



League of Women Voters of Albany County

September 2010

Educate

Participate

Advocate

The 90th Anniversary of the League of Women Voters Continue the Celebration

The League of Women Voters of Albany County will be starting its fall season for current and prospective members with a pot luck supper on September 28th at St. Sophia's Church.

To continue celebrating the 90th anniversary of the passage of the 19th amendment and the founding of the League of Women Voters, the evening will feature Bob Warren and "Only the Message Mattered", a musical exploration of the life of Susan B. Anthony.



Pot Luck Supper and Music/Story by Bob Warren

September 28th

St. Sophia's Church, 440 Whitehall Road, Albany

5:30 to 6:15 Hors d'oeuvres and "Discover the League"

6:15 to 7:00 Dinner

7:00 to 8:00 Bob Warren

RSVP to Lois Griffin by Sept. 22: e-mail (ohgriffin@gmail.com) or call (518 765 4733)

Let her know what you are bringing (appetizer, salad, entree, dessert) or if you prefer to make a donation. And, if you can help set up.

Bring a dish and bring a friend

The text and song cycle for "Only the Message Mattered" was written by Bob Warren, a songwriter and performer for more than thirty-years. He has been on the road bringing his emotionally charged and lyrically astute songs to appreciative audiences throughout North America in venues ranging from coffeehouses, outdoor festivals and house concerts. He is a regular host of Caffe' Lena's open mic night.

In "Only the Message Mattered", Mr. Warren, his singers and musicians take listeners on a journey that is as significant spiritually as it is socially. The music is seamlessly interwoven with historical dialogue that leaves audiences of all ages and genders, enthralled and enlightened.

The piece was commissioned and funded by the Lower Adirondack Regional Arts Council and the New York State Council on the Arts that leaves audiences of all ages and genders, enthralled and enlightened.

League of Women Voters of Albany County

Website: www.lwvalbany.org Email: lwvac@lwvalbany.org

Mary Berry, President

Monica Sharpe (475-9736) and Margaret Danes (438-7218), Membership Co-Chairs

Laura Ladd Bierman, Newsletter Editor



From the President

Welcome to a new year for the League of Women Voters of Albany County. I am excited and honored to have the opportunity to serve as your president for the next two years. And what an auspicious time for my term to start – when we are celebrating the 90th anniversary of both the founding of the league and the passage of the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, guaranteeing women the right to vote.

It was in July, 1848, that 200 women suffragists, organized by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott met in Seneca Falls to discuss women's rights. In 1850, the first national women's rights convention was held. In 1869, the National Woman Suffrage Association was founded by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton to push for woman suffrage by amending the Constitution. That same year, Lucy Stone founded the American Woman Suffrage Association to focus on working through state legislatures instead of through Congress. These two groups united in 1890. It was in February of 1920 that Carrie Chapman Catt, at a National American Woman Suffrage Association meeting, suggested forming the League of Women Voters. Six months later, August 26, 1920, the 19th amendment passed.

We will continue our celebration of these historic events through our programming this fall. The first being our annual Potluck Dinner on Tuesday, September 28, at St Sophia's Church. Come and bring a friend or neighbor, learn about the various projects our local league committees are focusing on and sign up. In addition, through our special music program that evening, learn about the league's history as well. We will be entertained and educated by a music group performing an original program based on Susan B. Anthony. Please read about the details in this bulletin and contact Lois with your reservation.

Although as I write this, it is still August and we are in the heat of summer, your League has not been on vacation! Our Membership committee and Voter Service committee have been especially busy staffing tables at farmer's markets and festivals and preparing for candidate's debates. I have met with the Mayor of Cohoes, four gentlemen from Azerbaijan and a number of local organizations talking about the League and discussing ways to partner with others. There may be a film series with SUNYA in October and a trip to a museum in November – so keep informed.

Which is a lead-in to my last point. How do we keep information flowing in all directions among our members, the board and the general public? We will be investigating, learning and evaluating various electronic means of communication and weighing whether it is time for our League to change. Will our finances dictate? Will our desire to be more "green"? Will you pluck our bulletin from cyberspace? All things to consider during the coming year.

See you at the Potluck!

Your in League,

Mary

(maryb424@aol.com)

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan citizen organization that promotes the informed and active participation of citizens in government, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Any person of voting age, male or female, may become a League member.

