



LWV of Albany County

April 2008

Educate

Participate

Advocate

What in the World is Happening in Albany?



Whither "Project Sunlight"?

Come to the Souper Supper to hear!



Wednesday, April 30

5:30 pm Supper, 6:00 pm Speakers and "Project Sunlight" Demo

Speakers:

Blair Horner, NYPIRG Policy and Legislative Director

Barbara Bartoletti, LWNYS Legislative Director

(Both 30 year veterans of Albany politics)

Please call Gael Vecchio, 459-9958, if you can contribute soup or sides. Try to remember to bring your own bowl and utensils (we'll have extras!)

When LWVAC members saw a demo of "Project Sunlight" in December by Attorney General Andrew Cuomo and Blair Horner, the then project manager (and now headed back to NYPIRG), we were excited about the promise that it had to promote transparency in state government. Our members and other good government organizations would be prime users for this wonderful new facility, and we are concerned about its future.

The website can be accessed via <http://www.sunlightny.com>, and a tutorial can be found on the home page. The website promotes transparency in government by making information about individual elected officials, campaign finance activities, legislation, lobbyists, state contracts, registered corporations and charities easily accessible, and, especially exciting, by providing the links between them all! The website also offers educational videos and materials to inform you about the basic laws governing official conduct.

This website and its improvements would be extremely useful to high school Participation in Government programs, our local higher education institutions, our coalition members in advocacy activities, and anyone else interested in open Government, novice and expert alike.

League of Women Voters of Albany County

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

Lori Keegan-Brady and Maggie Moehringer, Co-Presidents

Susan Coleman (330-2992) and Audrey Kibrick (489-9931), Membership Co-Chairs

Laura Ladd Bierman, Newsletter Editor



From the Co-Presidents

Well, what in the world is happening here in Albany!? There has been so much water under the dam that the bridge might just wash out, but here to help you get across are Barbara Bartoletti, LWVNY Legislative Director, and Blair Horner, formerly of the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), then of the Attorney General's Office and "Project Sunlight" . . . and now, spokesperson of NYPIRG once again. Come to our last Souper Supper of the year (and bring your own bowl). You can read about and explore "Project Sunlight" online – this issue of the bulletin will tell you how – and find out the future of this wonderful facility with LWVAC friends, and also new friends from LWV of Schenectady, Saratoga and Rensselaer.

We are busily preparing for our Annual Dinner on May 12th, with guest speaker Michael McNulty. In this bulletin you'll find the budget for next year, a proposal for a new study, and an initial slate of new board members, all of which will be presented for your approval at the meeting. Watch your May bulletin for a complete slate of candidates and for suggestions of what we might speak with Congressman McNulty about.

And speaking of a new study, "Greening our Towns" promises to be a fascinating activity, opening doors into the environmental practices of our County's villages, towns and cities. Provided it is approved at the Annual Meeting as a local program item, we will be absorbed in this study next year and in action on its findings in years to come. **BUT WE NEED A STUDY CHAIR!!** No chair, no study! Being a chair involves working with a committee to formulate the study questions, to bring together study materials and information, and to present information to your fellow LWVAC members. Interested? Let us know! Remember, study and action are the heart of the League; we learn and then we act.

See you soon for Soup!

Yours in League,
Maggie and Lori, LWVAC Co-Presidents

SAVE THE DATE!

May 12th

Annual Meeting and Dinner with Congressman Michael McNulty

We are very happy and fortunate to be able to host Congressman Mike McNulty at our Annual Dinner as he comes to the end of one career and starts another. Please join us at Normanside Country Club for an interesting evening as he reflects on the past and advises on the future!

Great Decisions Discussion Group

The "Great Decisions" discussion group will have the following remaining sessions for this year:

- 4/7 at Francine Frank's – "Latin America: The Next US President's Agenda"
- 4/21 at Rita Redlich's – "U.S.-China Economic Relations: Evolving Rivalry"
- 5/5 Luncheon – "Foreign Aid: New Players, New Goals?"

