



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: March 2016***

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

- Advertise Regional Training locations and dates to your members; registration form is attached.
- Schedule meetings with your local Legislators for late April or early May in his/her district office; legislative packet will be distributed shortly.
- Mark calendar for State League Lobby Day on May 10 in Albany.
- Email [Jennifer@lwvny.org](mailto:Jennifer@lwvny.org) to confirm your League's participation in Vote 411
- Complete and return order form for Voter Guide Part I asap.
- Register for LWVUS Convention, June 16-19, 2016 (<http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/council-and-convention/convention-2016>)

#### **President's Report/Membership Report: Dare Thompson, [darethompson@gmail.com](mailto:darethompson@gmail.com)**

I think we are all hearing many more conversation about elections this year than most and I hope you saw the "URGENT message about our nonpartisanship" email message (attached) that Laura sent out on March 16th from Judie Gorenstein and me. We are very concerned about how easy it is for any of us to make comments or get into situations that will make us appear for or against a particular candidate or party.

In a nutshell, we reminded you to discuss your nonpartisan policy at your next board meeting. Even if you have a good policy (but especially if you don't have one or want to revise it), we recommend the guidance provided on the LWVUS site at

<http://forum.lwv.org/member-resources/article/developing-and-implementing-nonpartisan-policy>

It is also a time to assure current or potential members that they may participate in campaigns and other party activities, but that many board members cannot. This is a year to be especially tight about restricting board members' partisan activities and we strongly suggest that all board members refrain, if possible.

Perception is everything, and we need to keep thinking about how others may be seeing and hearing us. Consider this when presenting issues too. Are we fact-based, not just passionate? Do we ever sound like we're simply following a party line?

For nine decades the League has managed to be both actively engaged in political work and nonpartisan, and it is widely respected by the public and the political establishment for doing this well. In highly charged times like these it is even more challenging to maintain the high regard in which we are held. We thank you for your cooperation and vigilance.

## **Voter Services Report: Judie Gorenstein, [JudieL728@aol.com](mailto:JudieL728@aol.com)**

A successful candidates night begins with careful preparation. An important first step is a carefully written and complete policy statement for your league, which can be publicized and sent in the invitation to candidates and their campaigns. The policy statement should always include the LWV nonpartisanship statement, your policy for candidate criteria, your policy for who cannot appear (i.e., empty chair, unopposed candidates, etc.), your policy for recording, and your rules of the evening. At the regional workshops held already in NYC and Saratoga, attendees shared their concerns and ideas about a policy statement. We are pleased that so many local leagues are either writing their policy for the first time for their candidates nights or reviewing and editing their previous ones. Examples of the policy statements from the LWV of North Country, and LWV of Broome and Tioga County as well as LWV of the Hamptons are being distributed at the regional workshops and will appear on the LWV webpage. The LWV of The Rivertowns has worked diligently on editing the recording policy from the LWV of Rye, Ryebrook and this edited statement is also being distributed at workshops and will appear on the webpage. As leagues have often struggled with unauthorized people taping or editing the tape, it is extremely important for all leagues to include recording in their debate policy. We hope that the examples we provide will help local leagues in writing and adopting their own. Remember also that Road To The Voting Booth Part II has invaluable information on this topic. This year when there is so much negative partisanship, it is more important than ever that our leagues remain the gold standard of how candidates nights are run. As I wrote last month, "If not us, then who?"

