



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: January 2015***

**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) if you need help.**

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

- Return consensus report forms (term limits and ballot access) **by Jan. 31, 2015.**
- Update membership roster in LWVUS database **by Jan. 31, 2015.**
- Call or email Katrina (518-465-4162 or [katrina@lwvny.org](mailto:katrina@lwvny.org)) to reserve your spot at the Advocacy Training Day on **Feb. 5th** in NYC (**NOTE: NEW DATE**).
- Return Program Planning Response form **by Feb. 20, 2015.**
- Send any proposed revisions to the State League Bylaws to the state office **by March 1, 2015.**
- Student/parent forms for the Students Inside Albany Conference are due in the state office **by March 1, 2015.**
- Return completed form on Constitutional Convention Update to state office **by May 30, 2015.**
- State League Convention is **June 6-7** in Albany. Save the date!

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

On January 21, Governor Cuomo presented an unprecedented joint State of the State and 2015 Budget Program (2015 Opportunity Agenda). The League was well represented at the event and is currently analyzing the budget proposals in several different subject areas. The League will be presenting testimony at a number of the Joint Budget hearings. Watch the state website to read these testimonies.

Also last week, Assembly Speaker Silver was arrested by the FBI on corruption charges in connection with an investigation into his outside income. The League continues to monitor the impact of this arrest on the Assembly leadership and League priorities for the legislative session. The League will also continue to work with the other good government groups to advance long-needed necessary ethics reforms. A statement was released shortly after the arrest and is posted on the state website as well as attached here.

#### **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.**

### **Advocacy Training Session – NEW DATE**

The state League will be holding its annual Advocacy Training session on February 5th in New York City. The State Advocacy team, including our Issue Specialists, will be presenting information on the League's expected action during the upcoming legislative session. We hope that holding it in NYC this year will encourage more downstate members to come learn about our advocacy agenda. Plans are being developed to organize a lobby day later in the spring in Albany for members to directly lobby their legislators in Albany. **To attend the Feb. 5th Advocacy Training Day in NYC, please call or email Katrina at the state office (518-465-4162 or [katrina@lwny.org](mailto:katrina@lwny.org)).** Please encourage all members to join us on this day.

### **State League Bylaws**

At Convention, the delegates must consider any proposed amendments to the state League Bylaws. The current bylaws are attached. Please review the bylaws with your board and/or membership to determine if your League has any suggested revisions. Any proposed amendments must be received by the state office **by March 1, 2015.**

### **Women's Issues, Barb Thomas, [barb.lvw@nycap.rr.com](mailto:barb.lvw@nycap.rr.com) and Lois Haignere, [haigner@nycap.rr.com](mailto:haigner@nycap.rr.com)**

Since 2013, the state League has actively supported the passage of the Women's Equality Act comprised of 10 point agenda. Much of this legislation has been addressed in one house or the other, but never jointly passed to become law. The Senate passed 8 of the agenda items last week but has refused to pass legislation dealing with reproductive justice. In previous years, the Assembly has preferred to pass the Governor's 10 point agenda as a package.

The 2015 legislation session will allow the Women's Equality Coalition to move forward in a slightly more comprehensive way. In conjunction with the Women's Equality Coalition, LWVNYS will be supporting measures that advance economic and reproductive justice for all women in New York State. The Women's Equality Coalition has added the issues of child care and paid family leave to its agenda. LWVNYS, along with the WEC, will pursue a political strategy that includes:

- Working closely with the women in the legislature, as well as other lawmakers who support legislation which will move New York's women toward economic and reproductive justice; and
- Supporting the passage of bills, individually and/or collectively.

### **Judicial Issues, Helga Schroeter, [helgasasquith@verizon.net](mailto:helgasasquith@verizon.net)**

Following last year's success in gaining more Family Court Judges state-wide, the Coalition for more Family Court Judges has decided to rename itself to reflect their current advocacy issues. The new "Coalition for Family Court Justice" plans to advocate for the needs of adequate resources and for adjustments in light of impending legislation to raise the age of criminal culpability for juveniles. The new coalition hopes to retain support from its previous members, including the LWVNYS.

The Governor's Commission On Youth, Public Safety And Justice (co-chaired by Soffiyah Elijah of the Correctional Association and Jeremy Creelan) had been charged with evaluating the current Juvenile Justice System and making recommendations for change. They just released a comprehensive report. The governor has pledged his full support and plans to turn the recommendations into legislative action. Proposed changes would incrementally raise Family Court jurisdiction from 16 to 17 years of age in 2017 and to 18 in 2018. The current age of 7 for Family Court jurisdiction would be raised to 12, although murder cases would remain at 10 and would not be sealed for future criminal proceedings. Instead of being sent to adult criminal prisons, juveniles would be kept in less restrictive, more rehabilitative settings up to the age of 21. More youth courts would be created. Under the League's positions, alternatives to incarceration should allow us to be supportive of most of these changes.

