

**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
OF NEW YORK STATE**

**COUNCIL REPORT  
JUNE 2016**



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**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW YORK STATE  
FORTIETH BIENNIAL COUNCIL REPORT  
June 2016**

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**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

**Dare Thompson, President, darethompson@gmail.com**

We thank all those local leagues who voted on our annual budget (which passed) and sent directions to the board. Your attention and participation are so appreciated. What follows now is a review from several of us on the year that is just ending. This document provides a helpful annual report for our historical records but we hope it is immediately useful to you as well.

While it was exciting this April to have a presidential primary in NY that actually "mattered," it has been a very challenging time for League leaders who have so many thoughts about what's going on but so often have to hold our tongues publicly (including on social media) lest we appear biased toward any party or candidate.

And it was enormously frustrating to see the 2016 state legislative session come to an end with *virtually no attempt to address the causes of the corruption that led to the arrest and conviction of the leaders of both houses!*

But those of us working at the state level are **always energized and impressed to see the work that local leagues are doing in their communities** and it was great to interact with so many of you personally at regional meetings, Lobby Day, and - so recently - the LWVUS Convention in DC.

We are also excited that the LWVUS Convention voted to change the national by-laws (and thus the bylaws of state and local leagues) to say that membership is open to all PERSONS age 16 or older. **Our ranks can now include non-citizens and most high school students who are interested in learning about our government.** Now local leagues can give memberships to most of the students we send to Students Inside Albany and we can welcome into full membership someone working for his or her citizenship.

Meanwhile in Albany your state League is busy, busy, busy year-round with two top priorities: **service to local leagues** and **better state government for all of us.**

The mantra of all staff members is whatever else they are doing, never fail to call a member back! And no policy or activity is ever adopted without us thinking about how it will affect local leagues. We truly believe that **local leagues, spread across the state, are our greatest asset.** We hope you feel that in every encounter.

**Please review the following reports** for more information about the work we've done for you this past year. Please notice that the board list has one change. **Kay Sharp** (Tompkins Co.) whom you voted in as our secretary, had to resign due to caregiver responsibilities. The board invited **Jane Park** (Broome/Tioga Co.) to replace her and she has been serving ably. *We miss Kay and are grateful to Jane and thank both of them.*

We also want to thank all of you who heard the message at the 2015 Convention that if you don't need to use Education Fund money to pay PMP, please don't, since it is harder for the state League to find 501c4 revenue elsewhere. You really "got it," and this has helped us balance the League budget.

Now we look ahead and prepare for the **2016 elections** and all the 2017 activities coming at us - **state Convention** in the Syracuse area, the **New York centennial of women getting the vote in 1917**, and the **vote on the Constitutional Convention** on the November 2017 ballot. Fasten your seat belts. We have so much to do - *together!*

## **ISSUES AND ADVOCACY REPORT**

**Sally Robinson, robintwins@gmail.com**

### **Legislative Procedures Update**

Delegates at the state League convention in June 2015 approved an update of our position on Legislative Procedures, dating back to 1997. (current position:

<http://lwny.org/advocacy/impact/issues/2013/LEGISLATIVE-PROCEDURES.pdf>)

The update is focused on two aspects of our current position in particular, although it may consider other parts:

1. the reference to a part-time legislature
2. the ambiguous reference to length of terms.

Suzanne Stassevich of the New York City League agreed to chair the committee. Their work is almost done, and local leagues will hold consensus meetings for this update in the fall of 2016. An updated position will be available for lobbying in the 2017 legislative session.

### **Living Wage**

In 2015, LWWUS announced an interpretation of the Meeting Basic Human Needs position to permit state and local leagues to lobby in support of raising state or local minimum wages or adopting a living wage position. After a state committee led by Barb Thomas (Saratoga Co.) the issue, the state Board accepted their report and the League used it to lobby.

### **Legislative Agenda**

The state Board needs and wants local league input on lobbying priorities every year. After discussion with their members and heard their suggestions and concerns, local leagues completed and returned Legislative Priorities Forms last fall on the issues that they wanted the state League to lobby during the coming legislative session. Issue specialists considered them and made recommendations to the Board, considering League resources as well as the evolving politics of issues and our goals for the session.

