League of Women Voters of Albany County Bulletin
May-June 2015

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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- Bios of Speakers
- The Main Course
- Proposed 2015-16 Budget
- Proposed Local Program
- Proposed Slate of Candidates
- Join the Board!
- Voters Registered at Library

Board and Committees

**Officers**
- President: Lois Griffin (518) 487-4671, griffinocce@gmail.com
  - 1st Vice President:
  - 2nd Vice President: Stephen Winters, 432-0797
- Treasurer: Marggie Skinner, 489-5311
- Secretary: Karen Wagner, 482-2895

**Directors**
- Aimee Allaud (Communications), 482-2617
- Mary Berry (Ex-Officio - Past President)
- Margaret Danes (Membership/Observer Corps), 438-7218

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**Annual Meeting**

**Dinner at Trevisio by Mallozzi's**

**Italian-American Community Center, 268 Washington Avenue Extension, Albany**

**Tuesday, June 16**

**Social Hour: 5:30; Dinner: 6:00**

**Program and business meeting: 6:45 pm**

**Topic:** The Voting Rights Act of 1965: How Current Changes Impact Albany County and How We Can Be Involved

**Guest Speakers:**
- Mark Mishler, Albany Civil Rights Attorney and community activist
- Nell Stokes-Holmes, LWVAC member, Alabama native, and participant in the Montgomery bus boycott that launched the civil rights movement.

*see speakers' bios inside the bulletin*

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act. Our speakers both recently participated in the February 2015 capital area event commemorating the Selma March's 50th Anniversary, "A Celebration of the Continuing Struggle for Voting Rights." We begin our League's Annual Meeting with their reflections on the significance of the Voting Rights Act and the events leading up to it, so crucial to the League's core mission and values.

Prior to the business meeting, we will also welcome our two sponsored Bethlehem High School student delegates to the LWVNY Students Inside Albany conference. Ellie Bell and Taylor Rohan will share their experiences from the May conference.

**Dinner Reservations:** Please indicate your choice of entrée on the form located inside the bulletin and return it with your check to LWVAC, Box 611, Slingerlands, NY, 12159, by June 11. Please call Julie Elson, 482-0981, jelson510@earthlink.net if you have questions.

Reservations are necessary for the dinner, but are not necessary if you wish to attend the program and business meeting.
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, creed or national origin.

Quick Links

LWV of Albany Co.
Like us on

Annual Meeting Dinner Reservation

Name(s) of those attending

Menu Choices: $35 per entrée

_____Chicken Francaise with potatoes and vegetables

_____Oven-baked White Fish, lemon wine sauce, potato and vegetables

_____Eggplant parmigiana with penne pasta and vegetables

Dinner will include house salad with dressing, rolls and butter, your choice of entrée, assorted cookies and pastries for dessert, coffee or tea.

_____ Check enclosed

Please indicate your choice of entrée and return this form with your check to LWVAC, Box 611, Slingerlands, NY, 12159, by June 11. Please call Julie Elson, 482-0981, if you have questions.

President's Message

Musings ............

On an April Saturday several of our League members and those of at least four other Leagues met at the State office to be introduced to a new program beginning this July. Our League will participate in a grant program to educate people to sign up as organ donors when they register to vote. New York State's voter registration form allows for a section to complete if the individual also wants to become an organ donor but apparently few people are aware of this. It was good information to know but after that discussion, we shared our frustration in trying to find members who would take on major leadership roles in our local leagues. The Albany League is not alone in having that problem.

A week or so later I found myself sitting next to Aimee Allaud viewing a film sponsored by the Girl Scouts of Northeastern NY, "Raising Ms President" which was followed by a panel discussion with Mayor Kathy Sheehan, some women academics and several young women, on how to encourage girls to want to run for political office in the future. These two issues - of running for office and assuming a leadership role - seem to be related, encouraging women of any age to take on responsible roles.

Back nearly half a century ago when I first became involved in the League, I would have thought it was a different era. There were few females in any kind of leadership role. Going to college was to find a husband and/ or become a teacher or a nurse. Today men are going into all sorts of careers. More women than men or going to law school.

We know they have not gained parity with men. And we know that there aren't the stay at home moms that there were in my day. But there are the women who are retired and their children are grown. Why aren't these women stepping up to taking leadership roles in the LWV?
I owe so much to the LWV. When I first joined the League, I was a stay at home mom who had grown up in a culture which told me that women were inferior; they were catty, disorganized, who must be governed by a male--love, honor and obey. That wonderful League board in Broome County took me in, nurtured me, encouraged me and taught me how meetings should be run, how you could be non-partisan and reach consensus and how to encourage newer members to be involved. Because of the League I was the first woman elected to the Vestal Town School Board and became its vice president the first year on the board and its president the second year. Then I was invited to run for the state legislature. I declined because my marriage was breaking up and I was having to start out in a new life as a divorced woman. As a divorced woman I did not feel I could run for public office. There ended my political career.

Today we should look to the independent women of today to stand up to the challenge of taking on leadership. My experience as League president twice has been most rewarding. I have the privilege of working with women and men now who are knowledgeable and dedicated. They serve on the board, do the work, and as President, I get the credit. Being President is the easy job on the board. You should try it.

In League,
Lois Griffin

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**Bios of LWVAC Annual Meeting Speakers**

**Nell Stokes-Homes** was born and raised in Montgomery, Alabama. As a young woman she participated in the historic Montgomery bus boycott that launched the national Civil Rights Movement. Since moving to the Capital Region in 1963 she has been active in many community organizations. She serves on the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Scholarship Committee of the Capital Area Council of Churches, having been its chair for 18 years. Nell volunteers with the 15 Love Reading Program at Giffen Elementary School in Albany and with the League of Women Voters. She is also a poet and a playwright.

