

News From *Your* State League

Update from LWVNYS

January 2009

New Yorkers for Alternatives To the Death Penalty

Has the League won its fight to abolish the death penalty in New York State? Effectively, yes. For the time being, things are going our way, but that could change in an instant with one horrific crime. Aware of this possibility, New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty decided to expand and change its mission. Under their new name, New Yorkers for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, they will seek to unite victims, law enforcement, advocates for the mentally ill, restorative justice practitioners and families of the incarcerated around policies that address their real and immediate needs and reduce the likelihood of violent crime. This holistic approach can empower constituencies by bringing them together to create a stronger, united voice to advocate for their common goals.

Call to Convention 2009

The LWVNYS Biennial Convention will be May 15-17 at the Doubletree Inn in Syracuse, NY. The Convention theme will be "Fair, Vibrant and Strong". In addition to planning our program, electing a new board, adopting by-laws changes and a new budget, we will have helpful workshops, interesting and informative presentations, a special presidents' meeting, great speakers and entertainment, good food, and fun.

Mark your calendars and consider being part of Convention 2009, either as a delegate of your local League or as an observer. This is your opportunity to be sure the concerns of your community and your local League are represented at the Convention. Most important, working with other League members and seeing New York State League leaders in action is something you won't want to miss.

The Local League Board

Now is the time when local League nominations committees look for new members to serve on their Boards. Serving on your League Board, or serving your local League in any other capacity, is an amazing opportunity. The Board plays a major role in defining the League, not only to its members but also to the community at large. Every member of the Board plays a part.

Yes, you'll be serving your League when you serve on its Board. But you'll also be gaining personally. You'll be learning from more experienced members how to do the many tasks that make the League work. You will develop expertise that will carry over into your work on other issues with different organizations. With the self-confidence you'll develop, you will become a force to be reckoned with!

Students Inside Albany

This year's Students Inside Albany program will be held Sunday, April 19 – Wednesday, April 22, 2009 at the Hampton Inn & Suites in Albany, NY. The LWVNYS Education Foundation has been able to acquire funding to cover the costs of one participant from each local League or two from local Leagues with LeaderSpark programs. Local Leagues are responsible for travel expenses for all students to and from Albany. If any of the participating Leagues desires to send an additional student — if there is room — that League's cost would be \$300 plus travel expenses. Customized SIA brochures can be obtained from the LWVNYS office.

Lead Poisoning Update

The NYS Department of Health is, on Governor Paterson's urging, revising downward the child's blood level of lead that would trigger comprehensive follow-up interventions from 20 mcg/dl to 15 mcg/dl. This will enable more environmental assessments and house inspections to be made.

Legislative Agenda 2009

This year's Legislative Agenda will place emphasis on (1) reforming state government; (2) energy and the environment; (3) cost-effective and accessible health care. Additional positions will also be highlighted. Watch for copies of this Agenda at meetings of your local League or ask your local League President. You'll want to have a few extra copies to hand out during your lobbying visits to local legislators.

Economic Stimulus and Transportation

Effective and expanded public transit helps to reduce air pollution and conserve energy — one of our Legislative Priorities for 2009. Now is the time to lobby Congress to allocate some of the new Economic Stimulus funds to expand and develop public transit in New York State, especially upstate.

NYSPEC Strategizes

The New York State Pay Equity Coalition (NYSPEC) held a strategy meeting with its member organizations. One area of disagreement was whether the legislation should include "punitive damages" language. Such language makes the legislation enforceable. An alternative is the Canadian proactive model. The Canadian legislation requires the employer submit information showing that they are in compliance by a certain date. It was also noted that companies that do business in Canada have no trouble complying with the Canadian Pay Equity laws.

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