



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: June 2015

If you are no longer President or on your local League board, please forward this to the appropriate board member – and be sure that your League has submitted the changes in your board to the state office.

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

- Complete and return Local League Information Form **by June 30, 2015.**
- Complete and return Voter Guide Part I Order Form (with payment) **by June 30, 2015.**
- Complete and return evaluation form on 2015 State Convention
- Schedule a Fall membership meeting to consider the concurrence on “Raise the Age”
- Schedule meetings in late Fall to consider LWVUS studies on Money in Politics and US Constitutional Amendment Process
- Email Katrina@lwvny.org to sign up to participate in state committees on minimum wage or program planning (see Issues and Advocacy report)

President's Report: Dare Thompson, darethompson@gmail.com

What a pleasure to see so many of you at Convention! It was a frustratingly brief time but I especially remember the Moments in the Sun period when local Leagues shared a few highlights from their past year. The ones we have received so far are attached and posted on the state website; **if you didn't turn in your notes then, be sure to send them to laura@lwvny.org right away** so we can all see what even those who were there may have missed.

I also enjoyed seeing many of you in workshops on membership and leadership issues that I did with Georgia DeGregorio and LWVUS board liaison to NY, Anne Schink. The questions we had in NY were echoed two weeks later at the LWVUS Council meeting attended by leaders from each state, from Hawaii to Florida to Maine - and most states in between. How do we restructure our leadership teams to avoid leader burn-out and still get the work done? How do we diversify our membership? How can we use technology better from websites to Facebook and Twitter and beyond? And above all, how do we strengthen the communities we serve?

No one solution fits all, but successful Leagues focus on assets not deficits and they don't try to do more than they actually *can* do. They are likely to be comfortable with change, flexible, and not afraid to have fun! They reach out and connect with other community groups and resources. They know what they need and want and they ASK! And they make a difference, whether it's getting voters registered and engaged or getting a good bill passed or a bad one killed.

Back in NY again after Council, I saw many of these assets at work when I joined Barbara Bartoletti a couple times at the Capitol as the legislative session was drawing to a close - i.e. getting crazy! We huddled around a

table in the Capitol's Dunkin' Donuts and strategized with our allies about who would visit which legislators. We sent requests to key legislators to leave the Assembly Chamber to speak to us, which they usually did. Barbara caught a glimpse of Shelly Silver and went chasing after him for a nugget of news and came back with more than one. We played well with others, we asked, and we had fun. And at least on one very important issue we had a significant impact. (Read about that elsewhere.) It sure does feel good to make a difference.

State Convention 2015

As I become President of the State League, I'd like to thank Kathy Stein (ST. Lawrence MAL Unit) and Barbara Thomas (LWV of Saratoga County) for their years of service on the state Board. Their input and insight was instrumental in guiding the state League these past two years. I'd also like to thank Sally Robinson (LWV of NYC) for her wonderful leadership as President the past 3 years and am glad that she will continue on the board as VP for Issues and Advocacy. Finally, I'm pleased to announce that Georgia DeGregorio (LWV of Rochester) and Anne Burton (LWV of Rensselaer) were elected to the state Board at Convention. I look forward to working with them, and the continuing board members, as we tackle the many issues presented to the State Board.

2015-17 State Board

PRESIDENT/ ISSUES & ADVOCACY

Dare Thompson (LWV of Mid-Hudson) Email: darethompson@gmail.com

1st VICE PRESIDENT/VOTER SERVICES:

Judie Gorenstein (LWV of Huntington) Email: JudieL728@aol.com

2nd VICE PRESIDENT/DEVELOPMENT

Susan Wilson (LWV of the Hamptons) Email: sswilson@hamptons.com

3rd VICE PRESIDENT/ISSUES & ADVOCACY

Sally Robinson (LWV of NYC) Email: robintwins@gmail.com

SECRETARY

Kay Sharp (LWV of Tompkins County) Email: phylliskaysharp@gmail.com

TREASURER

Judy Middelkoop (LWV of Schenectady County) Email: JM.Koop@verizon.net

DIRECTORS

REGIONAL DIRECTOR COORDINATOR

Terri Parks (LWV of Buffalo/Niagara) Email: lwvoter@verizon.net

Grassroots Director

Carol Mellor (LWV of the Hamptons) Email: CarolMellor140@gmail.com

AT-LARGE

Georgia DeGregorio (LWV of Rochester Metro) Email: georgiatd1@gmail.com

Anne Burton (LWV of Rensselaer County) Email: anneburton10@gmail.com

Also at Convention, the delegates adopted a budget for 2015-16 which included a \$2 raise in the PMP (Per Member Payment) starting on July 1, 2015. The 2015-17 program that was adopted is described below in the Issues and Advocacy Report. Bylaw amendments were also passed by the delegates and are available from the state League office; information on amendments to local League bylaws, based on the changes required by the NonProfit Revitalization Act, will be emailed later this summer.