**Mark Mishler** is an Albany civil rights attorney. He has successfully litigated cases involving police brutality, first amendment rights, discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations, as well as numerous criminal trials. Mark received his law degree, with honors, from Boston College School of Law in 1981. In addition to his practice, Mark is a community activist, having worked on issues such as police misconduct, voting rights, labor rights, strengthening public schools, and in the solidarity movement against apartheid.

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**The "Main Course" for the Annual League Meeting June 16, 2015**

This year’s meeting promises to be filled with good company, good food and interesting speakers. But, the annual meeting is more than an occasion to end the season of league meetings and events in advance of both a restful summer and busy preparation for our fall and winter calendars. League by-laws spell out that each year we conduct an annual business meeting in order to maintain our organization. The business meeting will include in its agenda membership votes in three areas. By-laws require that each of these be published in advance of the meeting so that members have the opportunity for review. Included below are the 2015-2016 recommendations for an operating budget, a slate of officers and board members serving either one or two year terms and a re-statement of the league’s approved local program agenda. The latter document is repeated from the previous year and continues interest and possible actions in four areas of local civic activity.
## 2015-16 Proposed Budget

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League of Women Voters of Albany County
Proposed Local Program 2015-2016

Albany County Charter: Continue following developments in Albany County concerning revisions to the Albany County Charter and take action to support the positions on it adopted by the Albany County League.

Environment: Monitor proposals for landfills in Albany County, based on our existing four-county solid waste position with the recognition of responsible and sustainable use of natural resources by municipalities. The League will monitor the environmental, public safety and health impacts associated with the transportation of crude oil shipments into the port of Albany.

Long Term Care in Albany County: The League of Women Voters of Albany County will continue monitoring long term care options and issues in Albany County.

Government Consolidation and Shared Services: The League will advocate for shared services and government consolidation where practical and feasible.
2015-2016 SLATE OF CANDIDATES

Board of Directors
President (Vacancy)
1st Vice-president Paula Philo (1 year)
Secretary Loretta Simon (1 year)
Treasurer Marggie Skinner (2 years)
Ex Officio Lois Griffin
2 years Board Aimee Allaud, Julie Elson, Barbara Frankel, Lois Portnick
1 year Board Linda Brown, Herb Gordon, (Vacancy)

Nominating Committee Chair (vacancy), Ann Brandon, Tina Raggio

Off-Board
Laura Bierman Budget, Bulletin format
Ann Brandon Albany County Charter
Judy Wing Albany County Charter
Marggie Skinner Poll Reporting/Vote411
Marian Schwager Bulletin Editor
Arleen Stein Albany County Long Term Care
Monica Schneider International Great Decisions
Martha Kennedy International Great Decisions
Linda Hunt International Great Decisions
Barbara Frankel Voters Service/Candidate Forums/Vote411
Dianne Symanski Bulletin Mailing
Loretta Simon Government Consolidation & Shared Services
Monique Roeth New Citizen Voter Registration
Linda Brown Web Content Manager

We Invite You to Join Us on the Board!

Would you be interested in increasing your participation? We are at an exciting juncture of increasing our Vote 411 visibility, expanding our ability to register voters, continuing our watch dog role, and utilizing social media to effectively promote what we have been doing for 95 years!

In 2015-16 we will be implementing a new leadership model for the board in order to share responsibilities more broadly. It would be great to include different perspectives and give more people a place at the table.

You are a League member because you care about your community, state and nation and how democracy thrives; take a small step and join the board and help guide this organization through the next year! Give Loretta Simon, Nominations Committee Chair, a call at 478-0051, or lsim4425gr@gmail.com, to discuss how you can be a part of the LWVAC board. A new board will be elected at the Annual Meeting on June 16th.

Volunteers Register Voters at the Albany Public Library

Albany media pundits are quick to point out areas in which we stand out whether it be in winning a sports championship or having a famous native son or daughter make the national news. In the last few months, however, notoriety has taken a darker turn with elected officials facing arrest and criminal proceedings. And recently the Albany Times Union in its March 19, 2015 editorial, ”New York's 2014 Turnout 49th Best in the U.S.,” remarked on a dubious distinction for the state as a whole. In the mid-term elections this November, New York ranked 49th out of the 50 states in voter turnout. Of 11.8 million registered voters only 3.7 million showed up at the polls on election day. Given this depressing
statistic, why do League members mount vigorous campaigns to enroll voters in the electoral process? Is there any evidence that more registered voters translate to more participation at the polls?

We address this by mounting as many different initiatives as we can, with conviction that more participation in democracy will strengthen it. The issue of a fragile democracy with low voter turnout requires us to demonstrate by our actions that civic participation matters in our community. We maintain a busy calendar of appearances at community events with information tables, leaflet distribution and volunteers who both register voters and answer questions on voting. Starting in July our efforts to register voters will include providing them with guidance on the use of their voter registration form as a means to also register as an organ donor. Efforts are also underway to enlist community organizations in a national voter registration day event on September 21, 2015.

On April 15, 2015 volunteers under very short notice were able to conduct voter registration drives at all 7 branches of the Albany Public Library. The timing was intended to help educate potential voters on the library budget and for members of the library board. Given its concurrence with league objectives, the short notice invitation was accepted and with usual League member willingness to respond produced good results. We are going to target certain branches for additional programs in the future.

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
League of Women Voters of New York State
56th Biennial State Convention
June 5-7, 2015
Desmond Americana Hotel, Albany

Join us! Network with other Leagues, learn about new issues and just relax and enjoy some League friends. Call the state office at 518-465-4162 if you would like to volunteer.

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