



The League of Women Voters of New York State
62 Grand Street, Albany, New York 12207
Phone: 518-465-4162 Fax: 518-465-0812
www.lwvny.org E-Mail: lwvny@lwvny.org

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS *of New York State*

State Board Updates: February 2014

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

- Sign up for Regional Training Session in your area (Mar 1, 8, 29 or April 5); registration form attached and more info below
- Contact Sarah@lwvny.org if your local League would like to participate in **Vote 411**; login and password info is available.
- Have students participating in Students Inside Albany Conference return completed forms by **March 1**.
- Schedule your lobby meetings with your individual state legislators **in April or May** now; legislative packet is coming.
- Tell the state office who is going to LWVUS Convention from your local League.

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

Advocacy Efforts

Most of the League's advocacy efforts this month have focused on the Governor's budget. We presented testimony before the Joint Legislative Committees on the 2014-15 Executive Budget in the areas of Public Protection (where election reform and campaign finance reform is located), elementary and secondary education finance, and taxes. All of the testimonies are posted on the homepage of the state website as well as within the appropriate individual advocacy area on the Advocacy page.

The state League participated in a press conference with other good government organizations to strongly encourage the Governor and legislative leaders to keep all parts of comprehensive campaign finance reform in the budget. The letters to the Governor and legislative leaders, press release, photos and a video are all posted on the state website – feel free to link on your local websites. An email was also sent out to all members encouraging them to contact or write their state legislators encouraging the same. The email and the linked sample letters and talking points are attached. There is a short window of opportunity for this action as it relates to the budget so we encourage local Leagues to take action now before the end of March.

The League is also a member of the Coalition for More Family Court Judges. The Judiciary budget includes a request for additional resources, including 20 new Family Court Judges statewide. The coalition is asking members to contact the Governor and legislative leaders to urge them to approve this budget request and increase the number of Family Court judges. The link to take action is: <https://secure2.convio.net/ccny/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=125>. Please pass the info on to your members and post the link on your website.

Lobby Visits in Legislators' District Offices

The Legislative Packet will be sent to all local Leagues in the next couple of weeks. In the packet will be information on the primary topics the state League would like each local League to discuss with their individual legislators. **Please schedule meetings now with your state legislators for April or May (after passage of the budget)**; the Legislature will be in recess in early April so this is always a good time to meet with your legislators in the district offices.

2014 Lobby Day (Advocacy Training Day)

Over 70 people joined us in Albany on Feb. 3 to learn about our advocacy agenda and hear from the League's Issue Specialists on their specific issues and expectations for this legislative session. **All materials, including a summary from each Issue Specialist, are posted on the website.** A link is on the homepage and all of the materials are available on the Advocacy page (click on Overview of Advocacy dropdown on top bar of homepage). These materials provide a wealth of information on a number of issues – all which will become very helpful as the legislative session continues and we ask for member action.

Election Reform Forum

The League is co-sponsoring an educational forum with the Rockefeller Institute on election reform issues, including early voting, better ballot design, improved voter registration and absentee ballot procedures. The forum will be held on **Monday, March 24**, 11:00-12:30 at the Rockefeller Institute in Albany. Legislative Elections Committee Chairs, Senator Thomas O'Mara and Assemblymember Michael Cusick will join Tom Wilkey, former Executive Director of the US Election Assistance Commission and former Executive Director of the NYS Board of Elections, on this panel discussion. Capitol Correspondent Susan Arbetter will moderate. All League members and the public are invited to attend. The forum will be videotaped and posted on the Rockefeller Institute website – the state League will post a link on its website, too. Please share with members – and we will have a flyer to post on website and facebook pages soon.

Grassroots Lobby Director: Carol Mellor, camellor@aol.com

Thank you all for your interest in our latest Update on Issues conference call on environmental issues. The sheer number of people who expressed interest in the issues discussed was extremely impressive and I think I can speak for Beth Radow and the other members of the committee in thanking you for your interest and participation. I am attaching Beth's notes, which many of you asked for.

In addition, Beth and other members of the committee are working on a proposal for a study of the practice of fracking to be brought before this June's convention. Please be on the lookout for the announcement from Beth and, please, if possible, bring this before your Board this month for possible inclusion in your program selections to be submitted to national.

I look forward to the next call and appreciate any suggestions as to issues of interest! If any member has suggestions for future conference calls, please contact Carol Mellor, camellor@aol.com.

Constitutional Amendment on Redistricting

A constitutional amendment on redistricting is on the ballot in November 2014. The culmination of the fight to revise the manner in which New York draws its state and congressional maps will be in

November, when the voters will be asked to vote on a constitutional amendment which would authorize an independent redistricting commission.

The independent commission would consist of 10 members. The four legislative leaders would each get two appointments. Those eight members would then pick two people who have not been enrolled in a major political party for five years. All commission members must be registered voters. None can have been an elected official, state employee, political party chairman or lobbyist within three years of joining the commission. The new rules would also explicitly prohibit anyone from drawing lines that protect incumbents and instead divide the state's population as equally as possible. (Now, political districts can vary in population by as much as 10 percent.) All federal requirements for protecting racial, ethnic and other communities of interest would still apply.

The League supported passage of this amendment in the legislature and is now planning a campaign to educate voters on the plan and to encourage them to vote for it in November. Details and materials on the campaign will be forthcoming and will be included in the Regional Training sessions to be held around the state next month.