The 2016 Legislative Agenda booklets were sent to each local league based on membership numbers in January. We also sold additional copies and posted the document on the website. We

hope leagues will use this booklet in meetings with their legislators and also as a membership tool with new and prospective members.

### **Lobby Day**

The year our annual lobby day was held on May 10<sup>th</sup>. Over 30 members from around the state came to lobby their legislators. It was an extremely busy day and many other groups were also holding events and lobby days including the coalition on Raise the Age. Several of our members from Schenectady attended the Raise the Age press conference and lobbied with the group. After our morning presentations our members spent the afternoon mingling with their local legislators and advocating for voting and ethics reforms, as well as several social policy issues. We had excellent feedback from all who participated and all of the materials that were distributed can be found on our website <http://www.lwvny.org/advocacy/lobby-day/index.html>

### **Anti-Corruption Activities**

From fall 2015 until the end of session the League worked actively with our good government colleagues to finally get reform accomplished after what is often referred to as New York's "Watergate" moment. With the backdrop of the United States District court house and the trials of former Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and former Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos on federal corruption charges, on November 11 the state League held a press conference with our good government colleagues to press for comprehensive ethics reform. At the press conference we announced a letter to the Governor and legislative leaders giving a specific list of urgent reforms (posted on the state website and linked here: <http://www.lwvny.org/advocacy/gov-reform/ethics-lobbying/2015/Letter-from-Civic-Groups-to-State-Leaders>)

Ethics Reforms: On March 8 we held a press conference with other good government groups to call for a public leaders meeting on ethics. See [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>.

June 14 saw a final press conference on the lack of ethics reforms this session. See [http://www.lwvny.org/advocacy/gov-reform/ethics-lobbying/2016/Press-End-of-session-plea-FINAL\\_061416.pdf](http://www.lwvny.org/advocacy/gov-reform/ethics-lobbying/2016/Press-End-of-session-plea-FINAL_061416.pdf)

### **End of Session:**

During the final days of the 2016 legislative session, several voting reforms were brought to the floor of the Assembly for a vote. These included no excuse absentee ballots, early voting, the Voter Friendly ballot Act, and allowing for electronic poll books in all counties. The Assembly also voted to close the LLC loophole, a bill we have advocated for all session. Unfortunately,

these bills were not considered in the Senate. We issued memos on all of these issues which can be found on the League website.

We spent a significant amount of the end of session pleading with the legislature to take action and pass comprehensive ethics and campaign finance reforms. We were extremely dismayed when the two houses passed a supposed “5-Point Ethics Package” that did not even begin to touch on the issues we have highlighted all session. The League was quick to issue a statement criticizing the legislature for passing the insufficient reforms in the dead of night without public input. We will continue to push for real ethics and campaign finance reforms next session.

<http://www.lwvny.org/advocacy/election-law/campaign-finance-reform/2016/LWVNYS-Statement-End-of-Session-Ethics-Package-2016.pdf>

### **Other activity**

Election Reform: Aimee Allaud, the League’s Election specialist, testified before the New York State Assembly Election Law Committee on early voting and no-excuse voting (again, posted on the state website and linked here: [http://www.lwvny.org/advocacy/election-law/2015/Testimony-to-NYSA-Election-Law-Early-Voting-No-Excuse-Absentee\\_111815.pdf](http://www.lwvny.org/advocacy/election-law/2015/Testimony-to-NYSA-Election-Law-Early-Voting-No-Excuse-Absentee_111815.pdf) ). This is an area where the League has traditionally been the leader around the country and we know there is much that can be accomplished in New York to bring our voting into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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).

Budget Testimony: The League also submitted testimony to five different budget committee hearings during the budget process.

Capitol Beat, a blog written by Barbara Bartoletti, LWVNYS Legislative Director, and Jennifer Wilson, LWVNYS Director of Policy and Program, on “happenings” at the state Capitol is updated every week during the legislative session. The link is on the state website and here: <http://www.lwvny-capitolbeat.blogspot.com>

All our press releases and memoranda to the legislature are also posted on the home page of our website during the legislative session.



