New Consensus Discussion on Term Limits

for Jan. Souper Supper Program
DATE: January 13, 2015
TIME: 5:30 pm
PLACE: St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 16 Elsmere Ave, Delmar

Souper supper followed by discussion on term limits.
RSVP to Julie Elson at either jelson510@earthlink.net or 482-0981 and let her know if you are bringing soup, salad, bread or your favorite dessert. Beverage will be provided.

Term Limits Program: 6:30 pm
Jan Messina, a member of our league as well as a member of the state study committee on term limits, will present the state league’s power point on this topic and lead a discussion of the study questions. The statewide committee has been studying this topic for six months and has prepared study materials. Participants are encouraged to refer to the state league website at http://www.lwvny.org/programs-studies/termlimits.html to review materials prior to the meeting.

WHY PARTICIPATE IN THIS CONSENSUS:
This is a consensus meeting where members will be asked to vote on a series of questions developed to gauge member opinion on whether or not the state league should amend its current position against term limits for elected state and local officials. At the state convention in June 2013 delegates approved a Board recommendation to conduct a new study on whether or not the existing opposing position, adopted in 1992, needs to be changed. The rationale for conducting a new study on the pros and cons of enacting term limits for various offices is based on growing perceptions of voter dissatisfaction with the status quo in the state legislature and pessimism that the 96 per cent return rate for elected legislative representatives can generate new leadership for reform.

Based on YOUR input during this discussion, participants will vote on whether or not to support voter initiatives to impose term limits on several
Mary Berry
(Ex-Officio - Past President)
Margaret Danes
(Membership/Observer Corps), 438-7218
Susanna Martin
(Voter Services), 861-5264
Julie Elson (Program), 482-0981
Barbara Frankel (Voter Service) barbaremeg@me.com, 518-437-1032
Paula Philo (Action), 475-9213
Lois Portnick (At Large), 478-0618
Tina Raggio (Program/ "Students Inside Albany"), 439-7569
Karen Wagner (State Issues)
Judy Wing
(Albany County Charter Study), 269-4337

Policy on Inclusiveness
The League of Women Voters in both its values and practice is committed to inclusion and diversity. This means:

We recognize that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision making;

We believe inclusiveness enhances our organization's ability to respond effectively to changing conditions and needs;

We affirm our commitment to reflecting the diversity of Albany County; and

There shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the League on the basis of economic position, gender, race, ability, age, sexual orientation, sets of state offices (Assembly, Senate, Executive) and if so, under what conditions the limits would apply (consecutive, lifetime, other). Since the 21 states that have passed legislation for term limits have all had varying experiences with it (repeals, reversals due to court decisions, state-specific variations), there is much to learn. Our consensus will be collated with the response of local leagues throughout the state to determine what, if any, policy changes the state league will consider for 2015.

WHY THIS MATTERS:
Aside from the importance of the topic, league processes are truly democratic and vital to policy development. Policy based on member feedback becomes formulated at a nation level. It gets translated through state leagues for their agendas and then to local leagues for theirs. This progression occurs because first local leagues inform state leagues which then inform the national league of the need - a true "grass roots" approach. We can influence the course of league policies through the consensus process and by doing so have the potential to create changes with wide reaching impact.

President's Message
As I write this today, I am thinking about our League's holiday luncheon, which was well attended. People were in a holiday spirit with the snow covered landscape, only a few inches here in Albany but 20 inches at Duanesburg where our intrepid guest speaker Senator Cecelia Tkaczyk lives.

After the usual pleasantries at our table, the talk turned, not surprisingly, to politics. The emphasis was on the deplorable interest of the general public in politics and therefore the terrible turnout to vote. As you probably know, New York is near the bottom when it comes to percentage of people voting. Unfortunately, many of those who do vote often vote against their own best interest. What is the problem and what can League members do? Our mission is to encourage an active and informed participation in government. On January 13, we will try to come to consensus on the issue of term limits. Would having term limits stimulate interest for the voting public? What are the issues involved? Be sure to read the information on Constant Contact*, our web site and the NYSLWV web site and come to the meeting at St. Stephen's.

Senator Tkaczyk spoke to us of her experience as she was afforded opportunities by our public education system. She saw active participation in the government as an opportunity to bring about change. Ironically she was defeated in her run for a second term. She seems not to be discouraged by this defeat. We, also, should not be discouraged by low voter turnout and interest, but redouble our efforts. After all, isn't that why we belong to the League?

