President's Message

Dear League Friends,

It is an honor to be working with League people. We have a dynamic board and committee persons hard at work with much to show for their efforts. We have a new brochure called “Voting in Albany County” and anticipate wide distribution of this new publication. And, this fall we have had numerous candidate forums on primary elections guided by our members. There will be more candidate forums on the general election taking place during the month of October. The web-site www.vote411.org is up and running. All of the information contained in this newsletter has relevant detail available through accessing our website at http://www.lwvalbany.org. We now have updated news available to you at that site as well as on Facebook.

And, our communications aren’t simply limited to our membership. We recently were able to get into the press our letter to the editor of the Albany Times-Union urging voters to contact their members of Congress to repair the Voting Rights Act. (By the way, have you contacted your congress person?) I testified at the County Legislature on Local Law C to protect our drinking water.

I believe we are a unique organization. We are political, yet we are non partisan. We feel strongly about good government and yet we do not act on our feelings. We act on reasoned information by studying the issues and reaching consensus. I know there were times in my life that I was not able to play an active role in the League and some of you may be finding that true, but you can continue to be informed, to help your family, friends and neighbors be informed and participate as good citizens. Others of you may want to participate in action or study. Whatever your role, you are a valued member of the League. Together we can make a difference in our government.

Yours in League,
Lois Griffin, President
League of Women Voters of Albany County
Welcome to the Autumn Newsletter
Aimee Allaud, Chair, LWVAC Communications Committee

We at the LWVAC have had a busy summer getting ready for a series of public candidate forums and plans for a year's worth of League activities. We've recently instituted a new committee, which I chair, designed to improve our ability to communicate both with the public at large and with our many members. Our aim is to make the League's work easily understood and rapidly available to all. We've improved our online capacity to do this through Facebook and our website. We've also re-instituted a more in-depth look at our activities through a newsletter sent out three times a year. We hope you enjoy reading our newsletter.

I'd be interested in getting feedback from you on how we're doing in keeping you informed of both League breaking news and important voter issues. Please take the time to complete a reader's survey of how best to keep you informed and to keep in touch. I'd welcome whatever comments, ideas, suggestions you'd like to make in addition to completing this survey. Please take the time to let us know how we're doing!

Click on this link and complete the survey:
http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SRTFVSH

News Roundups from League Projects and Standing Committees

Observer Corps
Paula Hemmings and Judith Wing have decided to put the current emphasis for this committee on the county rather than town or village level and are developing a plan for getting observers to attend the County legislature’s meetings. Their work will also include developing methods and procedures to manage a corps of LWVAC members who commit to attend these as well as other local government meetings within the county. Judith Wing will be taking the lead on this committee until January and then Paula will take over. The LWVAC Observer Corp section of our website contains a listing of potential venues throughout the county for members wishing to participate in observing county and local government at work.

Albany County Charter Revision Commission
Ann Brandon and Judith Wing attended the August 28, 2013 meeting where County Comptroller Michel Connors spoke about possible revisions to the charter and Chairman Greenberg presented Draft Revisions of Articles 12A Dept. of Civil Service (Personnel), 15 Dept. of Law, 16 Dept. of Records (County Clerk), 17 District Attorney, 18 Sheriff, and 23 Public Defender all to be considered by the committee.

Long Term Care Issues
Arleen Stein and Paula Hemmings represent LWVAC on the Albany County Long Term Care Council. The Council has passed a resolution requesting the county to add additional funding to the budget so that seniors are able to remain in their homes rather than seeking institutional care. Both of our representatives signed on to a Letter to the Editor initiative to support this effort.

Candidate Forums
Barbara Frankel and Mary Ann Lettau have completed the first part of an ambitious series of public forums for giving local candidates access to public discussion of their platforms and issues. During the primary session, over 500 residents of the county attended LWVAC forums including...
the Albany mayoral Democratic primary, Bethlehem Highway Superintendent and Albany city
ward candidates. These candidate forums will extend into October with two currently scheduled
to highlight the town of Colonie races, one for Bethlehem's general election and one for the town
of Guilderland which is currently in the planning stages. The dates, times, and places for these
are all posted as they become available on the website and are also published in local news media
outlets.

