



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

September 2014



From the President

Thank you to all of you for everything you are doing to register voters during this busy season and planning candidate forums. On top of that, this year we have asked our local Leagues and members to reach out to the public to support Proposition 1, on the November 4 ballot reforming the method by which the state conducts redistricting. I wanted to use this opportunity to respond to some concerns we have been hearing about Proposition 1. Much of this same information, along with some more detail, can be found in Grassroots Director Carol Mellor's information for the October 8th membership phone call on this subject.

History:

Leading up to the last post-2010 census redistricting process, the League was actively engaged in advocacy for the reform of the redistricting process in New York State as we had been for many decades. During this process, the League always spoke strongly in favor passage of a strong constitutional amendment to achieve lasting structural reform. Our advocacy was discussed at state board meetings and the membership was alerted to expect a redistricting related action alert in January 2012. In February of 2012, all League members received [an update on redistricting](#), recounting the activity between January and February of 2012, and informing all the members that the League would continue to urge the Governor and the Legislature to reach an agreement to create structural reform.

In March of 2012, all League members received a copy of the [press release](#) from Citizens Union and the League in which the proposed constitutional amendment agreed to between the legislature and the Governor was described, and our decision to support this proposal based on the belief that it afforded an opportunity for structural reform to the process even though it falls short of our ideal, as often happens with legislative reforms in Albany, was presented. The proposed amendment was brought before and considered by the state board.

This history is provided to counter the impression we have received from some League members that they were not informed about this issue at the time the decision to support the amendment was made by the state League. To the contrary, every member of the League received at least two reports detailing the progress of the proposal, the reason why the League was in support of it and invited to question or comment on either the proposal or the League's support of it

Currently:

We have had a lot of questions about the recent judicial decision to remove the word "independent" from the Proposition 1 ballot

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Your Legacy with the League

Have you included the League in your will?

If so, please let us know by September 15th. We are preparing our Annual Report and would like to include those donors who plan to leave a bequest to the League. You do not need to tell us an amount, just let us know of your intentions and we will add you to our [1919 Society](#).

If you have not yet included the League in your estate plans but would like to, you should know that 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.

language. This decision did nothing to affect the substance of the amendment, or the critical reforms it achieves, particularly, the strong, definite and specific criteria designed to prevent political gerrymandering. Citizens Union and the League distributed a [memo](#) in response to this court decision.

The advantage of placing criteria in a constitutional amendment is that it will make it harder to change in the future. In our previous advocacy, as well as that of other good government groups, a constitutional amendment was always viewed as the better solution

As part of our campaign with Citizens Union, Vote Yes For Progress, www.voteyesforprogress.org, we now have available for public distribution a [one page explanation](#) of why vote yes for Prop 1. We are sending 50 copies to each league, and you are welcome to ask for more. Also, please visit the [Vote Yes for Progress website](#) for more resources and information on this issue.

Sally Robinson, President
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Congratulations

Congratulations to the State League's Director of Programs and Policies, Victoria. She was married this month and has changed her name to Victoria Melillo-Jordan.

Visit Cuba

Visit Cuba with the League!
Seize the opportunity to visit Cuba and learn more about the island nation just 90 miles from our shores. This is your chance to experience Cuba firsthand, and learn about the history, culture and changing political landscape of a country once forbidden to Americans!

For more information, contact LWV of Florida at 850-224-2545 or lvvfoffice@gmail.com.

GRASSROOTS LOBBY DIRECTOR

Carol Mellor, Camellor@aol.com

All Member Conference Call on Redistricting

On October 8 at 7:00 we will be holding the next in our series of Update on Issues conference calls. The subject will be the redistricting amendment which is on the ballot on November 4. Our president Sally Robinson, will be on the call to explain the amendment, the League's position in favor of it, how we arrived at the position and the recent arguments against it. We encourage you all to join us on the call to learn more about this issue and ask questions. A separate email with more information about our history and current action on this issue will be arriving shortly (also please see Sally's comments above). Call in procedures are as follows:

Call 800-582-3014
Passcode: 87721689



VOTE 411 is LIVE

Marianna Stout, marianna.stout@att.net
Victoria Melillo-Jordan, Victoria@lwvny.org



Vote 411 is LIVE for statewide candidates and many congressional, NYS senate and assembly races; information on the 3 ballot proposals, including pros and cons, is also posted on Vote 411.