Other issues covered in the Judicial arena are better and more consistent funding of indigent's defense services and potential changes to the current grand jury system. All of these long-standing issues are likely to be addressed in the current legislative session. The League should be prepared to advocate for changes where appropriate under our positions.

### **Election Law Reform, Aimee Allaud, [85aimee@nycap.rr.com](mailto:85aimee@nycap.rr.com)**

January 2015 brought new opportunities for visibility and advocacy on the League's Legislative Agenda on Election Law Reform. Our agenda is represented in a joint policy statement (attached and posted on the state website) adopted by our good government colleagues in January and presented at the NYS Election Commissioners (ECA) Conference in Albany. The groups joined together and purchased an information table at the conference that allowed us to interact with commissioners and their staff in informal conversations about our goals, their problems and what we could do together to improve voting processes in the state. Election operations at the local level are funded by the counties but they must implement NYS Election Law and mandates enacted by the Legislature. HAVA provided one time monies for machine purchases and software upgrades, accessibility improvements, the statewide voter registration database. Those monies have been largely depleted and further improvements in the way New Yorkers vote, for example, electronic poll books to replace the paper voter rolls in use in the polling place, will have to be implemented with either state funding or a combination of state and local/county funding. However, some of the Legislative Agenda goals are policy changes and/or a combination of applying modern technology to existing processes that will not have major fiscal implications for counties. The ECA has endorsed improving ballot design so we are committed to achieving success on this in 2015 with your help as you lobby your Assembly and Senate members.

League also partnered with statewide disability organizations at the ECA conference. Our joint statement on accessible voting is attached and posted on the state website, along with statements opposing the continued use of lever voting machines for local (school board, villages, fire districts, etc.) elections. A press conference was held at the Legislative Office Building to draw attention to the issue (attached and posted on the state website). We oppose the continued use of lever machines because they do not satisfy LWVUS SARA criteria (secure, accurate, recountable, accessible). In November 2014, LWVNYS provided comments to the NYSBOE on the issue; see those comments on the state website on the Election Reform advocacy page.

Watch for further developments in achieving our legislative goals. I will be in NYC for the February 5<sup>th</sup> Advocacy Training Day and look forward to meeting you.

### **Grassroots Lobbyist, Carol Mellor, [camellor@aol.com](mailto:camellor@aol.com)**

#### **Conference Call on Issues Process**

Nearly 40 members participated in the last Update on Issues conference call which explored the way the League makes decisions and reviewed the process by which particular decisions to support, or not support, proposals and legislation were made.

To recap the process, when an issue upon which action is contemplated arises, it is referred for consideration to the State Issues Committee, which consists of the Issues and Advocacy Vice President, Legislative Director, Grassroots Advocacy Director, and any relevant Single Issue Specialist. Approval is NOT necessary for items which the League has supported/opposed in the past so long as action is consistent with a current position.

It is most important to remember that any local League board or member can bring a potential action item to the State Issues Committee. A meeting is convened by sending notice and relevant materials to members of the committee. The preferred method of communication is e-mails, using the "REPLY ALL" button, with telephone conversations or conference calls as may be necessary. The procedures followed by the committee will be determined by the time framework for approval.

All decisions of the State Issues Committee are reported to the board after the decision was made. The board has the ultimate authority and retains the right to overrule any decision of the State Issues Committee on a going-forward basis.

We on the State Board and in the State Office understand that it is of utmost importance to keep our members informed about the actions taken by the League. We resolve to strive to keep information flowing to the members and to be responsive to the questions and concerns expressed to us by the members. We ask, in return, that the members take advantage of the resources available to them to keep themselves informed—which include the monthly Voter, Action Alerts, the Update on Issues conference calls, and the constantly updated web site.

#### **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](mailto: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.

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

How delightful it was that thirty LWV men and women from the Southern Tier and beyond turned out on a chilly but sunny day in Elmira on January 10th for an information and solution-swapping regional meeting. The Chemung league was a terrific host (thanks, Barb Luther and your MANY helpers!) and seven other leagues were represented: Broome/Tioga, Cortland, Schuyler, Steuben, Tompkins - and in the "beyond" category, Cazenovia and Utica-Rome.

Laura Ladd Bierman and Victoria Melillo-Jordan joined me to share information from the state League and to demonstrate how much information is on the state website (including a lot of information from LWVUS). We really hope more of you will take advantage of the wealth of information and training materials you can find there. We also continue to pass on this tip on how best to find what you want on the LWVUS site: Google it! E.g. if you want material on developing your membership, just Google "LWVUS + membership development." Some material may not be available if you haven't bothered to create a LOGIN password, so do that first if you want to be treated like a League member!

But of course the most valuable part of the day was what local league members learned from one another. We hope the excitement of these exchanges will continue on the regional calls that we always encourage all presidents to participate in.

We know there may be some sharing of study committees or speakers or co-presentation of programs going on in the Southern Tier, and we will watch you all with interest via your newsletters. What great energy and talents you bring to the League!

