COMING TO OUR JAN. 22 PROGRAM AND HELP US TO DECIDE
DO YOU THINK THAT NEW YORK SHOULD HOLD A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION?

Date: Sun, Jan. 22, 1:30-3:30, dessert/coffee
Location: St. Sophia’s Church
440 Whitehall Rd, Albany

The New York State ballot in November 2017 will ask this of voters: “Shall there be a convention to revise the constitution and amend the same?”

Every 20 years, New Yorkers are asked to decide whether or not there should be a constitutional convention. How would you answer that question? Should the LWVNYS take a position for or against?

Even though the November ballot vote is a year away, now is the time for us to study the issue and send our input to the State League. It will decide in March whether we support, oppose, or remain neutral on this ballot proposal.

Our discussion on January 22 will be facilitated by LWVAC members including NYS staff Laura Bierman and Jennifer Wilson using materials prepared for us by the state league. To assist you in preparing for this discussion, you can use the LWVNYS website for extensive background on the topic, www.lwvny.org. This site links to joint publications and co-sponsored programs on this important and controversial topic. The League's own documentation of the last Constitutional Convention (1967), "Seeds of Failure," can also be found there.

Come to our January 22 meeting, hear the pros and cons and help the LWVNYS develop a position. Discussion leaders will be Mary Beilby, Aimee Allaud, and Laura Bierman.

Contact: Aimee Allaud, 85aimee@nycap.rr.com
Board and Committees

President, Margaret Danes, stssophia@nycap.rr.com

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2nd Vice President/Voter Services, Barbara Frankel barbarameg@me.com

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Herb Gordon, gordon@acmenet.net.

Patricia Sibilia pbranch@verizon.net.

Stephen Winters, sdoxie@aol.com.

A complete list of committee chairs is available on the LWVAC website, www.lwvalbany.org. under Contact Us

Quick Links

LWV of Albany Co.

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Electronic Bulletin

MEMBERS can receive our Bulletin electronically or by US mail. If you wish to receive our Bulletin electronically, please send an email to bulletin editor, Aimee Allaud, 482-2617, or 85aimee@nycap.rr.com.

LWVAC Board meetings are held monthly (see calendar) at St. Sophia's church, 440 Whitehall Road, Albany, call Margaret Danes, president, 489-4442, mdanes@nycap.rr.com.

Bulletin editors, Aimee Allaud, 85aimee@nycap.rr.com., and Marian Schwager, welcome comments and suggestions

League of Women Voters of NYS and League of Women Voters of NYS Education Foundation

62 Grand Street, Albany, NY., 12207, Tel: 465-4162, www.lwvny.org., e-mail: lwvny@lwvny.org

Dare Thompson, President

League of Women Voters of the US,

Chris Carson, President

A WARM MEMBERS WELCOME FOR 2016

As 2016 draws to an end, we are pleased to announce that 22 individuals or households either joined the league for the first time or decided to return after an absence. The distribution of members within Albany county is strong, with a mixture of urban and rural environments.

Mary Barthelme, Colonie
Robert & Linda Bernardino, Altamont
Mary Bielby, Albany
Karen Bogucki, Slingerlands Carol Bullard, Menands
Marion DeGennaro, Clarksville Nancy Hernández, Loudonville Molly Johnson, Delmar
Laurie Lierheimer, Slingerlands Holly Lutz, Glenmont
Jessica Manna, Albany Karen McNamara, Delmar Lisa Nissenbaum, Altamont Joan Osborne, Sherrill
Paula Rosenberg, Albany Carol Scour, Delmar Cindy Schultz, Albany Patricia Sibilia, Delmar Erica Sufrin, Voorheesville
Jennifer Wilson, Albany
Robert Willower, Albany
President's Message

Enjoy the Holidays!
Let us enjoy the holidays. It's a time of year that often leads to a lot of "hustle and bustle" which, unfortunately, sometimes overshadows the gentle nature of the season. This is a time of year for good tidings and cheer, for gatherings of family and friends, and a time for sharing and laughing and loving. It is a time for good will. Let us all savor the flavors and scents and music that fill the air and let us be rejuvenated as we approach the new year.

