



The

January/February 2015

LOCAL VOTER LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS SYRACUSE METROPOLITAN AREA

Syracuse Metro LWV

PO Box 11866
Syracuse NY 13218
Phone: (315) 396-8225
Email: league@lwvsyr.org
Web Sites:
Local: www.lwvsyr.org
State: www.lwvny.org
National: www.lwv.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, Jan 8th
Ballot Access Consensus Mtg.
Saturday, Jan 10th
LWVNY Workshop
Thursday, Jan, 22nd
LWVSUR Board Meeting

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Board Notes..... | 2 |
| Co-President's Message | 3 |
| Calendar..... | 3 |
| Ballot Access Info..... | 4-5 |
| Test Your Knowledge..... | 6 |
| Take Action..... | 6 |
| New Castle LWV Survey..... | 7 |
| Membership Application..... | 8 |

WHY WE STILL NEED THE WORD "FEMINIST"



Because there needs to be a word to describe those who are committed to the radical notion that women are people and they should have the same unalienable rights as men-

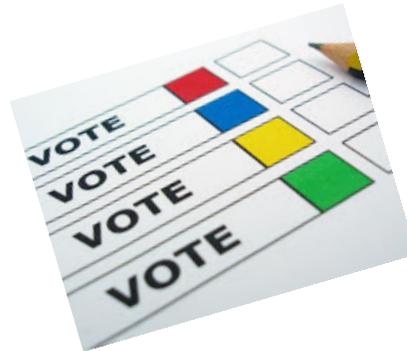
*NOW New York
Author Unknown*

BALLOT ACCESS INFO & CONSENSUS MEETING

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 8, 2015 AT NOON
CNY PHILANTHROPY CENTER**

431 EAST FAYETTE STREET (corner of Fayette and Townsend)

SYRACUSE NY 13202



Will changes in how candidates get on the ballot provide opportunity for more candidates to get on the ballot? Will it increase New York State's low voter turn-out?

These are some of the issues concerning access to the ballot in New York. Join us for a discussion of these questions as well as others and add your thoughts on whether changes are in order for easier access to the ballot.

You are invited to bring your lunch. We will provide dessert and beverage.

Please let us know if you can attend so that we can plan on refreshments by Tuesday, January 6th.

Phone: 315-396-8225 or Email at league@lwvsyr.org

BOARD NOTES

MEMBERSHIP NOTES

Our condolences to the family of **Betty Lourie**. Betty was a long time member and supporter of the Syracuse League.

Member **Deborah Cornell** has moved to Pennsylvania. Debbie served on the Board and has been a member and supporter of our League for many years. We wish her well in her new home.



**HAPPY NEW YEAR TO
ALL MEMBERS AND
FRIENDS OF THE
LEAGUE**

Naturalization Ceremonies—January-June 2015

| <u>Location</u> | <u>Date & Time</u> |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| County Court House | Thursday, Jan. 15, 2:00pm |
| Federal Bldg. Court Rm #1 | Thursday, Jan. 22, 11:00am |
| County Court House | Thursday, Feb. 19, 2:00pm |
| Federal Bldg. Court Rm #1 | Thursday, Feb. 19, 11:00am |
| County Court House | Thursday, March 19, 2:00pm |
| Federal Bldg. Court Rm. #1 | Thursday, March 19, 11:00am |
| Federal Bldg. Court Rm#1 | Thursday, April 16, 11:00am |
| County Court House | Thursday, April 16, 2:00pm |
| Federal Bldg. Court Rm. #1 | Thursday, May 21, 11:00am |
| County Court House | Thursday, May 21, 2:00pm |
| County Court House | Thursday, June 12, 2:00pm |

As a part of our Voter Service activities the Syracuse League of Women Voters has been helping new citizens register to vote for many years. Volunteers are needed to carry out this activity. If you have not done this before, you will find it is a rewarding experience as people from all over the world become citizens of the United States.

It does not involve a lot of time. We can arrange for a “seasoned” volunteer to go with you the first time.

Please contact Voter Service Director, Joan Durant at joandurant69@gmail.com or call the League at 315-396-8225 for more information.

Officers

| | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Co-President... | Rhonda Hungerford |
| Co-President... | Joan Johnson |
| Secretary... | open |
| Treasurer.... | Rhonda Hungerford(acting) |

Directors

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Education | Margrit Diehl |
| Membership ... | Sylvia Matousek |
| Publications/Public Relations... | Joan Johnson |
| Voter Service... | Joan Durant |
| Directors-at-large | Minna Buck |
| | Michele Jones Galvin |
| | Hasoni Pratts |
| | Rae Rohfeld |

Off-Board Positions

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Budget Director.... | Roberta Millert |
| Nominating Committee..... | Lisa Alford |
| | Ona Bregman |
| | Helen Buck |
| Technical Support... | Roberta Millert |

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. For more information please call the League office at (315) 396-8225 or e-mail to league@lwvsyr.org

Diversity Statement

The Syracuse Metropolitan League of Women Voters is committed to diversity and pluralism, which means there shall be no barriers to participation in any League activity on the basis of age, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, economic status, or national origin.