## **GRASSROOTS DIRECTOR REPORT**

Carol Mellor, [camellor@aol.com](mailto:camellor@aol.com)

After voter service workshops at the 2015 state convention, it was clear that many questions and concerns on debate processes existed. Judy Gorenstein and I arranged for conference calls so that members could talk about these issues and brainstorm some solutions. Because of technical problems on the first call, we held a follow-up call. I also presented a workshop on the role of the moderator at a debate for the Saratoga County League.

At the state convention, the delegates voted to hold a concurrence on the question of whether we should support legislation to Raise the Age of criminal responsibility to eighteen. In connection with this concurrence, materials were prepared for consideration by the members at their consensus meetings, including a PowerPoint. I traveled to several leagues, including Tompkins County, to make presentations of the material. Twenty-five leagues participated in the process, all of which reached consensus in favor of the concurrence, and a position was adopted by the Board of Directors in January 2016.

During the fall, local leagues were working on two national studies. One explored two issues: 1) the criteria which the League would find relevant to a determination of whether a proposed amendment to the United States Constitution should be supported and 2) whether we should have a position on the convocation of an Article V Constitutional Convention. The other study concerned the updating of our position on Money in Politics. In order to help the local leagues with their consensus meetings, two telephone conferences were conducted to review the materials and to help the locals through the process. The first call, chaired by me, reviewed all of the questions which were to be addressed in the Amendment to the Constitution study, and then we discussed specific questions. In addition, I made presentations to four local leagues on Long Island to assist them in their work. A second call, chaired by Sally Robinson, reviewed the issues presented in the Money in Politics study.

## **MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

**Membership Team:** LWVNYS board members Georgia DeGregorio (Rochester), Terri Parks (Buffalo/Niagara), Dare Thompson (Mid-Hudson) plus off-board members Susan Schwarz (Rivertowns and Westchester Co.ILO), Lisa Scott (Smithtown and Suffolk Co. ILO), Kathy Stein (St. Lawrence Co.)

Congratulations to all local leagues whose membership numbers grew or held firm: Bedford/Lewisboro/N. Salem, Cazenovia, Central Nassau, Chautauqua Co., Cooperstown Area, Cortland Co., E. Putnam Co., Huntington, Larchmont/Mamaroneck, Mid-Hudson Region, New Castle, Oneonta, Rensselaer Co., Rivertowns, Saratoga Co., Schenectady Co., Shelter Island, Smithtown, Somers, Steuben Co., Tompkins Co.

**Our mission is to put ALL local leagues on that list. Efforts included the following.**

**Regional Meetings**, held in years without a state convention, were in NYC on March 5, Saratoga County on March 12, Syracuse area on April 2, Buffalo/Niagara on April 9. Highlights this year were:

- Speakers on the **Constitution Convention** (Gerald Benjamin, Peter Galie, Christopher Bopst) and on our partnership with the state's **organ donation** procurement centers.
- Workshops focused on:
  - state and local advocacy efforts
  - getting out the vote, VOTE411, and moderating candidate meetings
  - celebrating women getting the vote in NY in 1917 and the LWVNY's birth in 1919
  - networking with each other and other groups and having fun while we work
  - reviewed all the local league websites to see how we could work together to make them

We reviewed all **local league websites** to see how we are doing across the states at being up-to-date and looking like one interconnected organization. We watch for new opportunities presented soon by the national website hosting program, League Easy Web (LEW), based at LWV-CA .

**Regional Calls** continue at least quarterly in several regions in our big state. Callers are Terri Parks (also coordinator of the callers), Joan Johnson, Barb Thomas, and Dare Thompson. Inter-League Organizations (ILOs) connect with their member Leagues with the information shared with the other League regions. These efforts

- allow us to share what the state board is doing
- have local leagues share their activities with their neighboring leagues
- optimize opportunities to share resources or otherwise work together.
- 

We encourage all local leagues to make sure they always have a representative on these calls. We all learn so much from one another!

