



STATE BOARD REPORT

August, 2009, Issue #1

This report is published electronically six times each year. Duplicate paper copies may be ordered for an annual fee of \$35.00 by contacting the League office.

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STATE BOARD REPORTS ARE AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE: www.lwvny.org
(Click on Local League Resources)



STATE LEAGUE NEWS

Betsey Swan, President

10 Norwood Drive, Menands, New York 12204

betsey@lwvny.org , 518-426-3711

Welcome to all new and returning LL presidents! It has been a busy three months since the excitement of the convention, and we all have been multi-tasking nonstop, both to ameliorate the League's financial problems and to implement a full and diverse program for the upcoming year.

FINANCIAL UPDATE

At the time of convention, the state League faced a \$18,000 shortfall for the 2008-09 fiscal year. As the result of generosity of individual donors and local Leagues, along with a very successful silent auction, the shortfall was reduced to \$3,000. Our heart-felt thanks to all who made this turnaround possible.

In the meantime, the League has taken a number of steps to ensure that last year's deficit is not repeated. We will not spend money budgeted for a part-time receptionist or for pay raises until we have received budgeted grants and corporate underwriting support.

We applied for a \$75,000 mock election grant from the Election Assistance Commission, which would be payable over a two-year period. Grants will be awarded at the end of August.

We have met with CSEA, the New York State Bar Association, and the Women's Bar Association about financial support. While none has additional funding, CSEA and the New York State Bar Association have agreed to provide in-kind services by publishing League materials free of charge.

We are continuing to investigate potential financial partners for our governmental consolidation / shared services study and education project.

GOALS

My goals for the next two years are three-fold. First and foremost, I strongly believe there is a need to bridge the gap between the state and local Leagues. Second, it is imperative to improve the financial footing of the state League and local Leagues. Third, the office needs to investigate ways it can work more efficiently, so that it can act as a better conduit of information without increasing its expenses.

LOCAL / STATE PARTNERSHIP

I have spent much time thinking and have had more than one nightmare about ways to bridge the gulf between state and local Leagues. As with most things, the key seems to be better communication. I shall share a *potpourri* of ideas but welcome and need your feedback to ensure change is meaningful the needs of all New York's diverse Leagues.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

As the new person on the block, and having assumed the presidency with a relatively short period of state League experience under my belt, I have not had the opportunity to visit many local Leagues. Over the next two years, I hope to visit every League in the state at least once. To that end, I recently took a whirlwind trip to western New York, where I met with the members of the **Rochester Metro** League and had a lovely tour of the waterfront, which has been beautifully restored as a public space since I last lived in Rochester. The next morning I was off to **Schuyler County**, where I met with the board and gave a presentation on how a bill becomes a law. Then it was off to Buffalo, where I met with members of the **Buffalo/Niagara** board over dinner and reviewed an application for a federal grant. If you would like to schedule a visit, give me a call at 518-426-3711, or drop me a line at betsey@lwnvy.org. In the meantime, feel free to call at any time to ask questions, share concerns or just to talk.

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE: THE NEW FACE OF THE STATE LEAGUE

- STATE BOARD REPORTS

There are a number of changes to both the changes and formatting of SBRs. In response to the complaints of local Leagues that they are unwieldy to navigate, we have shortened the basic format to approximately 10 pages, with attachments in a paginated appendix at the end. This way, people can focus on areas of interest to them. **Distribution will be electronic, with duplicate electronic copies available free of charge and duplicate printed copies available by mail on request for a \$35 annual fee. To order copies, complete the order form on page 13 and return it to the office.**

Any League member who wishes to receive an electronic copy of the SBR may do so free of charge by contacting the state office.

We hope to add a local League section to the SBR. If your League would like information about a particular topic, if it has a program, product, or fundraising idea it wishes to brag about or otherwise share, send notice to betsey@lwnvy.org so that we may share it with other Leagues.

- STATE NEWS

We have renamed *News from your State League* to *State News (SN)*. It will be distributed as part of each SBR; **the August 2009 issue is attached on page 52**. It will appear on our website in both PDF and word format. It will also be distributed to local League Presidents and bulletin editors, and it, or information from it, should be included in the local bulletin.

- ON-LINE PRINT-READY ARTICLES

To better meet the needs of Local Leagues, we will periodically prepare print-ready information and post it on-line between issuance of the print-ready *State News*. **Visit the home page of our website under the heading, *Local League Communication: Recent State Board Reports, State News, and Hot Topics (Print-Ready News for Local Bulletins)*. Local League Presidents and Voter editors are encouraged to check it out!**

- *THE VOTER*

Financial constraints have forced us to discontinue the printed version of *The Voter*. We are currently exploring alternatives.

WANTED: INPUT FROM LOCAL LEAGUES

As we talked with local Leagues in preparing the Centennial Plan, many voiced a need for more information from the state. I would also like to see more interaction with local Leagues, so that the planning process is not a state or local process but a joint process.

At its July meeting, the board considered ways to streamline our communications with each other and with local Leagues, so that communication would be less burdensome, volume would be reduced, and information would be more timely. We have a number of proposals and seek your feedback.

- Add a section to state board meetings for discussion of matters raised by local Leagues;
- Upgrade Website so it is a better resource for local Leagues in all areas of operation. If you have not looked at our website recently, take a look at www.lwvny.org. We are gradually changing our look, and the site is updated on a regular basis. The home page contains pictures and highlights from convention, as well as our most recent advocacy efforts. We have developed a prototype for the issues and advocacy section for purposes of organizing our materials and making available an electronic library. We are contemplating a local League section to provide quick way of seeing what other Leagues are doing and of sharing materials, such as local League studies, voter services materials and projects, advocacy campaigns, youth services projects, and development ideas, so that it is not necessary to reinvent the wheel. We also hope to develop grant prototypes that could be used by local Leagues to get grants from corporations and foundations. Let us know whether you think this is a good idea and what you would like to see on this part of the web.

To turn the website into a truly effective tool for local Leagues, we need notice of events, pictures of events, documents for various programs, and anything else you wish to showcase. Please send things to the state Office.

- Improve communication through website by adding a *Members Only* section, in which we post board agendas and minutes, budgets, highlight activities of local Leagues and share best practices.
- Improve communication among local Leagues by using the List Serves for leaders as a way for League members to discuss matters of concern, including what they have accomplished and what stymies them.

I look forward to working with all Leagues around the state over the next two years and hope you will free to share your hopes and concerns as we move forward.

- **WANTED: LOCAL BULLETINS**
In the past we have encouraged local Leagues to share bulletins with other Leagues through a complex bulletin exchange. This program is being replaced by posting all local bulletins on our website at <http://www.lwvny-bulletins.org/> and forwarding them to national for their databank. **To assure your bulletin is included, send a copy to Adam Gaus (for the LWVNYS website) at 6 Sorrel Hill Lane, Hauppauge, New York 11788 or adam.gaus@IEEE.org and three hard copies or one e-mail copy to LWVUS at 1730 M Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036 or membership@lwv.org .**
- **WANTED: E-MAIL ADDRESSES OF LOCAL LEAGUE MEMBERS**
In this age of electronic communication, it is increasingly important that all League members provide us with their e-mail addresses. Currently, we have addresses for approximately one-third of our members. By failing to provide e-mail addresses, local members risk missing important communications. **Please update the national database to include e-mail addresses for all members who have them. We never sell or exchange addresses, and do not use them unless requested.**

GOVERNMENT CONSOLIDATION/ SHARED SERVICES STUDY

We are pleased to announce Noreen Fisher, former Mayor of the Village of Scarsdale and member of the Scarsdale League as chair of the government consolidation / shared services committee. **A list of committee members is located on p. 14. Documents containing useful information about conducting a statewide study are in *In League* (p. 105-111) in the Local League Resources section of the website and are also contained in the Appendix, beginning on pages 15-21.** Local Leagues should identify local chairs for the study and send their names and contact information to Stephanie Lopez at stephanie@lwvny.org. More information will follow shortly.

BOARD RESIGNATION

I am sad to report that Helene Fausold recently resigned her position as Membership Outreach Director of as the result of job demands. We will miss you Helene.

UPDATED DOCUMENTS

See p. 22-30 for the bylaws, as amended on May 16, 2009, p. 31-33 for a list of the current state board members and issues specialists, and p. 34-36 for the 2009-2010 calendar.

ISSUES AND ADVOCACY REPORT
Sally Robinson, Issues and Advocacy Vice President
robintwins@gmail.com, 518-465-4162

ISSUE AND ADVOCACY WEBSITE

We are in the process of reorganizing our *Advocacy* portion of the website so that it is more user-friendly and so that it serves as a repository of information of information about assorted issues for League members and the public at large. **A copy first page of the reworked section is attached at p. 37-41.** As of this writing, the financing education portion has been updated. More issue areas will follow. Any local League wishing to add materials to the website should send them to laura@lwvny.org.

CAPITOL BEAT – THE SAGA CONTINUES

The stalemate that paralyzed the New York Senate ended on July 9th when Senator Espada who had defected to the Republicans returned to the Democrat caucus giving them the majority they needed to control the chamber. The new leadership arrangement appears to be Espada as majority leader, John Sampson as leader of the democratic caucus and Malcolm Smith as Senate president pro tem.

In a surprise move, on July 8th Governor Paterson appointed Richard Ravitch as lieutenant governor. His legal authority to make this appointment was immediately challenged and is the subject of an ongoing court battle that is expected to end up in New York's highest court.

Before leaving on July 17th the Senate passed a number of bills that were time sensitive and adopted senate rules changes that the League views as a step forward in making the Senate more open and accountable. However, these rules also codify an inequitable distribution of both resources and member items between the majority and minority parties. For more details see the rules reform press release put out by the League and its reform coalition partners on July 16th.

The Senate returned for one day on August 6th to deal with New York City school issues and pass Mayoral control.

The state legislature is expected to return sometime during this summer or fall to deal with the burgeoning state deficit.

In the meantime please use the attached Statement on Senate Rules Changes press release sent on July 16th to continue to press for action on our Albany reform priorities and attached at p. 42. If you have any questions, you can call the office or e-mail me at robintwins@gmail.com

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

**Georgia DeGregorio, Vice President Member Services,
585-787-9692, georgiatd@frontiernet.net**

Your state Membership Team is preparing the Regional Directors program for the new League year. Each local league president will be contacted by a regional director and will receive a brief email summary of what took place at the preceding state board meeting.

Following this email each Regional Director will have a conference call with her group to discuss the summary as well as other topics of concern. It is very important to participate in this process since this is the most efficient way for local leagues to communicate their concerns and suggestions to the State league and vice versa.

By the time you receive this report, you will see many changes to our Membership Section in the “In League” document and on our State website. The information is the same in both places.

You will find a revised job description for Local League Membership Director followed by a list of Resources. The job description reflects some ideas that have been used for many years as well as many new approaches developed from the Membership Recruitment Initiative being conducted at the national level. Please compare this document to your own local league description and feel free to adapt as needed. You may find this information useful as you conduct your annual orientations.

The Resources are documents that have been scattered on our website under different titles. They are organized with a description that best explains their use. Included are two documents that have been completely revised: “Welcome to the League” and “The Basics”. If you would like copies of the “Welcome” brochure, please call the office with your order.

As always, I welcome your emails and phone calls.

**VOTER SERVICE REPORT:
HAPPY NEW ELECTION YEAR!
Maggie Moehring, Vice President/Voter Service
12 Coventry Road, Glenmont, NY 12077
E-mail: mmoehrin@nycap.rr.com**

This State Board Report for Voter Service will alert you to new resources as you gear up for your 2009 election season.