"Great Decisions" follows the Foreign Policy Association's topical book of the same title for background and discussion guidelines. The book is available at the "Book House" in Stuyvesant Plaza. For information about joining the group, contact Katie Henrikson, 439-4308.

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, 12 Coventry Road, Glenmont, New York 12077 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.



League in Profile

Judy Jarnefeld

"Why I Joined the League - A Geography and Civics Primer"

I'm from Minnesota. I specifically *don't* say I'm from the "Midwest." That's partly because I'm a contrarian, and partly because Northeasterners have an annoying tendency to define the Midwest as some dreary area starting about 100 miles west of wherever they live, and extending vast distances until you get about 100 miles from the other coast. Nope, Minnesota was the "western frontier" when the Midwest was born.

Frankly, I prefer the less disparaging term "Northcentral" to describe my region. With the latitude of our southern capital city on par with Montreal, and our northern cities skipping right over the top of Maine, it just sounds right to have "North" in any name that describes Minnesota. Why, some might know it as the "Land of 10,000 Lakes" — and not just because of the butter, that's a literal term. Actually there are more like 15,000 lakes in Minnesota, but let's not quibble over statistics. Lakes, by the way, are defined by their summer depth, not their area. Some lakes are small, and some ponds are big! And there's bound to be one close enough to bike to!

With a background like that, chances are, I know how to swim. In fact, swimming was a required course in high school. What's all this got to do with the League? Well, I claim to be a lap swimmer, though sadly the ink is fading on the last entry in my fitness swimming log book. We fitness swimmers are a habitual lot; most days you see the same folks in the locker room. That's how my friend Bea met me, and urged me to join the League of Women Voters. I knew it as a worthy institution that promoted voter education, and I was more than willing to donate to such a good cause. At League events, I enjoy listening to knowledgeable speakers comment on the weighty issues of our day. I've learned a lot about immigration, pay equity and heaps of other topics. And, I meet nice people like Bea.

Back to the Land of 10,000 Lakes: in the 2004 presidential election, 77% of eligible voters turned out, the highest percentage for any state. The League is a lot like Minnesota; it is home to people with a high sense of civic duty. I'm proud to be from Minnesota, proud to be a member of the League of Women Voters.



Vendors to Sue NY Again to Allow DREs

Information from Bo Lipari's Blog (<http://www.nyvv.org/boblog>)

The DRE vendors are back, trying to force DRE machines on New York State voters. Once again, LibertyVote is preparing to go to Court to challenge county purchases for accessible paper ballot systems, and to overturn New York State's right to test voting machines to strict standards.

On Thursday, March 20, the Cattaraugus County Board of Elections informed the State Board that they wanted to change the order placed last month for 57 Ballot Marking Devices, and instead want to substitute LibertyVote DREs for the paper ballot systems. Cattaraugus County is asking the BoE to bypass the testing requirement and approve the machine at the Board meeting on Wednesday, March 26. The letter of request lays out the vendor's litigation strategy and arguments to the Court if the State Board refuses the county request to allow them to switch from paper ballots to an uncertified DRE.

We hope that the BoE will refuse the request; granting it would negate everything the Board has said during the last three years about New York's rigorous certification process and standards, and would essentially cancel New York's voting machine certification testing. If the Board approves this request, they will be enablers for a voting machine vendor that has demonstrated that when they can't win approval on merit, they are willing to force approval by litigation.

Call the State Board of Elections ((518)474-1953) and tell them our regulations require full and complete testing of all voting machines, and cannot be casually tossed aside. They must not give in to vendor pressure and allow untested DREs back into New York State!

LWVAC Budget, 2008-2009

In preparation for our Annual Meeting vote on the budget for our next fiscal year, we are attaching the proposed budget for your review. This budget has been approved as a proposal by the board and must be passed at our annual meeting in order to take effect.

LWVAC has not increased its dues for 4 years. National League has proposed to increase Per Member Payments (PMP) by 4.5% this year, with additional planned increases to follow in subsequent years. As we will explain at the Annual Meeting, the budget is based on increasing our dues to \$50 for an individual member, with an additional \$25 for each household member, beginning in 2009. On the State and National levels, dues for household members has always been half of the rate for an individual member. This increase will allow us to cover our dues to State and National Leagues without additional local fund raising; we will still have to raise additional funds to cover local activities.

