



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: October 2015

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

- RSVP to participate in the state League's conference call on **Nov. 16, at 7:00 pm**, on the LWVUS study on Amending the US Constitution; email Laura@lwvny.org to reserve your place (more info under Grassroots Lobby Director report below).
- Complete and return 2016 Legislative Priorities Form **by November 20, 2015**.
- Complete and return 2015 Voter Services Activities Survey **by December 11, 2015**.
- Schedule a Fall membership meeting to consider the concurrence on "Raise the Age" and return Concurrence Response Form **by January 1, 2016**.
- Schedule meetings to consider LWVUS studies on Money in Politics (due Feb. 1) and US Constitutional Amendment Process (due Dec. 1)
- Distribute registration form and register to attend League Day at the United Nations on **Dec. 3, 2015**
- Email Katrina@lwvny.org to sign up to participate in state committees on legislative procedures update, minimum wage or program planning (see Issues and Advocacy report)

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

Greetings, fellow LWV leaders! If you're reading this, I thank you - I know how busy you are right now! (My local league has three candidate forums on October 27 alone, so I know!) So quickly, here's an update about a few things we're doing that are NOT voter service related.

Visibility

We are all (sometimes painfully) aware that the world is increasingly living on-line. Most of us Google for so much of what we want to know. So we've reviewed all **your websites** to see what an eager voter might find when s/he goes looking for you.

Many of you have lively sites, full of information, though some of you are struggling to keep ambitious sites updated. Quite a few leagues have no website or "just the facts, m'am" ones that are basically on-line business cards. Happily, almost all of you provide a phone number (though it's sometimes a little hard to find) and most provide a way to email your league.

We were eager to see how well we're all respecting the League "brand" by trying to look like one another and most of you do this. If you have the LWV of California host your site, no problem. But even the rest of you use

the national logo and red and blue as the primary colors. So for the most part we look like the local-state-national organization we are. Thank you!

Special kudos to those of you who have Facebook (or even Twitter) links as well, particularly those few of you who are doing a great job of keeping all of these updated!

Now we're assessing our next steps in making all of this better for the whole LWV, because for so many people YOU are where the League rubber hits the road! We have some great resources to call upon, so watch for more on this soon.

State and National LWV Studies

Three studies all due by December or early 2016 - what were they thinking!? Well, it's really not anyone's fault, just our own enthusiasm to be up to date in our positions, but it IS a challenge! Most of you seem to be doing our state **Raise the Age** concurrence, which is great. But more of you seem to be avoiding the two studies related to the new world created by Citizens United, namely the one that asks if a **Constitutional Amendment** to overturn is possible or even desirable and the other that asks how else we can control or counter the flood of **Money in Politics. We are now going to have Conference Calls to discuss both LWVUS studies – see report below under Grassroots Lobby Director, Carol Mellor.**

Watch here and elsewhere for information about how the state league is trying to make these studies easier for you. We know you recognize that the more leagues we have weighing in on these issues, the better our positions are.

And as I always say, just do what you can do. We thank you for ALL your efforts!

Voter Services Report: Judie Gorenstein, JudieL728@aol.com

Voter Service drives for this year's elections are over and most Leagues have already held their candidate forums or debates. It was apparent by the 52 persons that were initially on our scheduled teleconference call on Sept. 28 that local Leagues are interested in discussing and learning how to have a successful candidate night. Unfortunately technical difficulties occurred in that call after the first half hour when we were discussing the "Empty Chair Policy." Many people were unable to get back on that call. Those who were able to do so, discussed concerns regarding controlling the audience and candidates, as well as the taping and airing of the debates.

A follow up conference call was held on Oct. 5, when we reviewed and discussed Empty Chair, control, and taping. It became apparent that Leagues are struggling with what they can and cannot do. Information on what must be done when candidates are running for federal office and what is strongly recommended in other races can be found in The Road to the Voting Booth Part II. Voter Service chairs or Presidents of Leagues are encouraged to either download or purchase the 2011 revised edition for the cost of \$5.00 (call the state office to order your copy).

What is crucial for Leagues to know is:

1. Policy for your debates /forums should be a board decision and put in writing long before the debate is scheduled. A good time to start doing this is THIS fall after reviewing how your 2015 event went.
2. Remember, next year will be federal elections and the FEC and FCC will not allow for the empty chair debates for federal races for any reason, i.e., unopposed candidates, when there are 2 candidates and one declines, and even if one candidate does not show at the last minute.