And when the holiday season is over, let us look to the work that lies ahead. For this coming year will most likely produce activities not in keeping with the many public policy positions formulated by the LWVUS. For those not familiar with the process, public policy positions are not easily achieved. They follow a careful and thorough non partisan process. Step one is the selection of an issue. Next the LWVUS Board sets up the parameters for a study committee's work. This includes the areas to be studied, researching and writing background information, and preparing consensus questions to help local League discussion to consensus. (Note: consensus is not a vote. It is a mutual agreement of members arrived at through the discussion of pros and cons.) Local Leagues then report on consensus (or lack of one) and based on this information, the committee can then formulate a position which, after Board approval, can be used for action. Each and every LWV position has been forged through a long and inclusive analysis.

There are a good number public policy positions of the LWV ranging from voting rights to natural resources, international relations, natural resources, and a wide range number of positions in social policy. There are currently fifty, yes fifty, League public policy positions. The full list can be found on the LWVUS website. But as we look to a new presidential administration, there are a number of positions the president-elect has stated that are diametrically opposed to those of the LWV. These include major differences in positions on energy and climate change, health care, immigration, and gun control to name a few.

Our positions were carefully studied and formulated, but it will be up to us to be support them in the coming months. We can be more vocal and we can voice our concerns. There are many other groups and organizations who have called for combined efforts in addressing these concerns. We can work together with those of like mind in being heard. We can write letters to our elected representatives. We can even join in peaceful demonstrations. We will need to be seen and heard if we are to preserve and further these principles of an open democracy. Our country has endured some rocky periods, but it has endured through the persistence and perseverance of its people. It will be us to maintain that positive and forward thinking vigilance.

In closing, I would like to thank our board and our many volunteers for their outstanding efforts during this past year. We are truly fortunate to have so many dedicated individuals. And at this time, I would also like to wish each and everyone a warm and joyful holiday season and a new year filled with countless blessings.

Best Wishes for a happy, healthy 2017!
Margaret Danes, President

LWVUS Comment on Women's March in DC on January 21

The LWVUS Board of Directors met this past weekend and discussed whether the League should participate officially in the planned Women's March on Washington, January 21, 2017. The board considered feedback from the State Presidents call, the State Presidents/ED listserv, and the State Executive Director calls to inform its decision. We also considered information about the March available online. After a thoughtful discussion weighing the pros and cons, the board decided that LWVUS is not planning to officially participate in the Women's March. We believe in the freedom of assembly as a cornerstone of our open democracy. We support political activism and encourage people across the United States to let their voices be heard. If
League members wish to attend this event, we do not discourage it. We kindly request that League members do not wear League buttons or carry League signs in this march. We will monitor the organization of this event and if additional information emerges before January 21 that indicates it will be a non-partisan diverse, and inclusive event, the LWVUS may reconsider its decision.

News Briefs

A Word About Our 2016 Voter Service Activities....
Barbara Frankel, Voter Service chair
As the pundits have said many times, 2016 was an unusual election year. From our perspective, there was more interest in voting than in other recent presidential election years and LWVAC has responded. As mentioned in another article, the naturalization ceremonies have increased and registered more voters than ever before. We have also expanded our reach into the community and expanded our voter registration efforts to include voter turnout and voter education since many voters are already registered. (The real problem is voter turnout.) Since the spring, LWVAC has held voter registration/voter education in twelve separate locations. We have helped or collaborated with Whitney Young Health Center, 100 Black Men, Center for the Disabled, Albany County Libraries, and two local Mosques. We have had voter registration/education efforts with students at the College of Saint Rose, Sage, Siena, and the University of Albany. We also had voter events at a local supermarket, movie theater and a Valley Cats Game. We held two candidate forums: 20th Congressional District co-sponsored by the four capital district leagues and NYS 46th Senate District cosponsored by Schenectady League, Altamont Free Library, and Guilderland Public Library. Patricia Sibilia has ably completed VOTE411, the League's on-line voter guide this year with information about candidates for the 15 Albany County races and Charter revisions.

The unusual election year, our planning activities, and the collective effort of many League members including board members have resulted in an increase the League's voter service activities. Thank you everyone!

