



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: June 2014

If you are no longer the President or on the Board, please forward this email and information on to the new President and board members.

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

- Set up your Vote 411 infrastructure **NOW** – races, questions, etc! See attached Time Table and Manual on Use of Vote 411.
- Complete and return the form listing your officers, board and chairs for the 2014-2015 year **ASAP**.
- Complete and return order form for Voter Guide Part I by **June 30, 2014**; payment must accompany the order. Orders will be accepted after on first come-first serve basis of supply.
- Schedule an educational forum on the issue of redistricting in **September or October 2014**; email katrina@lwvny.org with the date of the forum.

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

Summary of Advocacy Efforts for 2014 Legislative Session

We went into this session knowing that it was going to be tough to get action on several of our positions. In an election year many “controversial” issues become election issues instead of being considered by the legislature. In addition, because of the current Senate rules under the coalition leadership in the State Senate, many of the League’s key issues, eg, Women’s Equality Act and comprehensive campaign finance reform, were blocked from even coming to the floor of the Senate for a vote. This session, the League advocated for good public policy regardless of the election politics we encountered in the legislature. This approach saw mixed results with some successes.

A major success of the League this session was defeat of the **education investment tax credit**. First, the League was successful in keeping the tax credit out of the NYS Budget. But our efforts didn’t end there as the tax credit was then considered during the post-budget legislative session. The League succeeded again by preventing the bill from coming to the either house for a vote.

Funding for an additional **20 family court judges** was included in the budget this year but legislation determining where these judges should be assigned still needed passage. The state League worked in coalition with the NYS Coalition for More Family Court Judges (over 100 partners) and encouraged our local Leagues to join the coalition, too (many did). We are pleased to report that the legislature passed a bill allowing for 25 more family court judges distributed around the state, addressing the unconscionable court delays faced by children, families and victims of domestic violence. The Governor signed the bill today, June 26.

Although the Governor achieved some minor improvements to **campaign finance** in the negotiated state budget, comprehensive reform was not seriously considered this legislative session. The upcoming election in the fall prevented the legislators from agreeing to any real reform.

Politics reigned over policy again this year for the **Women's Equality Act**. While the Senate passed nine of the ten items, the Assembly steadfastly refused to split the Act and pass only pieces.

Another education related issue that the League actively opposed related to **financing of special education services** in New York City. The League successfully fought this bill last year when it was to be implemented statewide; it reappeared this year limited to New York City. The League continued to fight this bill because it would impose an additional monetary burden (over \$200 million) on City schools during appeals of special education placements. This bill passed in the Senate but it never came to the floor of the Assembly for a vote.

One great success we had this year was passage of the **National Popular Vote compact**. The state League was very instrumental in getting the national League to adopt the study of the Compact for the National Popular Vote in 2008 and getting the position adopted in 2010. The bill commits our 29 electoral votes to the 136 that have already committed to the interstate compact. The compact will take effect upon reaching 270 pledged votes--the amount needed to guarantee a majority in the Electoral College.

The state League submitted comments on the Draft 2014 NYS Energy Plan addressing many aspects of energy issues, including **climate disruption, energy conservation, pipeline infrastructure and the amount of natural gas estimated to be located within New York State**. A report commissioned and funded by the League's Education Foundation provided an independent evaluation of potential economically recoverable Marcellus shale natural gas in New York.

There were also a number of bills that we supported this session that did not pass both houses:

- **Nicholas' Bill** would have required the safe storage of all guns not in the immediate possession or control of the gun owner, either in a safe storage depository or with a locking device, to prevent access by children and others who should not have access to them;
- **Boss Bill** would have prohibited an employer from taking adverse employment action against an employee because the employee or a dependent made a reproductive health decision that conflicts with the employer's personal beliefs;
- Transparency bill that would have required that committee and floor votes be made available online and that **session and committee meetings be webcast**;
- Election law reforms such as **single primary in June** and **pre-registration of 16 and 17** year olds.

More information and details about each of these issues can be found in the memos posted on the state League website at www.lwvny.org.

Redistricting

The League is supporting the redistricting amendment that will appear on the ballot in the November election and we are asking our local Leagues and members to help us encourage voters to support the

amendment. As mentioned in previous State Board Updates, the state League is preparing a power point presentation, as well as a palm card and/or brochure on this issue. We ask each local League to schedule a community forum in September or October to present the power point and discuss the ballot proposal. The state League will also help local Leagues arrange for speakers, if they request them. **Please email Katrina at Katrina@lwnvy.org (if you haven't already done so) with the date of your community forum.** The power point and other information will be distributed to local Leagues in the next few weeks.

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

On June 17 we held the third of our Update on Issues conference calls. This call was on the topic of Funding in Education, with Marian Bott and Barbara Bartoletti taking the lead in updating the thirty or so participants. The participants came from all over the state. I recall voices identifying themselves from New York City to Buffalo, as well as Rochester, Saratoga and Long Island. It seems that concerns about finance in education span the state.

