lou Green, and other members the **Westchester County Inter-League Organization (ILO)** board, 32 League leaders gathered in Tarrytown on August 2nd to learn more about the LWVUS Membership and Leadership Development (MLD) Program.

Seven Westchester Leagues plus **Albany, Putnam, and Rockland** County Leagues were represented (Rockland by 5 people!), and **Laura Ladd Bierman** and the new Program and Policy Director, **Victoria Melillo**, from the LWVNYS staff also participated.

The workshop itself was organized by me and **Lisa Scott** (state coordinator of the MLD coaches) with considerable help from **Carol Reimers**, one of the founders of the MLD program when she was on the LWVUS board. Lisa and I, Carol, and state MLD coaches **Susan Schwarz** (Rivertowns and the ILO) and **Donna Dardaris (Saratoga County)** all contributed to the training that day.

The purpose of the workshop was to explain what the MLD program is and how it works, to share many of the best practices promoted by that program, and to give League leaders a too-rare chance to see and hear other League leaders. When we did pre-workshop interviews the Leagues all raised a need for more members (particularly younger and more diverse members) and for new leaders and that was our focus.

During the workshop, some Leagues shared how they are using new management models to maximize the efforts of the leaders they have and to prevent burn-out. Co-presidents is the most common new model but some Leagues have management teams instead of a president or co-presidents. Those attending the workshop were encouraged to consider being an MLD coached League so they'll stay on track with all the good tips and best practices we discussed. They also went home with an MLD binder full of more tips on increasing members and leaders. The whole binder is available in the Forums section at lww.org.

A longer version of this summary is attached and will be in the VOTER; it also includes some of the tips we shared with local Leagues that day.

Regional Director Coordinator: Terri Parks, lwvoter@verizon.net

Kay Sharp, who has done an outstanding job keeping connected with her region for several years, has resigned from that job, so we need a new Regional Director for the Southern Tier Region. Thank you, Kay.

While we could have someone from any area of the state do the job of conducting a phone conference after each meeting of the State Board and sharing the concerns and experiences of the Leagues in that region with the membership committee, we would like to have someone from the Leagues of the Southern Tier take that responsibility: Broome/Tioga, Chemung County, Cortland, Schuyler, Steuben and Tompkins County Leagues.

This is a marvelous opportunity to keep Leagues in contact with the state League and talk with amazing League leaders from other Leagues. It is an important service to League membership and doesn't require a huge commitment of time. Please contact me at lwvoter@verizon.net if you are willing to consider being a Regional Director. I'll be happy to talk with you.

Youth Programs: Judie Gorenstein, judieL728@aol.com

National Student/Parent Mock Election

We have been contacted by the National Mock Election organization seeking partnerships with any local Leagues who would like to work on a mock election in their schools. See the attached flyer for more information and contact Mary Miller, Education Services Director, New York News Publishers Association at mmiller@nynpa.com if you'd like to join this fun project.

Students Inside Albany 2015

The date has been set: Students Inside Albany Conference will be held on May 17-20, 2015, at the Hampton Inn and Suites in downtown Albany. Recruitment materials for the 2015 Students Inside Albany Conference will be available in September. Start planning how you will use these materials – and who will be contacting which school. It's not too early to begin planning.