2009 VOTER'S GUIDES

The text of the *Voter's Guide Part I – Facts for Voters* is included as an attachment to this State Board Report on p. 44-49. As you know, many of our polling places will be participating in the pilot of the optical scanning equipment, and so the guide has a description of the process for pilot counties, in addition to a description of the not-so-new Ballot Marking Devices (BMDs). A camera-ready version in PDF format, and a text version, is on the web site, so that Leagues that wish to print the guide locally can do so.

While we are still awaiting the wording of the ballot proposal, there will be a constitutional amendment presented as pros and cons in the *Voter's Guide Part 2*. The amendment is yet another to the “forever wild” section of the constitution concerning the Adirondack Park to allow for a power line to traverse park land. You can see a discussion of that amendment at these web sites:

<http://www.adirondackalmanack.com/2009/06/constitutional-amendment-for-power-line.html>

<http://www.adirondackcouncil.org/Power%20line%20finished%3B%20amendment%20is%20not.pdf>

In addition, there will be information about the NYS Supreme Court judicial election process as there was in 2007. Please note that local Leagues order and pay for this guide separately from Part 1. **The order form for Part 2 is attached at p. 50. Please have your League complete the order form and submit it to the office by August 31, the deadline stated on the form.**

“YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE IN NEW YORK STATE” SERIES

Good news! Through the efforts of our wonderful Executive Director, we have received underwriting from the NYS Bar Association for the design work on this pamphlet series and for printing services. The results are posted on our web site and available for Leagues to print locally or to order in quantity from the State League office. Our series of five informational pamphlets covering the voting rights of college students, homeless individuals, the disabled, the mentally disabled and offenders looks great. **As the result of NYSBA's support, we are able to offer these publications to local Leagues for \$20.00 per 100. See our website home page for an order form.**

UNDERWRITING OF *VOTER'S GUIDES* AND *YRTV* SERIES

We have developed a standard letter to possible underwriters and purchasers of our publications, offering to include their logo and provide free copies in return for design and printing underwriting, and advertising our publications to organizations that might be interested in purchasing them. With the financial situation at State League being what it is, we hope to garner financial support with more predictable regularity for those things that we do so well.

ELECTION PROCESS FOR SUPREME COURT JUSTICES

New York has 12 judicial districts, which often include multiple counties. Trial courts within these districts at the Supreme Court level are presided over by justices who are elected for 14 year terms (or until they reach age 70, whichever comes first). Voters in almost all of the state judicial districts will elect one or more justices to these positions in November.

The process in place to nominate Supreme Court justice candidates separates the voters from direct involvement in the nominating procedures. On primary day this September, voters will be presented with a slate of delegates, by party, for whom to vote, not the judicial candidates themselves. These delegates participate in judicial district nominating conventions, where the Supreme Court judicial candidates are chosen. Delegates are typically individuals who are active in their respective political party organizations. In January 2006, this partisan method of selecting nominees was held unconstitutional by a Federal District Court as violating the first amendment rights of both voters and judicial candidates, but later held constitutional by the US Supreme Court, foiling this method of reforming the process. There are many opinions about how the process should be changed. Some support an amendment to the state constitution so that justices are appointed, not elected. In any case, this process is confusing for voters, and the League's explanations are always welcome.

ON NATIONAL'S WEB SITE: GOOD ADVICE FOR LOCAL LEAGUES

It's a good idea to check in on National's online offerings, particularly as a refresher before planning your own voter service activities. In the "*Tools for Leaders*" section under *Voter Service*, you can find the following:

[Candidate Participation Legal Guidance](#)

[FAQ's Candidate Forums-Debates](#)

[Voters' Guides Best Practices](#)

[Organizing Voter Service Activities](#)

LWVUS' FACE TO FACE: It's hard to find National's publication about holding candidate forums online; you can find it here:

http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Voter_Information2

Scroll down and you will see the link. Be aware that this document is password protected, mainly because it is out of date in some areas, so you will need to login to access it. An update to this document is still pending.

YOUTH PROGRAMS/CITIZEN EDUCATION

JoAnn Ross, Citizen Education/Youth Programs Director

THE YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

Background: In January 2009, the state board voted to incorporate additional responsibilities and a change of title for the Citizen Education Director position. The new title is *Director of Citizen Education and Youth Programs*. State Convention brought an additional focus on youth programs with a special new award for Youth Programs and a workshop on the various existing models of youth programs. In February 2009, I began identifying various activities relating to youth that our NYS leagues already engage in. Utilizing an email questionnaire and summarizing information from the 2008 Voter Surveys, it was learned that 25 leagues indicated they had participated in a youth program related to civic participation. (i.e.: Student Voter Registration drives, debates, mock elections, Take Me to Vote, Vote 18, etc.) This number does not include leagues that distribute voter registration information, but do not run an actual program. The numbers seem to indicate that Local Leagues have an interest in civic related youth programs.

In response to the poll of local Leagues, the state board recently decided to not continue the LeaderSpark affiliation agreement when it expires on November 1, 2009 and instead, we have decided to develop a League Leadership Initiative, which will contain modules on civic education, financial education for the real world, and leadership skills. By adopting the modular approach, our program will enable Leagues to adopt the program to the needs of their members and their students. We believe this flexibility will enable more Leagues to participate and will better meet the needs of all the state's diverse students.

Please remember that when the current affiliate agreement between the LWVNYSEF and LeaderSpark Inc., expires on November 1, 2009, that the materials are copyrighted and cannot be used after the expiration date unless you have negotiated an agreement to extend the period of usage. If you wish to use the materials after this date and would like help in negotiating an extension, please contact me or the state office.

STUDENT MOCK ELECTION GRANT

In an effort to move forward with the expansion of youth programs, LWVNYSEF (LEF) applied for the Federal Grant being offered by US Election Assistance Commission (EAC). LWVUS encouraged leagues to apply for this competitive grant to promote student engagement in mock elections. The LEF applied for funding for a two year project to develop and implement a fast-paced, interactive series of five lesson plans, culminating in mock elections that together constitute a Voting module, tied to the New York State Department of Education's Participation in Government (PIG) curriculum for high school seniors. If awarded the grant, the LEF will work in partnership with New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), political science professors at various colleges and universities throughout the state (UUP) and the not-for-profit Vote 18 organization (Vote 18).

VOTE 18: A CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS

Vote 18 is a fun, fast-paced interactive game taught at high schools during one class period. It teaches students the history of voting, makes it relevant in their lives, and engages them in the world of politics. The goal of Vote 18 is to motivate students to register to vote when they turn eighteen, show them the value of their vote, and motivate them to stay politically engaged over the long term. For information on how your local league can sponsor a Vote 18 program in your community, or to receive training in the Vote 18 program, contact: JoAnn Ross, Citizen Education/Youth Program Director at jross18@roadrunner.com or Stephanie Lopez, Program Coordinator at stephanie@lwvny.org.

APPENDIX

ORDER FORM FOR DUPLICATE STATE BOARD REPORTS

Electronic State Board Reports: Attach a sheet with the name and e-mail or FAX of each League member who wishes to receive an electronic copy of the SBR (No Charge).

Recipients and Addresses

Printed State Board Reports (6 issues a year) Number ___ x \$35 = Total \$ _____
Recipients and Addresses

**Please return the form and a check to the League office at
52 Grand Street, Albany, New York 12207**

STATE STUDY COMMITTEE LIST
Noreen Fisher, Chair

Paula	Blum	East Nassau LWV	paulawblum@aol.com
Minna	Buck	Syracuse LWV	mrb6745@aol.com
Phoebe	Goodman	Port Washington-Manhasset LWV	PBGoodman2@optonline.net
Anne	Huberman	Buffalo/Niagara LWV	anne.huberman@gmail.com
Donald	MacLaughlin	Syracuse LWV	donmac@twcny.rr.com
Hilda	Pato-Krol	Syracuse LWV	hkrol@twcny.rr.com
Clyde	Ohl	Syracuse LWV	clydeohl@verizon.net
Noreen	Fisher	Scarsdale LWV	noreen76@aol.com
Adam	Gaus	Suffolk ILO	jd2@earthlink.net
Janet	Zagoria	Westchester ILO	jd2@earthlink.net
Beth	Keigher	Rochester LWV	jkeigher@rochester.rr.com
Margie	VanMeter	Saratoga LWV	rvanmete@skidmore.edu
Francine	Rodger	Saratoga LWV	aerodger@aol.com

CONSENSUS MATERIALS

CONSENSUS

Consensus, or membership understanding and agreement, is the basis of the grassroots character and effectiveness of the League of Women Voters. The League is a study and action organization. Therefore it is important to have a clear expression of member views to determine what action to take. Consensus-taking is a complex procedure at the local, regional, state and national levels; it is puzzling to new members and challenging to experienced leaders.

What is Consensus?

As noted in *League Basics (In League)*, "The American Heritage Dictionary defines consensus as 'collective opinion or concord; general agreement or accord.' In the League 'consensus' is used (1) interchangeably with 'member agreement' to refer to the overall decision making process . . . by which a League board determines that there is substantial agreement among members on an issue, and (2) to refer to a specific technique used traditionally in the League to discuss and arrive at conclusions on issues . . ."

"Consensus/group discussion is the technique most often used in the League for reaching member agreement. It is a process whereby members participate in a group discussion of an issue. The 'consensus' reached by members through group discussion is not a simple majority, nor is it unanimity; rather it is the overall 'sense of the group' as expressed through the exchange of ideas and opinions."

Preparation for the Meeting

Extensive member participation at consensus meetings must be an overriding goal. It is also important that members be as well informed as possible. General information meetings during the course of the study, fact sheets and bulletin articles can interest members in the subject and increase their understanding of the issues involved.

The resource committee is responsible for preparing or adapting the discussion outline for the meeting. This outline will determine whether the meeting is interesting to those in attendance and whether consensus is, in fact, reached. In its preparation the resource committee should be guided by the advice of a discussion or unit leader who can view the outline from the members' point of view. The carefully planned agenda will have two unequal parts - a brief presentation of background material by the resource committee followed by the consensus discussion. An important objective is to limit the resource material that will be presented to what the group needs to know for informed decision-making. The bulk of the time must be reserved for discussion because it is the members who reach consensus, not the resource committee. Suggested time slots for all parts of the meeting are a valuable tool for the discussion leader.

Consensus questions and discussion questions are not identical nor do they serve the same purpose. Consensus questions are intended to identify specific areas of agreement among members as a basis for action; discussion questions provide the background which helps clarify member thinking on the subject. They may bring out philosophical differences or raise new implications. Discussion questions permit various points of view to be aired. The discussion outline for the consensus meeting should include both types of questions in order to develop and guide the discussion toward the intended goal: consensus.

The Discussion Leader

The most important prerequisite for a successful consensus meeting is a good discussion leader. Leaders must be trained to encourage all members to speak. They must welcome all points of view—even unpopular ones. They must be adept at making sure all the facts are presented and all pro and con arguments covered. They must make sure all sides of the issue are examined. Familiarity with the subject under discussion is a necessity in order to recognize the requirements for balance and the essential points to be covered. Leaders do not have to be members of the resource committee; a certain detachment can aid in carrying out the discussion-leading role but attendance at some resource committee meetings or special briefings is advisable so that the leaders can gain a basic understanding of the subject.

A discussion leader must pace the meeting so that all questions can be covered. Often, too much time is spent on the first question leaving inadequate time for the rest. Knowing how to move the group along without cutting off discussion is important. The leader should be attuned to repetition and recognize when arguments and opinions begin to be repetitive and nothing new is being said. As areas of agreement become apparent, the discussion leader should announce them so that the group can agree or disagree with the interpretation. When a specific consensus question is answered, the leader should say, "We agree that" In this way, members have a feeling of participation in the decision-making.

