

LWW of Albany County

Educate

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Advocate

November 2005

Audrey Kibrick and Marggie Skinner, Co-Presidents



Albany County League of Women Voters

Invites you to

BELL, BOOK AND CANDLE

Directed by Judie Bouchard

November 17, 2005 at the Albany Civic Theater

6:30 p.m. Wine and Cheese Reception

Wine Tasting Sponsored by Capital Wine and Spirits

8:00 p.m. Show Time

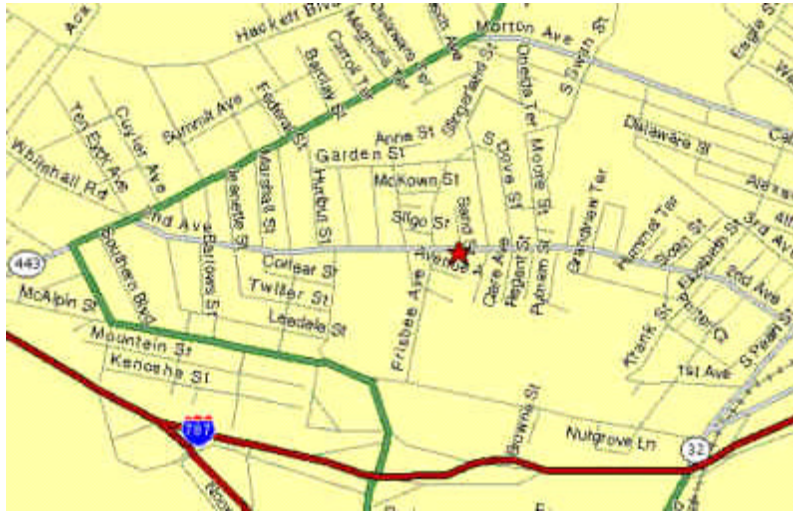
\$20.00 per person

To reserve your tickets send your check to Lori Keegan-Brady
at 19 Journey Lane, Glenmont, NY 12077.
Any questions, call 475-0396.

Come support the League at our annual fund-raiser and have some fun!

This charming and endearing classic tells the story of the alluring, talented witch Gillian, her lovable, eccentric and not-so-talented aunt Miss Holroyd, hip warlock brother Nicky and mystical cat, Pyewacket. On Christmas Eve, Gillian casts a spell that causes her upstairs neighbor, the very un-magical and very engaged Shep, to fall in love with her. Potions and spells bring them together, but as Gillian realized her true affection for Shep, she faces a dilemma: to accept love means forsaking her magical powers. Amidst wondrous magic and comic characters and situations, we wait and watch as Gillian decides between true love and her magical powers. For directions to the theater please see page 2

Albany Civic Theater is Easy To Reach!



Albany Civic Theater is at 235 Second Avenue in Albany, NY

From Albany

Take a hard left off Delaware Avenue to Second Avenue. **A.C.T.** is on the left past the third traffic light.

From Delmar

Take Delaware Avenue into Albany and a right onto Second Avenue. **A.C.T.** is on the left past the third traffic light.

From I-787

Proceed to the southern end of I-787, through the first intersection with traffic light and take a right at next traffic light onto Second Avenue. **A.C.T.** is on the left after on more light.

From The Thruway

Take Exit 23, Turn left on 9W to Hoffman Avenue. Take a right at the next traffic light at Second Avenue. **A.C.T.** is on the left.

Parking

A.C.T. is located in a residential area. Please be considerate of residents and do not block driveways, or residential entrances while parking.

Special Thanks to Capital Wine and Spirits for their generous support!

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.

FROM THE PRESIDENTS

Greetings from Marggie and Audrey,

Thanks to Kay Wilkie for her outstanding coordination of the League's October meeting at the "Linda," WAMC's Central Avenue auditorium. Kay and her committee developed the program to address the question "Trade vs. Aid; are we better off using free trade to improve a poor country or should we just give our financial aid? The panel consisted of two economists and a woman who runs an organization devoted to helping African children who have AIDS. It was a fascinating evening – we were educated, informed and interested. A League specialty!!!

At the October Board meeting, among other things, we reviewed the 2005 NYS League's Legislative Agenda and came up with our ideas for 2006. We realized that some items had actually been accomplished in 2005: HAVA, capital punishment, legislative rules and freedom of information, so we recommended their removal from the 2006 agenda. Under Reforming State Government we recommended continued support for the creation of an independent redistricting commission and an independent ethics commission, campaign finance reform, a "summit" on public authorities, meaningful lobbying reforms and budget reforms. In addition, Protection

of Reproductive Rights and Equity in School Financing should be priorities.

