



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: May 2016

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

- Complete and return Lobby Report form after meeting with legislators **by June 1**
- Let Katrina (Katrina@lwvny.org or 518-465-4162) know who is registered for LWVUS Convention, June 16-19, 2016 (<http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/council-and-convention/convention-2016>)
- Return response form for Council Kit (budget approval) **by June 24**
- Complete and return local League Update form for new officers, board and portfolios to state office **by June 30, 2016**

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

My husband, Doug, and I are heading off soon to help chaperone **Students Inside Albany** - our second time! - and I encourage all of you who are sending students to make sure you use the stories and pictures they bring back to promote the good work the League does. It is truly a rare and rich opportunity. Many of the students last year became interns for legislators or had other good follow-up experiences. Share that good news too.

We'll help at our end by encouraging the students to get pictures with key people they meet and to send them off to you. Laura and I will be taking pictures too and we'll be happy to share. The legislators often have a formal shot taken but may prefer a more informal one from us or a student for their newsletter. So **don't hesitate to show them pictures of them with "their" students and to thank them for their participation.**

By the way, Doug recently ran into a Congressional candidate and happened to mention the League, and he exclaimed, "Oh, I love the League" and then went on to explain that it was this program that first got him interested in politics quite a few years ago! This program really makes a difference.

Soon we'll be heading off to the **LWVUS Convention** and I look forward to seeing you there in the NY hospitality suite and elsewhere. Don't forget picture-taking and story-sharing there too. Try to capture moments that are startling, humorous, colorful or otherwise media-grabbing and share it in print, social media, wherever you can. Perhaps tweet and post news as it breaks. Let's not keep all the excitement and energy to ourselves.

Meanwhile I know your league is probably making fall plans. We hope you'll all save time in your fall schedule for a membership meeting on our **Legislative Procedures update** and in early 2017 for some serious discussion - with feedback to the state board - about the **Constitutional Convention**. These are not simple issues!

Of course, as we stressed at the regional meetings, include FUN in you summer and fall plans too. Has your League laughed lately? Of course it has, but do it more. It's free!

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

Following the April 19th presidential primary, local Leagues were asked to email us the problems that occurred in their areas. I wish to thank those Leagues who responded. Two Leagues did report that there had been no difficulties they were aware of in their counties, which was great news. The other Leagues wrote of numerous and varied problems which ranged from untrained or unconcerned poll workers, to inaccurate poll books where names of registered and enrolled voters did not appear, to disenfranchised voters who did not know about new YORK'S closed party system and either thought that because they always voted for a certain party, they were enrolled in that party or who believed because they were "independent " and unaffiliated that they could vote in the primary. One League reported a high voter turnout where some of their poll sites had to be kept open past 9 PM while another League reported low turnout. Most reported a high amount of affidavit ballots being filled out. The percentage of affidavit ballots that were ultimately counted ranged from 42% in Onondaga County to only 10% on Long Island. Reasons for the discrepancies are not known at this time.

However, we do know that there were problems with many people in New York feeling disenfranchised. We know that our Election Laws are archaic and need to be changed but that this will not happen this year. We also know there will be a congressional primary on June 28 (and are pleased several Leagues will be holding congressional primaries), a state primary in September and a general election on Nov. 8th. At our May board meeting, we discussed what local Leagues can do now. We urge local Leagues to contact their Board of Elections and meet with them to discuss ways to improve voting, including educating poll workers as well as informing voters of dates and poll sites. We ask Leagues to see if their Board of Elections holds open meetings and if so to attend them. Leagues also need to explore new ways to educate voters about the Election Laws and rules as well as important dates. We all do voter registration drives and put information on our web sites and in our Voters. We need to write letters to editors of our local papers (only the President can submit one in the name of your League). We need to increase our use of social media. We need to think out of the box. We also need to continue to explore reasons for some of the problems and how they can be alleviated. Recently I learned from an Election Protection lawyer that some voters had not checked their party enrollment when they re-registered to change their name or address thinking that they were not changing their party. As a consequence, they were no longer enrolled and not allowed to vote in a primary. Therefore we now know to make sure when someone re-registers that they complete the form and check their party affiliation. Knowing what went wrong, will help us set things right. More people are engaged and aware of what occurred on Primary Day. This is the opportunity to educate them and turn out the vote.

