



# League of Women Voters of NYS

## STATE VOTER

March 2014



### From the State League Office

The state League has been abuzz with activity these past couple of weeks. We hope you've been watching on the [website](#) and [facebook](#) pages to keep up with our action.

The state budget should be completed this week or by Monday next week. We have been working with our good government group advocates to ensure that comprehensive campaign finance reform remains in the budget. We have also been working hard to oppose a tax credit bill concerning education finance - read more about this below in the Issues and Advocacy report. We have had one big success, however, with passage of the national popular vote (NPV) initiative in both the Senate and the Assembly; now it just needs the Governor's signature to join the other 9 states and DC who have enacted this provision.

The state League staff have also been greatly enjoying meeting with many members at our regional training workshops. Over 40 people attended the workshop in Albany and 30 in Binghamton. All commented that the information was helpful and usable - and they had a great day with other League members. If you are available, attend either the one in Cold Spring Harbor (Long Island) this Saturday or in Rochester next Saturday!

Finally, the state League co-sponsored an educational forum on election law reforms with the Rockefeller Institute this week. Early voting, single primaries and absentee ballots were just a few of the issues discussed. A link to the video of the forum will be posted on the state League website later this week - check it out!

Thanks to all who have supported the League in its annual direct mail drive - don't forget to donate online on our website or send a check - we can't do it without support from our members!

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### Membership Tips

How about making your Annual Meeting a celebration of your League! Make it fun for all!

See some new ideas [here](#).

### QUICK LINKS

Have you "liked" the League on **Facebook**? [Click here](#).

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](http://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](http://smile.amazon.com) instead of just amazon.com and search for the League of Women Voters of NYS as your selected charitable organization.

## Regional Workshops for ALL!



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

Click [here](#) for the registration form; 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.

**Come network with other area League members, learn more about the League and see how you can get more involved!**

## ISSUES AND ADVOCACY

*Sally Robinson, [robinwins@gmail.com](mailto:robinwins@gmail.com)*

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. Click [here](#) for the email action alert that was sent out today. Click [here](#) for the press release on this topic.

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!

The [Legislative Packet](#) was sent to all local Leagues last week. In the packet is information on the primary topics (election law reform, women's equality agenda and natural resources) that the state League would like each local League to discuss with their individual legislators. Each local League is asked to schedule meetings with your state legislators in 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). Ask your local League to join the group making these lobby visits - it's a great way to take action with the League!

### **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.

## ***Pay Equity Specialists***

*Barb Thomas, [barb.lwv@nycap.rr.com](mailto:barb.lwv@nycap.rr.com)*

*Lois Haignere, [haigner@nycap.rr.com](mailto: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.

## **GRASSROOTS LOBBYIST**

Carol Mellor, [camellor@aol.com](mailto:camellor@aol.com)

### **Constitutional Amendment on Redistricting**

As mentioned in last month's Voter, 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. Click [here](#) for FAQs on the redistricting proposal.

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.

## **Voter Service Surveys from Fall 2013 Elections**

### **2013 Voter Service Survey Results**

We are 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 sites
- 10 aired on Public Access channels
- 19 leagues had events covered by media
- 10 provided moderators 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

## **LEAGUE DEVELOPMENT**

### **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@lwvny.org](mailto:kate@lwvny.org).

## Members in the News



Judie Gorenstein, co-president of **League of Women Voters (LWV) of Huntington** and Citizen Education/Youth Director on the LWNYS Board, has been selected by Suffolk County Legislator Lou D'Amaro (D-Huntington Station) as the District 17 Woman of Distinction for 2014. Click [here](#) for the press release. Congratulations Judie - you make us look good again!

Congratulations to long-time **LWV Rivertowns** member and former president of the Hastings League, Sue Smith. Sue was honored for her many contributions to Hastings with a community service award at the annual Martin Luther King Day breakfast.

