



The League of Women Voters of New York State
62 Grand Street, Albany, New York 12207
Phone: 518-465-4162 Fax: 518-465-0812
www.lwvny.org E-Mail: lwvny@lwvny.org

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS *of New York State*

State Board Updates: November 2014

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

- Complete and return your Voter Services Survey **by Dec. 10.**
- Complete and return Youth Survey to state office **ASAP**; inform state office **by Dec. 15** if your League plans to send a student (or 2) to 2015 SIA.
- Complete and return order form for 2015 Legislative Agenda brochure **by Dec. 31**; these are free and are great handouts at meetings.
- Return consensus report forms (term limits and ballot access) **by Jan. 31, 2015.**
- Update membership roster in LWVUS database **by Jan. 31, 2015.**
- State League Convention is June 6-7 in Albany. Save the date!

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

Thank you for everything all of you did this fall to register voters, distribute voters guides, organize Vote 411 and hold candidate forums for the general election. We also very much appreciate your help and support in our successful effort to pass Proposal 1 on the ballot, reforming how redistricting is done in this state. The League and Citizens Union issued the following statement after Election Day:

"We are pleased that voters seized this once in a fifty-year opportunity to fix our state's rigged redistricting process and end the practice of drawing districts to favor incumbents, protect majority party control, and discourage competition.

The constitution now guarantees New Yorkers fair redistricting rules and the ability to hold the legislature accountable to end partisan gerrymandering. It is a real change from the system we have now, and we look forward to following this enacted reform through to reality in 2021, when the time comes again to draw new state legislative and congressional districts that will bring fair and competitive elections back to New York State."

I believe that this joint effort by the state League and local Leagues exemplified what is best about the League and our truly nonpartisan approach to making elections work and protecting voters. I was also very pleased that we were supported in this effort by the national League and the state League in Florida, another state in which the League has been and continues to be a leader in redistricting reform.

Legislative Session 2015/Legislative Agenda

We are beginning to plan for the 2015 legislative session. The new Legislative Agenda brochure will be available in early January. Be sure to complete and return the order form so you can have a supply

of the brochures. They are free (except for shipping) and are a great membership tool, as well as informational when you meet with your legislators.

LWVNYS Program Planning

The process for evaluating the state League's program and positions begins now. We will email you all information in early December on the process. Your local League should review the state League's positions and decide if you want to keep them, update them, revise them or delete them. You also have to discuss any new positions you might want the state League to consider for new studies. The responses from all of the local Leagues are reviewed by the state League Board in March. The Board's recommendations are then presented to the delegates at state Convention in June for consideration and a vote. Watch for the email and information about this process in December – and schedule a meeting to discuss the state League program and positions with your members (or board) in January or February.

Grassroots Lobbyist, Carol Mellor, camellor@aol.com

The next Update on Issues conference call will be held on Thursday, December 11 at 7:00 P.M.

Rather than explore a particular issue, we are going to discuss the process by which decisions are made to support (or oppose) particular legislation or ballot proposals. This discussion emanated from the recent redistricting ballot proposal, but the conversation will not be limited to that topic. Already, questions have been posed about the process by which we will address the upcoming question of a constitutional convention, and we can talk about other issues, as well.

You are reminded that we are always looking for topics to discuss during these conference calls, so let me know if you have any ideas.

Local Studies Database

We still need to hear from locals about any studies they have done and what positions, if any, were arrived at. Please email the information to camellor@aol.com. When the database is complete, it will allow locals to see what issues might be ripe for study in their geographical area; provide opportunities for concurrence; provide resource material for local studies.

Transportation: Gladys Gifford, schuford@earthlink.net

Although I have been preoccupied with other issues, transportation still need attention from LWVNYS. As we prepare for the NYS legislative session and the next budget, the focus for transportation must be on fiscal realities. Opportunities exist right now to help us support a sustainable and effective transportation system throughout our state. As we visit our legislators, please include a strong message concerning transportation— both infrastructure and operations. **Reminder: elected officials tell us that they do not hear about transportation issues from their constituents.** So, let's make some noise!

* As always, transportation is a concern in the NYS budget. What will Cuomo propose that impacts transportation funding? **Appropriate action:** remind NYS legislators that any action to “reduce tax burden” must continue to support improved transit funding in the 2015-16 budget.