Pay Equity Specialists:

Barb Thomas, barb.lwv@nycap.rr.com and Lois Haignere, haigner@nycap.rr.com

Equal Pay Day is April 8. The Assembly is planning to pass their three very good equal pay for job titles of comparable worth bills on that day. See the February 3 League Advocacy Day handout on comparable worth/pay equity for the bill numbers, sponsors and a brief description of what each bill implements. All materials from the League Advocacy Day are posted on the state website:
<http://www.lwvny.org/advocacy.html>

The Senate will not be in session the week of April 8th and has never allowed a vote on these bills.(Sound familiar?) Stay tuned for statewide equal pay/pay equity activities in early April, and let us know of any related actions you are planning.

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

Regional Workshops for ALL!

The state League is organizing regional workshops around the state during March and April 2014; workshops will be held from 10:00 am – 4:00 pm on Saturdays. All local Leagues are **strongly** encouraged to have **ALL** board members attend part or all of one of the training sessions; all members are also invited to attend any or all of the workshops.

There are a variety of workshops planned. **These are not intended to be lectures, but rather an opportunity to discuss successful (and perhaps not-so-successful) programs and techniques in each of these categories.**

Hear from a League specialist, as well as your fellow League members in attendance. Ask questions, discuss the pros and cons and effectiveness of various strategies, and share your own League's stories. You'll find that there is a wealth of knowledge, skill, and enthusiasm just waiting to be shared!

- **March 1, Albany** (McKnownville Church, 1565 Western Ave, Albany – at end of Northway and Exit 24 of Thruway)
- **March 8, Binghamton** (Broome Co. Public Library, 185 Court St, Binghamton)
- **March 29, Long Island** (Cold Spring Harbor Library, 95 Harbor Rd, Cold Spring Harbor)
- **April 5, Rochester** (Brighton Parks and Rec Building)

Workshops will include the following topics:

- Vote 411 (beginners & refresher): Where do I start? (bring laptop if possible)
- Membership: Attracting and retaining members doesn't "just happen"!
- Leadership: League leaders are often made, not born. Are we building our future?
- Lunch (provided): Networking with League members and share your current local activities and efforts
- Vote 411 (experienced): Gripes, Grins & Going Forward (bring laptop if possible)
- Advocacy and Issues: What's going on in the state legislature now? And, share what hot issue is in your own community now?
- Fundraising Idea-Sharing: Minimal Pain, Maximum Gain
- Visibility: Are You a Player? How to increase connections with media, politicians, other groups, and "The Public"
- Candidate Forums: Policies, Guidelines and Staying Out of Trouble

Sign up sheet is attached; deadline is one week prior to the training session, eg, Feb. 21 for the Albany training on March 1. There is a \$10 fee per person to cover the cost of lunch and materials. All members are invited to attend.

Students Inside Albany Conference

We currently have our maximum number of students (60) projected for attendance at the 2014 Students Inside Albany Conference. If your League plans on sending a student and you have NOT contacted Katrina, please call her immediately to see if your student can attend (we will keep a waiting list as there sometimes is a cancellation). If you decide **not** to send any students, or if you indicated that you may send 2 students and now decided to send only 1 student, please contact us immediately so other Leagues may send more. **Completed forms from the students and parents are to be returned to the state office by March 1.** If you have selected a student but know that you cannot meet that date, please contact Katrina (katrina@lwvny.org) and let her know (unless you already have). We need the forms as soon as possible to start arranging the legislative shadow experiences.

Vote 411

The state League has agreed to pay the license fee for the entire state again for Vote 411. We will ask each local League to pay \$25 to participate; this fee also includes the training on Vote 411 and ongoing assistance during the election season. **If your local League will participate in Vote 411 in 2014, please email Sarah at Sarah@lwvny.org and confirm who the local contact for the program will be;** your login and password info will be sent out immediately to you so you can get started for this year's elections. The state League will invoice your local League for the \$25 fee. As mentioned above, all local Leagues are encouraged to participate in the regional training sessions which offers 2 workshops on Vote 411.

Local Bulletins and Newsletter

Don't forget to email your local League bulletins and newsletters to the listserv at localLeaguebulletineditors@lwny.org so they will be posted on the state League website and brief information will be included in the State Voter.

Development Update

League Direct Mail Appeal

The state League appeal for gifts will be mailed in the next few weeks. Many people support the Education Foundation but the League also engages in activities that cannot be funded through the EF—like advocacy, service to local Leagues, and leadership training for members. This fundraising appeal is designed to highlight those activities and ask for support of our 501©4.

Create a Lasting Legacy for the League

The League has been around for almost 100 years, in part because of the vitality of our members and mission, and also because members who have gone before have remembered the League in their wills. 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.

Membership: Dare Thompson, darethompson@gmail.com

All local Leagues are strongly encouraged to have board members attend all regional training workshops – there are two specifically designed on membership and leadership issues for local Leagues. Sign up now!

From LWVUS: Membership and Program Planning

LWVUS Convention

Who from your local League is going to the LWVUS Convention on June 6-10, 2014 in Dallas, Texas?

We want to know – send the names of delegates to the state League office. It is time to start planning who from your local League will be attending. Information, including hotel rates (\$169 a night – but can be shared) and a brief schedule of the Convention, can be found on the LWVUS website at: <http://www.lwv.org/content/your-guide-lwvus-convention-2014>. We hope that many local Leagues will find a way to send a member to the Convention. It is an exciting, educational experience which can generate enthusiasm for League programs when the attendee returns home.