3. The LWVNYS strongly recommends that Leagues do not allow empty chair debates for any race. However, some Leagues feel that this is a disservice to candidates who are willing and do participate. Some Leagues did hold empty chair debates this year. Leagues need to consider how this was perceived. Can it be perceived they were giving the candidate a gift? Was it perceived by those attending or candidate that he/she won? If it was covered in the press, how was it reported? If you will be holding a debate for congressional candidates as well as state candidates next year, will you have same policy for both level of races or different ones. If different, how will you make it clear? As some League members themselves find the different rules confusing, isn't it better to be consistent and perceived as being transparent with one set of rules?
4. The best way to control the debate is to be prepared with guidelines. A prepared and knowledgeable moderator is crucial. Besides information in Road to the Voting Booth, there is an excellent power point prepared by Carol Mellor on the LWVNYS website. Members of your board and voter service committee should have assigned task and be a team that can handle situations as they arise. Try to envision potential problems and come up with ways to handle. However, if something unexpected happens and it may, remember the importance of staying in control and that League must always be and perceived to be nonpartisan. Maintaining control is easier than getting it back once it has been lost.
5. Controlling what gets taped or aired is more difficult now in this time of cell phones and YouTube but we all must continue to try. However, it is important that your League owns and controls what is taped and aired. Have a written policy and make sure candidates and those attending the debate are aware of it. Written permission to tape is needed from your League which stipulates that the tape is owned by the League and needs to be shown in its entirety either live or reasonably soon after it takes place. Once someone else owns tape, control is lost. Several Leagues have experienced problems with this. Have a written policy and make certain candidates receive and agree to it.
6. We can all learn from one another and continue to improve. LWV of Cortland has asked if state has model letters or press releases for candidate forums. We do not but will in the near future. LWV of White Plains has asked to see policy statements from other Leagues. We will begin compiling these so if your League has one, please email it to Laura@lwvnys.org or Judiel728@aol.com. If your League does not have one, now is the time to have board begin.
7. As with everything the LWV does, visibility is important. We will be trying to share what Leagues have done to gain visibility for this year's election. White Plains has digital signs. LWV of Suffolk County and LWV of Huntington has bus ads. They also displayed flyers with deadlines for registering and for absentee applications. Share what you League has done. Others can replicate it next year. Together we will accomplish so much!

Don't forget to complete and return your Voter Services Survey (attached) – boast about all the great work you did during this election season!

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

2016 Legislative Agenda and Legislative Priorities Response Form

Now is the time for your local League to have input on the state League's 2016 advocacy in Albany. Last year we debuted a new Legislative Agenda document for distribution: a booklet with more information on each of the main issues that we monitor. With this new approach, we believe that members, the public and legislators

are able to see the full breadth of issues (rather than the few listed on the former Legislative Agenda brochure) that we are monitoring, even if we don't expect to accomplish all of these during this session.

The state board still needs and wants your input on our lobbying priorities. Please discuss with your members and board their suggestions and concerns – what are the issues that they want the state League to lobby this coming legislative session. **Complete and return the Legislative Priorities Form (attached) by November 20.** Once we have responses from the local Leagues, our Issue Specialists will consider them and make recommendations to the Board, but as always League resources and the evolving politics of issues will also influence our goals for the session. Please make sure your local League shares its opinions with us now!

Advocacy Training/Lobby Day

This year we are going to combine our annual advocacy training day with an actual lobby day! Save the date of **Tuesday, April 26**, to come to Albany. We're still developing the exact schedule, but we are tentatively planning on presentations by our Issue Specialists on "hot topics" in the morning, lunch for networking, and then lobby visits with your own legislators to lobby our League priority issues (still to be determined). Watch for more info – but mark your calendar now!

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

State Conference Call: LWVUS Study on Amending the US Constitution

Two interrelated studies were adopted at the LWVUS convention in June of 2014 joined under the umbrella topic of "Structures of Democracy": the Constitutional Amendment Process study and the Money in Politics (MIP) review and update. Although they were originally on the same timeline with a deadline for reporting results of February 1, 2016, the deadline for the Constitutional Amendment Process study completion was moved up to December 1, 2015.

