



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: January 2014

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

- Update LWVUS database with membership changes **by Jan. 31. You MUST change a member's status to INACTIVE if he/she is no longer a member or you will be charged PMP for him/her.** Contact Katrina (518-465-4162 or katrina@lwvny.org) if you have questions or problems with the LWVUS database.
- Sign up for Lobby Day 2014 (**NEW DATE: Monday, Feb. 3**) and join us for advocacy training; deadline extended.
- Sign up for Regional Training Session in your area (Mar 1, 8, 29 or April 5); registration form attached and more info below
- Organize local study groups on the state studies of term limits and ballot access; **email Sarah at Sarah@lwvny.org with the contact info** for the chairs of your local League study groups on these issues.
- Contact Sarah@lwvny.org if your local League would like to participate in **Vote 411**; login and password info is available.
- Schedule a meeting **in Jan/Feb** to discuss LWVUS Program Planning (see below)
- Have students participating in Students Inside Albany Conference return completed forms **by March 1.**

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

Legislative Agenda

The Legislative Agenda brochures have been mailed to all local Leagues who placed orders. We still have a supply so if your local League would like some, please contact Katrina at the state office. The brochures are free (and are a great membership tool, too); we just ask you to pay shipping. The 2014 Legislative Agenda brochure is also posted on the state League website. The 2014 Legislative Calendar, showing the dates the legislature will be in session in Albany, is also posted on the state website.

Advocacy Efforts

During this past month, the state League has already been active on legislative issues. We joined other good government groups and issued a letter to the Governor and a press release concerning **campaign finance reform**. We provided memos in support of legislation being considered by the Assembly concerning the **single, June primary and registration of 16-17 year olds**. Again with our good government partners, the League sent a memo in support of legislation requiring **online and webcasting of committee and floor votes** in the legislature. The League also issued a media statement following the Governor's presentation of the **Executive Budget**. See all these memos, letters and press

releases on the state website. Hear more about these and other legislative actions at Lobby Day on Feb. 3rd (see below).

2014 Lobby Day (Advocacy Training Day): NEW DATE OF MONDAY, FEB. 3RD

Want to come learn more about the League's positions and what we expect for action this legislative session? Lobby Day (or more accurately, Advocacy Training Day) will be held on **MONDAY, FEB. 3, 2014. The date of Lobby Day has changed from Tuesday, Feb. 4 to Monday, Feb. 3rd – please note the change in date!** All members are encouraged to attend. Explanation of the state League's positions and projected action will be discussed. The state League Issue Specialists will present information on the current status of legislation in their areas. Attendees will be able to observe either the Senate or Assembly from the Galleries and attend committee meetings scheduled for that day (schedules won't be available until the week prior to Lobby Day). If members wish, they can schedule meetings with their own legislators. We are still accepting registrations but please sign up NOW! **Call Katrina (518-465-4162) to reserve your spot! We are charging \$10 per person to attend – but it will include lunch this year!**

Judicial Issue Specialist: Helga A. Schroeter, helgasasquith@verizon.net

The New York State Judicial System faces many problems, caused in part by years of zero increases in the judiciary budget. The lack of additional funding has severely affected the Family Court which currently has 150 judges state-wide.

The State League has joined a state-wide coalition, spearheaded by the Fund and Committee for Modern Courts, to advocate for the judiciary budget request which includes the addition of 20 new Family Court Judges throughout the state. The coalition consists of a very diverse group of members, from good government organizations to Bar Associations, Child Welfare organizations, parents, families and children and any group of concerned citizens willing to participate. The coalition will campaign for the addition of 20 new Family Court Judges through letters to the governor and legislators, through advocacy days and visits to Senate and Assembly members.

The Office of Court Administration has included \$5 million in its budget request which will cover the expense of the 20 additional judges from January 2015 to the end of the budget year. The governor is required to pass the judiciary budget request along to the legislature without changes, although he can comment on it. In addition to legislative budget approval, the legislators must also pass a bill to add the 20 new judgeships. Local Leagues will be asked to approach their legislators urging them to support the budget request and the additional judgeships. It is the right course to pursue for the sake of the children and families caught in limbo by unconscionable delays, before some of the most important decisions in their lives are being made. 2014 may turn out to be the year to get this crucial issue resolved, and we hope the individual Leagues will help accomplish it. Please stay tuned for updates on action plans, sample letters and implementation strategy!

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

On Wednesday, January 22, we held the second of our Update on Issues conference call. Over 40 members signed up for the call, which centered on current energy and environment issues such as fracking and waste management.

Elisabeth (Beth) Radow, the Chair of the Committee on Energy, Agriculture and the Environment presented a wide ranging, thorough and riveting report on the issues of concern to anyone interested in the protection of our water, air and health. Details of her remarks will be sent to those who participated in the call, and will be made available on our website in a short while.

Among the points contained in Beth's presentation are a reiteration of the fact that fracking is not, at the present time, being practiced in this state and, as a result, other concerns are at the forefront of the committees' work such as efforts to pass legislation which would characterize and require the treatment of waste from gas drilling as "hazardous waste." Use of fracking byproducts on roads in this state and concerns about transportation of waste materials into this state through our railroads and vehicle roads. Other topics discussed are the proposed offshore liquefied natural gas facility off the shore of New York City and other plans in New York State to retrofit older energy facilities to enable them to process liquefied natural gas.

