



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: April 2015***

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

- **Sign up for regional workshops**, including organ donation grant training, NOW (May 9 in Rochester, May 26 via webinar)
- Register for State Convention – it's not too late.
- Schedule lobby visits with your Assemblymembers and Senators and complete and return the Legislative Packet Response form **by May 30, 2015**.
- Return completed form on Constitutional Convention Update to state office **by May 30, 2015**.
- State League Convention is **June 6-7** in Albany.

#### **President's Report/Issues & Advocacy: Sally Robinson, [robintwins@gmail.com](mailto:robintwins@gmail.com)**

##### **Final Call to Convention!**

This is the final call to Convention! Come join your League friends to network and learn what activities other local Leagues are organizing – share your knowledge and strengthen all Leagues. Also, Convention is the time to plan the next two years of the state League's operations: officers and board are elected, budget and program planning (our positions on issues) are adopted, and the bylaws are amended. The League is only as strong as its membership so come help us celebrate our accomplishments and plan for the future! Registration form is attached.

##### **Congratulations, Barbara!**

US Senator Schumer appointed LWVNYS Legislative Director Barbara Bartoletti, as one of his two appointees to the Elections Assistance Commission's (EAC) Board of Advisors. The 37-member Board of Advisors is designated in HAVA to assist EAC in carrying out its mandates under the law. Congrats Barbara!

##### **Legislative Packet**

The Post-Budget Legislative Packet is now available and attached. We are asking you to schedule appointments with your Assemblymembers and Senators during the month of May to lobby them on 3 issues: election law reform, women's issues and the education investment tax credit. We have included talking points to educate yourselves on the issues and also to provide a handout to the legislator when you go on the lobby visit. Please complete the response form and return it to the state office by May 30. These visits are very important for our advocacy efforts. The legislators must hear from their constituents and then your information is helpful to our lobbying those same legislators here in Albany. Please help us make the state League even more effective in advocacy.

##### **Ballot Access Consensus**

In New York State, candidates for elected office most often gain access to the general election ballot by obtaining political party ballot lines via various mechanisms. The Ballot Access study, adopted at the June 2013 state convention, examined the role of political parties in the process of gaining access to the general election

ballot. The study explored the process of gaining party lines on the general ballot via (1) New York's closed primary system, (2) fusion voting, and (3) Wilson Pakula certificates. The study included discussion and comparison of the different forms of primary systems and other states' experiences with fusion voting. A new position in favor of retaining fusion voting was adopted by the state Board in April, 2015. No consensus was reached with respect to the issue of opening up state primaries to non-affiliated voters.

**New position: The League of Women Voters of New York State supports the continuation of Fusion Voting in New York State whether or not Wilson-Pakula is repealed.**

### **Constitutional Convention Position Update**

At the state League convention two years ago, the delegates voted to update our current position on Constitutional Convention with an emphasis on the method of delegate selection. The materials for the update are attached to this email and will also be sent to all local League Presidents separately.

This is an update with a limited scope and we are not changing any of the substantive aspects of the current position. Therefore we are asking local Leagues to approve the updated position instead of responding to questions and then the state Board developing the updated position.

The memo giving the background and explaining the updated position is only a couple pages long and should be very easy to understand. If you have any questions, you can call the state office, email Laura, or email me at [robintwins@gmail.com](mailto:robintwins@gmail.com). While we recommend that you discuss the update in a general membership meeting attached to a board meeting, your board can use other methods to get input from your local League members on the update, including soliciting their input by email. **Return the completed form to the state office by May 30, 2015.**

LWV of Rochester Metro Area created a powerpoint presentation for their meeting on this issue. The PPT is attached – feel free to use it for your meeting, too (and revise if you prefer). Thanks for sharing, Rochester!

### **Election Law Reform and LLC Loophole**

**Thanks to all of our members who took action during the past couple of weeks concerning the LLC loophole.** This loophole allows LLCs (limited liability companies) to contribute to candidates up to the same amount as an individual, rather than other types of corporations. Typically, corporations are limited to \$5,000 per candidate although many exceed that limit with subsidiary corporations who are also limited to \$5,000. LLCs, however, since they are treated as individuals, can contribute up to same amount as an individual, eg, \$41,100 in 2014 for statewide candidates (general elections only). Large donors also easily exceed this limit by hundreds of thousands of dollars by creating multiple LLCs who can each donate that same amount.