What impact does your League intend to have this year? And how will you have fun? Keep us posted on your continuing "moments in the sun"!

Issues and Advocacy Report: Sally Robinson, robintwins@gmail.com

As you can see from my report, the state League Needs You! We are looking for volunteers for three different issues-related committees. Please email me (or Laura@lwny.org) with any questions about the committees.

Convention Wrap-up

Program

The convention delegates approved the two board-recommended program items:

- An update of the League's position on Legislative Procedures and
- A concurrence on raising the minimum age to be tried as an "adult" from 16-18 in the criminal justice system.

If you have an interest in serving on the study committee for the Legislative Procedures update, please contact the state office (Katrina@lwny.org). For more information on the minimum age concurrence, please see the report from Carol Mellor, Grassroots Lobby director. Delegates also approved retaining all remaining League positions. Non non-recommended items were moved for consideration.

State Committees on Minimum Wage and Program Planning Announcement

A recent LWVUS announcement interpreted the Meeting Basic Human Needs position to permit state and local Leagues to lobby in support of raising state or local minimum wages or adopting a living wage position. The state League is forming a committee of League volunteers to look at the issue and possibly make a recommendation on a state minimum wage to the Board.

We are also forming a long-range program planning committee to look at the last decade or two of program planning, what studies and updates were undertaken, and analyze the effort involved and the results. Please email or call the state office (Katrina@lwny.org or 518-465-4162) if you are interested in serving on either committee.

Action Motion

The delegates approved an action motion to send a letter to the Governor asking him to appoint a commission to examine holding a state constitutional convention following the 2017 vote. The letter has been sent; a copy is attached and is also available at http://www.lwny.org/convention/2015/Letter-NYS-Convention_061215.pdf.

Constitutional Convention Panel

Former state legislators John Faso and Richard Brodsky gave delegates a lot to think about with a very fast-paced and challenging discussion on issues related to the upcoming constitutional convention referendum that will be on the 2017 state ballot. Look for much more on this issue in the next 18 months.

Constitutional Convention Update Results

Twenty-two Leagues participated in the request for an update of the state League's position on constitutional conventions. Consensus was reached to update the portion of the position on delegate selection.

New Position: The League supports the following reforms as positive factors in deciding on support for a constitutional convention. Delegates should be elected by a fair nonpartisan process that complies with federal voting rights provisions and eases ballot access to encourage participation by racial and other minorities. Public financing should be provided for candidates and their positions on issues and convention goals should be widely publicized to enable voters to cast informed votes at their election. Statewide office holders, state or federal legislators, and state judges should not serve as delegates.

2015 Legislative Session

Ethics and campaign finance reforms remained off the agenda for the end of this legislative session despite the federal corruption charges brought against both former Speaker Silver and former Majority Leader Skelos. However the League has seen significant legislative victories on all of the original Women's Equality Agenda other than the Reproductive Health Act. In addition bills notifying mothers of their rights to breastfeed at work and naming pregnancy as an additional qualifying condition for enrollment in healthcare at any time were passed.

The League also lobbied heavily against the educational investment tax credit and we were gratified that it was not included the end of session "deal." This is a significant victory for the League, our public education coalition partners, and quality public education. However, we expect to have to engage this issue again next year.

Grassroots Lobby Director: Carol Mellor, carolmellor140@gmail.com

The delegates at the state Convention agreed to engage our members in a concurrence on the issue referred to as "Raise the Age." New York is the only state other than North Carolina that prosecutes ALL youth 16 years of age and older as adults. LWV Ohio conducted a full study and several updates on the issue of Juvenile Justice and arrived at Juvenile Justice positions. Paramount in their positions is the principle that children under the age of 18 are not adults and "their treatment within the juvenile justice system should relate to their stage of development", that the purpose of juvenile justice should be rehabilitation, and that the legal rights of juveniles should be protected. We will be asking members to concur with some, but not all, of the OH position.

By mid-August, we will distribute materials, including a Powerpoint presentation, articles, etc, on this issue. We ask that each local League schedule a meeting **during the Fall 2015** to present the materials and ask members to concur with the OH position. The results will be due into the state office by January 1 so that if agreement is reached, we can lobby on this new position during the next legislative session. Include this concurrence in your calendar for a Fall meeting.