The Recorder

Having a recorder at a consensus meeting is imperative. The recorder should also be familiar with the consensus process in advance. Discussion leaders should be free to concentrate on their job without having to take notes or trust their memories. They call upon the recorders to summarize the discussion and agreements periodically for purposes of clarification. Recorders should limit their note-taking to the consensus questions or other areas of agreement that emerge.

The Resource Committee

The role of the resource committee at the consensus meeting is probably the most challenging. Its basic function is to supply the facts, when asked, without taking over the discussion or forcing its opinions on others. Varying, and even opposite, opinions based on the same facts are possible and valid. Opinions based on fallacies, however, should be corrected. The resource committee should not only give needed information but bring in pro and con arguments not covered and make sure all viewpoints are expressed.

The Absent Member

Can consensus be valid and representative when only, say, a quarter or even only a tenth of the membership participates? Yes - when two conditions are met:

- (1) if all members are given the opportunity to participate, and
- (2) if the subject is discussed from all points of view with all pros and cons fully presented. The quality of the discussion is as important as the quantity.

Adequate notice should be given of an upcoming meeting and its purpose. An effort should be made to see that consensus meetings are held at convenient times and places. Leagues should consider encouraging members to communicate their opinions in advance when they cannot attend the meetings.

What About Polling?

Polling has serious drawbacks as a tool for reaching member agreement. Consensus includes a careful examination and discussion of all facts and opinions. It is a meeting of minds after considering all shades of opinion. A poll is a consensus based on individual opinion rather than group discussion. It deprives the members of the opportunity of interacting with others in the process of shaping their views. It has the further disadvantage of fixing previously-held ideas and polarizing positions. This eliminates an important part of the program process and undercuts one of the strengths of the League - educating and informing its members.

Reaching Consensus

Does the League ever take a vote at a consensus meeting? Preferably not, because consensus is not based upon a simple majority. Most of the time the sense of the meeting can be determined from the discussion, but this becomes difficult, if everyone does not participate. It becomes almost impossible if many are silent. The discussion leader may say "Are there others who feel this way?" or "Am I correct in saying that we agree that" This will usually produce a response. If there is uncertainty, a show of hands may clarify whether there is substantial minority opinion, and thus consensus is lacking.

Can It Be Done at One Meeting?

Yes, but before solutions can be agreed upon, a full understanding and discussion of the problems must be undertaken. As much background information as possible should be provided. Some subjects require more information than others and, therefore, require more time.

Consensus is never really reached at a single meeting; it is merely formalized there. Members at a consensus meeting bring with them a knowledge of government, their own basic philosophy, knowledge of past League studies on related subjects, and a backlog of information gathered from newspapers, TV and other mass media.

The Board

Determining whether there is consensus is the responsibility of the local board. The board should be presented with recommendations for a consensus report by the resource committee and/or unit and discussion leaders. It should also receive a full report of the meeting(s) in order to evaluate the recommended report. What were the answers to the consensus questions? Was there enthusiasm for these answers or opposition, doubt or hesitancy to come to a conclusion? What other areas of agreement were reached? The minority as well as the majority view must be considered. The board also considers the number of members participating and the effectiveness of the discussion.

There may be a problem when consensus is taken at several unit meetings within one League. How does the board reconcile the reports if they differ? To do this it considers membership as a whole, not the individual units. Substantial agreement must be found among the members. This may be arrived at by adding the minority opinion in some units to the majority in others. If there is still a question, the board may decide to call a general meeting to determine if there are areas of agreement. A fuller discussion of all the pros and cons and all divergent viewpoints may result in a broader understanding of the problem and a clearer agreement on solutions.

When a Consensus Concerns a Regional, State or National Matter

When participating in a regional, state or national League consensus, it is important that the local League communicate as much as possible about the local conclusion to the appropriate board. This includes not only describing the consensus but evaluating its strength and the degree to which it represents the membership.

Sometimes a consensus question may be answered with one word, but often additional comments are needed to clarify the position. The accuracy of the final consensus depends upon good reporting on the part of the local League. Responses should be concise and direct, but there should also be enough elaboration to guide the reader in determining precisely what views are being expressed.

It is also important to include conclusions which may have come up as a by-product of the discussion, not necessarily as a direct response to a question. If several Leagues arrive at the same spontaneous reaction, it is a strong indication of its significance to members and merits inclusion in a final position.

In the rush to meet a deadline take the time to remember that the information being provided forms the basis of League position and can make a real difference in its formulation.

Finally, it is important that Leagues refrain from announcing their local consensus results (in bulletins or press releases) since their conclusions will become an integral part of a carefully worded statement based on the reports of all participating Leagues. It is that statement which then becomes newsworthy. Also premature announcement of the local League's consensus results may confuse both the public and local members if the final statewide or national consensus differs from that of the local League.

STATE CONSENSUS/CONCURRENCE GUIDELINES & POLICIES

General Principles

It is the responsibility of the local League board to determine whether or not the local League has reached consensus/concurrence and what that consensus/concurrence is.

The percentage of participating local Leagues, as well as the number of members represented by those Leagues determines the degree of agreement necessary to achieve a valid consensus or concurrence. Also, a valid consensus/concurrence should represent a fair geographic distribution.

Criteria for declaring a valid consensus/concurrence:

1. At least one-third of the local Leagues in NYS participate.
2. The participating Leagues represent three out of four designated geographic areas: Region I, Region II, Region III and Region IV.
3. Within each geographic area, at least 20% of that area's local Leagues.

Degree of agreement required:

1. A valid consensus/concurrence is dependent on agreement of 2/3 of the local Leagues participating.

2. Any question or part thereof which does not clearly reach this level of agreement is considered a "no consensus/concurrence" area for further League action.

CONSENSUS/CONCURRENCE POLICIES

If two or more Leagues meet together for consensus or concurrence, each local board must submit its own consensus/concurrence to the state or national office. Resource committee members participate only in the consensus/concurrence of their own local League. Non League members may not participate in a consensus/concurrence discussion. Individual MALs and individual members of MAL units may participate in any one local League's consensus/concurrence. On the reporting form, notation should be made of how many MALs participated. MALs will be sent study material and consensus/concurrence forms only on request. They shall be counted as a single unit if the lower of 10% or 5 individual MALs respond. The form will contain a line to identify MAL respondents.

(Revised by LWVNYS board 3/2008)

TIPS FOR DISCUSSION LEADERS

1. **Help create the right atmosphere**
 - a. Be relaxed and friendly, pleasant and informal. Be tactful!!! Show your interest by listening impartially to every opinion expressed. Be sure the group understands they are to exchange ideas freely, that every opinion is solicited and welcomed.
 - b. Make sure everyone is comfortable, sitting in a circle or semi-circle and has been introduced. Use name tags when necessary.
 - c. See that the leaders (discussion, resource, recorder) are part of the group, not apart. Make sure they can be seen and heard by everyone and vice versa.
2. **Have a plan to get discussion started**
 - a. Before beginning, repeating if necessary, make sure everyone is aware of the focus and scope of the discussion. Clearly define the issues to be discussed and underline by indicating related areas that will not be taken up.
 - b. Start discussion off with a provocative, carefully prepared kickoff question which calls for opinions, not facts, and stems directly from the introduction and leads to the first area to be discussed. Beware of questions that can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no".
 - c. Do not be afraid to wait a short time to allow the group to mobilize its thoughts. If there is no response after a reasonable length of time, rephrase the question, but do not use a different question. Do not call on people directly unless you are quite sure they have background on the question and would be willing to speak.
3. **Keep the discussion moving**

- a. Using the questions carefully prepared in the discussion outline, help the group to move from point to point. Remember to ask, not answer the questions. Refrain from injecting your own point of view into the discussion. Be prepared to bring out a point of view that is not represented.
 - b. Be sensitive to the group. Know your outline, but be flexible and don't insist on sticking slavishly to any plan. Try to see that all points in the outline are covered at some time. If the group disagrees, point it out. Usually this is all that is needed to bring the group back to the subject.
 - c. If the members start repeating themselves, stop and recap in order to focus the discussion and crystallize thinking. This will help the group to move on.
 - d. When agreement is reached in any area, or the reasons for conflicting opinions emerge, stop to summarize. This will give the group a feeling of accomplishment.
 - e. If the group gets hopelessly bogged down on any point, ask resource leader to provide additional information which may help to clarify the issue, or help the group to distinguish facts from feelings. If points of view cannot be reconciled, summarize both and move on.
 - f. Remember, the secret of keeping discussion moving is to recognize when the group is ready to move on. Lingering too long will strangle discussion with boredom; moving ahead too fast will strangle discussion with frustration.
4. **Be alert to problem situations**
- a. Over participants. See that no one holds the floor too long or too often. Refuse to be awed by the "dominant" person, the "expert." Call for another opinion from the group or resource leader. Help the "repeaters" by summarizing quickly the point they are making to the group. They repeat to make sure their views have come across and this will reassure them. Help the insecure "ramblers" to feel they have a place in the group. Sometimes a small assignment will help. Ask the "tangent" persons to relate their off-the-point comments to the discussion or throw out a question quickly to bring discussion back on the track. If the "story tellers" go on long or off the subject, warmly suggest that the yarn be saved for after the meeting.
 - b. Shy ones. Try to draw them out with a simple question when they indicate they are ready to contribute something--they will probably not speak up unless called on. On the other hand, remember that it is not mandatory for each person to verbalize at every meeting. If shy people feel more comfortable remaining silent, leave them alone. A simple "I can see by Jane's nod that she agrees with us" will recognize her non-verbal participation.
 - c. Side conversations. Can be handled by asking those conversing aside to share their thoughts with the group. If there is a general restlessness, the group may either be bored, in which case you need to help the group move on, or frustrated, and need more information or clarification.
 - d. Missing facts. If the group members do not have the answer to a question (including resource leader), don't let them worry about it. Assign someone to bring it back to the next meeting.
5. **End the meeting ON TIME!**
- a. Ask recorder to give a brief summary.

b. Make sure the group agrees with the summary. Ask for a show of hands to ratify conclusions if there is any doubt.

6. **Help prepare the written report**

a. Together with the resource leader, units chair, and recorder, take a few minutes at the close of the meeting to expand on the results of the meeting; assess extent of participation; whether the group was stimulated and interested or bored; whether people felt competent and comfortable in speaking on the topic, or inadequate to participate.

b. Note number of attendees; number of active participants; any leading of the group by a particularly strong or vocal individual(s).

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW YORK STATE BYLAWS
AS AMENDED MAY 2009

Article I
Name and Office

Sec. 1 Name. The name of this organization shall be the League of Women Voters of New York State, hereinafter referred to in these bylaws as “LWVNYS.” The LWVNYS is an integral part of the League of Women Voters of the United States, hereinafter referred to in these bylaws as “LWVUS”.

Article II
Purposes and Policy

Sec. 1 Purposes. The purposes of the LWVNYS shall be to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government and to act on selected governmental issues.

Sec. 2 Political Policy. The LWVNYS shall not support or oppose any political party or candidate.

Article III
Membership

Sec. 1 Eligibility. Any person who subscribes to the purposes and policy of the LWVNYS shall be eligible for membership.

Sec. 2 Types of Membership.

- a. Voting members. Citizens at least 18 years of age who join the LWVNYS at any level shall be voting members at all levels of League.
 - i. individuals who live within an area of a local League may join that League or any other local League; those who reside outside the area of any local League may join a local League or may be state members-at-large;
 - ii. those who have been members of the LWVUS for 50 years or more shall be honorary life members excused from the payment of dues
- b. Associate Members. All others who join the LWVNYS shall be associate members. Associate members are non-voting members.