Remember there is now a LWVNY Voter Service Goggle Group to discuss turning out the vote and successful candidate nights. Join us in the conversation. Contact JudieL728@aol.com.

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

Advocacy Training/Lobby Day: May 10 in Albany

On Tuesday May 10th, the League had its annual lobby day in Albany. We had a great turnout with over 30 members attending despite the chaos happening around the Capitol. A special thanks to all our issues specialist who presented. Thank you to Aimee Allaud, Barbara Bartoletti, Marian Bott, Anne Burton, Gladys Gifford, Helga Schroeter, and Barbara Thomas; excellent presentations from everyone! Several of our members from Schenectady also attended the Raise the Age press conference and lobbied with the group. We were very happy so many of you chose to partner with the Raise the Age coalition of this important piece of legislation. The rest of our members lobbied their legislators on voting and ethics reforms, access to contraception, education, and the upcoming Constitutional Convention delegate selection process. All of the documents distributed at lobby day are now on the League website (click [here](#)); a link is also available from the homepage of the state website. If you attended lobby day and met with your legislator, be sure to send Jennifer your lobby report form (attached) so we can keep track of where your legislator stands on these issues as we near the end of session. Read updates and reports from the Issues Specialists below.

Don't forget to also return the Legislative Meetings form (attached) **by June 1** after meeting with legislators in your home district offices.

Transportation Specialist: Gladys Gifford, schuford@earthlink.net

I was delighted to see so many Leaguers at the Advocacy Day in Albany, May 10! Thanks to all who made the effort to attend. Amtrak took me to Albany, and taxi to the Empire Plaza area; I hope that others of us can use Amtrak for our travel needs.

Below is the information that I shared on May 10, updated, re: NYS Budget — here's what we asked for; here's what we got:

- Our focus at the LWVNYS was generally to increase funding for all modes of transportation, with special emphasis on public transit. The promise of the enacted budget is that all parts of the State Transit Operating Assistance (STOA) received increased funding. However, the mechanisms for providing those funds are not clear; there is no direction to change the system so that revenue streams for STOA are growing and not stagnant. The Brennan/DiFrancisco bill which we supported would have changed the structure, but was not included in the budget process.
- Similarly, appropriations for capital projects were increased. A long-awaited 5-year capital plan for the NYSDOT was approved, to the tune of \$27 billion. This plan covers all transportation modes outside of the MTA. A nearly equal amount was approved for the MTA, covering the next five years. Transit systems and jurisdictions must apply for these funds. Net result for transit systems will be to free up revenues to help cover operating costs.
- Governor Cuomo and the Legislature are negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which will define how and from what sources the funds will come. Ask legislators and the governor's office: Will that MOU be made available to the public?

- The LWVNYS and allies are concerned about rural transit systems that were impacted by the state Department of Health (DOH) rulings about serving Medicaid clients. The enacted budget added \$4 million to the DOH budget.

Update re: Legislative contacts is as follows:

- I spoke with staff at Assemblyman Anthony Brindisi's office (May 18) who reported that the O'Mara/Brindisi bill (S5794/A8202) is likely to pass during this session. This bill, "to improve Interagency Coordinating Committee on Rural Public Transportation", will help rural transit systems cope with Federal regulations regarding Medicaid transportation funding.
- There is bi-partisan support for new bill, Rozic/Lanza A09872/S07608, to require the NYSDOT Commissioner to "develop and present to the governor and legislature a five-year capital plan, with defined projects, that is subject to public review prior to the passage of the state budget." There is no clear momentum for this bill before the end of the session; however, there are many co-sponsors who urge the process be completed.

Between now and early June, we ask the following:

- continue to speak with NYS legislators in support of the O-Mara/Brindisi bill (S5794/A8202)
- urge NYS legislators to support Rozic/Lanza A09872/S07608, so that we may all benefit from clear understanding of the NYSDOT's funding needs prior to debate on the budget.