Please contact Lori Keegan-Brady, the chair of the Budget Committee, with questions or for more information (475-0396).

INCOME	BUDGET 07-08	ACTUAL/ PROJECTED	PROPOSED 08-09
AA. MEMBERSHIP DUES	\$8,800	\$8,800	\$10,100
Subtotal	\$8,800	\$8,800	\$10,100
BB. CONTRIBUTIONS			
1. Member	\$1,000	\$1,300	\$1,500
2. Fund Drive	\$3,500	\$6,400	\$4,500
Subtotal	\$4,500	\$7,700	\$6,000
CC. OTHER FUNDRAISING			
1 Annual Meeting	\$1,700	\$1,700	\$1,800
2 Potluck	\$150	\$100	\$100
3 Luncheon	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
4 Events	\$900		
Subtotal	\$3,750	\$2,800	\$2,900
EE. OTHER INCOME			
2. Poll Reporting	\$3,000	\$2,300	\$2,200
3. Speakers Bureau	\$0	\$0	\$50
4. Misc. Income/Grants	\$500	\$700	
Subtotal	\$3,500	\$3,000	\$2,250
FF. BANK INTEREST	\$250	\$250	\$350
Subtotal	\$250	\$250	\$350
INCOME TOTAL	\$20,800	\$22,550	\$21,600
(TO) FROM RESERVES	\$650	-\$2,495	\$0
GRAND TOTAL	\$21,450	\$20,055	\$21,600

LWVAC Budget, 2008-2009

EXPENDITURES	BUDGET 07-08	ACTUAL/ PROJECTED	PROPOSED 08-09
A. OPERATING COSTS			
1. General Supplies	\$200	\$100	\$100
2. Postage	\$200	\$250	\$250
3. Misc. Expenses	\$100	\$100	\$100
Subtotal	\$500	\$450	\$450
B. BOARD & ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES			
1. President	\$50	\$50	\$50
2. Administrative Committees			
a. Publicity/website	\$100	\$200	\$300
b. Finance Drive/Development		\$175	\$175
\$200			
c. Membership	\$350	\$350	\$400
Subtotal	\$675	\$775	\$950
C. DELEGATES, TRAVEL & AFFILIATIONS			
1. State Convention	\$0		\$3,000
2. National Convention	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$0
3. Annual Meeting	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
4a. Potluck	\$ 300	\$ 200	\$ 300
4b. Luncheon	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$1,200
5. Affiliations	\$1,125	\$1,100	\$1,100
Subtotal	\$7,625	\$7,500	\$7,600
D. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE LEAGUE			
1. State PMP	\$3,900	\$3,700	\$3,640
2. National PMP	\$5,350	\$5,310	\$5,660
Subtotal	\$9,250	\$9,010	\$9,300
E. BULLETIN			
1. Supplies	\$1,700	\$1,300	\$1,400
2. Postage	\$ 400	\$ 270	\$ 300
Subtotal	\$2,100	\$1,570	\$1,700
F. EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES			
1. Program Study	\$300	\$100	\$200
2. Voters Service			
a. Facts for Voters	\$200	\$300	\$300
b. Candidate Meetings	\$100	\$50	\$100
c. Voters Guide	\$0		\$300
3. Student Sponsor	\$500	\$300	\$300
4. Special Projects	\$100		\$100
Subtotal	\$1,200	\$750	\$1,300
G. PROGRAM / ACTION			
Subtotal	\$100	\$0	\$300
EXPENDITURES TOTAL	\$21,450	\$20,055	\$21,600



PROPOSAL FOR A NEW LOCAL PROGRAM STUDY

“Greening our Albany County Towns and Cities: Encouraging Responsible Use of Natural Resources by our Municipalities”

The heart of the League of Women Voters is grass roots action. Our members want to make a difference and be involved in their communities; study and action on local issues is a great way to do that. It’s what engages our members and benefits our communities. LWVAC has a long history of action on local issues - the Pine Bush preserve, the Albany County and City Charters to name just a couple of examples.