Pat Nugent of **LWV of Saratoga County** has published an article in Ms. Magazine Blog entitled, "Forgotten Heroes and Incomplete Victories." The article provides some background information on the successful play about the early suffragists she has written and produced around the capital region called, "The Stone that Started the Ripple." Check it out [here](#).

Anne Burton, **LWV Rensselaer**, has agreed to represent LWNYS on DEC's Water Management Advisory Committee. Thanks Anne.

## Local League News

The **LWV of Somers** focused on the school budget during their March meeting with a presentation from Dr. Ray Blanch, Superintendent of Schools for Somers Central School District, accompanied by Ken Crowley, Assistant Superintendent for Business. The **LWV of Broome and Tioga Counties** is also focusing on the school system this month at their public meeting, "How our local schools are reacting to fiscal stress."

**LWV of Rochester and Wayne Co. MAL Unit** sponsored a forum entitled, "Putting Food on Your Table: Linking Food, Farms & You." The two Leagues also collaborated on the LWVUS study and met with local farmers in February to discuss policies the farmers believe will be most helpful in improving their businesses. Many other local Leagues are also holding education meetings regarding the LWVUS Agricultural Consensus including the **LWV of Schenectady, LWV of Rensselaer County, and LWV of Saratoga County**.

The **LWV of Rye, Rye Brook, and Port Chester** will be holding their spring luncheon featuring noted columnist, Phil Reisman, in early April.

Natural resources will be the topic at the March meeting of the **LWV of Tompkins County**. Their program is called, "Cayuga Lake: Our Gift, Our Responsibility." The event is co-sponsored by Sustainable Tompkins, Ithaca Journal, Waterfront Trail Initiative, and Sciencenter.

Over the past year, the **LWV of New York City** Affordable Housing Committee has been studying affordable housing issues in the City. They will present their findings at the April "Lunch with the League" meeting and hope to have a new and more comprehensive strategy for how best to provide low and moderate housing for New Yorkers. The LWV of NYC has also announced that they are honoring Debora L. Spar, President of Barnard College, and Nielsen at their Annual Award Luncheon in May.

The **LWV of Buffalo/Niagara** will be hosting a lunch to discuss "Erie County: Can we Afford NOT to Raise County Property Taxes" with speakers including Scott Bylewski, Chair of the Erie County Citizens Budget Review Commission; Ken Vetter, Chair of the Erie County Fiscal Stability Authority; and Joseph Lorigo, Majority Leader, Erie County Legislature.

Climate change was the topic of conversation at a March meeting of the **LWV of Southwest Nassau**. Their program features Daniel Bader, Climate Scientist at Earth Institute of Columbia University.

The **LWV of Chautauqua County** reported that the community meeting they sponsored last month, "Fracking Facts and Fracking Fictions," was well attended, and sparked debate amongst attendees who included community members and employees of the Empire Gas Company. Next month, they are holding a program on the grape industry and its impact on the region.

Reproductive Justice was the topic of the **LWV of East Nassau's** March meeting. Sarah Miller, Vice President of Public Affairs and Education at Planned Parenthood of Nassau County, spoke about Reproductive Justice

and the Women's Equality Amendment, why it is now necessary to re-frame the terminology used regarding freedom of choice, and the need to keep the government out of our personal lives.

Several Leagues held fundraisers to commemorate Women's History month in March. The **LWV of Saratoga County** held their annual "Famous Person Fundraiser" this month. This year's brunch was called "Sojourner's Truth: How One Woman's History Changed Our Nation's History" featuring D. Colin as Sojourner Truth. And, the **LWV of Southwest Nassau** held a brunch called, "Embracing Women's Equality: Past, Present, Future."

**Is your local League sending its bulletin or newsletter to the state listserve? If you send it to the listserve ([www.localleaguebulletineditors@lwny.org](mailto:www.localleaguebulletineditors@lwny.org)), it will be posted on the state website and information will be used for the State Voter here!**

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