Article IV
Officers

Sec. 1 Enumeration, Election and Term. The officers of the LWVNYS shall be a president, a first vice-president, with up to but no more than three additional vice-presidents, and either a secretary and a treasurer or a combined position of secretary/treasurer. The number of vice-presidents and whether the offices of secretary and treasurer shall be combined shall be recommended by the Nominating Committee. Any of those offices may not be eliminated or combined until the term of an elected officer is concluded. The Officers shall be elected by the

convention and hold office until the conclusion of the next convention or until their successors have been elected and qualified.

Sec. 2 Qualifications. Only voting members in the state of New York shall be elected or appointed to serve as officers or directors of the LWVNYS.

Sec. 3 President. The president shall preside at all meetings of the LWVNYS and of the board of directors, hereinafter referred to as “the board”, unless the president is absent or designates someone else to preside. In the absence or disability of the treasurer, the president may sign or endorse checks, drafts, and notes. The president shall be, ex officio, a member of all committees except the nominating committee and have such usual powers of supervision and management as may pertain to the office of the president and perform other duties designated by the board.

Sec. 4 Vice-presidents. In the event of the absence of the president, the first vice-president, or any of the vice-presidents, in order of rank, shall assume that office until the president’s return. If the board declares the office of president vacant, the first vice-president shall assume the office. If the first vice-president is unable to serve as president, any of the vice-presidents, in order of rank, shall assume that office until the next convention. In the event that none of the vice-presidents is able to serve in this capacity, the board shall elect one of its elected members to fill the vacancy. The vice-presidents shall perform such other duties as the president and board may designate.

Sec. 5 Secretary. The secretary shall keep, or cause to be kept, minutes of convention, council, and meetings of the board; shall notify all officers and directors of their election; shall sign with the president all contracts and other instruments when so authorized by the board; and shall perform such other functions as the president and board shall direct.

Sec. 6 Treasurer. The treasurer shall, at the direction of the president and the board, perform such financial oversight of the professional staff of the organization, as is appropriate under the circumstances, and such other duties as may customarily pertain to the office; and shall arrange for an annual audit of the books by a certified public accountant.

Article V
Board

Sec. 1 Number, Selection, and Term. The board shall consist of the officers of the LWVNYS, up to five but not less than three elected directors, and up to four appointed directors. The number of elected directors shall be recommended by the Nominating Committee. The elected directors shall be elected by the convention and shall serve until the conclusion of the next convention or until their successors have been elected and qualified. The elected members of the board shall appoint such additional directors, not exceeding four, as they deem necessary to carry on the work of the LWVNYS. The terms of office of the appointed directors shall expire concurrently with the terms of office of the elected directors.

Sec. 2 Absences and Vacancies.

- a. **Absences.** In the event that a board member is absent from two consecutive meetings of the board, without excuse accepted as satisfactory by the directors,

that position may be declared vacant by a majority vote of the remaining board members.

- b. Vacancies. A board position shall be vacant in the event a board member dies or resigns, a position is declared vacant pursuant to Section 2a of this Article, or a board member is determined to have engaged in misconduct by three-fifths of the remaining board.
- c. Any vacancy in the board other than in the presidency may be filled until the next convention by a majority vote of the remaining members of the board.

Sec. 3 Powers and Duties.

- a. The board shall have full charge of the property and fiscal business of the LWVNYS with full power and authority to manage and conduct the same, subject to the instructions of the convention.
- b. The board shall plan and direct the work necessary to carry out the program on state governmental matters as adopted by the convention.
- c. The board shall accept responsibility delegated to it by the board of the LWVUS for:
 - i. the organization and development of local Leagues;
 - ii. carrying out of a program;
 - iii. providing assistance to the local Leagues in obtaining funds to further the work of a local League or the LWVNYS; and
 - iv. guidance of intrastate inter-League organizations hereinafter referred to as ILOs.
- d. The board may create member-at-large (hereinafter referred to as MAL) units, and establish rules and regulations for their operations.
- e. The board shall create and designate such special committees as it may deem necessary.
- f. The board may appoint an executive committee consisting of no fewer than five members of the board. The executive committee shall exercise such power and authority as may be delegated to it by the board and shall report to the board, at the earliest opportunity, on all actions taken by it between regular meetings of the board.
- g. The consent of the board and the signature of two officers shall be necessary to endorse, transfer, and deliver any certificate of stock, bond or other security or real property in the name and on behalf of the LWVNYS. The board may delegate such authority to sign or endorse checks, drafts, and notes as it may from time to time see fit.

Sec. 4 Regular Meetings. There shall be at least two regular meetings of the board annually. At the direction of the president, at least two weeks before each regular meeting, each board member shall be sent a written notice giving the time and place of such meeting.

Sec. 5 Special Meetings. The president may call special meetings of the board, and/or shall call a special meeting upon the written request of five members of the board. Members of the board shall be notified of the time and place of special meetings by fax, e-mail, or letter sent at least six days prior to such meeting. During convention or council, however, the president may, or upon the request of five members of the board shall, call a special meeting of the board by giving members of the board a written notice of the time and place of said meeting.

Sec. 6 Quorum. A majority of the members of the board shall constitute a quorum and a majority of the members in attendance at any board meeting shall, in the presence of a quorum, decide its action. Any member of the board may participate in a meeting by means of conference telephone or similar communications equipment that allows all persons participating in the meeting to hear each other at the same time; participation by such means shall constitute presence in person at a meeting.

Sec. 7 Compensation. Directors shall not receive compensation for services rendered to or on behalf of the LWVNYS except that members of the board may be reimbursed for expenses reasonably incurred on behalf of the LWVNYS upon presentation to the treasurer or secretary/treasurer of reasonable detailed receipts thereof.

Article VI

Recognition of Local and Provisional Leagues

Sec. 1 Local Leagues. Local Leagues are those Leagues which have been so recognized by the LWVUS.

Sec. 2 Recognition of Local Leagues. The LWVNYS board shall recommend to the LWVUS board recognition of any group in the state which fulfills recognition requirements for local Leagues as adopted by the national convention. When such recognition is granted, the local Leagues shall become an integral part of the LWVUS and the LWVNYS.

Sec. 3 Withdrawal of Recognition. When a local League recurrently fails to fulfill recognition requirements, the board shall recommend to the LWVUS board that recognition be withdrawn. Final action rests with the LWVUS board. All funds held by such dissolved Leagues shall be paid to the LWVNYS after payment of all liabilities.

Sec. 4 Member-at-Large Units. When a group of people in a community in which no local League exists wishes to form a League of Women Voters, it may be organized into a Member-at-Large unit by the board under the requirements adopted by the convention of the LWVUS. It shall remain a MAL unit until such time as it has fulfilled the recognition requirements for local Leagues, or until its recognition has been withdrawn. All funds held by a MAL unit from which recognition has been withdrawn shall be paid to the LWVNYS.

Sec. 5 Inter-League Organizations-ILOs. Members enrolled in local Leagues may organize ILOs in order to promote the purposes of the League and to take action on county, metropolitan or regional governmental matters. The LWVNYS board shall recommend to the LWVUS board that such ILO be recognized, provided requirements adopted by the national convention have been met. The board has responsibility for the guidance of ILOs. In the event of recurrent failure of an ILO to fulfill these requirements, the board shall recommend to the LWVUS board that it withdraw recognition from such ILO. All funds held by an ILO from which recognition has been withdrawn shall be prorated among its member Leagues.

Article VII
Financial Administration

Sec. 1 Fiscal Year. The fiscal year of the LWVNYS shall be from July 1 to June 30 of the following year.

Sec. 2 Financial Support. Each local League shall make an annual per-member and household payment to the LWVNYS in the amount to be determined by a 3/5 vote of those present and voting at each convention. Local Leagues shall be excused from making per-member payments for paid life or honorary life members. Member-at-Large Units shall pay dues to the LWVNYS in an amount to be determined by the LWVNYS board.

Sec. 3 Budget. The board shall submit to the convention or council for adoption a proposed budget for the ensuing year. This proposed budget shall provide for the support of the LWVNYS. A copy of the proposed budget shall be sent to the president of each local League and ILO and each MAL unit chair at least six weeks in advance of the convention or council. A budget shall be adopted by a majority vote, except that the per-member-payment shall be approved as provided in section 2 of this article. The practice of preparation and implementation of a two-year budget may be adopted by a vote of two-thirds of the delegates present at convention. Should a two-year budget be implemented, in the interim year, the board shall report to the delegates at council on the status of the finances of the organization and budgetary items.

Sec. 4 Budget Committee. The budget shall be prepared by a committee which shall be appointed for that purpose by the board at least four months in advance of the convention or council. The budget committee shall consist of no fewer than five members including a chair and the treasurer. The majority of the members of this committee, including the chair, shall not be members of the state board. Except for the treasurer, each member of the budget committee shall be from a different local League.

Sec. 5 Distribution of Funds on Dissolution. In the event of the dissolution of the LWVNYS, all moneys and securities which may at the time be owned by or under the control of the LWVNYS shall be paid to the LWVUS after the state board has paid or made provision for the payment of all the liabilities of the LWVNYS. All other property of whatsoever nature, whether real, personal, or mixed which may at the time be owned or under the control of the LWVNYS shall be disposed of to such a person, organization, or corporation for such public, charitable or educational use and purposes as the state board in its discretion may designate.

Sec. 6 Indemnification. Every LWVNYS director, officer or specified representative of the LWVNYS shall be indemnified against all expenses and liabilities, including counsel fees, reasonably incurred or imposed upon them in connection with any proceeding to which they may be made a party, or in which they may become involved by reason of being or having been a director, officer or specified representative, or any settlement thereof, whether the person is a director, officer or specified representative at the time such expenses are incurred, except in such cases wherein the individual is adjudged guilty of willful misfeasance or malfeasance in the performance of duties. The foregoing right of indemnification shall be in addition to and exclusive of all other rights to which the indemnified may be entitled. Indemnification will be up to the amount insured.

Article VIII
Convention

Sec. 1 Place, Date, and Call. A convention of the LWVNYS shall be held biennially. The time and place of the convention shall be determined by the board. At the direction of the president, a call for the convention shall be sent to the president of each local League and ILO, and chair of each MAL unit not less than three months prior to the opening date of the convention fixed in said call. Thereafter the board may advance or postpone the opening date of the convention not more than two weeks from the date fixed in the first call. A final call for the convention shall be sent by the president to the president of each local League, ILO, and to the chair of each MAL unit, at least 30 days before convention.

Sec. 2 Composition. The convention shall consist of the delegates of the local Leagues, ILOs and MAL units, as provided in section 4 of this article, and the members of the board.

Sec. 3 Qualifications of Delegates and Voting. All delegates shall be voting members of the League. Each delegate representing a local League, ILO, or MAL unit shall be entitled to vote only if that League, ILO or MAL unit has met its per-member-payment responsibilities. The LWVNYS board may make an exception in the case of proven hardship. No delegate shall be entitled to more than one vote, and absentee or proxy voting shall not be permitted. Final determination of a delegate's qualifications or credentials shall be made by the convention.

Sec. 4 Representation. The members of the LWVUS who are organized into recognized local Leagues, ILOs, and MAL units in the state of New York shall be entitled to voting representation at the convention as follows: each local League shall be represented by the president or an alternate. In addition to the president or alternate, each local League is entitled to one delegate for the first 40 members. Leagues having more than 40 members shall be entitled to one delegate for each additional 40 members or major fraction thereof. The record in the state office of paid-up voting members as of January 1 of the year of the convention shall determine the official membership count for this purpose. Each recognized ILO shall be entitled to one voting delegate to be elected by its board of directors. Each MAL unit shall be entitled to one voting delegate to be chosen by its members.

Sec. 5 Authorization for Action. The convention shall consider and authorize a program for action; shall elect officers, directors, the chair and two members of the nominating committee; shall adopt a budget for the ensuing year; and shall transact such other business as may be presented.