Each year, at its annual meeting, LWVAC members decide on whether to pursue what we call “local program” items. This year, members have proposed, and the Board is putting forward for a vote at the Annual Meeting, the proposal for a new local study entitled, Greening our Albany County Towns and Cities: Encouraging Responsible Use of Natural Resources by our Municipalities.

Possible questions to be answered by the study:

- What are best practices in current use or proposed for other municipalities of similar characteristics nation-wide that:
 - encourage responsible use of natural resources;
 - set a good example for residents and businesses in responsible practices;
 - encourage residents and businesses to adopt such practices.
- What are the current practices in our Albany County municipalities that encourage responsible use of natural resources?
- What are current practices that are not advisable or responsible?
- How can the League best educate our residents and municipal governments concerning best practices?
- How can the League and collaborative partners best encourage adoption of better practices by our municipalities?

Would you like to be involved in this study? Would you like to chair it? Please contact Maggie Moehring (475-0960)!

Students Inside Albany

LWVAC is delighted to present the two students who we will sponsor for “Students Inside Albany (SIA)”, which will be held Sunday, April 27 through Wednesday, April 30 at the Hampton Inn and Suites in Albany. They are Anne Dunne and Elizabeth Huss, both students at Albany High School. We will tell you more about them in our May bulletin and hope to host them at our Annual Dinner. LWVAC will fully fund one student; LWV Education Fund will sponsor the other.

SIA is a student conference sponsored by the Education Foundation of the LWV of NYS. The program is designed to increase high school students’ awareness of their responsibility in representative government and provide the tools necessary for meeting that responsibility. Students attend information sessions on public policy, leadership workshops, tour the Capital, State Museum and the Governor’s Mansion, and shadow their assemblyperson and senator, in addition to fun activities and an awards ceremony. The students that have participated in past years have given the conference very high marks. ***We are glad that through our members’ generous donations we can sponsor students again this year!***



Capitol Beat

Volume 1, Issue 4

Barbara Bartoletti, Legislative Director, LWVNYS

E-Mail: bbheck1@yahoo.com or 518-469-8905

Unless you have been living in a cave you are very aware of the turmoil those of us here in the Capitol have experienced over the past week. It is hard to believe it has only been a week since the stunning news on Monday, March 10, 2008, that Governor Eliot Spitzer was linked to a prostitution ring. The Capitol that day was stunned. It was as if there had been a death. Staff members on the second floor were seen crying and lobbyists milled around outside the Senate Chamber unsure of what would come next. By 3:00 p.m. that afternoon, news media outlets began streaming into the Capitol and by Tuesday, March 11th, there were more than 40 satellite trucks ringing the Capitol. As the speculation mounted that Mr. Spitzer would resign his office, the vigil outside of the Lieutenant Governor's office began in earnest. Amazingly enough, the Senate and the Assembly went about trying to carry on State business and actually went into session both Monday and Tuesday. However, the media was interested only in catching a glimpse of Lieutenant Governor David Paterson.

Majority Leader Joseph Bruno commented only on his sadness for the Spitzer family, as did Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver. As good government lobbyists, the League and NYPIRG were sought after and by late on Tuesday, my cell phone lost all battery power simply from fielding press calls. By Wednesday afternoon, Eliot Spitzer had resigned his office as Governor, effective Monday, March 17, 2008, at noon.

Monday, March 17th the Capitol was very similar to a first day of session. Again, there were news media from all over the Northeast, as 3 sitting Governors from adjoining states arrived for the swearing in of David Paterson as the 55th Governor of New York State. Mr. Paterson will also be the first African American governor in the states' history, as well as the first legally blind governor. David Paterson was sworn in by Chief Judge Judith Kaye before a packed joint session of the legislature. Also in attendance was former Governor Pataki, former Governor Kerry, both United States Senators and several current and former Mayors of New York City. It was a day of celebration and supposed new beginnings. Unfortunately, the new sense of hope that the state could begin to tackle the business of government quickly dissipated with the news that Governor Paterson had engaged in several extra marital affairs. The Capitol now, as you can imagine, is reeling from foreboding sense of "what next."