Our first action alert asked members to email the state Board of Elections (BOE). The BOE created the rule in 1996 allowing LLCs to be treated as individuals. The League, with the other good government groups, asked BOE to reverse this ruling and hold LLCs to the same limits as corporations. At the April BOE meeting, the vote was tied among the 4 Commissioners so the change did not occur, arguing that only the Legislature can make that change. The League moved to the Legislature then for action. Thanks to our many members who signed the petition (over 400 League members of the 5,000 signers) urging the Senate Elections Committee to pass S60, changing the status of LLCs in relationship to campaign donations. The League again joined other good government groups at a press conference with the Senate Minority Leader pressing for Senate action. The Senate Elections Committee did pass the bill and it has moved on to the Corporations Committee (watch for another action alert shortly). On Wed, the Assembly Elections Committee also passed a bill making the change in the status for LLCs' contribution limits, moving the bill on to the Codes Committee. We couldn't have had these successes without the action from our members!

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

Victory for Working Women! A6075 (S1) passed the Assembly April 27. It had already passed the Senate, so this part of the Women's Equality Act, the one that guarantees that employees can share wage information without fear of retaliation from their employer, will become law once it is signed by the governor (who negotiated the bill in the first place). The State League also participated in an Assembly Speaker's Press Conference yesterday prior to its passage in the Assembly. More women's issues still need your help – see the Legislative Packet for lobbying these other women's issues.

**Education Investment Tax Credit, Marian Bott, [sydneymab@aol.com](mailto:sydneymab@aol.com)**

The Education Investment Tax Credit was dropped from the 2015-16 state budget because of the advocacy of League members and other public education supporters. We applaud the Assembly members for their staunch support of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, which would drive funds to high-needs districts. This tax credit would have likely distributed funds to already wealthy districts and/or private and parochial schools. We expect the issue to be considered again this legislative session, so we've included information in the Legislative Packet and ask you to strongly urge your legislators to oppose this proposed tax credit.

**Transportation Issues: Gladys Gifford, [schuford@earthlink.net](mailto:schuford@earthlink.net)**

The 2015-2016 NYS Budget has been completed. The results for public transit are encouraging: additional funding for operating assistance as well as capital maintenance projects. A complete run-down of transit features of the budget is available at the New York Public Transit Association (NYPTA) website, [nytransit.org](http://nytransit.org). Of particular interest to some of our Leagues is the inclusion of \$4 million from the state Department of Health to support rural transit systems. In addition, the budget requires a study of transportation needs for the disabled community, to coordinate medical and non-medical transportation services.

However, the budget did not include legislation that would fix structural problems for funding upstate transit systems, which face increased ridership while state funding sources are decreasing. NYPTA reports that several legislators are interested in creating a task force to identify the problem and offer solutions.

Overall, the budget is favorable toward transportation infrastructure and public transit support. We can agree with NYPTA, who says that advocacy on behalf of public transit is making a difference. Our legislators are now aware that the public wants them to work for better transportation, as a vital part of our communities. But the work is not done— so keep at it!

Action: urge legislators to create and support legislation that fixes the structural funding problem faced by upstate transit systems. See you at the LWVNYS Convention, June 5-7!

**Membership: Dare Thompson, [darethompson@gmail.com](mailto:darethompson@gmail.com)**

Networking opportunities continue for League members and leaders. In connection with our training about the organ transplant option on voter registration forms we had a great conversation with several League folks from the NYC area at the LWV-NYC office on April 18 that covered everything from how to improve studies to voter service. We'll have another such training on Sat., **May 9 in Rochester** and again, after the organ transplant discussion, the lunch is free and the topics are up to you!

Of course **State Convention** offers the best networking opportunities of all. As promised, LWVUS board member and membership chair, **Anne Schink**, will be with us all weekend and will participate in the Sat. morning workshops on membership, particularly the one on Creative League Leadership. She and I will also lead a discussion on evolving **attitudes toward membership in the post-Boomer generations** during the second Sat. night caucus sessions.