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

Big League Raffle Winner: Lisa Cohen, LWV of Rivertowns

Congratulations to Lisa Cohen of LWV of Rivertowns who won the 2015 Big League Raffle. The drawing was held at the Saturday evening dinner at Convention. Lisa will receive \$2,261! All local Leagues who sold tickets will also receive a share of the net proceeds, and LWV of Rivertowns will receive an additional \$452 for selling the winning ticket. Don't miss out next year – you could be the winner!

Voter Guide Part I

Order Forms (attached) for the Voter Guide Part I are due in the state office by June 30, 2015. Payment should be included with the order form. Leagues participating in the Organ Donation Grant will receive 500 copies for free and additional copies at half price of \$7.50 per 100. The cost for all other Leagues is the usual \$15 per 100 copies.

There's still time to join the League's partnership with NY Alliance for Donation to increase voter and organ donor registrations through voter registration drives. Contact Laura@lwvny.org for more information on how you can join the effort. It's easy and has financial benefits for your local League.

Local League Information Form

Complete and return the attached Local League Information Form as soon as possible – and no later than June 30. We need this information to update the state League’s mailing lists so that the new officers and board members will receive the correct information from the state League. THIS IS VITAL TO MAINTAIN COMMUNICATION FROM THE STATE LEAGUE TO ALL LOCAL LEAGUES.

2015 Students Inside Albany Conference

The state League hosted 62 high school students for 4 days in Albany this month for the Students Inside Albany Conference. This year’s conference was another successful program with informed and interesting students. A summary of the activities and photos from the event are posted on the state website (<http://lwwny.org/youth.html>).

What State League Does for the Local Leagues

At Convention, the delegates voted to raise the PMP by \$2 starting July 1, 2015. We often hear, what do we get for our PMP? The League of Women Voters of New York State helps keep you strong by: ADVOCACY

- overseeing **state studies** for new or updated positions
- **lobbying** at the state level
- maintaining **coalition partnerships with many organizations** for stronger advocacy efforts.
- coordinating **Advocacy Education Days** for members statewide

EDUCATION

- funding for each local League to send one student free to **Students Inside Albany**
- providing **speakers** on current issues for community events
- developing ready-made Powerpoint educational presentations and briefing papers on various “hot topics” for community presentations and discussions

VOTER SERVICE

- paying **license fees** for all local Leagues and having staff **support for** www.vote411.org
- creating and distributing low-cost **Voter Guides**
- making **stipends** and reduced cost voter guides available through grant programs
- hosting statewide **candidate events**
- providing **ready-made presentations** on issues for statewide studies and voter education

SOCIAL MEDIA/VISIBILITY

- maintaining an up-to-date **website** with links and resources for running and promoting local Leagues
- supporting a **Facebook page** and “Liking” any Facebook page of our local Leagues
- sending **State Board Updates and VOTERS** monthly and including local League news
- providing **spokesperson** to media statewide on state issues
- developing **template Letters to the Editor** for local Leagues to submit to local media

LEADERSHIP/TRAINING

- **advising local Leagues** on a one-on-one basis and through regional training
- organizing state **Convention**
- nurturing and giving start-up funding for **MAL units**

ADMINISTRATION

- hosting **grants management** accounts for each local League in state Education Foundation to allow tax-deductible donations at no charge
- providing **insurance** for events held by local Leagues at no charge
- creating an **easy local League online giving** link you can use to accept tax-deductible donations online

Convention Awards

The Board of the League of Women Voters of New York State congratulates the following Award Winning Leagues:

LWV of Albany County

LWV of Buffalo-Niagara

LWV of the Hamptons

LWV of Harrison

LWV of the City of New York

LWV of Rensselaer County

LWV of Rye, Rye Brook, Port Chester

LWV of Rochester Metro

LWV of Saratoga County

LWV of Schenectady County

LWV of St. Lawrence County (MAL Unit)

LWV of Utica-Rome

The Awards Program is attached (and posted on the state website) to see what award each local League won. Congrats to all!

100th Anniversary Activities

The state League has an intern, Lauren Thomas, in the office this summer helping to gather information on all activities, events and forums that will be held during the next 5 years to celebrate the 100th anniversary of women's right to vote in NYS (2017), 100th anniversary of State League (2019), and 100th anniversary of women's right to vote in US (2020). We hope to make plans to coordinate the League's activities with the other organizations across the state. If you know of plans in your communities, local organizations, or your own local League, please share them with us (email LaurenThomas830@gmail.com). We're creating a big calendar of the events that we'll share with all. We will also be creating a Committee to help plan and organize the state League events – if you or you know of someone who would like to work on this project, email Laura@lwny.org.