Resources:

4-15-16 NYS Budget analysis (N. Lemmon) <http://blog.tstc.org/2016/04/07/new-york-state-budget-includes-big-wins-for-transportation-followed-by-big-question-marks/>

New York Public Transit Association https://nytransit.org/images/Budget_Analysis_4.4.16.fd.pdf

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

The League, working in coalition on women's issues, has had some notable successes this year: passing Paid Family Leave and increasing the minimum wage. Now we have a good chance to increase access to all types of birth control and thereby reduce the number of unintended pregnancies by passing the Comprehensive Contraception Coverage Act (CCCA) this session. The CCCA (A.8135B, Cahill/ S.6013A, Bonacic) has already passed the Assembly and is sponsored by a member of the Republican majority in the Senate. Tell your Senator that you support this bill.

The CCCA would build upon existing requirements of the Affordable Care Act by requiring health insurance policies to cover the following services without co-payments: contraceptive education and counseling, voluntary sterilization procedures and related follow-up services, and all FDA-approved contraceptive drugs, devices, and products; require dispensing 12 months of contraception; allow pharmacists to fill a non-patient-specific prescription for Emergency Contraception. It will reduce unintended pregnancies.

Election Law Specialist: Aimee Allaud, 85aimee@nycap.rr.com

Now that the budget has been passed, League members should be visiting their legislators to talk about our Election Law Reform Agenda 2016. Attendees at the May 10 Lobby Training Day were updated with two handouts (click [here](#) or see homepage of state website for link): a chart with the current status of bills we support and a brief narrative paper with virtually the same information. Notice that a new bill that would allow counties to replace printed poll books with electronic poll books (like an I-Pad) has been added to the Legislation agenda. There is greater interest in this measure now that the Senate Elections Chairperson, Fred Akshar, Repub, Senate District 52, is the Senate sponsor.

You will be sharing the meeting with the other League Legislative Agenda topics so I suggest that you prioritize the Election Reform topics as follows: 1) Electronic poll books, 2) allowing pre-registration of 16 and 17 yr. olds, 3) improving the ballot layout by re-designing it to be more “voter-friendly.” If you have time, be sure to mention the single June Primary – for 2017! There is interest in establishing the November election day as a school holiday. LWVNYS hasn’t taken a position on this – ask your legislator what she thinks.

We also were a partner with the NY Voting Coalition and the Rockefeller Institute in a forum concerning Practical Modernization of Elections. Donetta Davidson, former Colorado Secretary of State and former Chair of the US Election Assistance Commission, and Matt Crane, Clerk and Recorder of Arapahoe County, CO, joined Peter Kosinski, Commissioner, NYS Board of Elections, and Todd Valentine, Co-Executive Director of NYS Board of Elections, to discuss election reform changes implemented in CO that resulted in an increase in electoral participation. Watch the [video](#) on the state League website homepage.

Membership and Visibility: Georgia DeGregorio, **WATCH OUT!!**

These words will be used in our campaign to stir up opportunities to be visible this election season. Our “password” will be: “WATCH OUT!!”. Using these two words we want to assert our presence...our intention to be watch dogs over the voting process...our desire to be on the lookout for anyone who needs to register to vote...our willingness to partner with others who share our goals. Throughout the summer and early fall, you will be receiving messages regarding ways State League and Local Leagues can work together to achieve these goals. These will begin with the words: “Watch Out!!”

We will start with a new pin that will include the words: **“Watch Out!! I’m a Voter”**. These will be ready for sale in time for the National convention.

In addition, we will have available for purchase by local Leagues rolls of stickers with the same message that you can give each person who registers to vote; use your stipends from the organ donation grant to purchase the stickers! Upon completion of the form, you can reward them with the sticker which emphasizes how important their first step has been. **There is power in being a voter!!**

We will also be WATCHING OUT for any ideas you may have that we can share with other local Leagues on being visible in our communities.

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

Council Kit 2016

Last week, we mailed a copy of the 2016 Council Kit to all Presidents and one co-President of each local League (also attached to this email). The Council Kit this year basically is just the 2016-17 State League Budget. We need your local League approval to adopt this budget. Your League may discuss and vote for (or against) this budget at an open meeting – either a full membership meeting, annual meeting or an open meeting of your board.