## **Join the LWVNYS Leadership Team in 2015**

As the Nominating Committee for the June 2015 LWVNYS Convention, we take our responsibilities seriously and passionately. We're genuinely excited about the terrific team of LWVNYS leaders that we are already assembling for 2015-2017 and invite you (or a League colleague of yours) to consider applying for one of our small number of open positions including directors for youth programs, membership, and citizen education.

The coming years will be both challenging and inspiring for League in New York State. Many local Leagues are in transition, and looking for ways to attract and retain new members in compelling ways. The state League stands ready to assist in these efforts, strengthening our skills, imparting information and tools, and sharing best practices across the state.

If you (or a friend) are passionate about League, willing to work with a team from all parts of the state to further League goals and engage with our talented and inspiring local League members and boards, please consider joining our LWVNYS board and working in an area you find compelling. It will be a way for you to share your strengths, learn from others, and help lead LWVNYS in the important years ahead.

For more information please contact Lisa Scott, Chair of the Nominating Committee (631) 523-1653 or email [lisawscott@gmail.com](mailto:lisawscott@gmail.com)

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

### **Legislative Agenda Booklet**

The State League has created a new Legislative Agenda booklet to replace the former Legislative Agenda brochure. This new booklet provides more information on the issues the state League expects to monitor and lobby this legislative session. All local Leagues will receive a **free** supply of these booklets equal to the number of members they have with extras; additional copies are available 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. The booklets will be shipped to each local League later this week. There's a form included if your League would like to order more copies. The booklet is also already posted on the homepage of the state website.

### **BIG NEWS FOR LOCAL LEAGUES!**

#### **Tax Deductible Online and Credit Card Donations to Local Leagues Now Possible**

The state League is pleased to announce that we have a new benefit for our local Leagues! Members and friends wishing to make tax deductible donations to their local League through the grants management system can now use credit cards and do it online. Please use the link below – post it on your website, put it in your newsletters, etc – advertise that people can donate using this link:

[Local League EF Donations](#)

When people donate using this link, they will be required to select to which local League they want their donation sent. The donation will be deposited into your local league grants management account here at the state League office and you can use it as usual for educational expenses or to pay ½ of your annual PMP to state and LWVUS. Lisa Allendorph, LWVNYS Finance Administrator, will email the President and Treasurer a notice of who donated and how much they donated. Please be aware that there is a bank fee averaging 3.5% (depending on which credit card they use) that will be deducted from the donation, eg, a \$50 donation will actually be about \$48 donation to the local League. Also, as usual, the local League is responsible for sending a thank you letter for donations made to their grants management account.

## **Voter Services Survey Responses**

Again, less than half of our local Leagues responded to the state survey on voter service activities, so while the results are impressive, there is a lot more activity occurring by our local Leagues that isn't reported here. Thanks to all of your hard work during the election season and congratulations on the great results!

### **Responses from 25 local Leagues**

#### **Debates:**

- 19 held Debates or Candidate Forums
- 10 had to cancel Candidate Forums (candidate cancelled or refused to participate, bad weather, no mutual date)
- 13 Co-sponsored event with other organizations
- Attendance ranged from 15-564
- 17 leagues took questions from the audience, 13 screened the questions, 3 allowed questions from the floor at a microphone
- 4 Leagues had problems during Q&A (outbursts, disagreements between candidates)
- 12 Leagues videotaped the debates and 15 had the debates aired
- 3 had problems with people taping from audience (and using twitter)
- 16 debates were covered by the media
- 7 Leagues provided services such as moderating or timekeeping for an event sponsored by another organization
- 15 Leagues had debate policies

### **Voter Guides and Registration Drives**

- 8 Leagues published local voter guides printing between 100 and 24,000 copies
- Total of 135 voter registrations drives were held by these 25 local Leagues
- Local leagues registered over 1,005 voters
- 18 Leagues distributed absentee ballot applications (between 2-100 distributed)

### **Get Out the Vote Efforts**

- 6 leagues were on TV or radio programs
- 13 leagues sent Letters to the Editors
- 4 Leagues developed and distributed PSAs
- 8 Leagues attend naturalization ceremonies or organize activities for new citizens

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

The forms to be completed by the student (and parents) selected to attend the 2015 Students Inside Albany Conference have been emailed to all local Youth Chairs and Presidents or Co-Presidents. If you didn't receive them or have questions, please contact Katrina at the state office (518-465-4162). **These forms MUST be received by the state office by March 1.** There is a lot of work to do after we have the info on the selected students, especially in coordinating their shadow experiences in the legislature, so it is imperative that we have the completed forms by March 1. Also, remember that the **local League is responsible for coordinating and paying for the transportation of the student to and from Albany**; please discuss this with your student and make the appropriate plans. Suggested trains are included in the forms so that the students can travel together.

LWVUS has created a new and improved manual for those organizing voter registration drives in high schools and registering new voters. *Empowering the Voters of Tomorrow: Developing Winning High School Voter Registration Programs*, lays out a roadmap for organizations, educators and students interested in empowering young Americans to register and vote. See the new manual at: <http://lwv.org/blog/high-school-voter-registration-new-handbook-new-year>.

## **LWVUS Roster Update**

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