Albany Housing Authority Tenant Commissioner Elections
The LWVAC has for a number of years served as the administrator for bi-yearly elections of tenant
housing commissioners who provide oversight to the Albany Housing Authority. The LWVAC role
includes preparing voters for the race, getting candidates oriented on the procedures for
conducting their campaigns, mailing and collecting the printed ballots and tabulating the results.
A candidates’ forum is also conducted prior to the ballots being mailed to tenants. Jan Messina
chairs the group of volunteers who manage this series of events.

By-Laws Revision
Arleen Stein is currently leading a group of members working to revise and update the By-Laws.
A first revision was presented to the Board in September. Once the revisions have been approved
by the Board they will be sent to all members 30 days prior to having a general membership vote
on their passage. It is anticipated that this will occur at the annual holiday luncheon on December
11, 2013.

Nominating Committee
Loretta Simon is heading up the nominating committee for the 2014-2015 slate of officers and
board members. The by-laws require that this group have 2 board and 2 non-board members to
solicit volunteers for these positions. Work on this committee begins in early 2014.

New Studies
Jan Messina volunteered to represent our league for the NYS League of Women Voter’s new
study this year on the issue of term limits for elected offices. Jan will inform the board and our
membership as work on this topic progresses at the state level. Additionally, NYSLWV has asked
that local leagues consider conducting local studies in two areas: ballot access and the
procedures surrounding a state constitutional convention. The board will determine the degree to
which there is membership interest in pursuing either or both of these topics.

Vote 411
Marggie Skinner and MaryAnn Lettau have finished assembling the primary election voter and candidate information necessary to operate and maintain our county’s
version of the national and state Vote 411 website. This interactive software allows local leagues
to craft candidate profiles and solicits candidate responses to league-crafted questions on their
position prior to elections. This online voters guide furthers the league’s goal of making democracy
work. It gives readers non-partisan information on all of the candidates running for election, even
when candidates fail to respond to repeated league requests to provide such. When a reader
enters information on their location (and for primaries, their party enrollment) the software collates
and displays information the league and the Board of Elections has previously input. Voters can
then compare and contrast candidate qualifications and positions and prepare themselves for
casting their ballots. The Vote 411 group is now at work getting the necessary county-wide
information assembled for November’s general elections. Visit Vote 411 at www.vote411.org to
see the races and candidates for your own address - and get information about the six proposals
that will be on the ballot in November.
League Kicks Off 2013-14 Season with "NY State of Health"

This year’s series of public programs began with a Sept. 17 pot luck dinner held at St. Sophia's Church on Whitehall Road in Albany. Members and their guests enjoyed refreshments followed by a timely presentation on the state's efforts to roll out “Obamacare.” Sherry Tomasky, of the New York State Department of Health, gave the group an overview of how the state is rolling out the Affordable Healthcare Act. Ms. Tomasky directs the state's plan for establishing health insurance plan exchanges, known as the New York State of Health program. This initiative begins October 1. She presented a power point outlining the new provisions for those who may be eligible. After her presentation Ms Tomasky answered questions from League members. Although those members who are on Medicare may not need the information for themselves, all of those who attended gained a better understanding of both the nation's new health insurance program and the state's plans for implementing it.

Our thanks to the articulate presentation of Ms Tomasky and to the others who helped—with a special thanks to Margaret Danes, Tina Raggio, Julie Elson, Paula Philo, Annette Argyros, Jeanne Dugan, and Lyn Hmieleski for the planning, setting up and cleaning, and to all of you who brought the delicious food.

Our Members in the News: Steven Winters Wins Local Honors for Volunteerism

LWVAC member Steven Winters was honored at an April 23, 2013 ceremony at the Albany County office building with one of the County Executive awards for volunteerism in the county. Steve has been active in LWVAC with advocacy on public access television for City of Albany committee, on the SIA committee, Albany Housing Authority elections and other Voters Service activities.

His award was one of twenty bestowed upon Albany County residents for their volunteerism. The awards were presented to those county residents who over the course of the year have donated their time and energy to help others. At the ceremony, the description of Steven's volunteerism included his work with the Council of Albany Neighborhood Associations, the Second Avenue Neighborhood Association, the Albany Public Library Neighborhood Advisory Council and numerous others. He was nominated by Assemblyman John McDonald.