We suggested modifying the description of "Smart Growth/Containing Sprawl" to "*In supporting a proactive role for the state in conserving natural resources and containing sprawl, the League supports legislation that:*

- *Promotes intermunicipal partnerships*
- *Enhances urban communities*
- *Protects agricultural land, watersheds, and unique habitats*
- *Encourages effective storm water management*

The League also supports legislation that allows municipalities to adequately and equitably fund open space acquisition."

We look forward to working with the State League on these issues and will keep our members informed.

But first some fun. A theater party is on tap – November 17th at the Albany Civic Theater for wine and cheese and a great play. Hope to see you there.

Audrey and Marggie

League of Women Voters of Albany County Board

| | | | | |
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Paper ballots get the vote for accuracy

Election reform discussed; lawmakers hear backing for crime victims center

By CAROL DeMARE, Staff writer

First published: Thursday, October 13, 2005

"Excerpted with permission of the Times Union."

ALBANY — Nearly 20 speakers addressed county legislators Tuesday, voicing support for a new voting system using paper ballots and optical scanners and opposition to the disbanding of the county's crime victims center.

Several members of the League of Women Voters said their organization researched various machines and found the optical scan to be secure, accurate, recountable and accessible.

Under the Help America Vote Act, counties must replace lever-voting machines by the first federal election in 2006, which will be the September primary.

Aimee Allaud, the statewide League of Women Voters election and government specialist, and a member of the league's Albany County chapter, asked the local lawmakers to form a committee from a cross-section of the community to explore the advantages and disadvantages of the various types of equipment available.

County Executive Michael Breslin's tentative budget for 2006 includes \$1.6 million to replace the machines. The cost will be charged back to county municipalities, all of which will use the new system. The 39-member County Legislature has the final say on adopting the budget.

League member Phyllis Goldstein said the paper ballot and scanner technique "is as easy as filling out a state lottery ticket," one of which she held up. Goldstein said paper ballots are less expensive and more accurate than purchasing electronic touch-screen or push button machines.

Thanks to Phyllis Goldstein, Gael Casey-Vecchio, Virginia Hammer and Ray Blanchard for their participation at the public comment period of the Legislature on this issue.

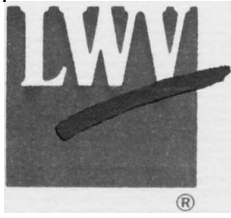
Let's Move Optical Scan Voting Machines Forward with the Albany County Legislature

What You Can Do

- Read League "Dear County Legislator" letter in this bulletin
- Call your legislator and tell him/her that you support optical scan voting machines and an ad hoc committee on election modernization. If you don't know who your legislator is, call the Clerk of the County Legislature, 447-7168, and find out.

Let me know the response you received from your legislator so we can follow up if necessary.

Aimee Allaud, 85aimee@nycap.rr.com, 482-2617



**THE LEAGUE
OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF ALBANY COUNTY**

October 3, 2005

Re New Voting Machines for Albany County

Dear County Legislator

As you know, the Help America Vote Act will require counties in New York State to replace their lever voting machines with new machines by the first federal election in 2006 (September 2006).

The League of Women Voters of New York State has endorsed the use of paper ballot precinct-based optical scan voting systems because they best meet our League criteria of *secure, accurate, recountable and accessible*.

Legislation signed by Governor Pataki in July gives each local board of elections the authority to select its own voting system. However, the effects of that decision for voters and elected officials will be with us for a long time. As a county legislator you will pass an annual budget which includes operations of the board of elections. The acquisition and long term costs for new voting equipment, in addition to its security and reliability, need to be carefully considered.

Therefore, we propose that the Legislature appoint a special ad hoc committee with a cross representation of members of the community, such as legislators, board of elections commissioners, disability organizations, senior citizens, students, League of Women Voters, etc. to explore the advantages and disadvantages of the types of equipment that is available.

For your information we have enclosed a two-page fact sheet comparing the advantages of optical scan voting machines to electronic voting machines.

Albany County League members will be making brief statements in support of our proposal at the public comment period preceding the October 11th county legislature meeting. We look forward to beginning a discussion with you on this issue.

Sincerely,

Marggie Skinner (489-5311)

Audrey Kibrick (869-8796)

Co-presidents, League of Women Voters of Albany County

Enclosure

WORKING TOGETHER TO STOP THE LEAD POISONING OF OUR CHILDREN

As a housing specialist working with persons with disabilities at the Regional Center for Independent Living, I witness first hand many adults and their families, who have lost quality of life experience from exposure to lead as children. There is currently no way for me to ascertain historically how many of these disabilities have a direct correlation. However, studies at the University of Rochester and other places are gradually linking adult diseases to lead exposure.

