



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: March 2014

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

- Contact Sarah@lwvny.org if your local League would like to participate in **Vote 411**; login and password info is available.
- Schedule your lobby meetings with your individual state legislators **in April or May** now; legislative packet is attached.
- Schedule a meeting to consider the State League's 2014-15 Budget as presented in the 2014 Council Kit (distributed in April); responses will be **due June 10, 2014**.
- Tell the state office who is going to LWVUS Convention from your local League.
- Schedule an educational forum on the issue of redistricting in September or October 2014.

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

Advocacy Efforts

Our legislative lobbying on the budget goes on. We've seen several senate and assembly members on our legislative priority issue, campaign finance reform, and have participated in press conferences on the issue with our good government partners.

In addition, a troubling issue the League has recently become aware of is a free standing bill (sponsored by Assemblymember Cusick in the Assembly and by Senator Golden in the Senate) that has now become part of the Senate's budget resolution. The Senate's budget provision would provide tax credits to individuals, corporations, and partnerships that donate money to public schools, to privately operated charter schools and, through "education scholarships," to students who attend schools that provide religious education. Not only do many opponents see the bill has a thinly veiled voucher system, but it would remove millions of dollars from the state general fund in the form of tax credits at a time when the state has continuously failed to fund public schools at levels ordered by the Court of Appeals in litigation initiated by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity more than a decade ago. Additionally, the proposal favors taxpayers who desire to support private and public schools of their choice, through a first-come, first-serve process with no restriction on geographic distribution or the target institution's need. It uses, at a minimum, \$300 million of state revenue, which the League believes should instead be allocated through a democratic legislative process. Although it encourages additional resource allocation to students in PreK-12 education, it thwarts the Legislature's collective decision-making as exercised through the budget negotiation process and transfers the power to target public tax dollars for education to individuals, corporations, and partnerships. We are working vigorously to protect public education by defeating this initiative. An action alert was sent to all members today to ask them to call the Governor and their Assemblymember to tell them to vote

against this proposal. Please talk with members who don't have email addresses and ask them to call, too. I've attached the email action alert that was sent out today.

The state League also distributed memos in support of bills in both the Assembly and Senate to amend the election law in relation to enacting the agreement among the states to elect the President by national popular vote (NPV). And the great news is that the bills have passed both Chambers and are awaiting the Governor's signature. You may remember that the state League was instrumental in getting LWVUS to study and come to consensus on this issue a few years ago – and now NYS has supported the change. Great job to all!

Lobby Visits in Legislators' District Offices

The Legislative Packet was sent to all local Leagues last week. The full packet is also attached here. In the packet will be information on the primary topics (election law reform, women's equality agenda and natural resources) 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. If campaign finance reform does not pass in the budget this week, we will send out more information and talking points on this issue and we will ask you to also talk with your legislators about campaign finance reform (if it passes, we ask you to thank those legislators who voted for reform).

Election Reform Forum

The League is co-sponsored an educational forum with the Rockefeller Institute on election reform issues, including early voting, better ballot design, improved voter registration and absentee ballot procedures. Legislative Elections Committee Chairs, Senator Thomas O'Mara and Assemblymember Michael Cusick joined Tom Wilkey, former Executive Director of the US Election Assistance Commission and former Executive Director of the NYS Board of Elections, and Daniel Kolb, Co-Chair of the NYS Bar Association's Special Committee on Voter Participation, on this panel discussion. Capitol Correspondent Susan Arbetter moderated. The forum was videotaped and a link will be posted on the state League website later this week.

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

Constitutional Amendment on Redistricting

As mentioned in last month's State Board Update, 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 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. We are asking each local League to schedule an educational forum on this topic in September or October 2014. 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

The League continues to advocate for the NYS Women's Equality Act (A8070) and a package of pay equity bills (A.753/S.1871), (A.1729/no same as), (A.5958/S.1491) to improve the lives of women, families and the economy of NYS.

The Assembly has already passed the New York Women's Equality Act and is scheduled to pass the pay equity package **on April 8, Equal Pay Day**. That is the day in 2014 when the average woman's wage for working all of 2013 and more than three months into 2014 finally catches up to the wages the average man made in 2013 for his one year of work.

On Equal Pay Day please let your senator know that you want WEA and the pay equity legislation to be passed by the NYS Senate and thank all Assembly members who voted for WEA (all Democrats and Independents voted for it except Colton, Crespo, Cusick, Gjonaj, Kearns, Miller, Schimminger and Simanowitz; all Republicans voted against except Crouch and Duprey).

Fifty-one years after the passage of the Equal Pay Act, women and minorities continue to suffer the consequences of the undervaluing of women's work and unequal pay. Fair pay can never exist if it is possible to pay those doing traditionally female jobs less than their work is worth. Besides being a family issue this is a *fairness* issue that impacts pensions and social security as well as current income.

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

Regional Workshops

Two of the regional training workshops have been held so far: Albany and Binghamton. The response has been tremendous. Everyone who has attended has commented that they learned a lot and had fun. Come join us at the last two workshops in Cold Spring Harbor this Saturday (March 29) or in Rochester on April 5.

- **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; call Katrina at 518-465-4162 if you want to attend. There is a \$10 fee per person to cover the cost of lunch and materials. All members are invited to attend.

Vote 411

The State League has discussed who will be covering which races in Vote 411. The State League will cover the four statewide races: Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General and Comptroller. The State League will also cover the Congressional races, but we will be asking for help from local Leagues in urging candidates to participate (constituents can influence more). The local Leagues will be responsible for state Senate and Assembly races in their areas; the state League will cover any state Senate or Assembly races where there is no local League. We encourage local Leagues to coordinate with other area Leagues if races overlap into other League's geographic areas.

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.

2013 Voter Service Survey Results

I am pleased to report the results of our Voter Service Survey from the fall 2013 election season. Thanks to everyone who completed the survey – and keep up the great work! The following results were received from 27 local Leagues:

- 26 held forums or debates
- 15 held them with other organizations
- Attendance ranged from 25-900 people at the forums
- 21 had questions from the audience
- 15 had questions written and screened
- 5 allowed people to ask questions from a microphone
- 14 videotaped the events
- 2 used Youtube and social media sties
- 10 aired on Public Access channels
- 19 leagues had events covered by media
- 10 provided moderates or time keepers for other organizations
- 5 Leagues requested payment for these services
- 16 have debate policies or guidelines (but from what was submitted, it's guidelines mostly)
- 8 published local voter guides
- 10 stated that the state Voter Guides could be improved
- 21 held voter registration drives (over 156 drives registering over 2500 voters)
- 19 distributed absentee ballot applications
- 6 used TV or radio for Get Out the Vote efforts
- 10 sent LTEs
- 1 developed a PSA

- 12 attend naturalization ceremonies and distribute forms there

2014 Council Kit

In the years when there is no state Convention (2014), the state League creates a Council Kit that is distributed to each local League. In the Kit is the proposed budget for the following year (2014-15) and any new updates, studies, etc recommended by the board to be considered by the membership. At its March meeting, the state Board of the LWVNYS Education Foundation adopted the 2014-15 budget for the Education Foundation and recommended the LWVNYS budget to be considered through the Council Kit. This year's Kit will require action only the budget but it will also include reports from the state Board members on their activities this past year; no program changes are recommended. The Kit will be mailed to one President or co-President of each local League by mid-April. We asked you to consider the budget at a membership meeting, open board meeting or even your Annual Meeting. We need to receive responses to approve the budget for the state League. Responses will be due to the state office **by June 10, 2014.**

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

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.

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.