VOTING IN ALBANY COUNTY: A New Look at an Old Body Politic

Albany county's governance from the early 17th century up to the present is described in a newly released LWVAC publication, "Voting in Albany County." Unlike other League publications which explain ballot-related issues or voter registration, this brochure is designed to help students, new citizens and those moving into the area to get a thumbnail sketch of our county's interesting history and its complicated municipal profile. Did you know that the county has 3 cities, 10 towns and 6 villages, including 2 villages (Colonie and Green Island) which are also towns? Contact information for all of these is included. Election time frames for local...
government officials is also listed. We include reference to "other" elections which are often forgotten in describing the multitude of voting options available to registered voters ---library budgets and trustees, school budgets and school boards, fire commissioners, assessors, highway superintendents, county legislators and more! In just a few short pages, the LWVAC has been able to profile the many options voters have to make their voices heard. The contact information for the county's municipalities provides a handy, one-stop reference guide for those needing assistance. Our League website, www.lwvac.org has a copy of this fold-out brochure in the section "Voter Information." We have printed enough copies for distribution at public meetings, League programs, and for contact with student groups such as Participation in Government classes throughout the county's high schools. If you think that a community group you know of would benefit from having copies for distribution, please contact us.

June 26, 2013: Seneca Falls or Bust: The Suffragist Tour Reflections on the Trip by Board Member Paula Hemmings

We started the trip on a drizzly morning but the conviviality of the group brightened the day. It seemed like such a small town when we arrived in Seneca Falls. But then I put my imagination to work and imagined myself in the middle 1800's. The town was thriving as a port town of the Erie Canal. I imagined women walking in their long warm clothes as seen in the Women's museum. How hot it must have been. What a burden to wear those clothes, much less work in them!

When we arrived at Elizabeth Cady Stanton's home it struck me how small it was. A simple house. The tour guides told us about her children. The boys must have been a real handful to raise. I thought about how difficult it was to work for women's rights while caring for her children. I related it to myself as I was a working mother and while it was acceptable to be away from my daughter for work it was never without guilt. I wondered if she felt the same feelings.

I also thought how far women's rights have come but still how far they have to go. My daughter doesn't have to break the barriers I had to in the work place. But there are still barriers in her way.

What I marveled at was how this woman in this small town made such a difference. It reminded me that one person can make a difference if they believe in the cause and have determination and perseverance. It recharged me in my resolution to work for my causes through the League of Women Voters.

2013 Annual League Membership Meeting Enhanced by Address on International Status of Women

On June 6, 2013 more than 70 League members and their guests attended the annual dinner and business meeting at the Treviso Restaurant, Italian American Community Center in Albany. Advanced notice and documentation necessary for members to vote on the annual budget, slate of officers and local program agenda was simplified this year by having all of the materials posted in advance on our website. Power point presentations enabled league directors to explain each item requiring a vote without the need for printed materials (a plus for efforts at "greening" our communications!) The evening also included presentation of thank you gifts to outgoing directors and acknowledgment of several long term members. Margaret Gutman and Gerry Oakley were cited for achieving the 50 year membership milestone. Attendees Edith Allen and Ann Brandon were thanked for their membership exceeding the 50 year mark. Outgoing
board of directors members were Mary Berry, Judy Campbell, Monica Sharp, Arleen Stein and Loretta Simon.

The business meeting was conducted after a thought-provoking presentation by Dean Peggy Andrews of the Albany College of Law. We were also privileged to have our three Students Inside Albany delegates in attendance. This summary includes highlights of Dean Andrews' keynote address, notes on our Students Inside Albany delegates and the outcome of our business meeting.

WORLD-WIDE ROLE OF WOMEN

Dean Penny Andrews of the Albany College of Law delivered a thought-provoking presentation on the ways in which women's rights are being played out on the world-wide stage. Highlighting concepts and content from her recently published book, From Cape Town to Kabul: Rethinking Strategies for Pursuing Women's Human Rights, Dean Andrews reminded the audience that the right to vote—the core of citizenship—happened just within the past hundred years for women and is not universal in the countries of the world. Even in "advanced" countries such as the United States attainment of suffrage was painful and hard fought.

The importance of groups such as the League of Women Voters was underscored by its relevance to the ideal behind the right to vote. It is more than having a representative say in government; rather it is a hallmark of fundamental human equality in society. People who do not have the right to vote are not viewed as equals in their societies. Dean Andrews explained several different domains in which inequalities play themselves out in countries throughout the world. They are manifest in a society's economic life, its cultural practices and its tolerance for violence towards persons. In each of these domains, women are subordinated and disadvantaged. Dean Andrews concluded her remarks by explaining how her legal project is working toward culturally sensitive approaches to improving women's legal and political status with the aim that gains in equality can follow.