Our Team members also had individual "**Big Idea**" **conversations** with one or more leaders in each league to hear what their aspirations were and how the state League might help them achieve these.

All these calls supplement occasional **Special Issues Calls**, open to all members and coordinated by Carol Mellor and the office. (See information on these elsewhere.)

Phone calls supplement **on-going e-mail and online communication** from the state League via

- **State Board Updates** (SBUs)
- the state *Voter*
- the constantly updated **website (www.lwvny.org)** where basic League documents are found (e.g. Impact on Issues, In League), latest action at the Capitol or voter service information is highlighted, training handouts are posted, SBUs, Voters and local league newsletters are archived, and so much MORE can be found.

Finally, local leagues have learned that having a **Membership and Leadership Development (MLD)** coach helps them

- keep on track with the plans they’ve made
- remember to use “best practices”
- incorporate new League-building tips sent on monthly by LWVUS.

Current coaches are Lisa Scott, Kathy Stein, Dare Thompson, and Carole Torok-Huxtable. They consult monthly with our national coach Amy Hjerstedt (a past member of the LWVUS Young People’s Task Force and a current nominee to the LWVUS board), fellow national coach Deborah McMillan (former NJ state president), and Anne Schink (LWVUS board member for Membership and the LWVUS liaison to New York).

If your League would like a coach or if you would like to BE a coach, contact **Lisa Scott, state MLD coordinator, at lisawscott@gmail.com.**

The Membership Team members and all LWVNYS staff and board members welcome your questions and comments any time. It is the grassroots work you all do that makes the League a truly unique and invaluable civic organization.

LEAGUE NAME	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Albany County	276	279	272	257	255	231	235	173	192	184	159
North East Westchester (as of Spring 2016)	55	61	57	44	40	27	28	37	28	31	31
Bronxville	142	135	127	142	121	80	82	0	0	0	0
Brookhaven	90	96	99	90	84	74	70	70	65	67	63
Broome and Tioga Co.	133	144	128	126	111	109	109	109	100	100	93
Buffalo/Niagara	390	405	371	377	321	238	225	224	213	193	190
Cazenovia	57	49	46	46	47	37	41	35	32	24	29
Central Nassau	59	64	43	48	49	39	35	35	27	20	20
Chautauqua County	105	121	124	126	108	93	88	88	83	84	88
Chemung County	31	26	27	35	29	34	15	20	20	20	14
Columbia County	36	33	33	27	35	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cooperstown Area	50	38	39	36	33	24	34	40	47	35	47
Cortland County	29	22	25	26	30	26	29	29	24	23	28
East Nassau	86	96	83	78	80	59	53	53	47	51	45
Eastern Putnam County	0	0	0	15	23	20	5	5	5	5	9
Geneva	103	91	78	77	60	55	53	50	46	38	34
Great Neck	77	68	67	74	58	39	0	0	0	0	0
Greater Oneida Area	19	21	13	15	11	11	10	8	7	7	6
Hamptons	199	185	187	187	165	144	135	124	133	125	116
Harrison	62	59	60	50	49	41	43	34	36	39	35
Huntington	74	76	70	78	91	90	87	85	89	88	97