* The governor attempted to partially fund the Tappan Zee bridge project by raiding funds from the Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund but was rebuffed by the Federal EPA. LWV Westchester has been following this project intensively, and can provide more information on the details. The

enormous cost of this project impacts the whole NYS budget. You can see structures already in the river in preparation for the new bridge— especially from Amtrak, traveling south. **Appropriate action:** ask legislators to require that the governor disclose a real financial plan for this project which involves appropriate sources for funding.

- * A significant new struggle in Albany is over the distribution of more than \$5 billion from recent lawsuit settlements. Shall this money go to the general fund? to schools? to mass transit? to infrastructure? This is a one-time windfall: wiser use would be to invest in long-term benefits, such as long-delayed infrastructure improvements. Rail track improvements needed for higher-speed rail in upstate, deferred subway maintenance in NYC after Superstorm Sandy, possible highway removal in Syracuse and consequent improvements to transit, long-delayed investments in Long Island RR, as well as Tappan Zee Bridge funding— all deserve a hearing for the use of this new money. New York Public Transit Association sent a letter to Gov. Cuomo on 8-18-14, urging him to invest these funds in public transit infrastructure. **Appropriate action:** call on NYS legislators ASAP, to express your support for any local transportation investment that will endure for the long term.
- * The current Federal transportation bill, “Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century” (MAP-21), was extended to May, 2015. Additionally, Congress authorized stop-gap funding to maintain the Highway Trust Fund only until December, 2014. For more information, see the blog on Transportation for America t4america.org for updates. **Appropriate action:** maintain relationships with our Congressional representatives, especially to ensure adequate funding for public transportation (all modes) and to monitor closely the next transportation bill, after MAP-21. Just a reminder, if you are contacting congressional representatives, please contact the state League office first – we need to coordinate communication with LWVUS.

As we continue to advocate for better transportation options, do keep in mind that other organizations share this concern. Organizations such as AARP, Sierra Club, Citizen Action, Congress for New Urbanism tackle the transportation issue in a variety of ways and from their own perspectives. When possible, joining voices with other organizations does strengthen our own.

Health Care Reform, Madeline Zevon, madeline.zevon@gmail.com

We are pleased to announce that Madeline Zevon, LWV of White Plains, has agreed to Chair the state League’s Committee on Health Care. Anyone interested in joining this committee should contact Madeline.

This is an exciting time in the campaign for universal single-payer health care. Because a majority in the last session of the State Assembly supported New York Health, Assemblyman Richard Gottfried’s single-payer Bill, Speaker Silver has asked the Assembly Health Committee to hold hearings around the state on the proposed legislation to build support for the bill. Hearings will take place from December to January in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Mineola, NYC and Albany. Madeline will give the official State League statement in New York City but we encourage League members around the state to attend or testify as a private citizens. <http://www.nyhcampaign.org/calendar>

The campaign has designed a New York Health Survey to gather testimonials some of which may be presented at the hearings. Through these testimonials, http://www.nyhcampaign.org/tell_your_story, the legislators hope to learn about the struggles people are having with the current health care system, such as lack of coverage, economic hardships, inadequate coverage or limited networks. The

Affordable Care Act has improved a broken health system. Assemblyman Gottfried's bill will close the gaps that remain.

Last year the state League issued a Memorandum of Support for this bill (A.5389-A Gottfried) and its complementary bill in the State Senate (S.2078-A Perkins) <http://tinyurl.com/lyq4j6d> . When the new bill is reintroduced a new Memorandum of Support will be issued. The State of Vermont has already passed a similar bill. New York has always been at the forefront of providing quality health care for its citizens. We must not let this opportunity go by.

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

United Nations Day

Over 100 League members and friends convened at the United Nations on Thursday, Nov. 13, for the annual League's Day at the UN. Attendees toured the newly renovated (and still being renovated) facilities, seeing part of the old Berlin Wall, the Security Council Chambers and Human Rights wall. Lunch in the Delegates' Dining Room was beautiful and delicious as usual. The briefing in the afternoon on the topic of water was presented by two speakers: Dan Thomas, Head of Communications for the UN Secretary-General's Climate Change Support Team, and Nicolas Franke, Associate Expert in Water Policy at the Division of Sustainable Development of the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs. Links to videos presented by the speakers and speakers' notes, as well as photos from the day, are posted on the state website (and attached) – just click on UN Events as a dropdown under Programs and Studies on the left side (<http://www.lwvny.org/programs-studies/un.html>).