This newsletter is published by the League of Women Voters of Albany County, PO Box 611, Slingerlands, New York 12159 and mailed to League members. The frequency of publication is as follows: one mid-summer issue followed by nine monthly issues from September to May.



The 49th National Convention LWVUS

90 Years of Making Democracy Work: A History of Change A Future of Hope

Carol Webster

As a first time delegate to the National Convention, I have a myriad of thoughts and feelings. I was struck by the dizzying energy and enthusiasm from the hundreds of delegates. In spite of the busyness and the noise of expressed impassioned viewpoints, there was a sense of order, friendliness and respect for one another. The role call of the states at the plenary meetings was a poignant illustration of the many differences in our states but that we all share an immense pride in our home state and yet we join together in spite of our differences to work on issues that affect us as a whole.

The highlights were numerous, beginning with Georgia Congressman, John Lewis who welcomed the League to Atlanta and gave us praise for a Legacy of working tirelessly “getting in the way” to create a better government for the people. It was enlightening to hear from a panel of past LWVUS presidents giving their perspectives on the issues during their terms of office. The address from Kathleen Sebelius, US Secretary of Health and Human Services acknowledged the League in our ninety years of work to promote better government and gave us kudos for our recent vote in support of a single payer health system. The banquet presenter, Robert P J Cooney Jr., author of “Winning the Vote: The Triumph of the American Woman Suffrage Movement” shared his in depth research in how American women won the vote. His presentation was enriched with feminist imagery and period photographs from the early 1900s. Last but not least it was a privilege to be seated and conversing with my League friends and colleagues from the NY Delegation and meeting many new friendly delegates from across the United States.

In my busy four and half days at convention, I attended five plenary sessions, four workshops and six caucus meetings which I will briefly summarize in the remainder of this report.

Workshops

1. Informing Communities: Sustaining Democracy and Citizen Participation in the Digital Age

I attended the second part of this workshop which focused on civic participation in our democracy. Steven Clift, founder of E Democracy.org shared tips on how citizens can access information about their governments on line and assess how open they are to our communities.

2. Voter Registration Drives: Quantify your Impact and help your Community Vote

This interactive workshop focused on building strong voter registration strategies particularly to the young ages 18-30, ethnic groups and the underrepresented. Income, education, age and culture are variables that affect voter registration.

3. Building the Community-Centered, Locally Connected League

This workshop featured three local leagues connecting member interests with community concerns, opportunities and benefits for the community. One league set up a “hot topics” lunch venue to discuss timely issues that were of interest to the community. Another league developed an Observer Corp Training Program. League members would then go into the community to observe public meetings in action and report their findings. A third league developed a workshop series partnering with local community officials. The series was titled “How to Have a Civil Discussion in Uncivil Times”.

4. Delegate Briefing Introduction to Convention

This presentation was designed for first time delegates to the LWV National Convention. We were given a brief overview of the workshop and caucus options and the protocol of the plenary meetings.

Caucuses

1. Concurrence-Marriage Equality

The caucus served to educate the delegates regarding additional language to be added to the LWVUS Equality of Opportunity position. The proposed language indicated that LWVUS would support legislation to equalize the legal rights, obligations and benefits available to same-gender couples with those available to heterosexual couples.

2. Improved Medicare for All

Dr. Rob Stone, Director of Hoosiers for Commonsense Health Plan and Illinois Coordinator for Physicians for National Health Program (PNHP) described what Improved Medicare for All is and the steps we should take to obtain it. The slogan Dr. Stone said PNHP has adopted is “We are not there yet, there Is more work to be done”.

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National Convention

3. How will you Vote on the National Popular Vote Concurrence?

A case was made for a national popular vote (NPV) ensuring every vote is equal regardless which state the vote was cast and the candidate with the most popular votes nationwide wins the presidency. Once a state enters in the NPV Compact agreement, all of the state's electoral votes would be awarded to the presidential candidate who received the most popular votes in all 50 states.

4. How can we really make Democracy work?

Making democracy work means increased voter turnout, meaningful choice and transparency, fair representation and the power of people over money. Universal voter registration, constitutionally protected right to vote, instant runoff/proportional voting, National Popular Vote Plan and a program to increase civic education of youth are the proposals to achieve the goal of making democracy work.

