



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: March 2015

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

- **Sign up for regional workshops**, including organ donation grant training, NOW (Apr 11 in Albany, Apr 18 in NYC, May 9 in Rochester, May 26 via webinar)
- Register for State Convention **by April 8.**
- Submit an application for an award at Convention **by April 15.**
- 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

This year Governor Cuomo linked multiple issues with the state budget in an attempt to use it as leverage with the legislature. We are coming down to the wire on the budget deadline of April 1 and as of yesterday some issues had been “de-coupled” from the budget - the Education Investment Tax Credit which the League opposes and the Dream Act on which we have no position. However the Governor is still demanding ethics reforms be accomplished with the budget and he has reached an agreement with the Assembly on some ethics measures. The League views these measures as an improvement over the status quo – stronger and more complete disclosure of outside income, pension forfeiture risks for all public officials convicted of corruption, per diem reform with verification, and marginally tighter restrictions on personal use of campaign funds. But in our statement with other good government groups, <http://goo.gl/t3UtWL>, we noted what was **not** in the agreement – stronger ethics enforcement, comprehensive campaign finance reform with public financing that closes the LLC loophole and bans all personal use of campaign funds, strong disclosure and accountability for all executive and legislative discretionary lump sum funds, and most importantly a commitment to undertake the necessary examination and full-scale overhaul of our ethics and campaign finance laws.

Once the budget is agreed upon and we know what issues have remained unresolved, we will send local Leagues another Legislative packet on these issues and other items on our Legislative Agenda and ask you to lobby your state legislators again.

Ballot Access and Term Limits Consensus Studies

In a meeting scheduled for April 15 the state board will adopt and announce a ballot access position based on the results of the ballot access study. Although a sufficient number and geographic diversity of local Leagues participated in the term limits study to have made consensus possible, the necessary 2/3 agreement was not there to reverse the League's opposition to term limits at the state level.

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. 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!

Transportation: Gladys Gifford (schuford@earthlink.net)

The budget process in the NYS legislature is moving forward to meet the April 1st deadline. Each house has already produced its own budget; now the negotiations begin. The focus for transportation is on funding for public transit, both for operating assistance and for increased capital funding. Since the funding for NYC-area needs (i.e., the MTA) is dealt with separately, the specific transit systems involved for these budget negotiations are those that serve upstate and suburban areas outside of NYC.

As of this writing, both the NYS Senate and Assembly one-house budgets include significant increases in both operating and capital assistance for transit systems across the state. This strong support from the legislature for transit systems outside of the MTA is encouraging, contrasted with the flat support from Governor Cuomo's budgets for the last six years. See nytransit.org for more detailed analysis for each transit system.

Action: encourage legislators to stand firm on increased funding for non-MTA transit systems; contact Governor Cuomo, Senate Majority Leader Skelos and Assembly Speaker Heastie to urge that the final budget include the improvements now offered by each house.

As you plan for the LWVNYS Convention, June 5-7, consider dropping by the transportation caucus/networking area— location and time TBA. See you there!

Committee on Energy, Agriculture and the Environment, Beth Radow, Chair (enradow@gmail.com)

The Committee on Energy, Agriculture and the Environment submitted to the U.S. Department of Transportation written comments to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Port Ambrose Project Deepwater Port Application. Click [here](#) to view the written comments. In addition, the Committee is joining other organizations in a letter to Governor Cuomo, Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos and Assembly Majority Leader Carl Heastie supporting legislation called the Microbead-Free Waters Act (A. 5896 Schimel / S. 3932 O'Mara) which bans plastic microbeads in personal care products. Scientific studies demonstrate that these microbeads are polluting New York's waterways.