Because of the change in the State Bylaws, each League is entitled to the number of votes based on your membership as of Jan. 31, 2016. That number was indicated on the cover memo that was mailed with the Council Kit to your League (if you have questions, just give me a call). The Council Meeting will be held in Albany at the state League office at 2:00 pm on June 24, 2016. Your local League may send a representative to vote in person, or you may complete the form allowing Dare Thompson to vote by proxy on your behalf. **Please discuss, vote and return the response form by June 24th. Late responses will not be counted – the Council meeting will be held at 2:00 pm on June 24th.**

In the past, yearend reports from the different officers and board members have been included in the Council Kit. We are still planning on distributing this yearend report – it just will be a separate document from this Budget approval that is needed.

Local League Update

Attached is the annual Local League Update form. **Please complete and return to the state office by June 30.** Even if your officers or board has not changed, please complete and return the form. This information is crucial to communication between the state and local Leagues. Group email lists are developed from this form to ensure that appropriate communication from the state League goes to the correct local League contact.

Development Report: Kate Jankowski, kate@lwvny.org

Father's Day Tribute



Many of us wear buttons saying, “League of Women Voters—Not for Women Only.” In 1973, the League’s charter was amended to allow male members and we have benefitted from that change ever since. Any study of the history of woman suffrage includes the men who stood alongside the suffragists and fought for woman to have an equal say in government. So, this Father’s Day, we are giving you a chance to honor the inspiring men in your life. [Make a gift to the League of Women](#)

[Voters of New York State Education Foundation today \(EF\) and we will send a Father’s Day card on your behalf to a man in your life who has inspired you.](#)

Whether it is your husband, father, son, or someone else who helps you celebrate your civic responsibility, you can honor them this Father’s Day with a gift to the League. Let’s let everyone know that the League is not for women only and that all of us must value our role in this democracy and work together to ensure an educated electorate!

Click [here](#) to make a gift by June 10th and we will send a Father's Day card on your behalf to the person or people you designate. Or, if you prefer to mail in your gift, simply send a check, made out to the LWVNY EF, to us at 62 Grand Street, Albany, NY 12207. Enclose a brief note indicating that your gift is for the 2016 Father's Day Tribute and include the name and address of the person you'd like to honor with your gift. To guarantee that your card gets there by Father's Day, please make sure your gift arrives by Friday, June 10, 2016.

LWVUS Updates

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

CONVENTION REGISTRATION DEADLINES

[Online registration](#) closes on June 6. After June 6 members will need to register on-site during Convention, beginning June 16 at noon. Early bird registration fee (\$395) applies only until May 31. A \$50 late fee will be added to registrations received June 1-June 6. If you know of anyone still needing to register, be sure to tell them about this late fee. Access the online registration form [here](#).

Lobby Day registration opened on 2/4 and closed on 4/20 when capacity was reached. Members who paid the fee/received a confirmation notice will be sent a June 16 agenda of the legislative briefing and Capitol Hill travel. With Lobby Day interest so high, we'll be able to offer greater capacity in 2020.

HOTEL ROOM DEADLINES

Hotel rooms are going fast at the LWV's block of rooms at the Churchill Hotel, less than a mile from the Convention hotel. Call the Churchill at 202-797-2000 to reserve soon, and by no later than May 26. Be sure to reference the League of Women Voters to get the League room rate (\$209/\$219/night).

Convention is at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel. Although a few weeks ago the LWV room block there was full, it's possible a handful of rooms may open due to cancellations. Call the hotel reservations number at 1-877-212-5752 to inquire by May 26, our cut-off date. Reference LWV.

OTHER WAYS TO PLAN AHEAD FOR CONVENTION

- Read [tips on travel](#) from the airports and train station, and getting around DC.
- Be sure to buy [tickets](#) to the Capitol Steps comedy performance on Friday night June 18.
- [Voting for convention awards](#) for Leagues doing great work closes May 31. Take this opportunity to cast your vote if you've not already.
- The Campaign Oversight Committee (COC) will sponsor a forum for [candidates running for LWVUS office](#) on Saturday, June 18, if there is a contested election. Questions for candidates may be submitted to the COC using this [form](#).
- Especially for first-time convention-goers: this [Making the Most of Convention webinar](#), focusing on proceedings and parliamentary basics will be helpful.
- By June 1, we hope to post the final daily agenda and other information on the League Management website [convention page](#).
- Read proposed budget, program, bylaw amendments and nominating committee report on LWVUS website at <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/council-and-convention/convention-2016>