5. Election Integrity: Seeking Transparency- Is our Vote Secure? Accurate? Recountable? Accessible?

Recent LWVUS Report on Election Auditing examined pre and post election approaches to making our elections more accurate, secure and recountable. Speakers from the Election Audit Task Force presented an overview of their report.

6. Educating Citizens and Policy makers effectively about the LVWUS Immigration Position

League of Women Voters of Henderson County, North Carolina have taken steps to advocate and educate the public on the LWVUS position on immigration. The underlying goal is to promote comprehensive immigration reform in providing a path to citizenship, protect workers, reunite families and restore the rule of law that is realistic and enforceable. This league developed an Immigration Power Point which is available on DVD. It was purchased for our league to continue the efforts to educate citizens in our city and county.

Surrogate Court Judge Races

Take note that this year on Primary Day, September 14, in Albany County four candidates for Surrogate's Court Judge will be on the primary ballots of three different political parties, vying for places on three different lines for the general election in November. Remember only voters registered in a particular party may vote in that party's primary. In Albany County they are:

Working Families Party ballot: Helena Heath-Roland and Murray Carr.

Conservative Party ballot: Cathryn M. Doyle and Margaret Adkins

Democratic Party ballot: Murray Carr, Helena Heath-Roland and Cathryn M. Doyle.

Surrogate's Court is established in every county in New York State. Outside of New York City, a Surrogate's Court judge serves for a term of ten years. This special court hears cases involving the affairs of decedents, including the probate of wills, granting letters testamentary and the administration of estates. It oversees the proceedings in order to ensure that the assets of the estate are managed and distributed in accordance with the wishes of the decedent and New York State law. This court approves adoptions, exercises control over executors, administrators, trustees and guardians. Guardianship proceedings usually involve either infants (persons under age 18) or persons under a disability. It passes upon and settles accounts of fiduciaries and renders judicial determinations on these matters.

Membership Report

Summer is a great time to go out and meet people. Farmer's Markets are one of the places at which people hang around during summer. The League is also hanging around at the Farmer's Markets. In a joint effort with the Voter Services Committee, the League has been to Delmar and the Linda Farmer's Market. We are continuing to go to the Delmar Farmer's Market till the end of the season. Come and join us. Meet people, register new voters, eat healthy foods and have FUN. Bring your husband, son, daughter, friend, neighbor, relative and increase the number of people who TAKE ACTION. There are too many fights to fight and the League need supporters to help us to do our jobs.

Give a League membership as a gift. As a matter of fact, my first membership was a gift, and I AM STILL IN THE LEAGUE.

Our committee needs volunteers. For more information about the Membership Committee and how you could help the League, please contact Monica Sharp by telephone at 475-9736 or e-mail sharpmonica@yahoo.com.

Voter Services Report

Mary Ann Lettau, 489-0212; mlettau1@yahoo.com

Hello Leaguers! Bye to summer—hello to Primary Day (September 14) and General Election Day (November 2), voter registration and candidate events and poll reporting. I am confident that you're eager to jump in!

I started in early June with an appearance at CANA (Council of Albany Neighborhood Associations) to see if we might work together on registration activities. I reviewed what is new this year. A rep from United Way asked me to prepare a summary for her to distribute (it was too early for Voters Guides), which I did; it included the web site where voters can get a video guide to using the new machines. An email was sent out to CANA members to follow up and the League was invited to be part of the National Night Out program put on by the Delaware Ave. Neighborhood Association on August 3.

Voter Services has begun a collaboration with Membership to staff a table at two farmers' markets—Albany on Central Ave. and Delmar at Bethlehem Middle School. We've done this 3 times so far and will continue through September. Thank you Monica Sharp for your enthusiasm and creative ideas. We were asked to be part of the African American Family Day on 8/7. Thanks to Lois Griffin and Carol Webster for giving their time. On all the above occasions, we registered voters, answered many questions about the new voting machines and promoted League membership.

I am thrilled to announce that I have a committee!!! Carol Webster and Judy Wing have signed on. We have decided to focus in the immediate future on adding even more information for voters to our web site, including a guide to local government. Jessica McMullen has graciously agreed to work with us. Representatives from 5 area Leagues met to plan an on-line "Candidate Guide for the Capital Region", using software endorsed by the national League from E-the People. A voter can submit his/her address and the program will tell you what races will be on the ballot. Each candidate provides contact and background info and answers the same questions as others running for that position. You can even print a sample ballot with your choices to take to the voting booth. I attended a Webinar with the National League on how to use the software. We were all set to begin when we found out that the Times-Union uses the same program. We'll meet again to decide on our next step.