2014 Voter Service Survey

Here is your time to boast and brag! Let us know what you did this year for voter services. A survey is attached. Please complete and return the survey. Last year only 27 local Leagues submitted completed surveys ☺. We know that you all have organized amazing events and a bunch of activities – tell us about them! **Return the completed survey by Dec. 10.**

State Studies

Hopefully you are all scheduling membership meetings to discuss the two state studies: term limits and ballot access. **Remember that the consensus results are due to the state office by January 31, 2015.** The report forms for both state studies (term limits and ballot access) are attached. All materials can also be found on the state website (click on Programs and Studies on left side of homepage). Contact the state office if you have questions.

Membership: Dare Thompson, darethompson@gmail.com

With the craziness of elections behind us, it's time to catch our breath and consider **leadership issues**. Almost all non-profits are struggling to deal with fewer active volunteers and the League is no exception. So we have to work smarter, not harder, to maintain the great work the LWV is so famous for.

Your league board might review the one-page description of league tasks at <http://www.lwvny.org/training/Streamlined-Best-Practices.pdf>. Which tasks are you doing well? Are there tasks that need to be done differently? Where might you really use some help?

Review your membership list and ALSO the names of all those who know and appreciate the League but may not be members. Are there people who might take on at least part of a task? **Non-members might actually enjoy helping the League** even if they might not join (at least not right away). E.g. social studies teachers and journalists often share our voter education mission and can be very helpful in a limited way.

Our leadership assets can easily shrink unless we always **have an eye out for new hands to pick up work that other hands are putting down.**

You might also think about your **leadership structure**. Is it allowing you to do the work in the best way? More and more leagues are looking at the LWVUS publication, **ABCs for a Streamlined League** at <http://lww.org/files/ABC's%20of%20Streamlining.pdf>.

You can change your organizational structure to try it out and then (if you like it) change your by-laws the next year. So don't let your by-laws stop you from trying new things. Of course it's always wise to check with the state LWV for help with significant changes. We might be able to direct you to other leagues that are doing the same thing so you don't all reinvent the wheel.

Challenging times require creative thinking and doing things differently is often really energizing. Let us know if we can help!

PS - And don't forget your Nominating Committee's important role in leadership development. Although the **Little Green Book** from LWVUS is neither little nor green, it will be a big help to your NomCom, so please make sure they have it. This book is attached but also posted on the state website at: http://www.lwvny.org/LLresources/membership/Little_Green_Book_final%20LWVUS.pdf.

LWVUS Roster Update

Each local League's membership roster MUST be updated in the LWVUS database by January 31, 2015. Remember that this is the list of members for whom you will be charged PMP starting in July 2015. If someone is no longer a member, you MUST make them "inactive" in the database or they will still be considered a member (and you will be charged). Call Katrina at the state office (518-465-4162) for help. LWVUS is also sponsoring some challenges to encourage local Leagues to update their rosters – see below:

Win Free Convention Registration!

Saturday, January 31, is the deadline for Leagues to update their member roster for FY2014-15. Summary sheets (the online document that shows your League's official membership count) are now LIVE. Any changes that you make to your members' records will be reflected on that page. Tips on renewing members, including a renewal letter template, are available [here](#). As a way of saying thank you for all the hard work that Leagues do, we will be giving away five FREE registrations to National Convention 2016. For more details about how to win, [click here](#). For assistance updating your League's roster, download the [user manual](#) or contact membership@lww.org.

Roster Update Challenge #2!

This week we have another challenge — an opportunity for all Leagues to win great prizes! If you have upwards of 85 percent of your active League members' birthdates entered into the Member

Roster, LWVUS will send you some great items from our [League Store!](#) (Prizes determined by number of winners.) You have until January 31st to update this information to qualify. To see more about all of the challenges, [click here](#).

**Development: Susan Wilson, sswilson@hamptons.com and
Kate Jankowski, Communications and Development Coordinator**

On Tuesday, December 2, 2014, the League of Women Voters of New York State Education Foundation is part of the call to action that will change the calendar and help make history. We are joining over 10,000 organizations from 46 countries to celebrate the third annual #GivingTuesday. Coinciding with Thanksgiving and the kickoff of the holiday shopping season, #GivingTuesday was created to inspire people to take collaborative action to improve their local communities, give back in better, smarter ways to causes they support, and help create a better world. People are encouraged to donate to the League or the League's Education Foundation online. Anyone interested can click on the link to give: https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/mUIZ74kBrRZeYrCPJ5C3QQ