There was also discussion about the present League position on fracking, and how action can be taken to modify that position, updating them on current activity and exploring ways to act. If any member has suggestions for future conference calls, please contact Carol Mellor, camellor@aol.com.

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

- **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 20, 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 as we will be providing lunch. 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. We will send out confirmation of the Leagues and numbers next week.

Some local Leagues were surprised or didn't realize that the student forms were due into the state office on March 1. The conference is later this year (May 18-21) but the state office still needs time to make the arrangements for 60 students to shadow both their Assemblymember and Senator; this is a time consuming process that isn't always easy. All local Leagues were notified in October that the student forms will be due on March 1. We ask you please to try and get the forms to us by that date; if you cannot meet that deadline, please contact Katrina and let her know when we can expect the forms.

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@lwvny.org so they will be posted on the state League website and brief information will be included in the State Voter.

State Studies

Because of comments from our local Leagues, the timing for the state studies on term limits and ballot access has been revised. The State Study Committees will distribute the consensus questions by the end of June 2014. Local Leagues will be asked to hold consensus meetings during the fall 2014 or Jan 2015. A consensus report from the local League will be due on January 31, 2015. New materials, with discussion questions, will be distributed for both studies in the next couple of weeks. The discussion questions will help guide your local study group in their meetings.

The state League is still planning a study on the delegate selection process at a Constitutional Convention. Materials will be sent out shortly so that each local League can schedule a meeting to discuss and consider consensus questions to update this position. We haven't forgotten – it is still coming!

League of Women Voters NYS Finance Dept.

Please remind all of your members that any donations they wish to have designated to the Local League EF Grants Management account **MUST** go through your local league first and then be sent to the state League using the Deposit form. We have received a few checks this month that have the State League EF Direct Mail stub attached but the donor is requesting that the funds go to the local league EF fund. This cannot be done, for auditing purposes.

Development Update

Online Match

During the last few weeks of 2013, we offered online donors to the Education Foundation the chance to have their gifts matched. We are happy to report that the match was a resounding success. We raised a total of \$10,885. This represents a 250% increase in online gifts from the same time last year and we welcomed 26 brand new donors to the Education Foundation. Thank you to all who made donations!

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 workshop – there are two specifically designed on membership and leadership issues for local Leagues. Sign up now!

Youth Programs: Judie Gorenstein, JudieL728@aol.com

As chair of Youth program services, I was delighted when Debbie Reisner, President of LWV of Rye, Ryebrook and Port Chester invited me to demonstrate Vote 18 at a workshop for LWV board members and community leaders in Westchester County. I have been presenting Vote 18 to high school classes since 2008 and have found that it provides an excellent interactive lesson plan to engage students in not only learning the history of voting, but gives them an opportunity to discuss hot political issues which are relevant to them, and shows them the power and importance of their vote.

The newest studies shows that ¼ of eligible voters are between 18 and 30 years old and this continues to be the age group with the lowest turnout at the polls. Even in the presidential election, when turnout is the highest, only 45% of this age group voted in 2012 as compared to 57% of all age groups. The Commission on Youth Voting and Civic Knowledge Report, which I mentioned in last month's report, stresses the need for civic education and political engagement in schools, particularly in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

This year, LWVUSEF has provided Leagues with a pass through grant to register youth. Several local Leagues have received this grant and have participated in webinars where they were learned of practices for registering young voters; ie, doing the voter registration in classrooms rather than auditoriums and having students interact rather than just be passive listeners.

Vote 18 uses these best practices. Over the years, the lesson plan has been modified to include some of the most recent statistics and the disenfranchisement of voters in some parts of the country. The lesson plan can easily be done in 45 min. including the time it takes to register the student to vote. The participants in the workshop that Debbie Reisner arranged included not only League members, but community leaders and students from a Hispanic community. They all found the workshop worthwhile and plan on bringing it to their schools. This is not a difficult or time consuming program for your youth committees or voter service committees to do. Anyone wishing to get the amended lesson plan can contact me at judiel728@aol.com. However, each school is different, each class is different, and each presenter can and will need to make modifications of their own. The goal is always the same: engage the students and motivate them to become educated voters and of course to vote.

From LWVUS: Membership and Program Planning

LWVUS Convention

The LWVUS Convention will be held June 6-10, 2014 in Dallas, Texas. 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. Please let the state League know who will be attending from your local League as we like to coordinate the NYS delegation at the Convention.

Program Planning Guide Is Here!

Every two years state and local Leagues and ILO's participate in the LWVUS Program Planning process by making recommendations concerning program issues. The Program Planning process is an important League tool for identifying issues for study, review and update or concurrence. [Read the Program Planning Leaders Guide](#) to assist you in your **January/February 2014 Program Planning meeting**. The Program Planning form is available on the LWVUS website at: <http://www.lwv.org/search/content/program%20planning>. If you have questions on this process please email progplan@lwv.org.