LEAGUE MEMBERS MEET OUR STUDENTS INSIDE ALBANY DELEGATES

All three student representatives from the LWVAC to the State League of Women Voters Students Inside Albany conference were able to attend the annual dinner. Each made brief presentations to the members. The April 14, 2013 conference they attended with our sponsorship was held at the State Capitol and provided an opportunity to experience first hand the workings of state government. A major "perk" is the opportunity to shadow for a day our Assembly and Senate representatives as they go about their work. Prior to the conference, our League's committee solicited nominations from high schools in the county and used a competitive application process to select delegates. In 2013 the committee solicited participation from 15 area high schools and received 13 nomination portfolios. Three students were selected. Julie Dean is a junior at Berne Knox Westerlo; Drew Perry is a junior at Bethlehem Central and Maynumah Sarujamohayden is a sophomore at the Albany Leadership High School for Girls.

BUDGET PASSES AND NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS ARE ELECTED FOR 2013-2014

During the business meeting, the proposed budget for 2013 was voted on and accepted. The nominating committee presented its recommendations for board membership and relevant terms of office and these were also accepted. A local program carrying forward several items from prior years (consolidation and shared governmental services, local environmental issues including solid waste, and Albany county's plan for long term care for elderly residents) were all continued. A new local program for adapting state election law to local laws governing absentee balloting was also approved. Each of these resolutions is available on the League's website. There was also discussion of the League's by-laws and a motion was passed to pursue their revision.
Calendar

The autumn months are busy ones for LWVAC. Regular checks for updates on our website and FaceBook will help provide relevant details on each of the events listed below:

Oct. 8 LWVNYS UN Day trip, call LWVNYS office, 465-4162, or www.lwvnys.org

Oct. 9 Co-Sponsored Program with Women Against War featuring Malalai Jaya, First Unitarian-Universalist Society, Washington Avenue, Albany, 7:00 P.M.

Oct. 10 Last Day to Register to Vote

Oct. 16 City of Albany School Board Candidates Forum, Albany High School cafeteria, Washington Avenue, Albany, 6:30-8:00 P.M., co-sponsored with City Council PTA

Oct. 21 C-Span First Ladies Series: Eleanor Roosevelt, C-Span channel, 9:00 P.M. (see LWVAC website for more information)

Oct. 21 City of Albany Mayoral Candidates Forum, Albany Public Library, Washington Ave., 6:30-8:00 P.M., co-sponsored with NAACP, Capital Area Urban League, The Hispanic Coalition NY, Inc.

Oct. 22 Albany Housing Authority Election of Tenant Commissioners; LWVAC will count ballots the following day and can use monitors for this event

Oct. 22 Candidate Forum for Town of Bethlehem (all Town offices), Bethlehem Town Hall, 445 Delaware Ave., Delmar, 5:30-9:00 P.M., co-sponsored with Spotlight News, Capital Area Council of Churches

Oct. 23 Candidate Forum for Town of Colonie Town Supervisor, Holiday Inn Express, 400 Old Loudon Road, Latham, 7:30-9:00 A.M. Breakfast, co-sponsored with Spotlight News, Capital Area Council of Churches

Oct. 28 Candidate Forum for Town of Guilderland Supervisor and Town Board candidates, Guilderland Public Library, 2228 Western Avenue, 7:00-9:00 P.M., co-sponsored with Spotlight News, Capital Area Council of Churches

Oct. 30 Candidate Forum for Town of Colonie (Town Supervisor and 3 Board Members), Holiday Inn, 205 Wolf Road, 7:00-9:00 P.M., co-sponsored with Colonie Chamber of Commerce, Spotlight News, Capital Area Council of Churches

Nov. 5 ELECTION DAY and Poll Reporting for the LWVAC

Nov. 13 General Membership Meeting at William K. Sanford Colonie Town Library, 5:30 P.M., “The Health Care Film,” (6:00 P.M.), co-sponsored with Capital District Alliance for Universal Health Care

Dec. 11 Annual Holiday Luncheon for League Membership at the Normanside Country Club, Elsmere
Membership 2014 - Join & Make a Difference  
(payment after Oct. 1 is for the 2014 calendar year) 

Name: __________________________ Telephone: ____________________
Address, City, Zip: _______________________________________________
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___ Individual Membership $60/year
___ Household Membership $90/year
___ 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