We are proud to report that every statewide, congressional, NYS Senate and Assembly race is being covered in Vote 411 in New York State - this doesn't mean, however, that information for all candidates in all races is included in Vote 411. We have the state League, local Leagues or ILOs coordinating these races and candidates have been invited to participate. While we have asked, not all candidates have responded. Our goal is always to get as many candidates as possible to participate in Vote 411 and our numbers are increasing every year. For example, the Westchester ILO has 73 candidates and, currently, a 70% candidate response rate.

League members at all levels are continuing to track down email addresses for candidates, invite candidates and remind candidates to respond, so candidate response rates will be even higher the closer we get to the general election date. Public usage statistics will be provided when available after the election. Anyone in the league who has ever worked on producing a voter's guide is familiar with how much time and effort is required. Recognition is due to all of the local league members who are working so hard to provide this valuable service to the public.

The State office is covering all statewide office races, as well as some Congressional, Senate and Assembly races. Our responses to date for the statewide and Congressional races include the following:

Statewide Races:

Governor

5 out of 6 candidates have submitted their responses:
Cuomo, Astorino, Hawkins and McDermott

Lieutenant Governor

5 out of 6 candidates have submitted their responses:
Hochul, Moss, Jones and Edes

Attorney General

1 (Schneiderman) out of 4 candidates has submitted a response

Comptroller

3 out of 4 candidates have submitted their responses.

Congressional Races:

30 candidates, 14 districts (not reflected in this count are the congressional districts being covered by LWVNYC)

24 candidates responded to our request for an email address

18 have submitted their responses

6 are pending responses

We went live on Friday. We had to wait until then because that is when the state Board of Elections certified the ballot. Many local Leagues have already gone live on Vote 411 - congratulations and thanks for all of your hard work! A special thanks to all local league members who have helped the state League contact these candidates. We cannot do this work without you and appreciate your continued support and assistance.

Click [here](#) to go directly to Vote 411 to enter your address and see your races. Click [here](#) for a list of all races in New York State currently live on Vote 411. Both of these links are also available on the state League [website](#). Finally, there is a QR code for mobile devices on the state League website to connect directly to Vote 411.

SAVE THE DATE: League Day at the United Nations, November 13



The annual League Day at the United Nations will be held on **Thursday, November 13**. All members, family and friends are invited to join us for a fun and educational day. The day includes a tour of the UN building, lunch in the Delegates Dining Room and a briefing by key UN experts. The topic this year is "Water for Life" the UN International Decade for Action 2005-2015.

From the "Water for Life" website,
<http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/background.shtml>:

Water is essential for life. No living being on planet Earth can survive without it. It is a prerequisite for human health and well-being as well as for the preservation of the environment. However, four of every ten people in the world do not have access to even a simple pit latrine; and nearly two in ten have no source of safe drinking water. Every year millions of people, most of them children, die from diseases associated with inadequate water supply, sanitation, and hygiene. According to the World

Health Organization, each and every day some 3,900 children die because of dirty water or poor hygiene; diseases transmitted through water or human excrement are the second-leading cause of death among children worldwide, after respiratory diseases. Water scarcity, poor water quality, and inadequate sanitation negatively impact food security, livelihood choices, and educational opportunities for poor families across the world. Water-related natural disasters such as floods, tropical storms and tsunamis exert a heavy toll in human life and suffering. And all too regularly, drought afflicts some of the world's poorest countries, exacerbating hunger and malnutrition.

Beyond meeting basic human needs, water supply and sanitation services, as well as water as a resource, are critical to sustainable development. It is a major source of energy in some parts of the world, while in others its potential as an energy source remains largely untapped. Water is also necessary for agriculture and for many industrial processes. And in more than a few countries, it makes up an integral part of transport systems. With improved scientific understanding, the international community has also come to appreciate more fully the valuable services provided by water-related ecosystems, from flood control to storm protection and water purification.

Click [here](#) for the registration form; the form is also posted on the state League website. Encourage all to join us on November 13 at the United Nations.

MEMBERSHIP

Dare Thompson, darethompson@gmail.com

We regret that the Southern Westchester Member-at-Large Unit has disbanded but we hope that many of the members in that unit will join other Westchester local Leagues. Meanwhile Gail Lane, who served as the MAL unit's president, is serving on the Westchester ILO board, so the League continues to benefit from her enthusiasm and leadership skills. Any members of that MAL Unit have been invited to renew their membership with other area Leagues or become a Member at Large of the state League. Call the state office for more information (518-465-4162). Don't let your membership lapse - there are many other ways to stay involved!