The call began with the "Hot off the Press" news from Barbara that although there were bills in both houses on the proposed educational investment tax credit, they were not "same as" and given the late date in the legislative calendar, that meant that the issue was defeated--for now. There was great concern that the issue would rear its head again, and so there was a great deal of discussion about how the credit would, if passed, result in inequities for underserved children and a windfall for the very wealthy. The mechanics of this legislation are somewhat obtuse, so there were several questions from call participants about how this would work, who it would favor and what interests were pushing for its passage.

Another education related issue that we discussed related to financing of special education services, only in New York City. Again, call participants were curious to know how this would work, and why the present bill would apply only to New York City. We got a brief lesson in the politics of New York State, and how certain legislators, in response to the needs of their specific constituents, introduce legislation which, though seemingly well meaning, might have unfortunate consequences. We also heard about the difficulty of measuring legislation which deals with a group for whom we all have sympathy (special education students) against the specific results of the proposed bill.

As in the past, the call ranged from informational items, to political considerations and lessons in the politics of our state, to the specific concerns of our members.

We plan to host another Update on Issues conference call this fall on the issue of redistricting; watch for more details.

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

Voter Guide Part I

The order form for the Voter Guide Part I is attached to this email. **The orders and payment are due by June 30.** If you don't order by then, the supply is available on a first come-first serve limited basis. As a reminder, Part I will include general information on how to register to vote, absentee ballots, voting machines and the election calendar for 2014. Part I will be distributed to local Leagues in early July.

There will be a Voter Guide Part II this year which will include candidate information on the statewide level races and the three propositions on the ballot in November. Orders for Part II will be available in July with distribution of Part II Guides in late September.

Policy and Program Director

I am sad to report that Sarah Podber, LWVNYS Director of Program and Policy, is leaving the state League for other endeavors. We wish her the best of luck in her new adventures.

We have just selected a new staff person: Victoria Melillo will be joining the state office staff on July 7th. Vicky has a MA in Women's Studies, a Masters of Social Work, and a graduate certificate in Public Administration. She has been working recently in the Government Relations Office of the Office of the President at University of Albany. She also has interned with the National Association of Social Workers' New York State Chapter, which similar to the League, has a national organization and local chapters throughout New York State. Please help us welcome Vicky into the League organization!

2014-15 Local League Contacts

Please complete and return the attached form identifying the 2014-15 local League officers and board members **ASAP**. Also, please include anyone who coordinates the listed activities, even if they are not on your board. We need to have the correct email addresses to include these people on the appropriate listserves. This is vital to receiving the timely and correct info from the state League.

2014 Council Kit

We reached a quorum in the number of responses to the Council Kit with unanimous approval of the 2014-15 State Budget. So, thank you – but please still submit your response if your local League hasn't done so yet.

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

Our Vote411 season is about to take off like a run-away train. So, I hope Leagues using Vote411 have completed the infrastructure in your own Vote411 Voters Guide, which includes:

- creating bio fields and bio field sets;
- creating question sets;
- creating email templates; and,
- creating the races for the offices to be elected this year.

By having all of these tasks done already, you can now concentrate on the very hardest part, which is getting email addresses from each candidate.

Please refer to the Vote411 User Guide (attached) that was used during the training sessions throughout the state this spring. Remember that if you have any questions or need any help, call or email Marianna Stout at 914-739-0100, marianna.stout@att.net. You may also rely on the State Office at 518-465-4162 for help.

The offices that will be covered by the state League include: Governor/Lt. Governor; Comptroller; Attorney General; and US Congress. The state League will also cover any State Senate and Assembly races where there is no local League or the local League is not participating in Vote 411. **If you have**

not already done so, please email Katrina@lwvny.org to tell her what races your local League will be covering. The state League has provided questions to the Vote 411 local League contacts (see below); we ask that all Senate and Assembly candidates be asked at least the first three state questions, and recommend using the remaining ones as well unless the local League has developed a couple of their own questions.

2014 Vote 411 Senate & Assembly Questions

Required to Use:

Priorities: What would be your top three priorities?

Campaign Finance: What further changes, if any, to campaign finance regulation and enforcement in New York State do you propose? Please explain your answer.

Election Reform: What election reforms would you support, such as: early voting; voting by mail; better ballot design; and voter registration modernization?

Optional:

Economy: What steps would you propose at the state level regarding income inequality, while maintaining an environment that encourages economic growth?

Energy Policy: What steps would you propose to secure the state's energy needs while protecting the local and global environment?

Transportation: What steps would you propose to maintain the state's transportation infrastructure?

Redistricting: Do you support the redistricting proposal appearing on the ballot this November? Please explain your answer.

The state League will be covering the three state-level proposals that will appear on the ballot for the November 4th General Elections.

