



League of Women Voters of NYS STATE VOTER

August 2014



From the President

The state League recently mailed out to all local leagues some material explaining the redistricting constitutional amendment that is on the ballot in November. 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 (page 3-4 at <http://lwny.org/advocacy/impact/issues/government/ConstitutionalConvention.pdf>)

We look forward to working with Local Leagues in pushing for passage of this amendment. 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.

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

Sally Robinson, President
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Your Legacy with the League

Have you included the League in your will?

If so, please let us know by September 15th. We are preparing our Annual Report and would like to include those donors who plan to leave a bequest to the League. You do not need to tell us an amount, just let us know of your intentions and we will add you to our [1919 Society](#).

If you have not yet included the League in your estate plans but would like to, you should know that bequests are the most popular way donors make deferred gifts. By making a bequest to the League, you can maintain control of your assets during your lifetime and still support the League for the next generation of members. You can make a bequest that is a percentage of your estate or stipulate a specific dollar amount. To find out more about naming the League in your will, contact Kate Jankowski, Communications and Development Coordinator, at (518) 465-4162 or via e-mail at kate@lwny.org.

Redistricting Efforts



As part of the efforts for passage of the redistricting amendment on the ballot in November, Citizens Union and the League have created a new website, www.voteyesforprogress.org. There is a wealth of documents and information on this website concerning the proposed constitutional amendment on redistricting.

GRASSROOTS LOBBY DIRECTOR

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.

VOTE 411 is LIVE

Marianna Stout, marianna_stout@att.net

Victoria Melillo, Victoria@lwvny.org



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. **ALL candidates in the Democratic primary for Governor and Lieutenant Governor have submitted responses!**

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

Barb Thomas, Lois Haignere and Barbara Bartoletti

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.

SAVE THE DATE: League Day at the United Nations, November 13



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.

Click [here](#) for the registration form; the form is also posted on the state League website. Encourage all to join us on November 13 at the United Nations.

MEMBERSHIP: Dare Thompson, darethompson@gmail.com

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 Dare Thompson (LWVNYS VP for Membership) 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. Dare, Lisa, 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. Attendees were urged to download "ABCs of a Streamlined League" to get some helpful advice if they are looking for a new leadership structure. You can try out a new model and then change your by-laws at the next annual meeting if you find the new model is working.

The Streamlined League publication and many other publications, tips, and conversations with your peers can be found in the members-only Forums section of the LWVUS website (lww.org). All you need to get access to this is to sign up with the e-mail address that LWVUS uses to contact you and a password you make up.

One of the conversations going on in the Forums section is with members interested in attracting young professionals (and who isn't?!). Including a webinar and slide show called Young People and the League: Where Do We Go From Here? and the toolkit "Building the League of Tomorrow: Growing our ranks with younger members." If you're not using both the LWVUS website and our own state website (which Laura toured for us during the workshop), you're missing out on one of the big reasons your PMP payments are such a bargain. If you can't find something easily, try using Google - e.g. google "young people + lww.org" or "streamlined + lww.org."

Donna Dardaris shared how as a fairly new leader she kept hearing people use the phrase "In League," which she first thought was some kind of salute or catch phrase. Turns out it's the basic League "guidebook" with a chapter on just about everything you need to know as a leader. What a discovery! Laura pointed out that although In League has become huge over the years, each chapter can be opened and downloaded separately on the state website.

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 lwv.org.

Finally, a few important TIPS that emerged at the workshop:

1. Focus OUT! Make sure you are truly serving your community, not just the LWV.
2. Find allies! Work with other groups to increase your impact, spread our message, and find new members.
3. Don't try to do it all! Ask yourself: What is the smallest thing we can do to have the greatest impact? Don't burn yourself out. Have fun!

Questions about any of the above, including how to become an MLD League? Contact Dare Thompson (darethompson@gmail.com) or Lisa Scott (lisawscott@gmail.com).

Want a workshop like this in your region? Ask them how to make it happen. MLD leagues are growing Leagues!

STUDENTS INSIDE ALBANY CONFERENCE

One Student's Perspective: Anna D'Arcy, LWV of Broome-Tioga Co



This May I had the pleasure of attending the Students Inside Albany Conference as the Tioga and Broome county representative. Prior to the conference, I didn't really know what to expect. I didn't know if it would be beneficial. I didn't know if I was going to know enough about politics. I didn't know if I would enjoy meeting the other students. By the end of the experience, I had all of these answers.

Answer one: Yes, it was extremely beneficial. The different speakers, though some may have been a little on the dull side, they were all very informed on their topics and came with available resources should students seek to further research the topic. The assembly and senate members, at least the ones that I communicated with, were courteous and willing to share their thoughts and ideas.

Answer two: Yes, I knew enough about politics. Though I am not extremely informed on politics, the league members were very understanding and helpful no matter what your knowledge level be. Over the course of the conference, I obtained more knowledge and now have a better understanding for my role in government.