The state league would like to offer help to local Leagues and their members who want to complete these studies and report the answers to LWVUS. We are offering a **conference call to all members to go over the LWVUS materials on each of the studies.** Results will still have to be reported by the local Leagues as Leagues to LWVUS. The Constitutional Amendment call will be on **Monday, November 16, at 7:00 pm.** We need you to RSVP as soon as possible by email to Laura@lwny.org that you want to be on the call and we will get back to you with information for the call. A separate conference call will be held in December to review the Money in Politics materials and study – watch for the date and time of that call. The LWVUS materials on the Constitutional Amendment study can be found at <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/constitutional-amendment-study>, and the LWVUS materials on the MIP review and update can be found at <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/money-politics-review>.

Constitutional Amendment Study Background for the November 16 Conference Call

This study is not about any particular amendment; rather it is about establishing guidelines for evaluating amendments

Questions to Consider for Guidelines to Evaluate Proposed Constitutional Amendments

The study asks us to first decide what constitutes an appropriate and well-crafted amendment. This is accomplished by addressing the following issues.

1. Should amendments be made to the constitution only when they address extreme problems and long term needs or should overwhelming public sentiment in favor of the change override exercise of restraint?

Historically, the Constitution was only been amended a very few times, reflecting the exercise of great restraint of the American people to use this tool. This question asks whether the League favors the use of the amendment process only when the matter at hand is of extreme importance and has long term repercussions, or the reluctance to amend the constitution can be overridden when the public is very much in favor of the change.

2. How important is it that the wording of the amendment be effective in achieving its policy objective? In other words, should we support an amendment that may be unenforceable or miss the objective or have unintended consequences with the view that the Courts and legislature can sort it out over time?

This question speaks to the issue of how carefully the proposed amendment should be crafted. In other words, should we demand that the proposal be drafted so that it is sure to achieve its goals, or should we support a less precise proposal which might not reach its goal, or have unintended consequences relying on the courts and legislature to sort it out.

3. Should we only support amendments that make our political system more democratic or support individual rights, or should we not be constrained by these parameters?

Most of our amendments have either been aimed at making our country more democratic or protecting individual rights (I.e. The Bill of Rights and lowering the voting age). Should we limit our support of future amendments to those which foster these goals, or should we not consider these parameters as important to whether to support a proposal.

4. Should we only support amendments with policy objectives which cannot be achieved by legislation or a political approach which are easier to achieve than amending the constitution?

It is very hard to change the Constitution and much easier to pass/change a law. Should we only support constitutional amendments which have goals which cannot be achieved by other means, such as legislation or executive action.

5. Should we take into consideration whether the public policy objective is more suited to a constitutional (i.e. general) approach or a legislative (i.e. specific) approach?

Constitutional provisions are very broad (e.g. Congress shall make no law abridging the right to speech); legislation is very specific (e.g. It is unlawful to threaten the life of the President). In assessing a proposal, should we take into consideration whether the problem is best solved by a general or a specific approach.

The second part of the study considers the possibility of convening a Constitutional Convention to consider the passage of a proposed amendment. This process has never been successfully used and so it is rife with questions such as how it would work, who would be the delegates, how they would be chosen and what the convention could consider once convened. The first questions for study consider these and other questions; the second part asks whether, given the uncertainty of the process, we should support any call for a constitutional convention. The final question asks, basically, whether it is more important to foster our positions, or to ensure that the process of amending the constitution is done carefully and correctly.

Raise the Age Concurrence

Many local League have held meetings to discuss this concurrence – thanks! And, don't forget to complete and return your concurrence response form. Materials, including a Powerpoint presentation, articles, etc, have been posted on the state League's website. 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.

Women's Issues Report: Barb Thomas, barb.lwv@nycap.rr.com

Finally, on October 21st Governor Andrew Cuomo signed the eight Women's Equality bills that the legislature passed this year. Congratulations to all of you who worked so hard to get this done! The Leagues and their members were an important part of the 850 organizations who made up the Women's Equality Coalition.