Throughout this issue we highlight how participation in League activities strengthens the democratic process. We are a grass roots local organization with easy access to our statewide organization and its forceful lobbying impact on state politics. For example, although the League did not oppose high volume hydraulic fracturing, the League’s Committee on Energy, Agriculture and the Environment provided extensive science-based
testimony and comment to the various state agencies and the Executive since 2009 on the need for sufficient environmental and health studies on the impact of "fracking" before any permitting would be allowed. Protecting the state's water resources and the health of all New Yorkers have their foundation in LWVUS position for "preservation of the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the ecosystem and maximum protection of public health and the environment." Check out the League's advocacy history on this issue by linking to www.lwvny.org/advocacy/natural-resources/hydrofracking.html.

If making a difference is one of your priorities, the League is the place for you to be. You'll learn in this issue both what's been accomplished and what topics are likely to occupy our attention in 2015.

My wishes to you for a happy, productive New Year. Looking forward to hearing from you and seeing you.

*If you are not receiving our informational email Constant Contact, let me know (griffinocee@gmail.com) and I will see that your email gets added.

In League,
Lois Griffin

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**Busy Season for Voter Services Group**

Co-Voter Service Chairs Susanna Martin and Barbara Frankel thank the many League members who willingly and graciously helped with all the candidate events, voter registration and other voter service activities. They have submitted the following summary of 2014 activities and events.

Although 2014 was a midterm election year, the Albany League was busy with a variety of election related activities. We held six candidate events that covered the Bethlehem School Board, Albany School Board, the 20th Congressional District, the 109 and 110 Assembly Districts, and 46th New York State Senate District. Held in Altamont, the Senate District 46 event with Cecilia Tkaczyk Democrat and George Amedore (Republican) was the most exciting. Managing a "standing room only" crowd of over 300 people, Mary Berry did a wonderful job moderating. Our co-sponsor, the Altamont Library and League volunteers helped with all aspects of crowd control, and event details. The event was videotaped, posted on our web site, and featured in TV and print news.

We also co-sponsored a 20th Congressional Candidate Event with the Saratoga, Schenectady and Rensselaer Leagues at the Clifton Park Library. We modified our usual format with a four-member panel that included two newspaper reporters Matt Hamilton from the Times Union and Hailey Vaccaro, from the Schenectady Gazette. Mary Berry was again a successful moderator.

Our League collaborated with the Albany Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to hold three of the events in the City of Albany. We had two excellent moderators Chris Ellis and the Reverend Robert Linder (President of Troy NAACP). The other event co-sponsors included: George Biddle Kelly Education Foundation, Capital Area Urban League, Council of Albany Neighborhoods (CANA), Capital Area Council of Churches, Reform Jewish Voices, and for Albany School Board-the Albany City Council Parent Teacher Association (ACCPTA). League volunteers registered new voters at eleven naturalization ceremonies.

The Albany League has again successfully participated in VOTE411, League of Women Voters online voter guide. Launched by the League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF) in October of 2006, VOTE411 is a "one-stop-shop" for election related information. It provides nonpartisan
information to the public with both general and state-specific information on many aspects of the election process including polling place locations, ballot measure information, and candidate information. The State League entered information about State level races such as the Governor and Lieutenant Governor races and the Albany League worked to provide information for 22 candidates in 11 local races. This year we advertised VOTE411 via CDTA bus signs. Albany County generated close to 3,000 VOTE411 users who had over 4500 sessions.

November Elections Reported on by Large League Turnout of Poll Reporters

While many of us are sitting at home on election night glued to the news media for the results, league members and community volunteers under the direction of Marggie Skinner, coordinator of poll reporting, are out at election districts anxiously waiting for the polls to close so the results can get reported to the media. Poll reporting is a major League source of revenue and community service.

Volunteers are stationed at 154 election districts, located at 64 poll sites throughout Albany County. Where the sites have more than one scanner, multiple volunteers are needed to receive the printouts. This November there were 70 poll reporters on election night and thanks to committee efforts, approximately one third were community members not associated with the League but willing to help us out. The League raised almost $2,000 for this effort and wishes to thank all who contributed their time to helping with this important service.

Albany County Charter Revision

The League committee observing the Albany County Legislature has been following the developments on the revision of the county charter. The Review Commission's new proposed charter has been modified by the county legislature's special review committee. Among other changes they wish to retain the coroner system and weaken the power of the county executive. Subsequent efforts to bring the revision of the charter to the legislature for action appear to have been postponed indefinitely pending resolution of a multi-year law suit on the county's redistricting efforts. Members of the minority inner city community had sued saying based on the last census they were entitled to five instead of four districts in which the minority would be in the majority. Recently it was apparently decided by some legislators acting behind closed doors that the plaintiffs in this case might be satisfied if rather than seeing the law suit to fruition the county legislature offered a solution which reduced the size of the legislature such that the minority community in being represented by four legislators would be a larger percentage out of the proposed twenty nine than it is out of the current thirty nine seats. This alternative to pursuing the conclusion of the lawsuit was rejected by the legislature. One outcome of these actions was seen to be that the topic of reducing the size of the legislature would be separated from overall review of the charter commission's recommendations and the changes made by the special review committee and should be voted on separately from the rest of the revisions for the charter. As this is being written, there is a public hearing on the reduction of the size of the legislature scheduled for December 29th. Observer Corps members will continue to monitor the actions of the county legislature in 2015.