About candidate events: the Albany and Saratoga Leagues, along with Spotlight Newspapers and the Chambers of Commerce of Colonie and South Saratoga are planning 2 debates for October between Bob Reilly and his opponents—one event in each county. I am working on 2 possible events in Albany before the primary—with the candidates for Surrogate Judge and State Senate. I am distributing the Voters Guides Part 1 at all our tabling activities; I'm slowly getting to libraries and some other community institutions. Thanx to Steve Winter who put out Voters Guides in his neighborhood, along with our pamphlet about the right to vote for people who are incarcerated. Voter Services was invited to attend a meeting with the new PR Chair. Arleen Urell will help us get out the word about all our activities including Voter Services. Finally, WWE—World Wrestling Entertainment—and the National League have an agreement. Wherever WWE appears, the local League will register voters. Carol Webster and I will do so on 8/31 at the Times-Union Center. This is a special effort to reach out to younger voters; we have special literature and great T-shirts to liven up our efforts. If you have comments or ideas or wish to help, please contact me.

New Members

Flora Geller	Albany	Anita Patka	Voorheesville
Ada Kitchen	Albany	Dorice Brickman	Albany

Welcome!

SAVE THE DATES

United Nations Event

Nov. 9 – NYC

2011 Students Inside Albany

April 10-13 – Albany

2011 State Convention

May 20-22 - Albany

United Nations Event

The state League is pleased to offer the United Nations Event this year. It will be held on Tuesday, November 9 in New York City. Although the UN building is under renovations, we continue to offer the tours of the UN, lunch and a briefing by UN affiliate agencies. The topic this year will be women and microfinancing. Watch from more details in September.

Fall 2010 Debates

The New York City LWV requested and received permission from LWVNYS to co-sponsor a debate with WABC for the Democratic primary candidates for Attorney General. It was aired on July 18th. You can view it at <http://abclocal.go.com/wabc/story?section=news/politics&id=7561181>.

2010 LWVNYS Council

The 2010 proposed budget was adopted by the local Leagues through the Council Kit. The Leagues also approved the proposed concurrence on Marriage Equality, but with the approval of the concurrence at the National Convention on this issue, NYS will not need to adopt its own position (see Convention summary). The local Leagues also provided numerous Directions to the Board which can be found in the July SBR on the website.

New State Board Members

The League State board has appointed two new members: Judie Gorenstein (Huntington) as Director of Citizen Education and Youth Programs and Bo Lipari (Tompkins Co.) as Director of Technology. Assisting Judie with the Youth Programs (off-board) will be Judi Roth (Hamptons) and Lisa Scott (Smithtown). Welcome!

Students Inside Albany Conference

The 2011 *Students Inside Albany* Conference will be held on April 10-13 in Albany. More information will be available soon but start thinking about ways to select a student from your League to join this conference on leadership and lobbying.

Redistricting Reform

Redistricting reform is the crucial reform effort on the immediate horizon in NYS. Every League has an important role to play in this effort. By raising public awareness of the need for reform and the consequences of not acting in time for post - 2010 census redistricting, local Leagues can help put our state on the right path for the future. We need to stop legislators from choosing their voters, not the other way around.

Toward that end, we have asked each local League to organize a community forum on the issue of redistricting this fall. The state League will provide all the materials and information for the meeting. If you are interested in this topic, tell your local League President and help develop this forum in your area. Look for more information on this issue on our website.

Local Consolidation Study

The state League board approved the results from the statewide study on local consolidation and shared services at the July meeting. Check out the full position on the League's website

The League of Women Voters of New York State (League) supports the efficient and effective operation of government. Consolidation of governmental units and the sharing of major governmental services may be a way of promoting the efficient and effective operation of government. In achieving this goal, the League supports a cooperative and transparent process, in which citizens have sufficient and timely information with which to make informed decisions about proposed actions, and well-defined channels for citizen input and review.

