



League of Women Voters of NYS **STATE VOTER**

June 2014



From the State League Office

Sarah Podber, LWVNYS Director of Program and Policy, has announced that she 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!



The summer is a busy time for voter registration for our local Leagues. I hope you all contact your League and offer to assist at a local Farmers' Market, fair, or elsewhere! The election this fall will include all of the statewide offices, eg, Governor, Attorney General and Comptroller, as well as the State Assembly and Senate, and the US Congress races. In addition, we will have 3 proposals on the ballot. We need as many people as possible to vote in this election - and voter registration is the first step. Let's all help to increase the state's voter participation rates during this election!

Happy 4th of July to all! Celebrate our history and our freedoms!

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Have you donated to the League or the League's Education Foundation? We need your support to maintain our strength, visibility and programs. Click on the "DONATE" buttons [here.](#)

Amazon Smile

The State League has just joined a new program to help raise funds. AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support the State League every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the exact same low prices, vast selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a 0.5% of the purchase price to the State League's Education Foundation. To shop at Amazon Smile, simply go to smile.amazon.com instead of just amazon.com and search for the League of Women Voters of NYS as your selected charitable organization.

ISSUES AND ADVOCACY

Sally Robinson, President, robintwins@gmail.com, and
Barbara Bartoletti, Legislative Director, BBheck1@yahoo.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 yesterday, 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. 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

GRASSROOTS 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.

Vote 411

Marianna Stout, marianna.stout@att.net

The State League is again coordinating efforts for Vote 411, the electronic voter guide. The offices that will be covered in Vote 411 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.

The state League has created questions to be asked of all candidates for the State Senate and Assembly races; local leagues have been asked to include at least the first three state questions, and then either use the additional state questions or develop 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 economy 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.

These are also great questions to be used at any candidate forums - let's make sure we know where each candidate stands on these important issues.

The state League will be covering the three state-level proposals that will appear on the ballot for the November 4th General Elections in Vote 411.

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. All local Leagues need help in encouraging candidates to participate and in advertising the Vote 411 website. So, get involved with Vote411 and talk it up!

Local League News

The **LWV of Westchester** has for some time wondered if splitting shifts might not: 1) halt the drop-off of election inspectors as they age and 2) attract much-needed new recruits. With these factors in mind and with NY State having made split shifts legal, in mid-March 2014 we sent a brief survey to a randomized sample of 1,776 of the individuals on the Board of Elections 2013 list of 4,440 EIs. We hoped for a statistically significant 20% return of 355, but as of April 25th, we had received 605 responses, or 34%, without correcting for the nearly 9% of undeliverables. Nearly 64% of responders favor the option of split shifts.

The **LWV of NYC** has had a another busy month. Here are some of their accomplishments:

- LWVNYC members held a voter registration drive at the Park Slope Armory in Brooklyn on May 29th.
- Anthony Shorris, First Deputy Mayor of New York City, spoke at the Annual LWVNYC Members Meeting. Mr. Shorris praised the League for its work in encouraging citizens' active participation in democracy. He spoke about what the NYC Government is doing to help make democracy work, citing two priorities: first, bringing down barriers between people and the government and, second, making people feel that they can have an impact on government.
- For the first time since we began using Vote411 we had 100% participation from the twelve candidates running in five Congressional District Primaries!
- NYC Board of Elections Executive Director Michael Ryan invited various "Good Government," groups (including LWVNYC) to his office for updates and exchange of ideas on Monday, June 9, 2014.

The **LWV of Southwest Nassau** held their annual meeting in June. New York State Assemblyman Harvey Weisenberg was their speaker. Assemblywoman Paulin and Senator Latimer were the speakers at the Annual Meeting of the **LWV of Bedford/Lewisboro/North Salem**. At their Annual Meeting, the **LWV of Albany County** honored two 50 year members, Judy Wing and Monique Roeth. Former Assemblymember Jack McEneny also spoke to the attendees. Casey Seiler, Capitol Bureau Chief for the *Times Union*, was the speaker at the annual meeting for the **LWV of Rensselaer**.

The **LWV of the Hamptons** is holding a member meeting July 14 to discuss the results of their study groups' research on term limits and ballot access prior to the member consensus meeting to be held in the Fall.



The **LWV of Huntington** presented Running and Winning, a comprehensive workshop to 38 high school women in April; the program introduced the students to politics and public service as viable career choices through dialogues and discussions with elected public officials from Huntington and Suffolk County. The league also presented "Vote 18" to over six hundred high school seniors and helped them register to vote. Finally, after shadowing her Assemblyman, Hon. Joseph Saladino, at the Students Inside Albany Conference, one student was offered a summer internship with the Assemblymember.

The **LWV of Chautauqua** held a community forum on fracking in June. Panelists included: David Colligan, lawyer specializing in energy issues; John Holko, Lenape Resources; Tim Hull, Empire Energy; Kim Sherwood, Chautauqua County Water Quality Task Force; Glenn Wahl, Cattaraugus-Chautauqua for Clean Water; and moderator, David Rankin.

The **LWV of New Castle** held a fundraiser entitled, Tapas and Sangria, and encouraged members to bring a friend. The **LWV of Utica/Rome** is organizing a bus trip this summer to explore The Women's Rights National Historical Park, The Women's Hall Of Fame, a Winery in Seneca Falls, including Ranger guided tour of Historical Park, Film, Wesleyan Chapel, Eliz. Cady Stanton House and Women's Hall of Fame.

Ann Krill was honored at the annual meeting of **LWV of Saratoga** with the Carrie Chapman Catt award.



The **League of Women Voters Buffalo/Niagara** (LWVBN) has maintained an active interest in the use and development of the region's waterfronts in Erie County for many years. Currently the use of Buffalo's Outer Harbor lands is under review; the League members' interest in this issue has led the LWVBN to adopt "Waterfront Planning Guidelines:"

The **LWV of Rochester** participated in an average of two Naturalization Ceremonies per month in Monroe County in 2013. This brought about 1,200 new citizens into the USA. The 2013 Fair Elections Practices Campaign was co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters/Rochester Metro Area (LWV/RMA) and The Interfaith Alliance of Rochester (TIAR). All candidates for public office were encouraged to run positive, issue oriented campaigns. The Committee/Hearing Panel heard complaints about candidates who had not followed the Pledge of the FEPC. Finally, at their Annual Meeting, Sheila Abeling received the Carrie Chapman Catt Award in recognition of her tireless volunteer activities in the League and in her community. In addition to her years as Voter Services chair (coordinating the League's voter registration activities, producing the annual "Who Represents You" brochure, scheduling League members to welcome naturalized citizens at every ceremony held in Rochester, and managing all aspects of the high-profile Fair Election Practices Campaign), she has established important liaisons with the Board of Elections (providing League volunteers for ballot opening in exchange for a donation from the BOE). Congratulations Sheila!

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