Observer Corps

This fall has been an exciting time to observe the Albany County Legislature. Every month one experienced league member teams up with a member, who may or may not have attended these meetings before. In an effort to give everyone an opportunity we are alphabetically calling each league member and are currently at names beginning with C. If you cannot wait until we call you and wish to attend please contact Judith Wing at 269-4337 or email judywing@beverwyck.com
Great Decisions Discussion Groups, Winter 2015

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. Great Decisions 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. You can find out more information about the FPA and Great Decisions at http://www.fpa.org/great_decisions/. You can order the book through this site.

For Winter 2015, LWVAC is starting a new Great Decisions Group; there will now be two groups. Both groups will use the Foreign Policy Association's Great Decisions 2015 book.

The existing group will continue to meet alternate Mondays at 9:30 am at locations which will be announced on the schedule. The first meeting of the existing group will be on February 2 and every other Monday for a total of 8 sessions.

The new group will meet Monday afternoons from 2-4pm at the home of Linda Hunt and Larry Gambino at 34 Governor Circle, The Reserve at Whitehall Point in Albany. If you have questions about accessibility please contact them at 432-3212.

If you are currently in the morning group and would like to change to the afternoon please contact Judi Campbell at jcamp5223@gmail.com and Linda Hunt at lshunt@nycap.rr.com.

If you are new to Great Decisions please contact: Judi Campbell jcamp5223@gmail.com and Linda Hunt 432-3212, lshunt@nycap.rr.com; be sure to mention which group you want to join.

2015 STATE AND LOCAL ISSUES: CONVENTION, LEGISLATIVE AND ANNUAL PROGRAM PLANNING ACTIONS UNDERWAY

As we begin 2015, both the state and local leagues are at work developing ways for members to give feedback on a 2015 set of issues and positions. Early in 2015 the state league will be publishing the league's legislative agenda in a new booklet format that will contain one-page "Briefs" on the status of issues we will advocate for during the state's busy legislative session. It will also be asking local leagues for their input on program planning for 2015-2017. This will be a major function of the June 2015 State League Convention and developing desired positions beforehand is essential. No opportunity for presenting proposals will be provided at the convention itself. Local leagues will only have until February 20 to provide their recommendations so that all program work can be developed in time to be distributed for local league's to discuss in early spring. As these materials are developed, the League will be alerting our members through Constant Contact e-mails and publication on its website.

The advocacy issue briefs will include election law, governmental reform efforts such as ethics legislation and campaign finance reform, health care, judiciary issues, women's issues, transportation and educational financing. These become the foundation for effective lobbying and advocacy efforts during the Legislative session.

Concurrent with state legislative advocacy efforts, our league also monitors county governmental issues within the context of our own 2013-14 program. The program this year includes the Albany County Charter Review Commission's recommendations, the status of the Albany County Nursing Home, county efforts at either consolidation or sharing services, environmental issues such as clean water and solid waste, and election law reforms. We will be both monitoring and taking action on issues arising in these areas as issues arise. You can be part of monitoring and action on these local issues by contacting Paula Philo, V-P, Action, paula.philo@gmail.com. We are able to take these stands because our local program positions derive from pre-established positions developed through a consensus process cascading from national to state to local levels.

Every year at our annual meeting these local positions are reviewed for adoption for the coming year. Positions can
be dropped or modified and new positions can be added if they are related to existing stances taken by the national or state league. If we cannot find a position relating to a local issue, resolutions can be passed to recommend new studies so that positions can be developed. Local leagues can advocate for or against issues only in the context of these having been vetted through study and consensus. Leagues can chose to remain silent on topics which have been vetted but cannot speak against an established national or state position and cannot speak on topics where there has been no vetting process.

What does all this mean to the average league member? It means that this is THE time for members to think about what we want to keep on our program agenda, what could be deleted, updated or revised and what new topics might require our attention so that we can take positions for action on them. We can bring these to the state league for consideration in its convention-oriented program development efforts for 2015-2017 and for our league to consider at its annual meeting. February and March 2015 will both have numerous communications to members on specifics for both state and local program planning. Are there items we are missing? Items that should be a priority? Please let us know!