The state League is also be working on a pilot project with some local Leagues to pursue a possible partnership with their local newspaper. However, to obtain the maximum public access to Vote411, all Leagues are encouraged to take whatever steps are available to direct the public to the wealth of information that is available in Vote411.

Let's make it our goal to increase "hits" on Vote411 Voter Guides in New York State. The number of hits has gone up immensely since we started in 2010 and candidates are now contacting Leagues to make sure they can provide their responses in the local Leagues' Vote411 Voters Guides. Let's also add more local Leagues to the group that is already using Vote411, so we can increase our support for an informed public. It is not too late for local Leagues to sign up to use Vote411. Help is ready to support you. So, get involved with Vote411 and talk it up!

Email Katrina at Katrina@lwvny.org immediately with a list of what races you will be covering in your League's voter guide so as not to duplicate efforts with other local Leagues. And of

course, if your league would like to participate in Vote 411 and has not yet signed up **this year** (or if you are not sure if you have done so), please contact Katrina.

State Studies: Sarah Podber, sarah@lwvny.org

The full packet of information for each of the two state studies, Term Limits and Ballot Access, are being mailed this week to the President or one Co-President of each local League. We will also email the packet on the Presidents' listserv. The packet includes important information for your local study group to review – or for whoever will be leading the consensus meeting for your local League. There is also information on how to conduct a consensus meeting, as well as the consensus questions themselves. Each local League must hold an open membership meeting to present the information and come to consensus on the questions. **The results are due back to the state office by January 31, 2015.** Even if your local League does not have a local study group on one of the studies, please find someone to review and present the information – and complete the consensus at a membership meeting. Information can be copied and included in local newsletters in advance to educate the members. A power point is also available for each of the studies to help in the presentations at the membership meeting on consensus. If you have questions, please contact Laura at Laura@lwvny.org or by phone at 518-465-4162. We need to have at least one-third of the local Leagues, representing four designated geographic areas, submit consensus results to have the results qualify.

Also, taken from the State League's policies:

If two or more Leagues meet together for consensus or concurrence, each local board must submit its own consensus/concurrence to the state or national office. Resource committee members participate only in the consensus/concurrence of their own local League. Non League members may not participate in a consensus/concurrence discussion. Individual MALs and individual members of MAL units may participate in any one local League's consensus/concurrence. On the reporting form, notation should be made of how many MALs participated. MALs will be sent study material and consensus/concurrence forms only on request. They shall be counted as a single unit if the lower of 10% or 5 individual MALs respond. The form will contain a line to identify MAL respondents.

Youth Programs: Judie Gorenstein, judieL728@aol.com

We are still working on posting photos and a summary from the 2014 Students Inside Albany Conference – we hope to get those on the website in the next week or so. In the meantime, Senator Ball's office created a YouTube video of an interview with the students that shadowed him; click [here](#) to watch the video.

Also, please email Katrina at Katrina@lwvny.org with the **name and email address for the person who will be coordinating your Students Inside Albany conference** efforts for next year. We will begin to send out recruitment materials in September so each local League should have one contact for this program.

LWVUS Convention, June 6-10, Dallas, Texas

Convention 2014 wrapped up last week in Dallas, Texas with 700 attendees from the around the country helping make this one of the most successful and energetic meetings yet! At Convention we re-elected Elisabeth MacNamara as president for a third term, passed the proposed 2014-2016 budget, amended the Bylaws, adopted national program for the biennium, heard from numerous interesting

speakers, and spent time in workshops and caucuses on a variety of topics. Be sure to catch up on all of the action by reading the [daily action reports](#) and [our press release](#).

Convention 2014 had many great training sessions. Session materials, which encompass the critical areas of elections, fund development, communications, and membership and leadership development, are now [available](#) online (click link or got to www.lwv.org). We hope that these will prove useful to all League leaders.

Communications Resources from Convention 2014

We had a great time presenting at #LWV2014, and we're happy to share with you the many resources we mentioned in both our training tracks and the social media session. These are great resources even for those who didn't attend Convention but want to improve their League's online presence. In the Members website, you can find the [Facebook guide](#), [Twitter guide](#), [Twitter cheat sheet](#), [Online Content Strategy](#), [LWV Style Guide](#), [SEO guide](#), [Email & Blogging Best Practices](#) and [Online Communications Resources](#). In addition, you can find all of our PowerPoint presentations under the [Online Communications](#) section.

Please also follow your fellow Leagues on social media by using our handy [Facebook](#) and [Twitter lists](#) of the Leagues on each channel. If your League is on Facebook or Twitter and is not on our list, please send the links to your page to Stephanie Drahan (sdrahan@lwv.org) and we'll make the update. Finally, if you want to talk with other League members about social media and online communications, don't forget to join our [League of Women Voters New Media Facebook Group](#)!