**COUNCIL KIT**

**June 2016**

Larchmont/Mamaroneck	167	159	149	131	102	89	90	76	83	74	108
Long Beach	118	105	97	86	51	44	42	47	27	31	33
LWVNYS	115	68	133	141	88	94	91	89	57	36	33
Mid Hudson Region	130	132	129	108	114	88	94	91	90	92	92
New Castle	175	190	184	163	128	103	85	92	86	84	94
New Rochelle	115	119	110	101	95	85	89	77	74	59	45
New York City	754	769	665	541	500	243	265	205	199	223	217
Oneonta	114	109	105	79	67	57	52	48	46	38	41
Orleans County	0	25	22	26	18	12	13	14	0	0	0
North Country (as of 2013)	43	41	40	37	38	36	32	42	52	43	40
Port Washington	164	185	147	132	132	108	133	118	142	128	100
Rensselaer County	102	100	100	98	101	89	84	77	81	80	81
Rivertowns	93	97	93	78	87	47	41	53	73	75	86
Rochester Metro	282	290	287	289	278	146	135	131	132	145	139
Rockland County	72	76	75	69	73	47	50	50	34	37	27
Rye-Rye Brook	46	80	57	39	49	47	53	37	51	57	47
Saratoga County	170	173	181	177	169	150	144	150	161	130	141
Saugerties	39	36	24	18	25	22	14	24	24	17	15
Scarsdale	360	316	299	290	259	275	223	203	220	216	205
Schenectady County	172	181	167	156	162	149	131	132	129	126	134
Schuyler	60	62	54	49	45	39	39	21	21	17	14
Shelter Island	38	58	79	83	38	34	33	46	42	44	44
Smithtown	59	55	55	51	46	37	38	37	36	28	29
Somers	149	138	129	128	126	134	116	105	99	87	94
Southwest Nassau	169	149	122	127	116	101	83	82	76	66	50
Steuben County	0	22	20	23	22	23	25	24	24	25	26
Syracuse Metro.	106	100	103	94	93	86	85	102	100	90	71
Tompkins County	149	155	148	130	123	121	106	103	90	82	92
Utica Metro. Area	61	44	52	57	55	54	53	57	54	56	44
Warren County	0	0	0	0	0	18	17	9	13	0	0
White Plains	199	161	165	153	141	130	125	134	145	125	117
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>6294</b>	<b>6264</b>	<b>5940</b>	<b>5608</b>	<b>5141</b>	<b>4179</b>	<b>3958</b>	<b>3695</b>	<b>3655</b>	<b>3445</b>	<b>3363</b>
Hamilton					11			8	0	0	0
Orange					17			0		0	0
Wayne					9			17	13	10	10
St. Lawrence/Jefferson					23			21	13	7	8
Southern Westchester								19	14	0	0

**VOTER SERVICE REPORT**  
**Judie Gorenstein, Judiel728@aol.com**

Encouraging citizens to be active and informed participants in government is a major mission of the League. At our 2015 LWVNYS convention workshops, we began the conversation on what we can do to engage voters and how to run successful candidates' nights. It was evident that leagues could learn from one another. Attendees took back to their local leagues some of the ideas that were presented and modified them for their own communities. It was also apparent that League members were frustrated by low voter turnout and many had questions with how to run successful candidates nights and were looking for help.

In July a brief voter service survey was sent to all leagues with five questions:

1. Are you planning to have a Meet the Candidates Night?
2. Have you held them in the past?
3. Did you have problems either arranging or conducting them?
4. Would you want to be on a teleconference to discuss ways to have a successful Meet the Candidates Night?
5. What areas of Voter Service would you like assistance with or want to be discussed?

The majority of the leagues who responded indicated they would like a teleconference which was scheduled and held on September 28. Prior to the teleconference, a PowerPoint presentation focusing on the role of the moderator was emailed to members. Fifty two members participated in this first teleconference where we first discussed the "Empty Chair Policy," a policy that leagues struggle with. Unfortunately, technical difficulties occurred after the first half hour of the call and many were unable to get back on the call. A follow up call was held on October 3 when we reviewed and discussed the Empty Chair policy, how best to control debates/candidate nights, and the taping and airing of the event. It was very clear that leagues continue to struggle with what they can and cannot do. Information on what they must do for all federal candidates and what is strongly recommended that they do for all other elections is clearly written in Road to the Voting Booth Part II. Local leagues were urged to either purchase the 2011 revised edition for \$5.00 or download it, and attendees at the spring regional meeting workshops were given a copy to bring back to their leagues.

Crucial for leagues to know is

1. Policies for candidates nights are decided by the local board and should be written.
2. FEC and FCC laws prohibit an Empty Chair debate for federal elections.
3. LWVNYS strongly recommends leagues do not allow empty chair debates for any race.
4. The best way to control a debate is with prepared guidelines.
5. Controlling what gets taped and aired is more difficult now and makes it more important than ever to have a clear and thorough policy which is sent to and is accepted by candidates and their campaigns.
6. We can learn from one another.