Voter turnout is still a mystery and challenge. We are planning a brief survey of volunteers, collaborating organizations, and co-sponsors to determine what we can do to strengthen future efforts. We also hope to look at voter registration/voter turnout data to help plan/target future efforts. Anyone who has ideas or suggestions and interested in helping in any way is very welcome. Please contact me at barbarameg@mac.com.

Spring 2017: Great Decisions Discussion Groups Begin on February 13
Morning group: Martha Kennedy 439-4559, dkennedy2@nycap.rr.com
Afternoon group: Peggy Gutman 439-4758, gutmanm@beverwyck.com or mgutman@nycap.rr.com
Book order info: Katie Henrikson 533-7441, HenriksonK@beverwyck.com

Great Decisions is America's largest discussion program on world affairs. The name is shared by a national civic education program, briefing book and television series administered and produced by the Foreign Policy Association (FPA). The Great Decisions program highlights eight of the most thought-provoking foreign policy challenges facing Americans each year. A Great Decisions briefing book provides background information, current data and policy options for each issue and serves as the focal text for discussion groups. LWVAC has had a Great Decisions discussion group for many years. Further information about the FPA and the Great Decisions program including 2017 Briefing Books are available at www.fpa.org

This year we will be hosting two Great Decisions Discussion groups. The morning group will meet on Mondays (Feb.13 and 27, March 13 and 27, April 10 and 24, and May 8 and 22) from 9:30-11:30 in the Community Room at the Berkshire Bank, 11 Vista Blvd., Slingerlands. The afternoon group will meet on Mondays at Beverwyck in the Albany Room, 40 Autumn Dr. Slingerlands and follow a similar schedule. To ensure that attendees are aware
of the specific aspects of the complex topics that will be under discussion, participants will be required to purchase a copy of the FPA Briefing Book for 2017 either via the FPA website (www.fpa.org) or by sending a check in the amount of $27 to Katie Henrikson (10 Hickory Dr. Slingerlands, NY 12159) no later than Dec. 18, 2016.

Please note: Meetings of the Great Decisions groups are open to all LWVAC members but space is limited. For more information or to sign up to participate in this program, please contact:

Morning group: Martha Kennedy 439-4559, dkenney2@nycap.rr.com
Afternoon group: Peggy Gutman 439-4758, gutmanm@beverwyck.com or mgutman@nycap.rr.com
Book order info: Katie Henrikson 533-7441, HenriksonK@beverwyck.com

New Citizens and More Get Great Introduction to the League
Julie Elson, Naturalization Chair
The League in the person of Monique Roeth and Judith Grose- Johnson has been assisting new citizens and their families and friends to register to vote during their naturalization ceremonies at the Federal District Courthouse for decades. In 2016, Monique handed the responsibility over to Julie Elson, knowing that with Judith’s guidance, the project would continue.

In fact, it has grown in both scope and support. In addition to attending thirteen naturalization ceremonies at the Federal District Court, a cadre of new and old League members also assisted at three Albany County Court ceremonies and one Washington County Supreme Court ceremony. More than 500 new voters were registered to vote during these ceremonies and each received materials about both the voting process and the activities of the League.

But the many new citizens aren't the only beneficiaries this year. Voter Services chair Barbara Frankel successfully applied for grant funding to provide us with an array of voting information and supplies, including stamps for volunteers to mail in completed, out of county registration forms! The project has also proven a great introduction to the league for prospective members looking for ways to assist with voter registration in this momentous election year. Despite the 7:45 am start time, we welcomed new volunteers not only share in the excitement and happiness of people becoming American citizens, but also to provide them a vital educational service for their new civic responsibilities. Linda Bernardi, Lisa Nissenbaum and Cindy Schultz joined the League after helping with new citizen voter registration. They joined Judith Grose-Johnson, Janet Reilly, Barbara Traynor, Judith Wing and Patricia Sibilia who have all devoted time to the project this year. Susan Poleto, a Rensselaer County resident has also been an enthusiastic worker, often hand delivering registration forms for us to the Rensselaer County Board of Elections.