State Office Staff

We are sad to announce that Victoria Melillo-Jordan, Director of Program and Policy, has left the state office for another position in NYS government. We are recruiting now and hope to hire a new staff person before the end of the summer. In the meantime, email Katrina@lwny.org or Laura@lwny.org if you have questions on Vote 411 or other programs.

Development: Kate Jankowski, kate@lwny.org

League Matters Campaign—A Success!!

Thanks to over 300 donors around the state, the League Matters Campaign exceeded our \$400,000 goal this month. Our Board and Campaign Committee have been working hard to raise these funds since July of 2012 and we are gratified by the overwhelming support we received.

Some highlights of this Campaign include:

- 70% of the donors are members. The other 30% are former members and friends of the League.
- Donors came from areas represented by 41 local Leagues.
- The Campaign attracted 75 brand new donors.
- 32 donors made gifts of \$1,000 or more and 13 of those donors made gifts of \$5,000 or more.
- During the Campaign, members in Albany, Rochester, and Buffalo/Niagara opened their homes to have events promoting gifts to this special fundraising effort.
- Members of the LWV of Broome and Tioga Counties signed letters to current and former members asking them to join in giving to the League Matters Campaign.
- Three local Leagues made gifts starting with the LWV of Albany County. The Albany League challenged the state League to raise \$25,000 for the Campaign between 12/1/2014 and the League's birthday on 2/14/2015 in order to get an additional \$10,000 from them. This challenge was successfully met.
- The LWV of Buffalo/Niagara and the LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region were both motivated by the Albany County League's gift and they made gifts to the Campaign as well.

The Campaign officially ends on June 30, 2015 and we are still receiving gifts and the Board is matching each gift received for the Campaign until June 30th.

A portion of the gifts to this Campaign is being shared with local Leagues from the donors' areas. This share will be added to the grants management accounts of the local Leagues.

Action Fund Solicitation

With the end of the legislative session, we are mailing our annual Action Fund appeal. This solicitation letter goes to donors who have expressed an interest in our advocacy areas and it highlights our successes and challenges over this legislative session. We will be sending out an email solicitation for the Action Fund in the next few weeks as well. Gifts to the Action Fund benefit the League and are used for advocacy so they are not tax deductible. If you are interested in supporting the Action Fund, you can make a gift online at: https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/ij3-OUs9IGprh6iqJxrjw or send a check to LWVNY, 62 Grand Street, Albany, NY 12207 with "Action Fund" written on the memo line.

Convention Workshops

Handouts from all of the Convention workshops are posted on the state website – please share with leaders and members. There are great ideas and tips for all local Leagues!

Youth Programs: Judie Gorenstein, JudieL728@aol.com

I would like to thank the panelist as well as the attendees who came to The Youth Programs workshop held Sat. morning at 8:30. Each of the panelists described how their League's program engaged the youth in their community. There was an array of programs that ranged from those for elementary school to high school. Whether your League was large or small, there was a program for you. Judi Roth from the LWV of Hamptons described how their League had worked with the girl scouts helping them get a citizenship badge. (Please include information I will email you on this program) JoAnn Alario- Paulsen and Brenda Reiss from LWV of Huntington described their Running and Winning Program, a full day workshop where high school female students engage with women elected officials and are encouraged consider a political career.(This information was mailed to you on Sat. and should be included) Francine Rodger from LWV of Saratoga presented information on three separate 30 minute one woman shows where students from grades 5 to 8 were able to hear a first-hand account of the battle for women's suffrage from Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and

Sojourner Truth. They received excellent press coverage and are in process of finding out if the scripts can be given to other Leagues and what cost would be.

Although Ellie Drake and Sandy Keller from the Wayne County Mal had planned on showing a DVD their League put together on SIA, because of technical problems, they instead had to tell us about it. League members are always prepared even when problems occur. Their DVD can be purchased for cost of \$5.00. [Contact HSTDRAKE@aol.com](mailto:HSTDRAKE@aol.com)

For those Leagues who have wanted to send a student to SIA, but have been having difficulty in finding one, Elizabeth Donderewicz from the LWV of Steuben provided their planning session and time line they use, which can be adopted for other Leagues and gives good guidelines.

In addition to the programs and ideas shared by our local Leagues, Georgia DeGregorio provided a description of a civics Bee from Massachusetts. Attendees of the workshop as well as the panel all left with some new ideas. WE can continue to learn from one another, adapt programs to meet the needs of our youth and communities by sharing what we have done. Our youth are our future and will always be.