Sec. 6 Quorum. A quorum shall consist of a majority of the delegates registered at the convention provided that not less than one-half of the local Leagues are represented at convention.

Article IX
Council

Sec. 1 Place, Date and Call. A meeting of the council shall be held in the interim year between conventions, approximately 12 months after the preceding convention. The time and place of the meeting shall be determined by the board. At the direction of the LWVNYS president, a formal call shall be sent to the president of each local League and ILO, and to the chair of each MAL unit. This call shall be no more than 50 nor less than 10 days before a council meeting. Council business may be conducted by mail, if so determined by the board. A special meeting of the council by approved forum may be called by a majority of the local Leagues, or by the President upon the vote of a majority of the board.

Sec. 2 Composition. Delegates to council, conducted by approved forum, shall be comprised of the board, each of whom shall have one vote, the president of each ILO or an alternate, the president of each local League or an alternate, and the chair of each MAL unit or an alternate. The delegates representing each ILO, local League, and the chair of each MAL, shall each have two votes at council. Local Leagues with membership over 500 shall be entitled to one additional delegate at a council meeting. At council conducted by approved forum, those delegates of local Leagues with membership over 500 shall each be entitled to one additional vote, making a total of three.

Sec. 3 Qualifications of Delegates. Each delegate shall be a voting member of the LWVNYS.

Sec. 4 Authorization for Action. The council shall consider program, methods of operation and the financial status of the organization, including a proposed or ongoing budget, as presented by the LWVNYS board. The council is authorized to make such modifications of the program and, if applicable, an ongoing budget, as shall be necessary to meet altered conditions, provided that notice of proposed modifications shall have been sent by the LWVNYS board to the president of each local League and ILO, and to the chair of each MAL unit, at least six weeks in advance of the meeting of the council. A two-thirds majority of the delegates present and voting at a council meeting shall be necessary to adopt the changes. A two-thirds majority of the votes cast by delegates to council conducted by mail shall be necessary to adopt such changes. The council shall transact such other business as shall be presented.

Sec. 5 Quorum. A quorum for the transaction of business at a council meeting shall consist of a majority of the delegates registered at the council. A quorum for the transaction of business at council conducted by mail shall be not less than one-half of the local Leagues.

Article X

Nominations and Elections

Sec. 1 Nominating Committee. The nominating committee shall consist of five members, two of whom shall be members of the board. The chair and two members who shall not be members of the board shall be elected by the convention. Nomination for these offices shall be made by the current nominating committee. Further nominations may be made from the floor of the convention. The other members of the committee shall be appointed by the board immediately after the convention. Vacancies occurring in the nominating committee shall be filled by the board.

Sec. 2 Suggestions by Local Leagues and MAL Units. The nominating committee chair shall solicit from the president of each local League, ILO, and the chair of each MAL unit, suggestions for nominations for the offices to be filled.

Sec. 3 Suggestions for Nominations. Suggestions for nominations shall be sent to the chair of the nominating committee at least six months before convention. Any member may send suggestions to the chair of the nominating committee.

Sec. 4 Decisions of the Committee. Decisions of the committee shall be by the concurrence of the majority of the full committee.

Sec. 5 Report of the Nominating Committee and Nominations from the Floor. The report of the nominating committee of its nominations for officers, directors, and the chair and two members of the succeeding nominating committee shall be sent to the president of each local League and ILO, and to the chair of each MAL unit, six weeks before the convention. The report shall be presented on the first day of the convention. Immediately following the presentation of this report, nominations may be made from the floor by any member of the convention, provided that the consent of the nominee has been secured.

Sec. 6 Election. The election shall be under the direction of an election committee appointed by the president on the first day of the convention. The election shall be by ballot, except that when there is but one nominee for each office, it may be by voice vote. A majority vote of those present and qualified to vote and voting shall constitute an election.

Article XI Program

Sec. 1 Principles. The Principles adopted by the national convention and supported by the League as a whole constitute the authorization for the adoption of the LWVNYS program.

Sec. 2 Program. The program of the LWVNYS shall consist of:

- a. action to implement the Principles, and
- b. concerted study and action on those state governmental issues chosen by the LWVNYS convention.

Sec. 3 Convention Action. The convention shall act upon the program using the following procedures:

- a. Local League, ILO and MAL unit boards may make recommendations for a program to the board at least three months prior to the convention.
- b. The board shall consider the recommendations and shall formulate a proposed program which shall be submitted to the president of each local League and ILO, and to the chair of each MAL unit, at least six weeks prior to the convention.
- c. A majority vote shall be required for the adoption of the program proposed by the LWVNYS board.
- d. Any recommendation for the program submitted to the board at least three months before the convention, but not proposed by the board, may be

adopted by the convention, provided consideration is ordered by a majority vote and the proposal for adoption receives a three-fifths vote.

Sec. 4 Council Action. The council may modify or change the program as provided in Article IX.

Sec. 5 Member Action. Members may act in the name of the LWVNYS only when authorized to do so by the board.

Sec. 6 Local League, ILO and MAL Unit Action. Local Leagues, ILOs, and MAL units may take action on state governmental matters only when authorized to do so by the LWVNYS board. Local Leagues, ILOs, and MAL units must act only in conformity with, or not contrary to, the position taken by the LWVNYS.

Article XII

National Convention and Council

Sec. 1 National Convention. The board shall elect the number of delegates to the national convention that was allotted to the LWVNYS under the provisions of the bylaws of the LWVUS.

Sec. 2 National Council. The board shall elect the number of delegates to the national council that was allotted to the LWVNYS under the provisions of the bylaws of the LWVUS.

Article XIII

Parliamentary Authority

Sec. 1 Parliamentary Authority. The rules contained in Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, shall govern the LWVNYS in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these bylaws.

Article XIV

Amendments

These bylaws may be amended at any biennial convention by a two-thirds vote of the delegates present and voting. Proposed changes shall be submitted to the board at least three months prior to a convention. All such proposed amendments shall be sent by the board to the president of each local League and ILO, and to the chair of each MAL unit, at least six weeks prior to the convention, together with the recommendations of the board. The presidents of all local Leagues shall notify the members of their respective Leagues of the proposed amendments. The failure of a local president to give such notice or failure of any member to receive such notice shall not invalidate amendments to the bylaws adopted at any convention.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW YORK STATE

62 Grand Street, Albany, New York 12207

Telephone: 518-465-4162 * Fax: 518-465-0812

Website: www.lwvny.org * E-Mail: lwvny@lwvny.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

May 2009/May 2011

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Betsey Swan, 10 Norwood Drive, Menands 12204
(Albany LWW)

518-426-3711
Email: betsey@lwvny.org

1st VICE PRESIDENT/MEMBERSHIP

Georgia T. DeGregorio, 337 Reef Point Circle, Webster 14580
(Rochester LWW)

585-787-9692
Email: georgiatd@frontiernet.net

2nd VICE PRESIDENT/ISSUES & ADVOCACY

Sally Robinson, 154 East 74th Street, New York 10021
(NYC LWW)

212-879-4575 Home/914-441-5144 Cell
Email: robintwins@gmail.com

3rd VICE PRESIDENT/VOTER SERVICE

Maggie Moehringer, 12 Coventry Road, Glenmont 12077
(Albany LWW)

518-475-0969
Email: mmoehrin@nycap.rr.com

4th VICE PRESIDENT/DEVELOPMENT

Lucille Argenzia, 114 Fourth Street, Rome 13440
(Utica/Rome LWW)

315-337-7043
Email: luciluci67@yahoo.com

SECRETARY/TREASURER

Adie Shore, 8 Oakstwain Road, Scarsdale 10583
(Scarsdale LWW)

914-472-5175 Home/914-420-5947 Cell
Email: absnyny@aol.com

DIRECTORS

CITIZEN EDUCATION/YOUTH PROGRAMS

JoAnn Ross, 116 Cranburne Lane, Williamsville 14221
(Buffalo/Niagara LWW)

716-631-9351
Email: jross18@roadrunner.com

GRASSROOTS LOBBY

Cheryl Feldman, 40 Rambling Brook Road, Chappaqua 10514
(New Castle LWW)

914-238-7860
Email: cfeld10284@aol.com

MEMBERSHIP OUTREACH

VACANT

AT-LARGE

Toni Coffee, 160 West End Avenue, Apt. 4D, New York 10023
(NYC LWW)

212-873-5410
Email: tonicoffee@aol.com

ISSUES SPECIALIST

ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION (CO-CHAIRS)

Debra Merryweather, 327 Wilmore Place, Syracuse 13208

315-455-5210

Email: dapearlie@earthlink.net

Therese Warden, 126 Russell Avenue, Buffalo 14214

716-833-7124

Email: theresewarden@verizon.net

CHILDREN'S ISSUES

Ellen Kotlow, 205 Forest Haven Drive, Slingerlands 12159

518-765-3275

Email: ekotlow@aol.com

COURT RESTRUCTURING

Helga Schroeter, 1436 Lowell Road, Schenectady 12308

518-370-5042

Email: helgasasquith@verizon.net

DEATH PENALTY

Ann Brandon, 64 Salisbury Rd, Delmar 12054

518-439-4332

Email: ambrandon2@verizon.net

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Georgia T. DeGregorio, 337 Reef Point Circle, Webster 14580

585-787-9692

Email: georgiatd@frontiernet.net

EDUCATION FINANCE

Marian Bott, 1148 Fifth Avenue, New York 10128

212-534-4076 Home/914-588-4212 Cell

Email: sydneymab@aol.com

GOVERNMENT/GUN CONTROL

Aimee Allaud, 85 Melrose Avenue, Albany 12203 (HAVA)

518-482-2617

Email: 85Aimee@nycap.rr.com

GREAT LAKES

Ann Ingleman, 123 Thistle Leah, Williamsville 14221

716- 634-2596

Email: aqingleman@yahoo.com

HEALTH CARE

Donna Packard-Mahoney, 28 Burton Lane, Loudonville, NY 12144

518-915-1254 Home/518-221-1904 Cell

Email: dmahoney@nycap.rr.com

HISTORIAN

Sydelle Herzberg, 46 Longue Vue Avenue, New Rochelle 10804

914-632-7745

Email: sherzb@aol.com

JUDICIAL

Lenore Banks, 151 Alberta Drive, Amherst 14226

716-836-5240 Phone

Email: lenorebanks@gmail.com

LEAD POISONING

Joan S. Rosenthal, 133 Dunrovin Lane, Rochester, 14618

585-244-6255

Email: joanmarv@rochester.rr.com

LEGISLATIVE

Barbara Bartoletti, 52 Brinker Drive South, N. Greenbush 12144

518-286-1536 Home/518-469-8905 Cell

Email: bbheck1@yahoo.com

NATURAL RESOURCES

Roberta Wiernik, 43 Longview Lane, Chappaqua 10514

914-241-7242

Email: RFWiernik@aol.com

PAY EQUITY (CO-CHAIRS)

Lois Haignere, 28 Bentwood Court, Guilderland, NY 12203

518-608 4196 Home/518-464-0991Office

Email: haigner@nycap.rr.com

Barbara Thomas, 220 West Milton Road, Ballston Spa, NY 12020

518-885-9769

Email: rthomas59@nycap.rr.com

REPRODUCTIVE CHOICES

Barbara Bartoletti

TRANSPORTATION

Gladys Gifford, 174 Capen Boulevard, Amherst 14226

716-836-2825

Email: schuford@earthlink.net

URBAN SPRAWL (CO-CHAIRS)

Ruth Bonn, 47 Bruce Drive, Alplaus 12008

518-384-0804

Email: rooty@nycap.rr.com

Anne Huberman, 303 Highland Avenue, Buffalo 14222

716-882-3083

Email: anne.huberman@gmail.com

Nominating Committee Chair

Janalyn Travis-Messer (*Shelter Island LWV*)

