League of Women Voters
of Albany County
Bulletin
March 2014

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Phyllis Goldstein

The Albany League notes with sadness the passing of long-time League member Phyllis Goldstein on February 21, 2014. Phyllis was President of our league from 1978-1980. During her presidency the League developed an advocacy policy on Pine Bush preservation. The Albany County Legislature declared March 23 as League of Women Voters Day. The League organized televised candidates forums for the congressional district races and also produced Voters Guide information for publication in the now defunct Knickerbocker News. In addition to her participation in League activities, Phyllis was a passionate advocate for those suffering from mental illness, formed a local advocacy group for lung cancer awareness and was also active with NOW.

We extend our sincere condolences to her family, Dr. Richard Goldstein, and her children, Heather Linsk and Paul Goldstein.

Salad Supper
April 8, 5:30 pm
Bethlehem Public Library
451 Delaware Ave, Delmar
Speaker: Barbara Bartoletti

Salad Supper:
Bring your favorite salad or dessert to share or donate $5. Beverages provided.

Topic: Legislative Update with Barbara Bartoletti, Legislative Director, LWVNYS.
In July 2013, Barbara was appointed by Governor Andrew Cuomo as a special adviser to the Moreland Commission to Investigate Public Corruption. Barbara will speak about campaign finance reform, the State Budget, and her work as special adviser to the Commission.

Contact Tina Raggio, 439-7569, traggio@nycap.rr.com or Julie Elson, 482-0981, or jelson510@earthlink.net
President's Message

Dear League Friends,

The Albany County League members have been busy. And they have made news. We have had two public meetings on February 8 and March 11. In each, we had a presentation by a prominent local leader followed by significant press coverage of both the event and the League's stand on it. First, our February 8 breakfast meeting was highlighted by Albany mayor Kathy Sheehan who spoke on her vision of the city's future. She voiced concerns of public safety and environmental risk associated with the proposed Global Industries oil transfer operations in the Port of Albany. The League joined with other advocacy groups in putting public pressure on government officials to conduct additional review before permitting further operations in this sensitive area.

Also at our Feb. 8 meeting we updated our consensus on the Albany County Charter. The committee under the leadership of Ann Brandon and Judy Wing attended the meetings of the Charter Review Commission and provided information to the Commission. The Review Commission's chair, Henry Greenberg, spoke at our March 11 meeting. He praised the League's efforts. Once again this event resulted in significant press notice. The Commission's results and the input of the League were cited in the Times Union both in press coverage and in a March 20 editorial in which the League's position has been supported. Developments on both of these important local issues are covered in Constant Contact email notifications sent to all members as well as postings on our League website.

On the State level, we are looking forward to the League's new studies on "Ballot Access" and "Term Limits." Barbara Bartoletti, the LWVNYS advocate in the State Legislature, will join our League for updates on state government issues when we meet on April 11 for our salad supper at the Bethlehem Public Library.

Unfortunately the Albany League has not been actively involved in national level sponsored studies. I hope that changes next year. Our League has the opportunity to send two delegates to the national convention in Dallas, Texas, June 6-10.

We hope that you all will be involved in the League in any way you can. We hope that the fifteen new league members who've joined us since the first of the year use this opportunity in reading our news bulletin to get a further sense of the scope of League activities. And, for all members, both old and new, we welcome any suggestions as to how we can help you to become involved.

Yours in League,
Lois Griffin, President
League of Women Voters of Albany County

New Members

We welcome the following new members:
Leon Adams
Lynn Ashley
David Brandon
Judy Doesschate
Joe Galu
Larry Gambino
Eleanor Greenfield
Henry Greenberg
Thayer Heath
Lynn Hmieleski
Linda Hunt
Rick Martin
James Miller
Margaret Miller
Karen Wagner

League 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 preference, creed or national origin.
County State of the County Message Renews Need for Observer Corps

On March 10, 2014 County Executive Dan McCoy delivered his State of the County Message to the Albany County Legislature. The address is available for review on the county's website (www.albanycounty.com) and contains several items which relate to League projects and priorities. These are likely to emerge as important ideas and issues before the county legislature and underscore the need for monthly attendance by our observer corps volunteers.