Prevention starts in the homes in which our children reside. This motivated my agency and me as representative to join the local Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning in Rochester in 2001. As I learned, I shared with the Social Policy Committee of the League of Women Rochester Metro, as a member. In May 2002 our League partnered with the Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning in Rochester to present a very successful community forum to educate the community on the dangers of lead poisoning to our children. At my suggestion LWV Board appointed Rochester League Member, Joan Rosenthal, to be their representative on the local Coalition. She is very active on the Coalition's Government Relations Committee.

Feeling that our grassroots efforts to prevent the lead poisoning in Rochester are a model that should spread across the state, I joined the *Coalition to End Lead Poisoning in New York State*. I am very proud to represent the LWVNY as the Off-Board Lead Specialist on the state coalition. As your representative on the Steering Committee I have been involved in the effort to pass comprehensive legislation that would prevent lead poisonings. Because lead

poisoning causes irreparable damage, even at low levels, it is now widely accepted that primary prevention is the key to ending lead poisoning.

The legislation, A.4201-B (Gantt, et al.)/ S.2513-B (Robach, et al.), based on recommendations from the *Coalition to End Lead Poisoning in New York State*, would amend state laws to create for the first time a framework for primary prevention of lead poisoning. New York's current laws focus on secondary prevention, that is, waiting until a child's blood levels are dangerously elevated, before acting to remove the environmental sources of the poisoning. New York State currently requires intervention only when children have blood lead levels of 20 ug/dL or greater; only New York City has a primary prevention law (and only for multiple dwellings).

This new legislation would require the state Department of Health to implement intensive primary prevention plans in communities with the greatest number of lead poisonings. NYSDOH would work with county departments of health and cities, towns and villages to implement lead poisoning prevention programs in these "communities of concern". The cornerstone of primary prevention approach is the requirement that all pre-1970 rental property units in the state with children under 7 or pregnant women in occupancy be certified as either "lead free", "lead contained", or lead stabilized" and periodically re-certified to ensure that they do not present a lead hazard. Properties would need to meet the standards within two years of passage.

Current state law and policies do not provide sufficient incentives or financial support for property owners to maintain their properties in a lead-safe condition or to take long-lasting steps, such as removal or encapsulation. This

legislation would create tax credits for property owners and require the state to issue bonds to create a revolving low-cost loan fund to provide resources for low-cost or no-cost loans for property owners to make their rental units “lead free”, “lead contained” or “lead stabilized”.

The Coalition’s bill was introduced by majority sponsors in both the Assembly and the Senate and gained momentum this year, advancing in the Senate and with several new sponsors added in the Assembly. Passage of this bill will be a priority for the *Coalition to End Lead Poisoning in New York State in 2006*.

Although I encourage Leagues across the state to support this important piece of legislation, our work as League members should not stop there. We need “grass root” efforts across our state to follow the lead in Rochester, New York to “get the lead out”.

Recognizing that education on the issue is the key to success, Dr. David Broadbent, Ralph Spezio and myself are organizing a statewide effort to connect with communities to enlighten and advise on how each community can get involved. I will be contacting local Leagues across the state, starting in September, and asking for each local League’s help, perhaps at “League Day” to educate on how to become involved in the effort to protect our children. David and Ralph are the first organizers to step up in Rochester to form our local Coalition to End Lead Poisoning by 2010, when they saw what lead was doing to our most vulnerable. They are working with me to carry the message to stops across our state. More details when I contact you. As a 20 something member of the League here in Rochester, I recognize the impact of our grass roots efforts. I now look to other Leagues to jump on board.

Jane Chase
jchase@frontiernet.net

RECOMMENDATION: NEW YORKERS SHOULD VOTE YES ON THE BUDGET REFORM AMENDMENT

The League of Women Voters of NYS urges a YES vote on Proposal 1, the state budget reform constitutional amendment. For decades, New Yorkers have had to pay the price for a budget process that is secret, unaccountable and unpredictable. The damage from late budgets, fiscal gimmicks and mounting fiscal instability is rooted in Albany’s flawed budget process.

The public needs to know more about the development of the Governor’s budget proposal; the state needs to have an independent, nonpartisan fiscal watchdog to monitor the state’s finances; and the public needs to know that there will always be a budget in place.

The budget reform proposal accomplishes these modest goals. The reform, among other things, opens up the Governor’s budget to more public scrutiny, establishes an Independent Budget Office and creates a “contingency budget” if there is no budget agreement by the beginning of the fiscal year.