Please let us know your email address or if your address has changed. It is the most efficient way to communicate. You will be notified of upcoming local events and LWVUS and LWVNY National & State Action Alerts and news.

Your e-mail address will not be shared or sold. Please respond to league@lwvsyr.org if there has been a change on how we can contact you.

Co-President's Report

As we enter 2015, it's rewarding to look back at all the Syracuse Metro League accomplished during the past year. Our Voter Service efforts included a candidates forum for Onondaga County Sheriff, an online Election Guide on www.VOTE411.org, registering students at 5 Syracuse high schools, and registering new citizens at naturalization ceremonies. We held educational programs on a wide range of topics including Immigration Reform, Health Care, Campaign Finance Reform, the Redistricting Ballot Proposal, and Term Limits, as well as our annual Legislative Breakfast. We advocated successfully for the NYS Ballot Proposal on Redistricting and plan to continue our efforts with elected officials on passing the Women's Equality Agenda and Campaign Finance Reform.

It has been so busy that over the past few years we have neglected to send out a finance drive letter. The end of the year, or even the beginning of a new year, seems to be an appropriate time to make an appeal for your financial support. Locally we run on a very tight budget with no office or paid staff. Donations will make it possible for us to continue to pay for 2 deserving high school students to attend Students Inside Albany and to cover the ever increasing cost of room reservations for program meetings. To show your support for the League, you can use the form on the last page of the Local Voter to send with a check. If you'd like it to be tax-deductible, please make it out to the LWV Ed Fund. We appreciate any and all support.

Coming up in 2015, we are planning an informational meeting in February on Education Finance and Charter Schools, an issue that will definitely be again addressed by our state legislature and governor. Details will be forthcoming. Our Legislative Breakfast will be on March 6.

On January 8 at Noon, all members are welcome to a power point presentation and discussion on a study topic chosen by League members at the last State Convention - Ballot Access. This is a very complicated issue, and we will learn a great deal about the challenges candidates face in NYS in getting on the ballot. The discussion will be led by LWV members who have been intimately involved in political campaigns and will share their expertise in this area. It will definitely be an enlightening program. We hope to see you then.

In the meantime, I wish you all a Happy New Year.

Rhonda Hungerford, Co-President

CALENDAR

| | |
|---|--|
| Thursday, January 8, 2015 18, 2014, Noon-2pm | Ballot Access Study Discussion/Consensus Meeting |
| Saturday, January 10, 2015, 10:30 am-3:00pm Steele Memorial Library, Elmira NY | LWVNY Workshop |
| Thursday, January 22, 2015, Noon CNY Philanthropy Center | LWVSYR Board Meeting* |
| Friday, March 6, 2015- 7:45-9:30am Rosamond Gifford Zoo | Annual Legislative Breakfast |

* **Program Planning**—In preparation for the LWVNYS 2015 Biennial Convention, local leagues will be asked to review our present program and positions. All league members are invited to join us at our January 22nd Board Meeting to decide if you want to keep them, update them, review them or delete them. You will also have the opportunity to discuss any new positions you would like considered at Convention.

BALLOT ACCESS STUDY INFORMATION



GETTING ON THE BALLOT HOW DOES IT WORK?

All members of the Syracuse League are invited to participate in our consensus meeting on the LWVNY Ballot Access Study. But before you can decide whether LWVNY should support changes to the system you have to understand how candidates get on the general election ballot now. It is a complicated process and there are many routes:

Voters register as members of a party or as “blanks.” Parties make their own rules about who may vote in their primary, but right now except for the Independence party, they all require registration in their party.

Any party whose gubernatorial candidate garnered 50,000 votes or more in the previous gubernatorial election is guaranteed a line on the ballot in order of the number of votes they received state-wide.

Candidates must submit nominating petitions signed by voters registered in the party line they are seeking (the number depends on the number registered in that party in the area that the office represents). If more than one candidate from the same party submits qualified petitions there will be a primary. If the candidate is not a member of the party whose line she/he seeks she/he must get the permission of the party committee to run on that line (this is done with a Wilson-Pakula certificate).

Candidates may also submit nominating petitions to run on a party line that they create (usually only for that election). For first-time parties the petition signers are not required to be registered in that party, but may not have signed any other nominating petition for that office.

Candidates may also get onto the ballot by being nominated by a party convention or a party caucus.

Party members may also circulate petitions to create the opportunity to write in a name for an unspecified person for an office in which there is no contest for the party endorsement. This is known as “opportunity to ballot.”