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**News from the State League's November Report**

**President's Report/Issues & Advocacy: Sally Robinson,**
[robintwins@gmail.com](mailto:robintwins@gmail.com)

Thank you for everything all of you did this fall to register voters, distribute voters guides, organize Vote 411 and hold candidate forums for the general election. We also very much appreciate your help and support in our successful effort to pass Proposal 1 on the ballot, reforming how redistricting is done in this state. The League and Citizens Union issued the following statement after Election Day:

"We are pleased that voters seized this once in a fifty-year opportunity to fix our state’s rigged redistricting process and end the practice of drawing districts to favor incumbents, protect majority party control, and discourage competition.

The constitution now guarantees New Yorkers fair redistricting rules and the ability to hold the legislature accountable to end partisan gerrymandering. It is a real change from the system we have now, and we look forward to following this enacted reform through to reality in 2021, when the time comes again to draw new state legislative and congressional districts that will bring fair and competitive elections back to New York State."

I believe that this joint effort by the state League and local Leagues exemplified what is best about the League and our truly nonpartisan approach to making elections work and protecting voters. I was also very pleased that we were supported in this effort by the national League and the state League in Florida, another state in which the League has been and continues to be a leader in redistricting reform.

**From the State League Office: Laura Ladd Bierman,** [laura@lwvny.org](mailto:laura@lwvny.org)

**United Nations Day**

Over 100 League members and friends convened at the United Nations on Thursday, Nov. 13, for the annual League’s Day at the UN. Attendees toured the newly renovated (and still being renovated) facilities, seeing part of the old Berlin Wall, the Security Council Chambers and Human Rights wall. Lunch in the Delegates’ Dining Room was beautiful and delicious as usual. The briefing in the afternoon on the topic of water was presented by two speakers: Dan Thomas, Head of Communications for the UN Secretary-General's Climate Change Support Team, and Nicolas Franke, Associate Expert in Water Policy at the Division of Sustainable Development of the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs. Links to videos presented by the speakers and speakers’ notes, as well as photos from the day, are posted on the state website - just click on UN Events as a dropdown under Programs and Studies on the left side ([http://www.lwvny.org/programs-studies/un.html](http://www.lwvny.org/programs-studies/un.html)).
Calendar

Tues. Jan. 6  LWVAC Board Meeting, 7:00 PM, St. Sophia's Greek Orthodox Church, 440 Whitehall Road, Albany, NY. All members are welcome. Contact Lois Griffin, President, griffinocee@gmail for directions.

Wed, Jan 7  Governor Andrew Cuomo delivers the State of the State Address to the New York State Legislature at NYS Capitol, 12 Noon. Major media broadcasts the event.

Tues, Jan 13 LWVAC "Souper Supper" and Term Limits Consensus meeting, 5:30 PM, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Elsmere Avenue, Delmar, NY. (see front page of bulletin)

Mon, Jan 19  Martin Luther King Day

Mon, Feb 2  Great Decisions discussion (existing group, 9:30 am), for location contact Judi Campbell, jcamp5223@gmail.com

Tues, Feb 3 LWVNY Advocacy Training Day in NYC, contact LWVNY office, Katrina@lwvny.org or call 465-4162 for info

Sat, Feb 14  LWVUS' 95th Birthday (LWVNYS 96th Birthday)

Feb LWVAC Meeting: Date To be determined. Topic: Federal Campaign Finance Reform with speaker

March 2015  Women's History Month

March 9-20  UN Commission on the Status of Women, 59th annual mtg. to undertake a review of progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, www.unwomen.org. LWV contact Suzie Maltz, Suzanne.maltz6@gmail.com, for information on how to attend.

March 15-21  Sunshine Week

Notice to Members
We are moving toward an electronic communication system and would like your help by indicating your preference for receiving the bulletin. Indicate by checking the space next to your preference, sign your name, and send to:
Aimee Allaud
85 Melrose Ave.
Albany, NY, 12203
Tel 482-2617, or email 85aimee@nycap.rr.com

Be sure to include your e-mail address! If you provide us with your e-mail, you will receive the periodic Constant Contact messages and updates on activities. Don't forget to check our website for information on topics and events, www.lwvalbanycounty.org.

_____Send me the printed bulletin  _____Send me the electronic bulletin only

Name: _______________________________ Email: _______________________________
Membership 2015 - 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
___ Please send me more information

Scholarships are available on an individual confidential basis.

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

LWV of Albany County
PO Box 611
Slingerlands, NY 12159