Voting Rights for Disabled Individuals



Greetings League Members,

As some of you may know, since leaving the League I have joined Disability Rights New York as their new Protection and Advocacy for Voting Access (PAVA) Advocate. In this role, I work to ensure full participation in the electoral process for individuals with disabilities, engaging in both systems change and individual advocacy. For more information about both the PAVA program and Disability Rights New York [click here](#) or look at the website [here](#).

I know League members are deeply committed to encouraging and enabling all New Yorkers to vote. As such, many - if not all - of you will be active this election season observing polling places, helping people vote, and voting yourselves. If when at the polls in November (or any other election day), or when registering people to vote, you encounter or hear of any issues of accessibility or other disability related issues, please know that DRNY is here to help in any way that we can. You can contact me (contact information is below) with any such issues.

I look forward to what I anticipate will be a great many opportunities to collaborate with the League on a wide range of voting access and voter engagement activities!

Best Regards,
Sarah Podber
PAVA Advocate

DISABILITY RIGHTS NEW YORK

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LOCAL LEAGUE NEWS

All of our local Leagues are busy with voter registration drives, candidate forums and many are organizing community forums on Prop 1, the redistricting amendment on the ballot in November.

Congrats to all our local Leagues and members for all of these activities.



LWV of Utica/Rome registered voters at the 2014 Irish Fest and at the recent Naturalization Ceremony at Fort Stanwix.



A candidate forum for the 20th Congressional District is being organized by the LWVs of Schenectady, Albany, Rensselaer and Saratoga. Two reporters and two League members will question the candidates about economic policies, domestic policies and foreign policies, before opening the questions to the audience. The LWV of Schenectady has also registered voters at eight different locations (some more than once) during this election season.

LWV of Rensselaer has performed election monitoring for both the East Greenbush Public Library and the Troy Public Library. Besides being of interest to members and a help to the library staff, these activities provide funding for the local League.

A state proposal to offer farmworkers job protections that are common for employees in many other industries, including overtime pay and a day off per week, was the subject of a LWV of Rochester community forum. Speakers included Dean Norton, president of the New York Farm Bureau, and Lewis Papenfuss, co-executive director of the Worker Justice Center of New York who discussed the farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act, a state bill that has been around in one form or another for about 25 years.

A panel of speakers, including representatives from State Farm, Binghamton University, Broome County Planner and the Mayor of Owego, spoke at a LWV of Broom/Tioga meeting on Flood Maps, Flood Insurance and Flood Questions.

LWV of Southwest Nassau had a panel of speakers discuss the issues of guns and violence in our neighborhoods. Three speakers including a Corrections Officer, a retired NYPD Detective and a retired NYPD Deputy Inspector stressed the point that we, the people, are the most important tool to reducing violence on our streets.



League members from LWV of Rensselaer and Albany help celebrate Women's Equality Day by the State Capitol.

LWV of Tompkins County organized a series of 4 presentations on Challenges to Women's Health and Well-Being during the month of September. The four topics were: reproductive rights, domestic violence against women, sexual harassment in the workplace, and pay equity. The forums were co-sponsored by Planned Parenthood of the Southern Finger Lakes, National Organization of Women, and Tompkins County Human Rights Commission.

LWV of Somers had Marc C. Fang, Executive Director of the Westchester County Human Rights Commission speak about his office's work on civil and human rights issues in Westchester County.

Many local Leagues have started book clubs, including the LWV of Saratoga and LWV of Rochester. What a great way to socialize and get to know League friends in another setting!

LWV of Saratoga kicked off the year with an ice cream social. Members were invited to make their own sundaes and hear about all the activities planned by the League for the year.

As part of their fall fundraiser, LWV of the Hamptons visited the North Fork, touring the Hallockville Museum Farm, Nagles Barn for lunch, Harbes Farm Stand, and finishing the day with a wine tasting at Shinn Estate Vineyards.

LWV of the North Country Serving Clinton, Essex and Franklin Counties organized a panel of federal and local officials to discuss the issues regarding rail trains that transport Baken crude oil through the area. Representatives were from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Emergency and Remedial Response Division, Essex County Emergency Management, Clinton County Emergency Management, Healthy Schools Network, and Lake Champlain Sea Grant.

National Voter Registration Day was celebrated by a number of our local Leagues. In NYC, the LWVUS President Elisabeth MacNamara joined LWVNYS President Sally Robinson and LWVNYC President Melissa Del Valle Ortiz at City Hall Park.



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