PO Box 919, Shelter Island, NY 11964

jtm0054@aol.com

Nominating Committee Members

Susan Wilson (*Hamptons LWV*)

sswilson@hamptons.com

Mary Lou Classen (*Saratoga LWV*)

wernercl@localnet.com

Nominating Committee LWNYS Board Representatives

JoAnn Ross

Cheryl Feldman

LWVNYS STAFF

Laura Ladd Bierman, Executive Director

Stephanie Lopez, Program Coordinator

Michael Durocher, Staff Accountant

laura@lwvny.org

stephanie@lwvny.org

lwvny@lwvny.org

LWVNYS
2009-2010 Calendar

July 2009

- 1 Beginning of Fiscal Year
- 1 LL PMP Due—1st Quarterly Payment
- 15 Bi-Monthly Lobbyist Report/Semi-Annual Client Report
- 15 *Board Meeting # 1 Evening Social*
- 16 Board Meeting #1 Start: 8:00AM – 5:00 PM
- 22 SBR #1/State News #1 Deadline (Election Information)

August 2009

- 15 State News #1/SBR #1 distributed (Election Information, Study Committee Contact List, Criteria for Declaring a Valid Consensus/Concurrence)

September 2009

- 4 Board Report, SBR # 2/ State News #2 Deadline for Submission (Voter Service/Development Survey—both due in December, SIA LL Participation Form, Legislative Agenda Order form)
- 9 Board Meeting #2 Start: 4:00PM
- 10 Board Meeting #2 Start: 8:00AM
- 15 Primary Day
- 15 Bi-Monthly Lobbyist Report
- 15 Mail 2nd Quarter PMP Notice to LL Treasurers w/Grants Management Report
- 23 SBR #2/State News #2 distributed

October 2009

- 1 LL PMP Due—2nd Quarterly Payment

November 2009

- 3 Election Day
- 4 Education Foundation Appeal to Printer
- 6 Board Report, SBR # 3/ State News #3 Deadline for Submission (LL Delegates to National Convention Due April 14, LL Check-Up Due February 17, SIA)
- 11 Veteran's Day
- 11 Board Meeting #3 Start 4:00PM
- 12 Board Meeting #3 Start 8:00AM
- 15 Bi-Monthly Lobbyist Report
- 18 SBR # 3/ State News #3 distributed (Legislative Agenda/SIA)

December 2009

- Two-Year Lobbyist Registration Form Due
- 9 Legislative Packet Background Material Deadline
- 14 Remind local Leagues to update their databases
- 15 Mail 3rd Quarter PMP Notice to LL Treasurers w/Grants Management Report
- 15 LL Voter Service/Development Survey, LL SIA Coordinator & Legislative Agenda Forms Due—YELLOW Sheets in November SBR

January 2010

- 1 LL PMP Due—3rd Quarterly Payment
- 4 Board Report, SBR # 4/ State News #4 Legislative Packet Background Deadline (Council/SIA)
- 4 League Appeal Draft
- 13 Off Board Specialist Meeting Start 11:00 AM
- 13 Budget Committee Meeting Start 1:00PM
- 13 Board Meeting # 4 Start: 4:00PM
- 14 Board Meeting #4 Start: 8:00AM
- 15 Bi-Monthly Lobbyist Report/Semi-Annual Client Report
- 20 SBR # 4/ State News #4 Legislative Packet distributed (Council/SIA)
- 27 League Appeal to Printer
- 27 SIA Packets to Coordinators

February 2010

- 1-12 Get final Membership Numbers from Lela at National
- 1-12 E-mail Nassau, Suffolk and Westchester ILO Official PMP #s for their LL
- 1-12 Update State League Database/CATT Database
- 17 LL Check-Up Due YELLOW Form in January SBR

March 2010

- 12 Board Report, SBR # 5/ State News #5 Council Packet Submission Deadline (Budget Committee Memo, Proposed Budget, Yellow Sheets—League Acceptance of Budget, Direction to the Board and Council Report Evaluation---due June 2, Annual Reports)
- 15 Bi-Monthly Lobbyist Report
- 15 Contact Printer Regarding Raffle
- 15 Mail 4th Quarter PMP Notice to LL Treasurers w/Grants Management Report
- 17 SIA Student Paperwork Due
- 16 Board Meeting #5 Start: 4:00PM
- 17 Board Meeting #5 Start: 8:00AM
- 24 SBR # 5/ State News #5 distributed

April 2010

- 1 LL PMP Due—4th Quarterly Payment
- 11-14 Students Inside Albany
- 14 Council Packet Mailed
- 14 Raffle Tickets Mailed
- 14 LL Delegates to National Convention Due

May 2010

- 7 Board Report, SBR # 6/ State News #6 Deadline (Council Highlights/LL Update Form/Voter Guide Order form)
- 12 Board Meeting # 6 Start: 4:00PM
- 13 Board Meeting # 6 Start: 8:00AM
- 13 Raffle Drawing
- 15 Bi-Monthly Lobbyist Report

June 2010

- 1 Remind board that fiscal year is ending and submit any outstanding expense reports)
- 2 Local League Lobby Reports Due—YELLOW sheets from Legislative Packet
- 2 League Acceptance of Budget, Direction to the Board and Council Report Evaluation Due—YELLOW sheets from Council Kit
- 2 ILO's get \$5 rebate for each MAL
- 11-15 National Convention - Atlanta**
- 28 SBR # 6/ State News #6 distributed (Council Highlights)
- 31 End of Fiscal Year

Template for New Advocacy Webpage

League Mission

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

What is Action?

"Action is agitating, organizing, educating, pleading, and persuading" - said Carrie Chapman Catt, a leader of the women's suffrage movement and founder of the League of Women Voters.

Today, action is whatever the League does to influence government officials to implement the League's program goals. Action is sending emails, writing letters, visiting public officials, mobilizing public support and testifying at hearings.

How does the League Take Action?

All League action is taken in accordance with positions arrived at after study and a consensus process. League positions and the history of actions taken under these positions are found in [Impact on Issues](#) (Click to view Impact on Issues). All action is taken to further our positions, with emphasis on those items contained in our Legislative Agenda (Click to see current Legislative Agenda) and [Legislative Packet](#) (Click here to see current Legislative Packet.) Off-Board Specialists in various areas develop [Annual Plans and Action Agendas](#) (Click here to view current Annual Plans and Action Agendas, which articulate the activities they anticipate during the legislative session.

CATT (Citizen Action Toolkit)

[CATT \(Citizen Action Toolkit\)](#)

Named after the League's founder, Carrie Chapman Catt. A central part of the mission of the League of Women Voters is to encourage the active and informed participation of citizens in their government. To that end, the League has created this easy-to-use resource that enables citizens to find a wealth of information about our state and federal governments.

Use our toolkit to contact your elected officials, or to send a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Support League issues with just a few clicks of your mouse or take a moment to craft a letter of your own. Sign up for action alerts on the issues that are important to you. Click on the link above to make your voice heard!!!

Coalition Membership

[Coalition Membership List](#) (2/10/2009)

To Get Involved

As an organization that operates and advocates at the local, state, and national levels, the League actively encourages individuals to get involved at all levels of government. Advocacy ranges from writing a letter to running a legislative campaign. If you would like to become more involved in League advocacy, [CLICK HERE](#) (Insert e-mail link to Issues and Advocacy Director at the League office) or call us at 518-465-4162. Training will be provided to those who are new to the advocacy arena.

Organization of the Advocacy Website

This website is in the process of being updated to reflect League positions, underlying educational materials, and League action for each of the areas in which we operate. It functions both as an educational resource for the casual observer and a more comprehensive resource for those actively involved in advocacy.

It is organized by issue area. Issues will be listed as they are added. For further information about specific issues, click on the issue of interest.

Individual Advocacy Areas



EDUCATION: EDUCATION FINANCE; CHARTER SCHOOLS; REAL PROPERTY TAXATION; THE STAR PROGRAM; REAL PROPERTY TAX CIRCUIT BREAKER RELIEF

Helpful Links for Transparency in NYS Government Information

- Open Book NY-- Office of the State Comptroller
openbooknewyork.com
- Project Sunlight – NYS Office of the Attorney General, A Public Integrity Initiative
sunlightny.com
- See Through NY – Empire Center for NYS Policy, A Project of the Manhattan Institute for

(As the different issue areas are inserted, the material below this point will be slotted into the area in which it belongs, eventually eliminating the long list of material that follows.)

Testimony

- [Testimony Before NYS Assembly Committees on Ethics Reform \(6/9/2009\)](#) **NEW**
- [Testimony Before NYS Assembly Standing Committee on Insurance \(6/8/2009\)](#)
- [Testimony before NYS Senate Committee on Elections on Campaign Finance Reform \(6/3/2009\)](#)
 - [Memorandum on Campaign Finance Reform \(6/5/2009\)](#)
- [Testimony before Senate Ethics Committee \(6/2/2009\)](#)
 - [Memorandum on Ethics Reform \(6/5/2009\)](#)
- [Testimony to the NYS Senate Elections Committee \(5/11/2009\)](#)
- [Testimony to NYS Senate Elections Committee \(4/24/2009\)](#)
Testimony given concerning voter registration legislation before NYS Senate Elections Committee.
- [Testimony Before the NYS Senate Temporary Committee on Rules Reform \(2/10/2009\)](#)
LWV of Syracuse Metropolitan Area
- [Testimony on Behalf of LWVNYS & NYVV, before the NYC Board of Elections \(3/4/2009\)](#)
Testimony in support of two paper ballot marker-optical scan systems being considered for adoption by NYC.

2009-2010 Budget Testimony

- [Local Government/General Government \(1/28/2009\)](#)
- [Transportation \(1/28/2009\)](#)
- [Healthcare/Medicaid Budget Testimony \(2/2/2009\)](#)
- [Education Testimony \(2/2/2009\)](#)
- [Testimony on Bigger, Better Bottle Bill \(3/4/2009\)](#)
Testimony before the Senate Standing Committee on Environmental Conservation

NEW 2009-2010 Press Releases

- [Groups Cheer Passage of Bigger Better Bottle Bill \(4/3/2009\)](#)
- [Bottle Bill Update Will Yield Big Benefits for New Yorkers \(2/10/2009\)](#)
- [Why Lever Voting Machines Do Not Provide An Acceptable Method of Voting for New Yorkers \(2/10/2009\)](#)

2009-2010 Legislative Memos

Memorandum in Support

- [Memorandum in Support of A.4015 Affidavit Ballot Serving as Voter Registration \(6/9/2009\)](#) **NEW**

- with NYS Constitution (6/9/2009) **NEW**
- [Memorandum in Support of A.7347 Providing Additional Time to Apply for an Absentee Ballot \(6/9/2009\)](#) **NEW**
- [Memorandum in Support of S.248 Prohibiting the Sale of Flavored Cigarettes \(6/9/2009\)](#) **NEW**
- [Memorandum in Support of S.5029 Using Certain Buildings At Polling Places \(6/9/2009\)](#) **NEW**
- [Memorandum in Support of S.5172 Authorizes Persons 17 Years of Age to Act as Poll Inspectors \(6/9/2009\)](#) **NEW**
- [S.5000-S.5000/Duane--Tier IV Prescription Drugs](#)
- [S.3164?Duane--Family Health Care Decisions Act](#)
- [A.1224-A/Jeffries--Voter Approval for Modification of Term Limits](#)
- [A.121/Sampson—Creating a Prescription Drug Discount Program](#)
- [A.777/Paulin--Prohibiting the Sale of Flavored Cigarettes](#)
- [S.248/Fuschillo—Prohibiting Sale of Flavored Cigarettes](#)
- [A.734/Gottfried—Enhance the Availability of Child Health Plus](#)
- [A.5694/Espailat—Funding for School Based Health Services](#)
- [A.3911/John—Pay Equity](#)
- [S.955/Johnson—Pay Equity](#)
- [S.1002/Perkins—Primary Prevention of Lead Poisoning](#)

Current League Legislative Action

- [Take Action Now to End the NYS Senate Stalemate \(6/19/09\)](#) **NEW**
- [Summary and Comments by LWVNYS Legislative Director Barbara Bartoletti on Recent Events in NYS Senate \(6/15/09\)](#)
- [Letter to US Attorney on HAVA Compliance](#)
Letter urging US Attorney's office to wait for complete testing of voting equipment prior to ordering of HAVA compliance. (5/5/09)
- **New Statewide Action on LWVUS Climate Change Positions**
The state League has initiated a new statewide action on the issue of Climate Change. Click on the link, [Reduction of Greenhouse Gases](#), for a fact sheet on the issue. Contact [Roberta Wiernik](#), LWVNYS Natural Resources Specialist, for more information on how you can help. More information is also available on the LWVUS website at www.lwv.org. (3/31/2009)
- [League Weighs In on Tax Caps and Circuit Breaker \(9/4/2008\)](#)
- [League Launches Campaign Finance Reform Project \(6/11/2008\)](#)

Healthcare-What Will Happen To Your Healthcare When You Pull the Lever?