Talking about us, who is better to turn out the vote. Most of our local leagues have been holding successful voter registration drives, but then have been frustrated by the low turnout of voters. As you all know, NY ranks 49/50 for voter turnout. This year, local leagues are being asked to put more effort into voter turnout. We are holding "Get Out the Vote" workshops at regional meetings. One easy idea for local leagues to do is to provide a sign up sheet at voter registration drives, where new registrants who want follow up contact can give their phone number or email address. Another idea is to have these new registrants, especially students, sign a pledge to vote card. Studies have shown both follow up contact and a pledge to vote effective ways of increasing turnout. At the lively regional workshop in Saratoga, attendees tried thinking out of the box ways to energize voters. Everyone agreed that we not only need some new venues like sporting events, concerts and even bars, that we need to expand our usage of social media, and that when we reach out, especially to our young voters, we should make our message fun, cool, and sexy. LWV of Saratoga has used memes to publicize their get out the vote message. These are fun to do and your members can contribute pictures and their ideas. (The LWV of Huntington is using one in our next Voter). At the workshop we also discussed the need to reach out to groups such as Rock The Vote, to radio stations, and celebrities who can get our message out. Use your imagination! We had fun thinking of new lyrics to old songs that can be used to engage people. Perhaps, you can come up with other ideas to turn out the vote.

The four elections this year; i.e., three primaries and the general election) give us an excellent opportunity. Of course, continue to do what may have worked for you in the past. Know it is important to reach out to low income and minority communities that have low turnout. Remember though to be sure that whatever you do, we must remain nonpartisan. Not only can we not support or oppose a party or a candidate, but we cannot be perceived as supporting or opposing a party or candidate.

By the end of March, we will be starting a google group to discuss both candidate nights and voter turn out. Let's continue the conversation. We can and will make a difference.

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

### **REGIONAL MEETINGS**

I'm still charged up from the two regional meetings - one in NYC and one in Saratoga County - and I challenge those coming to Syracuse and Buffalo next month to be equally lively, engaged and fun as your eastern colleagues. Among other things, we've decided that League work needs to incorporate more theatre (colorful hats might be a great place to start), more humor, and - whenever possible - good food and beverages.

We'll be sending out a brief Survey Monkey to those of you who attended this month and use your good insights to make our April meetings even better, so please respond promptly.

**To register for the upcoming workshops in Syracuse and Buffalo, complete and return form attached, register online at [https://secure.lglforms.com/form\\_engine/s/1Z8RiqOqQSizwMaEDlpS-Q](https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/1Z8RiqOqQSizwMaEDlpS-Q) or call state office.**

All members are invited to attend any or all of the workshops (note different times at different locations). All local Leagues board members are **strongly** encouraged to attend at least part of the day. Lunch will be provided and will allow for informal networking among the attendees (no program). There is a \$5 charge to cover other expenses.

- **April 2, 10:30 am – 4:30 pm, Syracuse Area** (Liverpool Public Library, 310 Tulip St, Liverpool – near intersection of Rtes 90 and 81)
- **April 9, 9:30 am – 3:30 pm, Buffalo Area** (Harlem Road Community Center, 4255 Harlem Rd, Amherst)

### **Tentative Discussions at Workshops**

Outside Experts/Academicians Discuss Constitutional Convention – Process, Timing and Potential Issues  
Best Practices for Candidate Forums – Process, Policies and Organization  
Programs, Issues and Activism – Local Programs that Have Had Influence in Our Communities  
Creative Fundraising – and How to Use Women's Suffrage and League Centennials to Raise Visibility and Money  
Coordination with Organ Donor Organizations to Increase Voter and Organ Donor Registrations  
Vote 411 Troubleshooting – Shared Advice and Learning Together  
Get Out the Vote – Ways to Increase Voter Participation  
Visibility, Diversity, Membership, Program and Money – All are Connected

### **LEAGUE EASY WEB (LEW)**

League Easy Web (LEW) is a host and template used by many of our local Leagues for their websites. It was created and maintained by LWV of California. We were relieved to learn this past week that the LWV of CA will continue to host users of LEW through 2016. What will happen after that is still being sorted out and we are following this with great concern. We feel this has been a great example of multi-league cooperation and were hoping to see even more local leagues use LEW, not have it go away! Please contact us if you have comments or questions. We'll communicate more to LEW users in NY when we know more.