Healthcare Committee, Madeline Zevon, Chair, (Madeline.zevon@gmail.com)

An economic analysis of the New York Health Act (A5062 (Gottfried)/S3525 (Perkins), a single-payer bill, has been released. The study was conducted by Gerald Friedman, PhD, Chair of the Department of Economics, UMass Amherst. By reducing billing expenses, administrative waste, monopolistic pricing of drugs and medical devices, and fraud, NY Health would reduce spending by 25 percent, or more than \$70 billion, in 2019. New York Health would expand coverage to all uninsured, eliminate co-pays and deductibles and correct the underpayment of Medicaid and Medicare services. NY Health would be funded by payroll assessments and

assessments on non-payroll income (capital gains, dividends and interest), graduated according to income. The largest savings would go to those earning less than \$75,000, but over 98% of New York households would spend less on health care than they now spend. Click on the link for the study: <http://goo.gl/agu0RW>.

The bill has passed the Health Committee in the Assembly. It will likely be brought up in Codes in April/early May. Then it needs to go through Ways and Means before getting to the floor. We think if we are successful the vote would be sometime in mid to late May. The statewide single payer lobby Day will be on **Tues. May 5th** in Albany in support of New York Health (Gottfried/Perkins New York Health Act A5062/S3525). We need YOU to help pass the bill in the State Assembly this session. If you plan on attending, please contact Madeline at 914-584-9968 (cell phone) or email: madeline.zevon@gmail.com.

The Healthcare Committee is planning to conduct a caucus at the State League Convention – watch for time and location.

Women's Issues, Barb Thomas, barb.thomas@nycap.rr.com

A.506, the Trafficking Victims Protection and Justice Act, one of the points of the Women's Equality Agenda (WEA), passed the Assembly on March 16 and is awaiting Gov. Cuomo's signature. The next day a Paid Family Leave Insurance (PFLI) bill providing for 12 weeks of leave passed the Assembly, and a Senate proposal for 6 weeks is reportedly in their budget. (See attached info on Paid Family Leave Act.) Negotiation and lobbying will be needed to make PFLI law. The Assembly is expected to pass the A.6221, the reproductive rights bill on March 25, but this is the point that the Senate has so far refused to take up. (See attached Memo of Support on this bill) Equal Pay Day is April 14, so the Assembly is poised to pass A.6075, the Women's Equality bill, that makes it possible for employees to find out if they are receiving equal pay, when they return from recess the following week. The schedule for the remaining parts of the WEA, and for other bills important to women, is still fluid. Watch on the state League website for more Memos in Support and action on these important women's issues.

Judicial Issues, Helga Schroeter, helgasasquith@verizon.net

Currently, there are some potential changes in progress which may apply to criminal justice issues in NYS. The first one deals with the NYS grand jury system. After several cases of police involvement in the deaths of unarmed citizens resulted in no indictments by grand juries in several states, New York has been taking a critical look at its own system because of the Staten Island Eric Garner case. Several different proposals for change have been offered by the governor, the Attorney General and the Chief Judge of the court system. The LWVNYS has always advocated for a more transparent system, since NYS provides a very high degree of protection from release of personnel records for police, state troopers, etc. League advocates should stay tuned as the different proposals are being considered for legislative action.

The second issue on the front burner is the review of Juvenile Justice practices in NYS. The Governor's Commission on Youth, Public Safety and Justice has recently released its report with a number of recommendations for changes in the Juvenile Justice System. The most important proposal is the change of age in criminal responsibility from 16 to 19. Only NYS along with the state of North Carolina has such a low threshold. The League can justify its support for the proposal under its Alternatives to Incarceration position which would keep juveniles out of adult prisons. Other proposals for changes in the Juvenile Justice system will require a brief study to concur with the Ohio League's position on Juvenile Justice.

Membership: Dare Thompson, darethompson@gmail.com

Reaching out for help is a sign of health, not weakness! Leagues stay healthy by continually training their members, sending them to workshops, participating in regional calls, and maybe using a Membership and Leadership Development (MLD) coach. Savvy leagues also call the LWVNYS office, me or another board

member, or confer with other league leaders in their region, when they have questions. Why reinvent the wheel or struggle with knotty problems in silence?

Several opportunities to learn from your League allies are coming up soon.