LWVUS National Convention

Much has been written about the wonderful speakers and the ambitious program that was in large part moved forward by New York State delegates at the national Convention. The delegates adopted **two new studies – one on the role of the federal government in education and the other on privatization of governmental functions.** Many thanks to **Tomkins County League member Kay Wagner**, who spearheaded the successful resolution to expand the LWVUS' global warming legislative priority to encompass mineral extraction, **Tompkins County League member Rebecca Elgie**, who put forward the successful Medicare for All resolution, **Saratoga County League member Lori Dawson**, who was instrumental in both the National Popular Vote and Marriage Equality concurrences. While states are not required to actively support nationally adopted concurrences, they cannot act in opposition to them. At its July meeting, the LWVNYS board determined to act in accordance with the national concurrence. For more information about the Convention, see the League's website (national or state).

1919 Society

Don't forget to include the state League in your will - and join the 1919 Society. If you already have included the League in your will, just let us know and we'll add you to the members of the Society. We will not ask for either proof of the bequest or its amount - we just want to honor your future support. As a member, your name will be engraved on a plaque in the state League office, listed in the *State Voter*, and on the website.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW YORK STATE

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E-mail: lwvny@lwvny.org

GET INVOLVED!

Come One and All to Socialize with League Members

"League Works"

Thursday, Sept 23, 5:30 pm

Key Bank, 135 South Pearl St, Albany

The LWVNY is launching an exciting new program called "League Works" on Thursday, September 23, 2010 from 5:30 until 7:30 p.m. at the downtown office of Key Bank, 135 South Pearl Street, Albany. We are in the process of lining up political commentators to discuss the upcoming elections and their import for New York.

"League Works" is the result of a series of focus groups composed of League members and fellows of the Center for Women in Government & Civil Society of the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy of SUNY Albany, in which the participants, who were generally supportive of League positions and activities, explored the factors that would impel them to join an organization and the nature or organizations they would consider joining. The primary purpose of the focus groups was to explore and recommend a format, which would offer working individuals, and especially younger working individuals, a series of League-Like experiences that would enrich their lives and the health of their communities and develop brand loyalty and membership for the League.

Briefly summarized, the focus groups concluded that the way to attract working members was to offer a series of cocktail party type events where they could join the League and volunteer for discrete activities that they could perform in accordance with their schedules. They also sought a degree of social networking and resume sharing, so that their membership would provide both a professional and personal advantage.

While we want to attract to working members, we need long-standing League members to talk about what they are doing in the League and what the League means to them. Therefore, we ask you to put this date on your calendar and send notice to your friends via e-mail.. If you are interested in attending, send your name and contact information to betsey@lwny.org or call LWVNY President Betsey Swan at 518-728-7115. Also, feel free to call if you would like further information. Let's all get together behind this exciting new initiative.

Visitors from Azerbaijan Hosted

The International Center of the Capital Region recently hosted four legislative staff from Azerbaijan who were visiting under the auspices of the U.S. State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program. The visitors started their trip in California, then to Texas, with New York their last stop. The League was asked to participate in a panel of "good government groups" to speak about the role of advocacy. The four gentlemen each worked in different areas of Azerbaijan's parliament: press access, constituent issues, local government boundary issues and social issues including family benefits, health care and public assistance. The panel included a representative from the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, Citizen Action of New York and the LWV of Albany County. The visitors were both interested and interesting. Although none spoke English, the two interpreters traveling with them provided simultaneous interpretation using microphones and headsets. They were proud to point out that women were granted the right to vote in Azerbaijan in 1918, two years before the United States. They had many questions and the two hours flew by – a wonderful experience for all of us.

Membership 2010-2011 - Join & Make a Difference

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address, City, Zip: _____

Email: _____

Individual Membership \$50/year

Household Membership \$75/year

Student Membership \$15/year

Contribution in support of my local League

Please send me more information

For financial aid information, contact Carol Webster, 439-1491.

Mail to: League of Women Voters of Albany County PO Box 611, Slingerlands, NY 12159

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ALBANY COUNTY
PO Box 611
Slingerlands, NY 12159

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League Calendar

<u>WHEN</u>	<u>WHAT</u>	<u>WHERE</u>	<u>MORE INFO</u>
Tues., Sept. 14	Primary Day	VOTE VOTE VOTE	
Thurs., Sept. 23, 5:30 pm	"League Works"	Key Bank, Albany	see page 7
Wed., Sept 28, 5:30 pm	Potluck Dinner and " <i>Only the Message Mattered</i> "	St. Sophia's Church, Albany	see page 1