## **Issues and Advocacy Report: Sally Robinson, [robintwins@gmail.com](mailto:robintwins@gmail.com)** **Update on Legislative Procedures Position**

Delegates at the state League convention in June approved an update of our position on Legislative Procedures, dating back to 1997. (current position: <http://lwvny.org/advocacy/impact/issues/2013/LEGISLATIVE-PROCEDURES.pdf>) It will be focused on two aspects of the position in particular, although it might consider other parts: the statement in favor of a part-time legislature, and the ambiguous reference to length of terms.

Suzanne Stassevitch of the New York City League has agreed to chair the committee. It is not too late to contact Katrina McEwan at the League office ([katrina@lwvny.org](mailto:katrina@lwvny.org) or 518-465-4162) if you are interested in volunteering to be part of the committee.

*Please put a consensus meeting for this update on the fall 2016 calendar for your local League.* The material for the update should be available to local Leagues by the end of the summer. We would like to wrap this up by year-end so any updated position will be available for lobbying in the 2017 legislative session.

### **Advocacy Training/Lobby Day**

The date for this Advocacy Training and Lobby Day has been changed to **Tuesday, May 10<sup>th</sup>**! 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!

### **2016 Post-budget Legislative Lobbying**

The state budget deadline is April 1 and we expect that the budget will be on time this year. As in the last few years, we are asking local Leagues to set up appointments with their local legislators to lobby for League issues during the legislative break, which this year is the last two weeks of April. If more than one local League is covered by the member, please try and coordinate to have as many Leagues involved as possible.

These meetings are very important and they give the legislators an opportunity to learn about League positions from their constituents. Ask for ½ an hour, but be willing to take less and seeing a staff person is fine.

As soon as the budget is finalized, we will be sending out background information and talking points for the meeting. Since non-budget issues have been negotiated frequently as part of the budget in the last few years, we need to wait until the budget is done to send you the materials in order to make sure they are up-to-date. We expect that this year the main topics to be covered will be election and ethics reform and opposition to the education tax credit.

### **Issues Specialist in Higher Education**

The state League is looking for an issue specialist to assist the state League with higher education issues in Albany. Please contact me or the state office, [laura@lwvny.org](mailto:laura@lwvny.org) if you would like more information, or have suggestions for possible contacts.

### **Recent Legislative Activity/Capitol Beat**

As we wait for the budget to be finalized, the League has continued to speak out for our legislative goals. The best way to follow the ins and outs, is to read the weekly Capitol Beat blog, <http://www.lwvny-capitolbeat.blogspot.com>. As a reminder, we post all our press releases and memorandum to the legislature on the home page of our website.

**Ethics Reforms-** On March 8 we held a press conference with other good government groups to call for a public leaders meeting on ethics., [http://www.lwvny.org/advocacy/gov-reform/ethics-lobbying/2016/Press-Joint-call-for-public-leaders-meeting-on%20Ethics-reform\\_030816.pdf](http://www.lwvny.org/advocacy/gov-reform/ethics-lobbying/2016/Press-Joint-call-for-public-leaders-meeting-on%20Ethics-reform_030816.pdf).

Unfortunately, instead of a public discussion, we got two separate inadequate proposals from the different houses. In response, the league sent the following memo, <http://www.lwvny.org/advocacy/gov-reform/ethics-lobbying/2016/LWVNYS-Memo-On-Ethics-Proposals-in-Assembly-and-Senate.pdf>.

**Constitutional Convention Process Reform**-On March 2, the League and NYPIRG had a press conference highlighting the need for reforms to the Constitutional Convention process. On March 21, we joined with other groups in supporting Governor Cuomo's Executive Budget allocation for a constitutional convention commission as well as his budget legislation to include convention delegates in the state's campaign finance program, and additional proposed reforms to improve processes around the convention. [http://www.lwvny.org/advocacy/gov-reform/concon/2016/MOS-Cuomo-Budget-on-ConCon\\_032116.pdf](http://www.lwvny.org/advocacy/gov-reform/concon/2016/MOS-Cuomo-Budget-on-ConCon_032116.pdf).