The missing plank of the WEA - protection for reproductive rights - didn't even get introduced into the Senate this year. This situation isn't likely to change until after the election in 2016, so for the upcoming legislative session I encourage Leagues to put their energy into the campaign for Paid Family Leave Insurance (PFLI) and to work in coalition with other groups working for PFLI. PFLI isn't exclusively a women's issue, but since caregiving, whether for children or the ailing, has fallen most heavily on the shoulders of women, it is of great importance to women's economic and social welfare.

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

League Day at the United Nations: Thursday, Dec. 3

The state League is pleased to offer its annual League Day at the United Nations on Thursday, December 3, 2015. This year's briefings will cover two topics: **Global Healthcare Issues and Educating the Youth of the World**. The briefings this year will be held in the morning, from 10:00-12 noon, followed by lunch in the Delegates' Dining Room and optional tours of the UN in the afternoon. The registration form is attached and also available online at https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/INvmPPc4Hpebf0PLNzaRnw. Please copy and paste the link onto your own local League website and make copies of the registration form available for members at your local meetings.

New Chocolate Treat



Announcing a new chocolate treat just in time for Halloween, Thanksgiving or any holiday — the League logo chocolate.

The state League now offers customized logo chocolates to use for volunteer recognition or just a fun gift for your fellow League members. The chocolates are made at Krause's Homemade Candy in Albany, NY and shipped to you.

There is a minimum order of 10 chocolates and they can be made in milk, white, or dark chocolate. You can order multiple types of chocolate in one order (for example, 15 pieces with 5 white, 5 milk, and 5 dark). Chocolates arrive wrapped in cellophane bags and tied with ribbons.

The price is \$2/piece (includes tax) with additional shipping costs depending on how many you order:

- 10 – 80 pieces--\$2/piece with \$12 shipping
- More than 80 pieces--\$2/piece with \$20 shipping

Please call the state League office at (518) 465-4162 to place your order. The chocolates are custom made for each order so please allow one to two weeks for delivery.

IRS 990N Postcard Filing

This is just a reminder that if your local League fiscal year ended in June 2015 you will need to file the 990N Postcard by **November 15th**. On the League website, lwvny.org under Local League Resources on the left, go to In League. Scroll down to the Raising Money section and you will find the 990N Postcard link.

http://www.lwvny.org/LLresources/inLeague/2013/UpdatedInstructions-%20990-N_62013.pdf

Each local League has an id and password and if you are a new treasurer please check with the outgoing treasurer for that information. Please contact Lisa at the state office (lisa@lwny.org) if you have any trouble and she can walk through it with you.

LWVUS National Voter Registration Day

Thanks to your hard work, National Voter Registration Day on September 22, 2015, was a huge success, with more than 250 Leagues hosting registration events on a single day. But LWVUS still needs to hear from you on two simple questions.

Please email Maggie Bush at mbush@lwny.org and tell them:

- * How many volunteers participated in your League's NVRD activities
- * How many people your League registered to vote on National Voter Registration Day

This important information helps us understand how many people in your community benefited from your work, and also helps quantify the League's overall impact as part of this important national effort.

LWVUS Studies: Money in Politics and Constitutional Amendment Process

Money in Politics Materials

The [Money in Politics Introduction and Overview paper](#) is now posted. This paper provides a comprehensive overview of the existing LWV position on Campaign Finance, the proposed update, League action on Campaign Finance, the purpose of a campaign finance system and why Money in Politics matters to the League of Women Voters. Newly posted is a [brief background paper](#) (2 pages) on the current LWVUS Money in Politics Review and Update. This short paper provides key points of the MIP Review including scope of work, timeline, current position, background and history. Feel free to use this paper as a handout for your MIP events, as notes for an introduction to an event, as talking points, or as a newsletter article. For additional information, please contact Barbara Zia, MIP Committee Chair at MIPCommitteeChair@lwny.org.

Constitutional Amendment Study Materials

Subscribe to the newly-formed Yahoo group to discuss the League Constitutional Amendment Study and share information with other League members. To subscribe, send an email message to this address: lwnconamend-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. You will receive an email back inviting you to join the discussion group. Follow the instructions in this email and you will be signed up for the CA discussion group. Be sure to check out [the Constitutional Amendment page](#) on the LWV web site, which includes the Study Guide, Consensus Questions and background materials. Questions can be sent to Pat Donath, CACommitteeChair@lwny.org.