Voter Services: Judie Gorenstein, JudieL728@aol.com

Voter turnout and educated voters are crucial for our democracy. Yet we know that in New York's voter turnout is one of the lowest in our country, We also know from the voter service survey done in 2014 that many of our Leagues struggled with Meet The Candidates Nights. How can we improve voter turnout especially in local election years? How can we schedule and remain in control of our Meet The Candidates Nights? These questions were the focus of our voter service workshop at convention.

Jane Thomas and Nancy Rosenthal from the Southwest Nassau ILO did an excellent job in presenting the chronological decline of voters especially in NYC and reasons for it. The declines in unions, the fact that major parties do not want to mobilize voters, and our archaic election laws all contribute. A constitutional convention that can change election laws can make a difference. What can we do now? The video "Why People Don't Vote" (<http://www.nytimes.com/video/us/politics/10000003211589/why-im-not-voting-in-the-midterms.html?playlistId=10000003212669®ion=video-grid&version=video-grid-headline&contentCollection=Midterm+Elections+2014&contentPlacement=1&module=moreIn-videos&action=click&pgType=Multimedia&eventName=video-grid-click>) shows us what we are confronting so how do we combat this.

Our next panelist, Sara Woken from LWV of Broome Tioga, discussed all that her League has done to increase voter turnout. It was uplifting to know that in one area they increased it by 125%. The LWV of Broome/Tioga Counties certainly is trying to turn out the vote and has been successful.

Many Leagues run Meet The Candidates Night to educate voters and let them hear for themselves what candidates have to say. Last year, several of the scheduled Meet The Candidates Nights had to be canceled for various reasons. Other Leagues experienced difficulties during their Meet The Candidates Night. Carol Mellor, our panelist from the LWV of the Hamptons told how they have been able to run successful candidates nights and keep the candidates civil. Their League contacts the candidates early and sends candidates four page booklet of ground rules. She discussed necessity of moderator being strong and remaining in control. While some attendees agreed that this has worked for them, other attendees vocalized problems and frustrations they encountered. Can a moderator interrupt a candidate who is making derogatory comments about another candidate? What if negative comments were made in closing statements? Should questions be vetted and asked by moderator or should individuals be able to ask their own question? Not everyone attending the

workshop agreed. However, we did agree that there was not one answer for all Leagues and Leagues experiencing difficulties need to look at what they can do differently.

We also agreed that we need to try to reach large number of voters and keep them informed. Vote 411 is an excellent tool, but how do we get more voters what the LWVs of Albany, Rensselaer, publicize Vote 411. They commissioned ads to the election. There were 16 signs on Election Day traveling throughout the entire 411. Four Leagues were able to do so much Leagues also used Vote 411 for school board links to the Leagues web page and one voter go to find out about information on school



to use it? Francine Roger showed Saratoga, and Schenectady did to on CDTA busses for a month prior sixteen busses for six weeks prior to Capital District advertising Vote more than one. This spring two elections. The school boards put commented, "The only place I can board is the League.."

Voter service is at the core of what the League does. This workshop was the beginning of the dialogue on what we can be doing and how we can improve. This is a work in progress. There will be phone conferences throughout the fall to share your ideas and ask questions. Together we can do so much.

LWVUS Studies: Money in Politics and Constitutional Amendment Process

Money in Politics (MIP) Review and Update

The LWVUS Money in Politics Committee will conduct an update of the League's position on campaign finance for the purpose of addressing the lack of member understanding and agreement as to whether financing a political campaign is protected speech under the First Amendment. The campaign finance position will be updated through a study and consensus process to consider: (1) the rights of individuals and organizations, under the First Amendment, to express their political views through independent expenditures and the finance of election campaign activities; and (2) how those rights, if any, should be protected and reconciled with the interests set out in the current position.

The Committee will make educational materials, including a presentation ready Powerpoint and script, available this summer, with a leader's guide and consensus questions available in October. Local Leagues are asked to **schedule a meeting this Fall** to present the materials and discuss the consensus questions. The results of your consensus meeting are **due to LWVUS by February 1, 2016**. More information is available on the LWVUS website at <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/money-politics-review> and through the Money in Politics Forum (you have to login to LWVUS website as a member to access the forum).

Constitutional Amendment Process

This LWVUS study is not about particular amendments that various people may be supporting or opposing or are just aware of discussion around. It is about the constitutional convention *process* for amending the Constitution as well as the consideration for evaluating amendments. LWVUS is compiling the materials now and will have the consensus questions for this study available in October. Resources are now available at: <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/constitutional-amendment-study>. Local Leagues should schedule a meeting this fall to discuss these questions and results from this consensus are due in the LWVUS office **by February 1, 2016**.