Workshops in April and May in Albany, New York City, and Rochester, designed in part to tell you about the Organ Donation registration program, will include a free lunch so you can network with old and new League friends and then discuss how to make the most of the assets you have to do voter service and advocacy and also increase your membership, finances, and visibility. See details elsewhere here and on our website.

Our June 5 - 7 LWNYS Convention will provide a whole weekend of **networking** as well as specific workshop opportunities on Saturday AM. We are especially glad to have **Anne Schink, LWNYS Membership Chair**, with us, and we'll make sure you have many opportunities to hear from and talk with her. Some Convention details have already been sent out and posted, but more will be coming soon.

USE YOUR LEAGUE NETWORK to build your league!

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

Spring Regional Workshops/Organ Donation Grant

As was mentioned in last month's State Board Update, the League is pleased to announce an innovative partnership with the New York Alliance for Donation (NYAD). 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. Our local Leagues will also be trained to encourage more people to register for organ and tissue donations during the League's voter registration drives. 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 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):

- **April 11** from 11:00am – 3:00pm at McKnownville Methodist Church in **Albany**
- **April 18** from 11:00am – 3:00pm at 4 West 43rd Street in **New York City** (building where LWNYS is housed)
- **May 9** from 11:00am – 3:00pm **Rochester Area** (location to be determined)
- **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. **Sign up now for the training session (attached).**

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.

State Convention: June 5-7, 2015 in Albany

Sign up to attend the League's State Convention in Albany NOW! Registration **is due April 8**. See the Registration Kit on the website (and attached). If you have more members who want to attend than you are assigned delegate spots, let the state office know and we'll find other delegate spots for you. We want a large attendance for this exciting educational opportunity and productive business meeting of the state League. The Pre-Convention Kit will be mailed to all members who register as a delegate; this will include the program planning proposals, Nominating Committee report, proposed 2015-16 Budget and proposed bylaw amendments.

Don't forget to submit your local League or members for an award! Think of all the great activities and events you coordinate – and get recognized for that great work. Submissions are due **on April 15, 2015**. The forms are attached.

America Goes to the Polls, Report on Voter Participation Rates in 2014 General Election

As recent study was released by Nonprofit Vote, a nonpartisan resource that helps nonprofits integrate voter engagement into their ongoing activities and services, summarized voter participation rates for the 2014 general election. New York State ranked 49th out of the 50 states plus DC with only 29% of eligible voters actually voting. The report found that states with competitive elections or election day registration had much higher rates of participation than other states. Seven of the top 10 states allowed same day (election day) registration. The full report is posted on the state website and attached to this email. Use this information to engage more people in our voter registration activities, Vote 411 advertisements, and other voter services events.

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.

Youth Programs: Judie Gorenstein, judiel728@aol.com

We all know that youth are our future. They can be a force for change. Our local leagues can flourish when we have strong youth programs as they not only engage our youth but also inspire our members. Many leagues have ongoing youth programs while others are looking to begin them. At our 56th Biennial Convention, as at past conventions, we will be holding a workshop where those leagues who have developed new programs or modified existing ones can show case what they are doing and other leagues can learn from them. Please contact me at Judiel728@aol.com or the league office, if you have a program you would like to share. Also, remember there will be a youth program award. You cannot win if you do not apply. Looking forward to hearing from you and seeing you at convention.

Students Inside Albany Conference

We have most of the paperwork in for our students to attend SIA Conference in May. There will be 62 students from 40 local Leagues participating. We are now contacting the legislators to confirm the shadow experiences. Please remember that it is the local League's responsibility to arrange and pay for the travel for the student(s) to come to Albany. Contact your student and make those arrangements NOW. Thanks.

LWVUS Information

NEW GUIDE: How to Create a Facebook Page for Your League

Does your League not yet have a Facebook Page? Maybe you have one but are unsure of how some technical aspects work? We have just the resource for you! Our new document (attached) will walk you through the process of setting up an organizational page for your League, including explanations, tips and best practices.