We all look forward to seeing you there!

## **From the State League Office: Laura Ladd Bierman, [laura@lwvny.org](mailto:laura@lwvny.org)**

### **Spring Regional Workshops/Organ Donation Grant**

Workshops have been held in Albany and New York City. Many of our members attended to learn more about the organ donation tear-off attached to the voter registration forms. We also had great discussions about League activities and its future.

This innovative partnership with the New York Alliance for Donation (NYAD) isn't asking local Leagues to advocate for organ donation; the purpose is to ensure that those who are doing voter registration can answer questions about the organ donation registration included on the voter registration form. NYAD's mission is to increase organ, eye and tissue donation in New York State through collaborative advocacy, education, promotion, and research. Their goal is to ensure a transplant for every New Yorker in need; NYS currently ranks last of all states and DC in the percentage of residents who are registered to be organ donors. NYAD and our local Leagues will coordinate a number of voter registration drives in highly populated and public areas. The hope is that we can increase both voter registrations and organ and tissue donor registrations together!

In order to learn more about this partnership, the League has and is offering a series of educational sessions around the state. These educational sessions will provide an overview of organ and tissue donation in New York State, specifics about the grant, role of the Leagues and important information on what is necessary to meet the project's goals and objectives. Mark your calendar today to participate in one of the following sessions (lunch is included at no charge):

- **May 9** from 11:00am – 3:00pm **Rochester Area** (Sperry High School, 1799 Lehigh Station Road, Henrietta – just off of Thruway exit #46)
- **May 26** at 7:00pm via **webinar** (only on the organ donation grant program)

Financial benefits will be available to local Leagues who agree to participate in the program. Local Leagues will be eligible for stipends of \$100-200 and receive free and reduced cost Voter Guides. Additional materials on organ donation will also be available, as well as public relations materials for advertising voter registration drives and the partnership program. Additional money will be available to help local Leagues pay for “table fees” at specific events in their area. One person from the local League **MUST** attend one of the training session (the webinar can count, too) to be eligible for these benefits and to participate in the program. **Call Katrina in the state office at 518-465-4162 to register.**

Other topics will be discussed in the afternoon training sessions. These topics may vary depending on the interest of those attending. The schedule for the workshops is as follows:

11:00-12:00 Organ Donation Program training  
12:00- 1:00 Lunch (provided) and networking with League members  
1:00 – 3:00 How do we get our League jobs done with the people resources we have?

Sign up now! All members are welcome and encouraged to attend.

### **Sustainers Plaque**

Would you like to honor an outgoing President, board member or longtime leader in your local League? We have the Sustainers Plaque in the state office that allows you to honor these people. For \$200 (can be paid by your Education Foundation funds), you can have an engraved plaque with a couple of sentences honoring a local League leader. The plaque is displayed at state Convention for all to enjoy – and a certificate of your own plaque is provided to your local League for presentation locally. Just call Katrina at 518-465-4162 if you would like to participate.

## **State Convention: June 5-7, 2015 in Albany**

The final call to Convention was announced above in this email. The Pre-Convention Kit has been mailed electronically to all members who have registered as a delegate; paper copies are available upon request. The Kit is also posted on the homepage of the state website. This Kit includes the program planning proposals, Nominating Committee report, proposed 2015-16 Budget and proposed bylaw amendments. Take a look and discuss how your delegates should represent your local League in voting on these important issues.

If you are planning on coming to Convention and need a roommate at the hotel, just call Katrina and we'll match you with someone else looking for a roommate. To make a hotel reservation (Desmond Americana Hotel), call: 518-869-8100 and/or the toll free 800-448-3500; use the Reservation ID: 12C0AK. Or book online using the below booking link: <https://bookings.ihotelier.com/bookings.jsp?groupID=1386332&hotelID=12446> with the online booking code: 6672. The rate is \$119.00 per room per night and is available from June 3-10 (in case you want to spend more time in Albany). **Reservations must be received by Friday, May 22, 2015.** Any reservation requests received after Friday, May 22, 2015 will be accepted based on availability

## **LWVUS Database**

The LWVUS database is being transitioned to a new program. The rosters of members and how to update the new database will be different – we'll all have to learn how to use the new system. **Each local League, however, MUST designate a Roster Manager for the new LWVUS database;** this can be your membership chair, treasurer, or whoever can access the LWVUS database and regularly update your membership information. To identify this Roster Manager, please go to <http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/2091040/RosterManager> and complete the survey. You should be able to just click on that link – if not, copy and paste it into your browser.