Answer three: Yes, I enjoyed meeting the other students. Not being the best at meeting new people, I was shocked at how many friendly faces I will now always remember. The group bonded everyday and talked as if we had known each other for a long time. All connected through social media, we can stay in contact.

The time I spent at the conference flew by and, if I'm being honest, I miss it. Every single person there helped contribute to my overwhelmingly satisfying trip; the advisors who served not only as mentors, but as friends, the students that I danced and bowled with, Senator Libous who sent me home with a bottle of his signature steak sauce (which, by the way, was really good). Never again could I relive the experiences that I had. Getting to walk on both the Senate and Assembly floor is a memory that I will be sharing with people for the rest of my life. I am forever grateful for the League of Women Voters that I got to attend the 2014 Students Inside Albany Conference.

The 2015 Students Inside Albany Conference will be held on May 17-20, 2015, at the Hampton Inn and Suites in downtown Albany!

LOCAL LEAGUE NEWS

Congratulations to Mary Chapin, past president of the **LWV of the Utica Metro Area**, who was selected as a living legend by the Oneida County Historical Society. The Historical Society chose Mary as one of their 2014 living legends because she has been actively involved in the community for more than 40 years, serving as a member of the League of Women Voters, the American Association of University Women and the Business and Professional Women of the Mohawk Valley. She was also part of a small group of eight women who collected about 117,000 total signatures to get Susan B. Anthony Day recognized in New York. In 2004, their efforts were rewarded, and Susan B. Anthony Day became the first state-recognized holiday honoring a woman.

This summer members of the **LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region** were given the opportunity to tour the recycling facility in Beacon, NY.

The **LWV of Chautauqua County** is offering a free trial membership for new members. This first time membership runs from now until December 31, 2014. In early November trial members will be invited to join as a full member of the League--at the local, state and national levels.



In mid-December 2013, the **Nassau County ILO** was awarded a grant from LWVUS to increase voter registration of students in underserved areas. They recently released these total results:

- 9 High Schools visited
- 1,374 students contacted
- 930 registration forms collected
- 675 students agreed to three follow up contacts and provided email, cell phone numbers or home addresses
- 43 classes visited
- 196 hours of contact time in the schools
- 27 volunteers involved

Congratulations to all involved!

The **LWV of Buffalo/Niagara** hosted a potluck picnic at the end of July. Part of this event was dedicated to reaching consensus on the state League's Term Limits study. This League's Natural Resource Committee is also planning a forum on Food Security, GMOs and Climate Change for September 17.

The **LWV of New York City** joined the Brooklyn Public Library for an evening of swing music and voter registration in July.

Members of the **LWV of Saratoga County** will hold their annual ice cream social in mid-September.



The **LWV of Southwest Nassau** held a special meeting at the end of July on The Gun Debate: When Will Our Country Get It Right... And Who is Right? The speakers will be: Dennis Jones, Retired First Grade Detective, NYPD; Darrin Green, Corrections Officer, Nassau County Sheriff's Department; and Corey Pegues, Founding member of NOBLE, Long Island Chapter and Retired Deputy Inspector, NYPD.

The **LWV of Schenectady** has many active committees during the year including ones on health, environment, civilian police review board, education and judicial issues. Each committee provided a year end report of its activities in their July/August bulletin.

The **LWV of East Nassau** is planning a summer social at the end of the month and they have several candidate forums planned for October for congressional and New York State senate races.



The **LWV of Huntington** held its annual meeting in June to install new officers and board members. They will also be holding meetings throughout the fall to discuss the term limits and ballot access studies.

Probation and Rehabilitation was the topic of a recent presentation to the **LWV of Somers**. Earlier in the month, Rocco Pozzi, Westchester Commissioner of Probation, spoke to their members.

The **LWV of the Syracuse Metropolitan Area** is providing two opportunities for their members and their community to learn more about the pros and cons of the redistricting amendment-one in September and one in October. The **LWV of Cazenovia** is planning to join them at the September meeting. The LWVs of Chautauqua County, Scarsdale, White Plains and Cortland County will also be holding informational meetings on this topic in September.

A series of four workshops titled, "Challenges to Women's Health and Well-Being" has been scheduled by the **LWV of Tompkins County**. The public is welcome to all programs:

September 8	-	Reproductive Rights,	Renee Bracey Sherman
September 15	-	Domestic Violence,	Kristi Taylor
September 22	-	Sexual Harassment in the Workplace,	Karen Baer
September 29	-	Pay Equity,	Barbara Thomas.

The **LWV of the Rochester Metro Area** is hosting a forum on Farm Labor Issues during September. This is the 3rd in their Agricultural Committee's series of forums. They are also planning a forum on the redistricting amendment in October.

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