Essentially the “contingency budget” is last year’s budget and it would automatically go into effect on May 1, the beginning of the new fiscal year. This reform allows lawmakers to continue to negotiate changes, but there would be no threat of a government shutdown. And as seen earlier, the change results in an institutional relationship between the executive and the legislature that is more like the relationship found in the vast majority of other states. For more information on Proposal 1, visit the LWVNYS website: www.lwvny.org.

While more work still needs to be done; this budget reform proposal deserves support this November.

ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION UPDATE

September 2005 State Board Report

The League of Women Voters is on the forefront of advocacy for reformation of drug laws and alternatives to incarceration.

With the 2004 amendment of New York's draconian Rockefeller Drug Law provisions, the state is moving in the right direction. Much work is being done in addressing substance abuse related crimes as well as the mental health issues involved.

The NYS Department of Corrections currently funds 161 Alternatives to Incarceration programs throughout the state. A list of a few of the programs which provide services for those entering the criminal justice system due to substance abuse and mental problems are:

- Albany County Rapid Assessment Intervention and Linkage Program
- Cattaraugus County Safe Communities/Safe Futures Program
- Erie County Shared Population Program
- Kings County DTAP – Drug Treatment Alternative – to Prison
- Lewis County Transitions to Independence Process
- Madison county Forensic Case Management
- Onondaga County P.R.O.U.D. – Prosecutors Response to Offenders Using Drugs

Two of the listed programs, Kings County's DTAP and Onondaga County's P.R.O.U.D. report significantly lowered recidivism rates, proving that education and treatment work not only to increase the well being of our communities, but to lower the taxpayers' financial burden resulting from warehousing the users of illegal drugs.

The League of Women Voters applauds the good being done and will continue to support alternatives to incarceration.

Debra Merryweather, Off-board Specialist, Alternatives to Incarceration

LWV runs successful Tenant Election for the Albany Housing Authority.

After a hiatus of several years, the LWV of Albany County agreed to conduct the 2005 election of two tenant commissioners to the Board of the Albany Housing Authority. On October 4, a week before the election, Pam Howell and Marggie Skinner conducted a lively candidates forum at the community room at Ida Yarborough Homes on North Pearl St. Five of the 6 candidates presented their credentials to several constituents and answered several questions. On election day, twenty three league members and others from the city of Albany staffed 9 polling places from 2 to 8 p.m. At the end of the evening, ballots were brought to Ida Yarborough and Aimee Allaud, Maria Markovics, Marggie and Pam counted them and announced the results. It was a rewarding experience in grass roots democracy for all of us who participated. Thanks to league members Marsha Kayser, Dianne Symansky, Ray Blanchard, Ursula Poland, Ken Skinner, Maria, Pam and Aimee for assisting. Thanks too to Jacqui Williams for helping us recruit election officials for this project. At our October Board Meeting we agreed to invite each person who worked on this election to join the league. The LWVAC will also make a contribution to the Housing Authority's Tenants Association. We look forward to greeting them at upcoming League events.

"The People Spoke! — Reflections on our October 6th program

An audience of about 50 engaged in an animated dialogue about the need for foreign aid, and the benefits and costs of global trade liberalization during "the People Speak" event sponsored by the LWVAC, the International Center of the Capital Region, the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers, the UN Assoc. and others on Oct. 6th at the WAMC Linda Norris Auditorium. Susan Arbetter deftly moderated a panel of experts and their discussions with the audience — Susanna Grannis of CHABHA raised our awareness of the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on Africa's children; Peter Riggs of the Forum on Democracy and Trade illuminated current trade policy trends in industrialized and developing countries, and Elena Alvarez addressed international economics from her vantage point of working on development projects in Latin America. Audience questions were far ranging — a couple of examples: one participant challenged the validity of international organizations such as the IMF and World Bank; another asserted the critical importance of education and civics to deal with the global competitive challenges ahead. The program was taped by WAMC, and we hope it will be broadcast in the future. The organizing team of various community organizations plans to continue its collaborations, and work together on bringing other global discussion programs to our community.

“Smart Voter” is Coming (We Hope)

If you go to the web site www.smartvoter.org, you'll see what LWV of California was able to accomplish with ten years of effort on this web facility. “Smart Voter” is a web site, similar to DNet but more fully featured, that provides services to voters, candidates, and boards of election. Candidates input information that's typically requested in Voters' Guides. Boards of election submit ballots, polling place, voting machine procedures, forms and date information. And voters, researchers, editorial writers, and the general public reap the benefits!

The California League has grown this facility through a paid staff and a strong network of local volunteers. Partnerships with local businesses and public service organizations have resulted in sufficient funding to support the service and to extend it to support other Leagues. The League OWNS this facility, so it isn't a service that will go away.