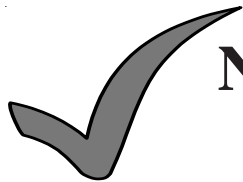
Meanwhile, the state is 10 days from the beginning of the new budget year. The first five way leaders meeting occurred at 3 p.m. on Tuesday, March 18th. The Governor cut 800 million dollars from the Executive Budget because of the economic downturn on Wall Street. At the moment, the three leaders cannot agree on what state revenues are available. These numbers need to be agreed to before they can begin to put their spending plan together. Available revenues had been decided upon in early March, but with the chaotic gyrations on Wall Street, those numbers had to be adjusted downward. Because legislators have now gone back to their districts and will be celebrating the holiday weekend, they are not scheduled to return to Albany until Wednesday, March 26th. Clearly, the budget is unlikely to be done by the April 1st beginning of the fiscal year. Several legislators have been told that when they come back on the 26th they should be prepared to stay until the budget is passed. Politically the three leaders must now show their constituencies that they can govern together. The budget will be evidence that state government is moving forward. Next week the budget conference committees will begin and the League will be there to monitor the process as well as to push for our budget priorities.

NOW FOR SOME OLD BUSINESS, BUT GOOD NEWS

As you may remember, February 28th was the date for the final approval by the New York State Board of Elections (NYSBOE) Commissioners of the truncated certification process. With much anticipation, February 28th finally arrived. I had taken steps to again alert the press of this meeting. So, along with Aimee and Bo, we arrived to a full room of press, voting machine vendors, and their lawyers. Bo Lipari, our representative to the Citizens' Election Modernization Advisory Committee (CEMAC) had worked diligently in a very short time to provide the NYSBOE Commissioners with a usability study on the Liberty Vote LibertyMark and LibertyProof Ballot Reading Device.

For those of you unfamiliar with the role of CEMAC, it is to provide advice to the SBOE on the adoption of new voting equipment. The area where CEMAC provided essential advice was in the real world usability of ballot marking devices (BMD) for the disability community.

(continued on page 9)



Nominating Committee Progress Report

Marggie Skinner, Chair

The Nominating Committee, chaired by Marggie Skinner, is continuing its work and offers the following progress report. Persons interested in serving on or continuing on the board are still being recruited. A full slate will be listed in the May bulletin prior to the Annual Meeting.

According to our by-laws, President, the First Vice President for Program, the Secretary, and 5 directors are elected in even numbered years. The second individual serving as Co-officer is counted as a director. The Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters will nominate the following individuals as officers and directors with two years terms at the LWVAC Annual Meeting on May 12th, 2008:

Maggie Moehringer, Co-President
Lori Keegan-Brady, Co-President
Jessica McMullan, First Vice President for Program
Linda Brown, Recording Secretary
Mary Ann Lettau, Director (Voter Service)
Martha Kennedy, Director (Membership Mentor)
Betsey Swann, Director (Development)

According to our by-laws, the Second Vice President for Action, the Third Vice President for Administration, the Treasurer and 5 Directors are elected in odd numbered years. However, a vacancy has existed in the Second Vice President position, and a vacancy will occur in the Third Vice President position with the resignation of Gael Vecchio after many years of service. The Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters will nominate the following individuals as officers and directors with a one year term at the LWVAC Annual Meeting on May 12th, 2008:

Ann Brandon, Second Vice President for Action
Gael Vecchio, Co-Third Vice President for Administration
Donald Kennedy, Director (Information Specialist)
We continue to recruit a nominee for Co-Third Vice President for Administration.
We continue to recruit new directors (possible portfolios are Natural Resources, "Greening" Study, State and Local Government, Social Policy)

Mary Berry will continue her term as Treasurer.
Peg Sawyer will continue her term as Director (Public Relations).
We continue to identify continuing directors.