## **Legislative Agenda Booklet**

Copies are still available for the new Legislative Agenda booklet. This booklet provides more information on the issues the state League expects to monitor and lobby this legislative session. Call or email the state office to purchase your copies at a cost of \$20 per 100, plus tax and shipping. Use these booklets when speaking with elected officials or as a membership tool at events. It's a great introduction to the League's positions.

## **Legislative Reference Guide**

The 2015 Legislative Reference Guide is now available for purchase from the state League. This book provides key information on each NYS Senator and NYS Assemblymember, including contact info in the district and Albany offices, committee assignments, and staff name. It is incredibly useful for lobbying your legislators. The cost is \$10 which includes tax and shipping; call Katrina or send a check to make an order. You can also order online from the state website.

## **Development Update: Board Match**

After three years, our League Matters Campaign is almost over. Thanks to over 250 donors, we have received \$378,000 to-date for this special fundraising effort. Our goal is \$400,000 above and beyond our normal annual fund by June 30, 2015. In order to help us reach that goal and safeguard the future of the League in New York State, several members of the state League Board of Directors have come together to offer a final match. All Campaign gifts received between now and June 30, 2015 will be matched, dollar-for-dollar, by members of our Board. If you'd like to be part of this gift match, please make a gift online here: [https://secure.lgiforms.com/form\\_engine/s/Qz8HLNG0DucaSDLlq0BD9g](https://secure.lgiforms.com/form_engine/s/Qz8HLNG0DucaSDLlq0BD9g). You may also send a check, made out to LWVNYS EF, to the state League office at 62 Grand Street, Albany, NY 12207. Please include, "League Matters Campaign Match" on the memo line of your check.

## **Youth Programs: Judie Gorenstein, [judieL728@aol.com](mailto:judieL728@aol.com)**

This is an extremely busy and exciting time for youth programs as we prepare and wait for the 62 students who will be arriving in Albany May17 to participate in Students Inside Albany. The students have all sent in their signed paper work. Remember though it is up to the local Leagues to arrange for the transportation for their students and make certain they have their tickets and also contact information if anything changes that day regarding their arrival times. Once they arrive, the LWVNYS has arranged everything to enable them to have wonderful opportunities to learn about and experience their state government, meet other interested and engaged students, and return home motivated to be involved share with others what they have learned.

As director of Youth Programs, I am also looking forward to meeting many of you at the youth programs workshop, where we can learn from one another about successful youth programs. Members of the LWV of the Hamptons, LWV of Huntington, and Wayne County Mal will be on a panel to discuss their programs. Other Leagues who have information they would like to share are encouraged to participate and also bring any materials they would like to distribute. Of course, Leagues who have struggled with either getting a student for SIA or beginning a local youth program are encouraged to attend. Discussion will focus on how the different programs can be adapted for your individual chapter and community.

## **LWVUS News**

### **Interested in Registering New Citizens to Vote?**

LWVEF has a handy toolkit to help Leagues conduct effective voter registration at naturalization ceremonies for new citizens. The toolkit, available for free download at <http://forum.lwv.org/member-resources/article/naturalization-ceremony-voter-registration-toolkit>, includes League-tested strategies for working with officials who host naturalization ceremonies, tips for improving voter registration rates at ceremonies, a customizable media advisory template to help spread the word about your great work, and inspiring success stories from Leagues who are already working to engage new citizens. Now is the time to start thinking about a great naturalization ceremony program ahead of the big 2016 election year!

### **Webinar Recording: Putting Together a Local Action Plan**

The LWVUS Program Planning and Support (PP&S) Committee webinar featuring LWVUS Advocacy Chair Chris Carson and state Leaders outlined the basics of creating a local action plan. The webinar was designed to help Leagues learn and review the basics for creating an advocacy campaign. You can view a recording of the [webinar here](#).