LWVNYS is working with local Leagues to try to get the local Boards of Election interested in providing information through this facility. Albany County is a key participant, and we will be meeting with the Albany County BOE to explore what good things this facility could do for them, particularly with their new HAVA responsibilities. The NYS BOEs have a long, long way to come to be effective information and service providers, and we can help!

This is a wonderful opportunity for us to provide the information typically provided in a Voters' Guide, but without the publication and distribution problems. While our partnership with the Times Union has worked relatively well in the past, we can see a future where both the TU and the LWVAC invest our collective energy in “Smart Voter” to provide similar services.

Stay tuned for more information, and opportunities to volunteer!

Did You Know?.....

Alice Morgan Wright, an Albany native (b.1881), became a sculptor and also worked for women's suffrage. After living for several years in Europe until just after the outbreak of World War I, she returned to the U.S. and lived in Greenwich Village in NYC further honing her sculpture skills. In 1921 she returned to Albany where she set up a studio on the top floor of her parents' house at 393 State Street, known today as the Morgan State house where she continued working throughout the 1920s and '30s. The majority of Alice Morgan Wright's sculptures depicted women, female subjects drawn from classical literature and modern theater.

It was while she was in Europe that she met Emmeline Pankhurst in 1912. Pankhurst led the fight for women's suffrage in England and Wright joined her in a suffrage demonstration which resulted in her being jailed. When she returned to the U.S. she continued her suffrage activities here by joining the New York State Women Suffrage Party and became a founder of the *New York State League of Women Voters*. She continued her activism after women obtained the right to vote but in 1945 turned her interests to animal rights. She became world famous for her efforts in animal rights and welfare.

She died in Albany in 1975.

The Albany Institute of History and Art has recently acquired a large collection of materials related to her life, as well as sculpture and paintings, etc., which are currently on view at the Institute.

(information on Wright was excerpted from *Panorama*, a publication of the Albany Institute of History and Art, Fall 2005)

Membership 2005–2006

Join & Make a Difference

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

e-mail _____

- 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
P.O. Box 611 Slingerlands, NY 12159

Or contact: Linda McKenna Tel: 463–1805

Letters.....

we get letters (we hope!)

Express yourself! We are starting a new column for the bulletin. Let me know your ideas and opinions...keep it short and to the point, and primarily on League issues. Mail your letter to Aimee Allaud, Editor, LWVAC bulletin, 85 Melrose Avenue, Albany, NY, 12203, or 85aimee@nycap.rr.com. Bulletin deadlines are the board meeting each month, generally the first Tuesday of each month.

From the Editor

LWVNYS Briefings on the Status of Democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan, Wednesday, November 16, 9:00 – 3:00, at the UN headquarters in NYC. Reservations can still be made (by November 9, to LWVNYS office, 465-4162). Marggie Skinner (489-5311) and Betsey Swan (426-3711) will be driving. If you need transportation, please call them. They'll leave @6:00 a.m. and return that evening.

Holiday Luncheon Speaker Dr. Kermit Hall, SUNYA President, is an expert on the U.S. Supreme Court, and will be speaking about the Court at the luncheon. Put the date, Tuesday, December 8, on your calendar right now.

LWVAC web site is under construction. Our new address is www.lwvalbany.org. Look for new and exciting format in November.

LWVAC Board meetings are the first Tuesday of every month at the Albany Public Library, 5:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome. The meetings are over by 7 p.m. Let your board know what you think about the League and what are the important issues in Albany County.

UPCOMING EVENTS CALENDAR

LWVAC Board Mtg.

Tues., November 1, 5:30 p.m.
Albany Public Library
Washington Avenue

Financing Education Mtg.

Wed., Nov. 2, 7:00 p.m.
home of Betsey Swan,
11 Norwood Drive, Menands
426-3711

ELECTION DAY

Tues, Nov. 8
Polls open 6 a.m.-9:00 p.m.

LWVNYS Briefings at the UN

Wed., Nov. 16
Call LWVNYS at 465-4162 for
reservation

LWVAC Theater Party

and Fundraiser
Albany Civic Theater
Thursday, Nov. 17

Global Issues Study Group

(discussion)
Monday, Dec. 5, 10:30 a.m.
Home of Nikki Singh

Holiday Luncheon with

Guest Speaker,
President Kermit Hall, SUNYA
SUNYA Alumnae House
SUNYA
Tuesday, Dec. 8, 12 Noon

The League of Women Voters of Albany County
P.O. Box 611
Slingerlands, NY 12159

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