As a community service to educate voters for the upcoming Presidential election, the League of Women Voters of NYS, along with the Capital Region Local Leagues, presented a pre-election program on October 25th, that provided voters with a thorough, unbiased analysis of both major candidates' proposals that included a perspective from a major area health service provider, Seton Health, an affiliate Ascension Health, the largest U.S. nonprofit health system, on the impact of both proposals on health care delivery.

[Healthcare Forum Webcasts October 2008](#) (10/29/2008)

Aging in the Community? The Future of Long Term Healthcare

League of Women Voters of NYS & The Capital Region Local Leagues
[Panel Discussion Webcasts Spring 2009](#)

PRESS RELEASE

STATEMENT ON SENATE RULES CHANGES NEW RULES A SOLID IMPROVEMENT

Too soon to retire dysfunctional label, groups say, but a strong step forward.
July 16, 2009

Contact:

CITIZENS UNION OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
COMMON CAUSE/NY
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS/N.Y.S.
NEW YORK PUBLIC INTEREST RESEARCH GROUP

DeNora Getachew 917 912-5471
Susan Lerner 917 670-5670
Barbara Bartoletti 518 465-4162
Bill Mahoney 518 436-0876

Our groups believe that the rules changes adopted last night include changes that will make the State Senate more open and accountable, but do not go far enough to improve the arcane internal operations of the Senate. For example, the new rules provide for:

- Greater transparency of Senate proceedings: All hearings of Senate standing committees and meetings shall be recorded and posted on the website within twenty-four hours, and webcast when practicable. This means citizens throughout the state will no longer need to trek up to Albany to follow the votes on issues they feel passionate about. Committee voting records and reports will be available online for the first time in a searchable database. When this is implemented, it will be one of the most significant improvements to legislative transparency in years.
- Motions and petitions for chamber consideration: A majority of Senators can move a bill from the calendar to the active list after aging for four days, and three-fifths of the full Senate can move a bill from committee to the active list. Unfortunately, it appears these new rules do away with motions to discharge. We believe that a majority of members should continue to be able to move a bill out of a committee rather than three-fifths of members. The net effect of these changes, however, is an increase in the power of rank-and-file Senators.
- C-SPAN: A joint advisory board appointed by the leaders of the two houses will report on how to expand the state's current television offerings. An improved television network will make it much easier for active citizens to follow their government.
- Committee hearing process: The new rules attempt to bolster the committee process through increased oversight and hearings. We support the change allowing members to call for hearings on bills by a vote of one-third of the committee and the holding of statewide regional budget hearings from October to December to discuss the impacts of the state budget on the community.

While these are important improvements, the rules codify an inequitable distribution of resources between the two conferences. In particular, the majority party's central staff allocation will be twice that of the minority party. Additionally, the rules require a base allocation for all Senators' staff – representing a small fraction of the legislative body's overall budget. There is also no specificity with respect to the distribution of general resources, such as those to be spent on office supplies and computers, except that such resources will be distributed "equitably."

The rules also provide for the inequitable allocation of member items. While the minimum 2:1 ratio for the portion received by the two conferences is a significant improvement above the historic 10:1 allocation, this is the first time the unfair distribution process has been codified. Voters will go to the polls knowing that their communities will be punished if they vote for the “wrong” Senate candidate. Additionally, nothing prevents party leaders from punishing insubordinate members by decreasing the amount they receive. We believe that there is no justifiable reason why every Senator should not be guaranteed equal access to community improvement funds.

Finally, the groups point out that these advances were negotiated by leadership behind closed doors, ending ultimately with a floor vote at 3:30 a.m. on Thursday. The way these rules reforms came to pass is an unfortunate indication that the Senate, while making laudable and historic reforms, has not yet fully matured beyond its dysfunctional phase.

Additionally, while the committees’ proceedings will now be available online and there are more opportunities for public hearings, the numerous recommendations our groups have made to reinvigorate the committees, including prohibiting “ghost voting,” and requiring substantive committee reports and fiscal notes for bills that move through committee have not yet been implemented. It appears that the Committees’ budgets, agenda and most of the staff remain controlled by the leadership. The Temporary Senate Committee on Rules and Administration reform is now “directed to make specific recommendations for revising the Senate Rules and the Legislative Law” to improve the committee process by December 1st. This is not the first time we have heard a promise to reform this vital area, but we hope that the remaining necessary changes will finally come from this report.

We congratulate the members for these historic reforms. We would particularly like to thank Senators Bonacic, Squadron, and Schneiderman for their recent leadership on this issue. Finally, we look forward to the implementation of additional reforms in the near future, particularly regarding resource allocation.

VOTER'S GUIDE
ELECTION DAY, 2009
Primary Election - September 15th
General Election - November 3rd

Voting is an important part of being a United States citizen. In 2009, local officials will be elected - your mayor or town supervisor, your town council members, etc. These are the people who will make decisions about the local services that directly affect your life. Voting is your chance to choose the decision makers and tell them what you want. In New York State, before you can vote you need to register. This *Voter's Guide* will answer many of your questions about registering and voting. You can also go to the League of Women Voters of New York State web site at www.lwvny.org, or call us toll free at 1-866-598-6971.

WHO CAN VOTE?

To vote, you must:

- be a United States citizen
- be 18 years old by the date of the election in which you want to vote
- live at your present address at least 30 days before the election
- not be in prison or on parole for a felony conviction, and
- not claim the right to vote elsewhere.

HOW DO I REGISTER?

You can register to vote by mail or in person. You must fill out a new Voter Registration Form if you move to a new address, change your name, or want to change your political party; otherwise your registration is permanent. If you change your political party enrollment, the change will not take effect until after the next general election.

REGISTRATION BY MAIL

Voter Registration Forms are available on the New York State Board of Elections website (www.elections.state.ny.us), at your county board of elections office, town and city halls, your post office and library, from political parties, state offices, many social service agencies, and the League of Women Voters. *Consult the "Countdown to Election Day" portion of this guide for the deadline dates.*

REGISTRATION IN PERSON

You may register at your local board of elections or any state agency participating in the National Voter Registration Act on any business day throughout the year. *Consult the "Countdown to Election Day" portion of this guide for the deadline dates.*

WHAT IF I MOVE?

Submit a Voter Registration Form with your new information. If you move to a new county, send the form to your new board of elections. If you are already registered, your change of address must be received by your board of elections by August 26th to vote in the Primary

Election, or by October 14th to vote in the General Election. If you move within your county and cannot notify your board of elections, you can go to the polling place for your new address and vote by affidavit (paper) ballot. The ballot will be sent to the board of elections to verify the new address. If verified, your vote will be counted and your change of address will be made a part of their records.

HOW DO I MAKE SURE I AM REGISTERED TO VOTE?

New York State has a centralized data base of all registered voters, and creates the voter rolls at the polling places from this information. As with all computer systems, there can be problems with the data, and your name could be erroneously eliminated from the rolls. Protect your right to vote by watching your mail for a card from your board of elections with the location of your polling place. If you do not receive such a card well before the election date, call your local board of elections to inquire about your status. Ask them: “*Am I registered to vote? Is my registration status set to ‘Active’? If not, to what is it set? Will my name appear in the polling place roll book on Election Day?*” While you can check your registration information on the NYS Board of Elections website, the information that you see does not indicate your status and is not assurance that you will be on the rolls. Your standing with your local board of elections is the determining factor.

WHAT IF I DON’T KNOW WHERE TO VOTE?

Your board of elections should send you a card telling you the location of your polling place. If you do not receive it, call your board of elections to verify your registration and ask about your polling place. You can also use the online Voter Registration Search facility on the NYS Board of Elections website at:

<https://voterlookup.elections.state.ny.us/votersearch.aspx>. You can also call the League of Women Voters of New York State at 518-465-4162 or toll free 1-866-598-6971.

WHAT IF I CAN’T GO TO MY LOCAL POLLING PLACE ON ELECTION DAY?

If you will be away on Election Day or will be unable to go to your polling place because of illness or disability, you can vote by absentee ballot. First, you must obtain an Absentee Ballot Application form from your board of elections, or download one from the New York State Board of Elections website. Complete the application and submit it by mail or in person; *consult the “Countdown to Election Day” portion of this guide for the deadline dates*. The board of elections will send or give you an Absentee Ballot form. Complete the ballot and submit it by mail or in person; *consult the “Countdown to Election Day” portion of this guide for the deadline dates*.

I AM IN THE MILITARY AND WILL BE AWAY. HOW WILL I VOTE?

You will vote by absentee ballot. To receive an absentee ballot to vote in the Primary Election, your application must be received by the board of elections by August 21st if you are not already registered to vote, or by September 8th if you are already registered to vote. You may also apply in person until September 14th if you are previously registered to vote. To receive an absentee ballot to vote in the General Election, your application must be received by the board of elections by October 23rd if you are not already registered to vote, or by October 27th if you are already registered to vote. You may also apply in person until November 2nd if you are previously registered to vote.

HOW DO I VOTE WHILE I AM IN COLLEGE?

When you are attending college outside your hometown, you may vote in person or by absentee ballot in your home community. You must be registered in your hometown district to vote there. You can only claim the right to vote in one locality. If you attend college in NYS and consider yourself a resident of your college community, and have lived there for at least 30 days before an election, you may register and vote in that community, but not elsewhere. If you are from NYS and attend college in another state and consider your college community your residence, consult the elections authority of that state to determine your voting rights.

CAN I GET TIME OFF FROM WORK TO VOTE?

NYS law states that if you do not have sufficient time outside your working hours to vote, you may take off up to 2 hours at the beginning or the end of your shift, with pay, to allow you time to vote. You must notify your employer no more than 10 and not less than 2 days before the day of the election that you will take that time.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT WHEN I GO TO THE POLLS?

A sample ballot should be posted. If you do not know how to use the voting machine, ask one of the election inspectors for assistance. If you are not on the rolls at your polling place, but believe you are registered to vote, and have verified with the poll worker that you are at the correct polling place for your address, you are legally entitled to vote on an affidavit (paper) ballot. You should also ask the poll worker for advice about following up on your status. After validation by your county board of elections, your affidavit ballot will be counted. If you determine that you are in the wrong polling place, go to the correct one to vote. Be sure to bring some identification, especially if you are voting for the first time.

WHAT IS AN AFFIDAVIT BALLOT?