Thank You Poll Reporters!
Marggie Skinner
Thanks to each of you for agreeing to cover a polling place on election day. We have received a check for $1,575 from WNYT for all the coverage that we were able to provide. We did receive an apology from Paul Conti who oversees this operation. He acknowledged that the phone lines did get tied up and I have heard from some of you that you were not able to get through and report your results. But we have been paid for covering all of the places. They will be working on fixing the phone system before next year. Paul and I have also resolved to meet with the Election commissioners and raise any issues that have been brought to our attention.

Some of you have reported. It's easier for my aging brain to remember specifics if you drop a line or send an email- good news as well as bad, and your message will be transmitted.

Thank you again. This effort covered 153 Election Districts in 58 locations with a team of over 60 league and noon-league members. This is a major source of support for our League and I think it puts us in the "room where it happens" for at least one phase of our political system.
Albany County Charter Update
Voters approved Local Law H that changed over 50 sections of the County Charter to update and clarify how the County government operates. Now, the focus for reform is on Redistricting, a complex issue. Patricia Sibilia, the League's monitor has been engaged full time in presenting the League's position that emphasizes a nonpartisan fully transparent solution to the reapportionment process. Detailed analysis of the two proposals and the League's comments is on the League website, www.lwvalbany.org and has been sent to members through Constant Contact.

THE LEAGUE THROWS A VERY BIG PARTY:
GET READY FOR FOUR YEARS OF CELEBRATING
WOMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE!

2017 marks New York State's centennial anniversary for women's suffrage. Women in New York got the vote here three years prior to the passage of the 19th amendment. Our state centennial will be inaugurated with an exhibit at the NYS Museum in Albany beginning November 2017. While the event horizon is a year away, it is not too soon to plan ways for your participation with the League. We are already participating in lending Susan B. Anthony's gavel for the November exhibit and a 100th Anniversary Centennial Committee has been formed. The steering committee includes both Barbara Bartoletti and Aimee Allaud. Plans now are for four subcommittees: education, events, LWVNYS history, fundraising. As plans emerge there will be opportunities for league members to participate in both subcommittee work and events.

In June, the 2017 LWVNYS convention will be held in Liverpool, NY, near the sites of the Women's Rights National Historical park, and the cradle of women's suffrage in NYS. For more information, see www.nywomenshistory.com

Four Years of Events on the Celebration Timeline:

November 6, 2017: Women get the vote in New York State
November 19, 2019: Founding of the League of Women Voters of New York State
February 14, 2020: Founding of League of Women Voters of the United States
August 26, 2020: Official certification of the ratification of the 19th amendment.

The Suffrage tent at the Suffolk County Fair at Riverhead, Long Island, NY was a place for child care. In 1913, Suffragists could go about campaigning for women's rights confident their children were well cared for in the Suffrage tent.

Calendar

Dec. 13, 11:45 Holiday Luncheon
Martel's at Capital Hills Speaker: Dr. James Ketterer
"The New Normal: Making Sense of the Election"
see website for details, www.lwvalbany.org.
Dec. 14, 7:15  Public Hearing on 2 Redistricting Proposals before the County Legislature  
County Courthouse, Eagle Street, Legislative Chambers  
contact Patricia Sibilia, psbranch@verizon.net.

Jan. 9, 6:30-8:30 LWVAC Board meets, St.Sophia’s Church, 440 Whitehall Road  
All are welcome  
contact Margaret Danes, president, stsophia@nycap.rr.com

Jan. 22, 1:30-3:30 LWVAC General Meeting:  
"Shall NYS Hold a Constitutional Convention."  
Join a discussion on the pros and cons of this issue and help LWVNYS  
formulate a position,  St. Sophia’s Church, 440 Whitehall Road, Albany.

Feb. date TBD  Topic: a Community Conversation on Immigration in the Capital District

Membership 2016-17 - Join & Make a Difference

Name: _____________________________________________
Tel: ___________

Address, City, Zip: ______________________________________________________

Email: _____________________________________________________________

___ Individual Membership$60/year       ___ Send me newsletters by mail

___ Household Membership$90/year       ___ Just use my email for newsletters

___ Student Membership$25/year       ___ Contribution in support of my local League

____ I’d like to join; this is the best I can do       ____ Please send me more information

____ tax deductible contribution to LWVNYS  Education Fund

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

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