7. Visibility for the LWV is always important. Always remaining - and being perceived as - nonpartisan is extremely important.

During the fall of 2015, LWVNYS continued to help and assist local leagues with questions and concerns. LWVNYS also edited and updated First Vote. There was a second and longer survey for leagues to complete after the November 2015 election. Questions covered Candidate Debates/ Forums, Voter Guides, Organ Donation, Voter Registration, Getting Out the Vote Efforts, Naturalization Ceremonies, and Other Successes or Challenges.

Thirty-two leagues completed and returned the surveys. The vast majority of leagues had held candidates nights. Attendance ranged from 15 to 500. Four had to cancel their debates because of the no empty chair policy since only one candidate in a race had responded they would attend. All of the leagues had some questions from the audience and most had the questions written and screened. The biggest problems encountered dealt with taping and airing of their candidate events. Seventeen leagues already had some policies for debates and were going to work on editing and improving them for 2016 including the segment on taping and airing. Two leagues already had a comprehensive policy. Other leagues who had no policy were going to write one. All leagues but one had held voter registration drives with most collecting and either mailing or bringing the forms to their Board of Elections. No league collected the voter information off the forms and followed up on it, although LWVUS is encouraging leagues to do that.

With 2016 being a year when there was increased interest and motivation to vote in the presidential primary, LWVNYS was aware that there would be increased confusion about not only the dates to register to vote and enroll in a party, but about our closed primary system. Information with the important dates and an explanation of who could vote in a primary was placed on our website and in our State Voters and State Board Updates. We knew education registration and turning out the vote would be crucial. Our Voters Guide Part I was published and available earlier than usual.

At our four regional training workshops held throughout the state, we had a workshop on Best Practices for Candidate Forums and another on Getting Out the Vote. These workshops once again showed that local leagues are striving to hold successful candidates nights and that they understand the importance of having a comprehensive written policy that can be publicized and sent to candidates and their campaigns. Leagues have taken the policies provided at the workshops and are editing them to fit their events. Leagues are also looking at ways to get out the vote, trying to think outside of the box. Successes will appear on the LWVNYS webpage.

We have also started a LWV voter service google group to carry on the conversation, share ideas, and help each other. All members throughout the state are invited to join. There were two leagues, Mid Hudson and Brookhaven, who were chosen by LWVUS to participate in a pilot project phone bank prior to Primary Day to see if phone calls reminding voters about the election and having them come up with plan to get to polls on Primary Day would increase turnout. When LWVNYS has the results, we will let local leagues know, although this was an unusual Primary Election with higher turnout overall, so it is unclear whether a comparison of a “control group” to a “called group” will show a difference.

What we do know is that there were serious problems on Primary Day. Voters called their local leagues to complain of being disenfranchised for many different reasons. We asked that leagues report these and at our May 2016 board meeting discussed what leagues could do to help alleviate some of the situations. We know that our election laws are archaic and that they need to be changed. We will continue to lobby for the changes, but certainly these laws will not be changed in the near future and definitely not this year. Right now there are things we can do!

1. Leagues can contact their local Board of Elections and find out if they have open meetings which league members can attend. We can let our presence be seen and our voices heard on the need to have adequately trained poll workers.
2. Members can write letters to the editors of local papers with information on the two upcoming primaries, including the candidates, the office, an explanation of our closed party system, and deadlines for registering and/or enrolling in a party. We need to make clear the different dates for enrolling in a party when a person is registering for the first time versus just changing his or her party.
3. Leagues can learn what errors people made and how these can be ameliorated in the future. We just learned that when many voters filled out registration forms to change their name or address, they did not check their party as they felt it had not changed. Voters **MUST** indicate their party whenever they fill out a new form in order to be enrolled in a party.
4. Leagues must continue educating voters on the important dates and election laws at their voter registration drives, in the schools, on their websites, and in their newsletters. They should use social media to get out this information and try new ways to reach people.
5. We must all encourage voters – and candidates - to use Vote411.
6. We can gain visibility by using our new “Watch Out! I’m a VOTER” buttons and stickers.