An affidavit ballot, sometimes called a “provisional ballot” or “paper ballot,” is used when a voter's name has been omitted from the computer-generated roll book. If you need to use one, you must swear that you are a registered voter and provide your current and previous addresses. At a primary election, you must include the party in which you are enrolled. You may also use an affidavit ballot to challenge your party enrollment as stated in the roll book.

WHAT IDENTIFICATION DO I NEED TO VOTE?

Federal law requires persons who register by mail and are voting for the first time to provide identification, either on the Voter Registration Form or in person at the polling place. Identification usually means a current NYS driver's license or the last four digits of your Social Security number. If you do not have a current NYS driver's license, you need to provide the last four digits of your Social Security number. If you do not have either of these, you may provide a copy of a valid photo ID, or a current utility bill, bank statement, government check or some other government documentation that shows your name and address.

FOR WHOM/WHAT WILL I BE VOTING IN THE 2009 ELECTION?

In the Primary Election (September 15th) and the General Election (November 3rd), voters in New York State will elect local officials (e.g. your mayor, town supervisor, town council members, etc.) and possibly the delegates that choose the NYS Supreme Court Justices. When two or more candidates from the same political party seek election for the same office, voters registered in that party vote in the Primary Election to choose the candidate who will represent that party in the General Election. In the General Election, you may also be voting on statewide and/or local ballot proposals.

WHAT KIND OF MACHINE WILL I BE USING?

The old lever machines, which are inaccessible to many disabled persons and which do not comply with several federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA) requirements, are in the process of being replaced in NYS by paper ballots and optical scanning equipment. For the 2009 elections, to comply with federal mandates, many local boards of elections have opted to participate in a pilot of this replacement equipment by implementing it in some or all polling places. *The New York City counties, the city of Buffalo, and the counties of Westchester, Rockland, Suffolk and Nassau, in addition to some other upstate counties, will NOT be participating in this pilot.* Call your board of elections to determine if your polling place will be piloting the new optical scanning equipment. In addition, as in the 2008 election, NYS polling places will have at least one ballot marking device (BMD) that makes it possible for individuals with disabilities to vote independently and privately.

MY POLLING PLACE WILL BE PILOTING THE NEW OPTICAL SCANNING EQUIPMENT. HOW DOES THAT AFFECT MY VOTING PROCESS?

If your polling place is participating in the pilot program, you will be voting using paper ballots and optical scanning equipment; the lever machines will not be in use. Voters who need to, or wish to, can mark their ballots with a ballot marking device (BMD); please consult the section below. Voters not using the BMD will be given a pre-printed paper ballot with a “privacy sleeve”. You will go to a “privacy booth” to mark your choices with a pencil or other marking tool. The privacy sleeve allows poll workers to help you, if necessary, without being able to read your ballot. Be careful to read and follow the directions about marking the ballot. You then take it, in the sleeve, to the assigned optical scanning equipment, and feed the ballot into the scanner for tabulation. If you have made a mistake, such as voting for too many candidates, your ballot will be rejected and voided and you should request a new one. The screen on the machine will show you how the machine has read the marks on your ballot, and if you are satisfied with the results you will tell the machine to accept and count your ballot. Your paper ballot is securely stored in the machine after scanning. There is provision on the paper ballot for write-in candidates. The equipment is simple to use, and poll workers have been trained to assist voters in using it; be sure to request their assistance if you are not clear about the new process.

I NEED TO USE THE BALLOT MARKING DEVICE. HOW DO I DO THAT?

Individuals with disabilities who cannot use a lever machine or mark a paper ballot (and any other voter who wishes to) can use the ballot marking device (BMD) to create a marked paper ballot for casting their vote. Tell the poll worker that you would like to use the BMD and what accessibility options you will need; they are trained to help you. These machines

assist the disabled voter through special interfaces, features and accessories. For voters who cannot see or read the ballot text, a multiple-language audio interface with headphones recites the ballot, including all contests and candidates, allows the voter to make selections, and verifies selections by reciting them back to the voter. A key pad with raised buttons, Braille and other markings enables the visually impaired voter to navigate through the ballot and record their vote. For voters who are unable to use their hands as a selection device, or who are quadriplegic or paraplegic, a “sip and puff” device enables navigation and selection. The accessible paddles, pads and buttons of these machines enable voters with limited manual dexterity to mark their ballots independently and privately. These interfaces and features are common to the two brands of BMDs that New York counties have chosen, although the devices look very different. New York City, Erie, Rockland, Schenectady and Albany counties have chosen the AutoMark device, and all other counties have chosen the ImageCast device. Full instructions can be found at the NYS Board of Elections web site.

If you are marking your ballot with the BMD you will follow a process similar to those marking their ballot in the privacy booth: you will check in and be handed either a pre-printed or blank paper ballot with a privacy sleeve, will place it into the BMD and will mark it using the BMD accessible interfaces. The machine will display the ballot choices, and when you are satisfied the BMD will print the completed ballot out into its privacy sleeve. Then you will either submit the completed ballot to a secure deposit location to be counted later by the board of elections or, if the polling place is piloting the new tabulating equipment, you will scan the ballot as described above. On some machine models, the marked ballot is automatically scanned and counted from the BMD or is automatically stored after printing without transporting it. If you are hearing impaired, you will use earphones to hear the equipment read back the ballot, so that you can be sure of the accuracy of the input before final submission. Poll workers can help with scanning and submitting the ballot.

COUNTDOWN TO ELECTION DAY

PRIMARY ELECTION—TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15th 2009

- **Last day to register for the Primary Election by mail: Postmarked by *August 21st*, received by *August 26th***
- Last day to register for the Primary Election in person: *August 21st*
- Last day to postmark an Absentee Ballot Application for the Primary Election: *September 8th*
- Last day to submit an Absentee Ballot Application in person for the Primary Election: *September 14th*
- Last day to submit your Absentee Ballot by mail: Postmarked by *September 14th*, received by *September 22nd*
- Last day to deliver your Absentee Ballot in person to your county board of elections: *September 15th*

GENERAL ELECTION—TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3rd

- **Last day to register for the General Election by mail: Postmarked by *October 9th*, received by *October 14th***
- Last day to register for the General Election in person: *October 9th*
- Last day to register for the General Election in person for those honorably discharged from the military or who become naturalized citizens after October 9th: *October 23rd*

- Last day to postmark an Absentee Ballot Application for the General Election: *October 27th*
- Last day to submit an Absentee Ballot Application in person for the General Election: *November 2nd*
- Last day to submit your Absentee Ballot by mail: Postmarked by *November 2nd*, received by *November 10th*
- Last day to deliver your Absentee Ballot in person to your county board of elections: *November 3rd*

PRIMARY ELECTION – TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15TH

Polls are open on Primary Day from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. at the following localities: New York City and the counties of Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Rockland, Orange, Putnam and Erie. In all other counties in New York State, polls are open on Primary Day from 12 noon to 9 p.m.

GENERAL ELECTION – TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3RD

Polls are open 6 a.m. – 9 p.m.

2009 VOTERS GUIDE

PART II – FACTS FOR VOTERS

Tri-Fold Brochure

with information on:

Constitutional Amendment Concerning

Adirondack Park

NYS Supreme Court Judicial Elections

Local League Order Form-2009 Voters Guide

	PRICE
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(or \$10 per 100 copies)	
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League of Women Voters of New York State

62 Grand Street, Albany, New York, 12207

Phone: 518-465-4162 / Fax: 518-465-0812

E-Mail: lwny@lwny.org

**PLEASE RETURN FORM TO THE STATE LEAGUE OFFICE
NO LATER THAN August 31, 2009**



State News

The League of Women Voters of New York State

August 2009

President's Message

It has been a busy three months since the excitement of the convention, and we all have been multi-tasking nonstop, both to ameliorate the League's financial problems and to implement a full and diverse program for the upcoming year. As an incoming President I would like to share my goals, which include bridging the divide between state and local Leagues, putting us all on a better financial footing, and bringing a new level of dynamism to League operations. For more concrete information, see pp. 2-6 of the August SBR. I welcome and need your input. Feel free to call me at 518-426-3711 or e-mail me at betsey@lwvny.org.

Election Season 2009

Election season 2009 is around the corner with Primary Day on September 15th and Election Day on November 3rd. Voter's Guide Part I is now available and provides general info on voting requirements and info on the new voting machines; Part II will include info on the proposed constitutional amendment and judicial elections and will be available in September. To order Voter's Guides, Part I, Part II, and the *Your Right To Vote* series (with voting info for special populations such as college students, homeless individuals and others), contact the office.

Youth Leadership Initiative

The League is planning to develop its own youth leadership initiative to replace the LeaderSpark program in NYS. It will contain modules on civic education, financial education, and leadership skills. The modular approach will provide greater flexibility, allowing local Leagues to tailor the program to the needs of all the state's diverse students and also enabling more Leagues to participate.

Free State Board Reports

The State Board Report is published six times a year and provides vital information on all activities and actions of the State Board. To sign up for your free electronic version of the SBR, contact Stephanie at Stephanie@lwvny.org.

Government Consolidation/ Shared Services Study

We are pleased to announce Noreen Fisher, former Mayor of the Village of Scarsdale and member of the Scarsdale League as chair of the government consolidation / shared services committee. More information will follow shortly.

Financial Update

The generous donations of local Leagues and individual League members enabled us to reduce the 2008-2009 deficit to approximately \$3,000. Our heart-felt thanks to all for their incredible generosity.

In looking at League budgets longitudinally, it becomes apparent that the largest decrease in income over the past decade has been in the area of corporate support and foundation grants. To avoid future shortfalls, we are now actively engaged in seeking outside sources of income. The NYS Bar Association has published the *Your Right To Vote* series of specialized Voters Guides, and CSEA will print the revised *Welcome to the League* shortly. We have applied for a mock election grant from the Election Assistance Commission, which, if funded, would provide approximately \$75,000 over a 2 year period to develop a series of lesson plans for use in Participation in Government classes. We are also in the process of soliciting corporate / foundation sponsorship for governmental consolidation/shared services forums and the new youth development leadership initiative.

Vote 18: A Civic Engagement Program for Students

Vote 18 is a fun, fast-paced interactive game taught at high schools during one class period. It teaches students the history of voting, makes it relevant in their lives, and engages them in the world of politics. For information on how your local league can sponsor a Vote 18 program, or to receive training in the Vote 18 program, contact the League office.

Check Out Our New Website

Our website has undergone exciting new changes - and everything mentioned in State News is also available on the website. Send us your local league photos and announcements and we'll include them. More changes to follow.

Capitol Beat – The Saga Continues

The stalemate that paralyzed the New York Senate ended on July 9th when Senator Espada who had defected to the Republicans returned to the Democrat caucus giving them the majority they needed to control the chamber. The new leadership arrangement appears to be Espada as majority leader, John Sampson as leader of the democratic caucus and Malcolm Smith as Senate president pro tem.

In a surprise move, on July 8th Governor Paterson appointed Richard Ravitch as lieutenant governor. His legal authority to make this appointment was immediately challenged and is the subject of an ongoing court battle that is expected to end up in New York's highest court.

Before leaving on July 17th the Senate passed a number of bills that were time sensitive and adopted senate rules changes that the League views as a step forward in making the Senate more open and accountable. However, these rules also codify an inequitable distribution of both resources and member items between the majority and minority parties. For more details see the rules reform press release put out by the League and its reform coalition partners on July 16th.

The Senate returned for one day on August 6th to deal with New York City school issues and pass Mayoral control.

The state legislature is expected to return sometime during this summer or fall to deal with the burgeoning state deficit.

In the meantime please use the Stick with Reform press release sent on July 16th to continue to press for action on our Albany reform priorities. The press release is located the League's website as http://lwvny.org/press/statement_SenateRulesChanges071609.pdf. If you have any questions, you can call the office or e-mail Sally Robinson at robintwins@gmail.com.