### **Vote Better NY**

Many local Leagues have been contacted by an organization entitled, Vote Better NY. While their goals and mission do seem in-line with the League's, we ask local Leagues to NOT become a partner with this organization. The state League has coordinated some with Vote Better NY and we have much of the same policy agenda but we are not a formal part of their coalition or partnership. Since they are part of the New York City government that has not seemed appropriate to us. Your league should feel free to share their information with your members but stop short of a public identification of the local League as their "partner."

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

#### **Vote 411 for 2016**

The state League is again paying the license fee for all local Leagues in NYS to utilize Vote 411; we are again asking each local League to confirm participation and pay a \$25 administrative fee. Please confirm to [Jennifer@lwvny.org](mailto:Jennifer@lwvny.org) if your local League is participating and who the contact for Vote 411 will be. We will again offer training at the regional workshops in March and April and Jennifer from the state office is available for one-on-one training to any League member.

### **Organ Donor Registration Program**

#### **Stipends are Announced – Money for your Local League!**

The League is pleased to announce continuation of the partnership program with the New York Alliance for Donation (NYAD). The goal is that we can increase both voter registrations and organ and tissue donor registrations together! This year we have more incentives for local Leagues to participate. If you participated last year, just let us know that you'll continue; we'll send you more buttons, pens, factsheets, brochures and posters – hopefully you can reuse the beautiful banner we sent to you last year. Those new to the program can just watch a webinar or attend one of the regional training workshops (see above), and you'll receive all these benefits, too. JUST REMEMBER THAT THE IMPORTANT TASK, HOWEVER, IS TO COMPLETE A TRACKING FORM (attached) FOR EACH VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVE THAT YOU ORGANIZE.

Based on last year's program, we have realized that the best results (most number of voter registration and organ donor registrations) were when the members from both organizations worked together at a registration drive. So, this year, a stipend will be available if you work with the organ donor organizations in your area to coordinate the drives. You'll also be eligible for a stipend for each Tracking Form that you complete and return; this will encourage you to organize more drives, as more drives will provide more stipends to your local League.

Stipends available:

- \$100 (one-time) for Local Leagues who are new to the program this year, are educated on topic and obtain Board agreement to participate;

- \$250 (max) to pay for a new location for a voter registration drive if there is a “table rental” fee;
- \$100 (one-time) to local League if they coordinate training or voter registration drives with their regional organ donation organization;
- \$25 (\$200 max) for each Tracking Form completed and returned (to encourage more drives and more returned tracking forms) – completed on paper or online at <http://goo.gl/forms/PQc4StFNQG>;
- 500 free Voter Guide Part I (and half price for more);
- Promotional materials free from NYAD (coming soon).

If your local League isn't participating yet and you'd like more information, contact Laura at 518-465-4162 or by email at [laura@lwny.org](mailto:laura@lwny.org).

## **LWVUS Updates**

### **LWVUS Convention, June 16-19, 2016, Washington, DC**

Now is the time to register for the LWVUS Convention to be held June 16-19 in Washington, DC. This is an exciting way to learn more about the League, reconnect with old friends, and actively mold the shape, money and action of LWVUS. To see how many delegates your local League is entitled to, to register and more, go to the website at <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/council-and-convention/convention-2016>. There is also a google group for discussion of the upcoming Convention; join the conversation here: <http://forum.lwv.org/member-resources/article/join-conventionprogram-planning-google-group>

### **Social Media Suggestions for Presidential Primaries**

LWVUS has also developed a list of suggestions for social media website, eg, Facebook, twitter, local websites, etc. Feel free to copy, share and post any of the suggestions on the attached document. See more at <http://forum.lwv.org/member-resources/article/2016-presidential-primaries-draft-social-media-content>