As we go forward with the Congressional primaries on June 28, state and local primaries on September 13, and the General Election on November 8, we know we have a lot of work to do. Vote411 is ready for the Congressional primaries and is an excellent resource. This year, when so many voters are engaged, the challenge is to educate them and then turn out the vote. With politics so partisan, our nonpartisanship is more important than ever. If not us, then who? If not now, then when? Together the LWVNY and local leagues can accomplish our mission.

### **Youth Programs**

### **2016 Students Inside Albany Conference**

The 2016 Students Inside Albany Conference had 58 attendees representing 41 local Leagues, MAL Units and ILOs. The students came from all over New York State from Long Island to Buffalo and Plattsburgh to Binghamton. They ranged from freshmen to seniors in high school. They were energetic and enthusiastic to learn about New York State government.

On Sunday evening, Blair Horner, Executive Director, NY Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), and Barbara Bartoletti, LWVNYS Legislative Director, presented information on how New York State Government works. They explained the roles of the various branches of New York State government and the differences between the state government and the national and local levels of government.

On Monday the students toured the state Capitol and heard about whose faces are on those engraved stones and the secret of the fireplaces in the Senate Chambers. League Legislative Director, Barbara Bartoletti, then provided them with the do's and don'ts of lobbying the legislators – how to approach them, make your arguments, and be persuasive. Senator George Latimer joined the group and allowed the students to practice lobbying on him about an issue of their choice. It was wonderful of the Senator to engage with the students in this activity.

In the afternoon, the students were directed to find their Assembly members' offices and shadow their legislators. All of the students were escorted onto the Assembly floor and introduced on the floor of the Chamber. They viewed the legislators at their desks and the Chamber in session.

After dinner, Peter Galie, a leading expert on state constitutional conventions (professor emeritus, Canisius College), spoke about the 2017 ballot proposal on a possible state constitutional convention. He explained what is currently in our constitution and the method for adopting amendments. He also discussed past constitutional conventions and issues that could be debated in a new convention.

On Tuesday, Jasmine Gripper, Education Advocate, from the Alliance for Quality Education, presented information to the students on education issues and the methods they use to advocate for these issues. The topic was of particular interest to the students who asked many questions on financing education, but also on the hot topics of Common Core and APPR. Blair Horner, NYPIRG, spoke again to the students about NYPIRG's activities in lobbying, as well as NYPIRG's activities on many college campuses around the state.

On the way to the Capitol that afternoon, the students had a tour of the chambers of the Court of Appeals and heard about the different levels of the judiciary in New York State from Gary Spencer, Information Officer at the Court of Appeals.

The students shadowed their senators on Tuesday and again were escorted to the floor to watch the session.

On Wednesday morning, Barbara Bartoletti engaged the students in a discussion of what they saw in the Assembly and Senate. Much of the discussion surrounded questions on procedures and voting in both chambers and the role of leadership in each chamber. The students were also presented individually with a certificate for attendance at the Conference. At least five students noted that they had been offered internships in the legislators' offices for the summer.

Just for fun, the students also went bowling one night at a local bowling alley that provided laser lights, disco lights, black lights, and runway lights combined with music videos on a giant



screen. On another evening the group enjoyed a boat cruise on the Hudson River to view the city skyline.

Quotes from some of the students included:

- I learned that state government is equally, if not more important, than the federal government.
- The fast-paced and intellectually challenging atmosphere was so interesting, and the potential to create change is something I want from a career.
- Even though Albany is flawed, I was inspired by the efforts for positive change made by good government groups and certain legislators.
- It taught me so many basic things about state government that I should have known, but didn't.
- It has made me want to become more active in state government and made activism seem much more approachable.
- It was a great opportunity for those who wish to go into government and for connections and internships.
- Being surrounded by incredible people that are passionate about fighting for what they believe in was inspiring and invigorating!

Thanks to all of our sponsors for the SIA conference.



New York State United Teachers