We are sincerely grateful for the continuing services of these off-board appointees:

Annette Argyros (Bulletin Distribution)
Jenny Stromer-Galley (Web Master)
Laura Ladd Bierman (Bulletin Editor)
Marggie Skinner (Poll Reporting)

Katie Henrikson will continue as chair of International Relations but will be serving in an off-board capacity. Edith Allen states that she would continue her term as Director (National Government), go off board in that capacity, or yield her position to a new person, as desired.
Susan Coleman will continue to assist in membership activities but will be serving in an off-board capacity.

(continued from page 7) **Capitol Beat**

The testing authority, SysTest, gave its report and with conditions recommended approval of all but the Avante BMD. Bo then answered questions from the NYSBOE Commissioners regarding the CEMAC report. The NYSBOE Commissioners then voted three to one to approve all but the Avante BMD. We were extremely dismayed that three NYSBOE Commissioners (two Republicans and one Democrat), voted to approve the Liberty BMD, particularly because it had become known to us that “the fix was in” before the meeting. Apparently, the Democratic Commissioners were told that they were to vote Liberty onto the list of machines to forestall further litigation by Liberty. Doug Kellner, a Democratic Commissioner refused to vote for Liberty for the simple reason that he did not believe Liberty met the “legal” definition for a BMD under HAVA and New York State’s strict state voting machine regulations. This vote is important because it is extremely unlikely that a machine that is approved through a truncated certification process is unlikely to be turned down during the longer certification process for the 2009 lever machine replacement. This could have serious advocacy implications for the League and it’s optical scan technology because it opens the possibility for Liberty to reach into those counties that have chosen either the Premiere BMD or the ES&S AutoMark BMD. The counties in possible jeopardy open to the Liberty’s failed technologies are: Albany, Schenectady, Schoharie, Rockland, and Erie. New York City’s BMDs would not be affected since Liberty cannot meet the several language requirements for city machines. League members in those counties must be proactive in continuing their advocacy with their County Commissioners and County Legislatures.

It has come to our attention, very recently, that Liberty is threatening more lawsuits as it attempts to secure more of a foothold in New York State. We will be keeping a close eye on this activity.

Stay tuned the next few weeks will be very interesting here in Albany.

GREAT DECISIONS
PROGRAMS
SPRING 2008

Location:

Room 110A (across from Auditorium)
School of Public Health, Univ. at Albany
(SUNY)
1 University Place, Rensselaer, NY

Time:

5:30pm-6:00pm – Informal Networking
with Wine & Cheese
6:00pm-7:30pm – Presentation
and Discussion

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Topic and Presenter</u>
April 17:	Defense and Security Dr. James Ketterer
May 15:	Engaging the Enemy Ambassador Frank Wisner Ambassador Robert Gosende

New Members

Barbara Bailey - Albany
John Moore - Delmar
Welcome!

Membership 2007-2008
Join & Make a Difference

Name: _____ **Telephone:** _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

- ___ Individual Membership \$45/year
 - ___ Household Membership \$60/year
 - ___ Student Membership \$15/year
 - ___ Contribution in support of my local League
 - ___ Please send me more information
- Mail to: League of Women Voters of Albany County**
PO Box 611 Slingerlands, NY 12159
Or Contact: Susan Coleman Tel: 330-2992

League Calendar

<u>WHEN</u>	<u>WHAT</u>	<u>WHERE</u>	<u>MORE INFO</u>
Mon., Apr. 7, 9:30 am	Great Decisions: Latin America	F. Frank's Home	see page 2
Mon., Apr. 21, 9:30 am	Great Decisions: US-China Econ.	Rita Redlich's Home	see page 2
Wed., Apr. 30, 5:30 pm	Souper Supper What on Earth is Happening in Albany / Project Sunlight?	Bethlehem Public Library	see page 1
Mon., May 5	Great Decisions Luncheon Foreign Aid	TBA	see page 2
Tues., May 6, 5:45 pm	Board Meeting	Albany Public Library	
Mon., May 12, 5:30 pm	LWVAC Annual Mtg & Dinner Speaker: Cong. Mike McNulty	Normanside Country Club	see page 2

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

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