In NYS candidates can be listed on the ballot multiple times (once for each party whose candidate they are). Candidates supported by several parties are called fusion candidates.

The Wilson-Pakula Law (1947) both requires that a candidate be a registered voter in the party whose nomination she or he seeks, and provides a way around this requirement with a Wilson-Pakula certificate.

*Barbara Thomas,
Ballot Access Study Chair, Saratoga County LWV*

PLURALITY VERSUS MAJORITY WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE

A majority means that more than 50% of the voters voted for the person or question.

A plurality means that less than 50% voted for the person or issue, but that vote got more than any other vote. For example, let's use the Bush/Gore presidential election:

| | |
|----------|-----|
| Bush | 45% |
| Gore | 42% |
| Nader | 6% |
| Buchanan | 4% |
| Browne | 3% |

Bush would have a plurality (the most votes) but not a majority (over half the votes). Some elections allow victory by plurality and some require an absolute majority. In some cases, if there is a plurality, the top 2 or 3 vote-getters enter into another round of voting, until there is a majority. In the Bush/Gore election, winning required a majority of the electoral vote (not the popular vote), which was determined by winning each state by majority.

Ballot Access Study Questions

1. Should NYS primaries be opened to nonaffiliated voters or should we continue to use the current closed primary system?
2. Do you support the adoption of ranked-choice voting by either Instant Runoff Voting or a Top Two Vote Getter Open Primary System?
3. If you support Instant Runoff Voting for statewide offices, in which elections do you support its use— primaries, general elections or both?
4. If you support Instant Runoff Voting for legislative offices, in which elections do you support its use— primaries, general election or both?
5. Do you believe Wilson-Pakula should be repealed?
6. Should NYS retain fusion voting? If yes, only with Wilson-Pakula; only without Wilson-Pakula; or whether or not Wilson-Pakula is repealed?

**SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THESE
QUESTIONS BY ATTENDING THE BALLOT
ACCESS INFORMATIONAL AND CONSENSUS
MEETING ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 8TH.**

TWO OTHER PRIMARY SYSTEMS

In discussing the pros and cons of getting on the ballot in different primary election systems, there are two other systems that, although they are quite different, they both ensure that the winning candidate in any primary election receives a majority vote.

Top Two Vote Getter (TTVG): Any registered voter can vote for any candidate from any party and the two candidates receiving the most votes go on to compete in the general election regardless of party affiliation.

Proponents say:

- Candidates reflecting the views of a broader range of the electorate may be successful.
- Nonaffiliated voters would have a voice in nominating general election partisan candidates.
- The major political parties will not control the primary election process because third party and unaffiliated candidates will be treated the same and can compete in the primary.
- TTVG eliminates the need for costly runoff elections.
- TTVG primary is easier to understand than other election reform options.

Opponents say:

- An incentive for party registration is removed which could reduce effectiveness of political parties.
- Voters may have less choice because the two top vote getters could be from the same party.
- Ballot access in primary elections may be lost for minor party candidates and there will be less chance for them to succeed in general elections.
- General election turnout may decrease because only “two top” candidates will appear on the November ballot.

Instant Runoff Voting (IRV): All voters rank all candidates by preference. The lowest ranked candidates are eliminated in a step by step process until one candidate receives a majority vote. This system essentially operates as a series of runoff elections. IRV determines a winning candidate in one election.

Proponents say:

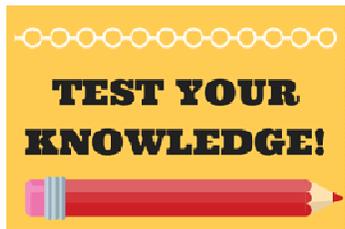
- Voters may have more choices because there will be greater opportunity for third party and unaffiliated candidates to participate.
- Voter turnout may increase because voters will have a greater choice of candidates without worrying about the spoiler effect.
- The high cost of having separate runoff elections is eliminated.
- Negative campaigning may be reduced because candidates can benefit if they are the voters’ second choice.

Opponents say:

- Confusion will result because American voters and Election Administrations are unfamiliar with IRV.
- Candidates without majority support may get elected if voters do not rank all possible choices.
- Costs will increase because of administration difficulties and need to change vote tally equipment.
- Large candidate fields could turn elections into name recognition contests.

How Much Did You Know About the Midterm Election?

The 2014 election was one of the most expensive in American history because the *Citizens United* decision allowed groups to pump hundreds of millions of dollars into our elections, with little or no disclosure or transparency required.



1. How many states had voting laws that were still being challenged in court with less than a month until Election Day?
___ One ___ Two ___ Three ___ Nine
2. How many donors accounted for nearly a third of all SuperPAC donations, totaling \$200 million, in the 2014 election?
___ 350 ___ 5,000 ___ 42 ___ 75
3. In 2014, how many state legislatures introduced new laws that would restrict access to the voting booth?
___ 10 ___ 29 ___ 50 ___ 14
4. How much money was spent in the 2014 election by outside groups (non-candidate or political party groups)?
___ \$21 million ___ \$168 million ___ \$554 million ___ \$689 million

Answers on the next page



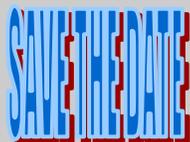
The Federal Election Commission (FEC) can do something to stop the secret money and end the coordination between Super PACs and candidates, which would put a lid on much of the outside spending from special interests.

The FEC is the federal agency in charge of our nation's campaign finance laws, but so far they have done practically nothing to address the US Supreme Court's disappointing decision in *Citizens United*, which unleashed the secret and unlimited spending. The FEC has the authority under existing law, even after *Citizens United* to set disclosure rules and rigorously define "coordination," but thus far they have refused to do so. The FEC is now receiving public comment about steps they should take to address corruption in the political process.

Take a moment to let the FEC know, in order to maintain the integrity of our Democracy, the American public has a right to have the law against unlimited coordinated expenditures strictly enforced so that our elected officials will be responsive to voters and not the big money and secret money from special interests.

Call: 1-800-434-95 Email: info@fec.gov or Write: FEC, 999 E Street, NW, Washington DC 20463

Info from LWVUS Updates



**FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 2015
LWVSYR ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST
7:45-9:30AM
ROSAMOND GIFFORD ZOO**



How Did You Do?

1. **Four:** Wisconsin, Texas, Arkansas and North Carolina. New voter suppression laws enacted in these four states were still in court into October. While only these states' laws were still in flux, there was still massive confusion among voters in these states and other states.
2. **42:** According to a *USA TODAY* analysis of contributions to SuperPACs of \$1 million or more, a mere 42 donors accounted for nearly a third of all donations to SuperPACs in this election.
3. **29:** Between January and June of this year 83 pieces of legislation were introduced in 29 states that would have restricted voters' access to the polls.
4. **\$689 million:** Opensecrets.org estimates that outside groups spent nearly \$700 million on the 2014 midterm elections, almost 20% of all spending this election season.

Ballot Access Meeting

New York's Closed Primary System?
 Fusion Voting?
 Wilson Pakula?
 Plurality vs Majority?
 and
 More

Join us on **Thursday, January 9th** and add your voice if changes are in order to ensure a thriving and functioning democracy in NYS.

Voter Participation Survey—LWV of New Castle



"I always vote. It is a citizen's civic responsibility and a privilege."

"I have never missed an opportunity to vote, never will. It's an obligation of living in a democracy."

These quotes from two New Castle residents capture the sentiment expressed by many who completed a recent voter participation survey conducted by the New Castle League of Women Voters. Although New York State's participation in the midterm elections was the fourth lowest in the country at 28.8%, the voter participation in New Castle was almost 50%.

The League's objectives in doing a survey were to find out whether the community feels it is getting the information it needs about the candidates and the issues, and the community's thoughts on what would make voting more accessible.

About 300 people participated in the survey; 82% had voted in the last election and 63% of the respondents felt that they were sufficiently informed.

Of the 50 respondents who had not voted, about 40% stated that they were disillusioned, disgruntled or otherwise not sure their votes mattered. Here are a couple of their quotes:

"My vote can't change anything in politics."

"Difficult to determine who was telling the truth and who was not. So many negative ads and constant phone calls left more questions than answers."

The New Castle Leaguers learned that about 40% of the nonvoters said they could not get to the polls because of their jobs. Suggested remedies included early voting, voting on the weekend, voting by mail or online voting. Early in-person voting and no-excuse absentee ballots are reforms that the League of Women Voters of New York State supports. In fact New York is one of only 14 states where early voting is not available and an excuse is required to request an absentee ballot. The NYS Assembly has passed an early voting bill over the last two years, but the Senate has not.

Although this survey only reflects the opinions of those willing to participate and is not to be statistically valid, it probably mirrors the feelings of most New Yorkers.

The Town of New Castle is located in Westchester County and has a population of 17,500 according to the 2010 Census



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
 SYRACUSE METROPOLITAN AREA
 PO BOX 11866
 SYRACUSE NY 13218**

January/February 2015

January 9th
Ballot Access Meeting

JOIN THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: (H) _____ (W) _____ (C) _____

E-mail _____ Date _____

___ **Individual Level....\$55**

___ **Household Level*....\$80**

___ **Student Level **....\$25**

**Please make check payable to:
 Syracuse Metro Area League of Women Voters
 P O Box 11866
 Syracuse, NY 13218**

* Two members in the same household

** Full time student under 25

___ **I would like to support the League with a donation.**

For more information call us at (315) 396-8225 or visit us at www.lwvsyr.org 8