The county legislature meets on the second Monday of every month in the Legislative Chambers, Albany County Courthouse, 16 Lodge Street. Prior to each monthly meeting the Legislature holds a Public Forum to allow the public to speak on issues which may be before the Legislature. On February 10, Observer Corps volunteer Janet Reilly attended the session along with LWVAC Treasurer Marggie Skinner and reported on its proceedings. She noted that despite having received the Charter Commission's recommendations from Commissioner Greenberg, there was no mention of the submission of the report. There was discussion on developing both an Albany County Land Bank and a Local Development Corporation to run the troubled county nursing home. Other measures included ordering a study from the county's Commissioner of Health on crude oil processing in the port of Albany, a proposed ban on the sale of cigarettes in pharmacies, and a study to evaluate the practice of online voter registration.

Board member Judith Wing and Observer Corps volunteer Karen Wagner reported on their attendance at the March 11 meeting of the legislature. At that time, Chairman Shawn Morse did acknowledge the contribution of Mr. Greenberg of the Charter Review Study Commission. There was conversation concerning the establishment of the Local Development Corporation to oversee the nursing home. Despite mention that the legality of the corporation had not yet been reviewed by the NYS Comptroller's Office, the proposal to endorse the corporation was passed.

The need for monthly reports from Observer Corps volunteers will continue since Mr. McCoy in his state of the county message called for three areas of new activities which will affect the League's work. First, he is proposing that county funding for the operation of its financially distressed nursing home be extended only until September 30, 2014 after which operations would be assumed by a newly created quasi-governmental Local Development Corporation.

Second, the County Executive has called for the legislature to create a Public Service Agency whose purpose will be to pursue energy options which are both renewable and carbon neutral for the county. This proposal is consistent with the League's interest in environmental stewardship and a move towards a greener county. Although the League does not currently have a standing committee on this matter it does have a history of involvement with the county's plans for solid waste management and has publicized county efforts at environmental stewardship.

Third, there will be a report coming out in the spring on the county's efforts to study local governmental consolidation plans for highways and roads within the county. The League has sponsored both a committee and community forums involving statewide initiatives to encourage local government actions at consolidation and shared services. The group has met with the County Executive on this topic and was assured that our input would be welcomed when this study is published. Recommendations emerging from the study would also need municipal and legislative approval to be enacted.

(The editors are indebted to our Observer Corps volunteers for their reports incorporated into this article. You can join the Observer Corps team by giving Margaret Danes a call at 438-7218, or contacting her at mdanes@nycap.rr.com. Margaret will connect you with an experienced observer. See calendar for upcoming meetings.)
March 11 League Meeting Videotaped

Did you miss the LWVAC March 11 meeting with our guest speaker, Henry Greenberg, Chair, Albany County Charter Review Commission? The program was videotaped and will air on local public access television stations. If you live in Bethlehem, you will have multiple opportunities to see it on Bethlehem Public Access at www.bethlehempubliclibrary.org/BCN-TV.asp. Check the monthly schedule. If you live in the City of Albany, visit www.channelalbany.tv and click on "show schedule."

Call for Volunteers to Serve on Board of Directors

Each year the Board's nominating committee works to propose an annual roster of volunteer League members who are willing to serve on the Board of Directors for a two year term of office. Based on the by-laws, terms alternate so that each year at the annual business meeting some directors are re-affirmed for an additional second year of their term and some are appointed for a full two year term. There are currently several vacancies which have emerged because of this rotating roster. If you are interested in either helping the nominating committee recruit candidates or serving as a candidate yourself, please contact committee chair Loretta Simon at grandma3@msn.com or 518-478-0051.

The League Bylaws are Changing

Since fall of 2013 a committee chaired by Arleen Stein has met to review and revise the league by-laws. The proposed changes are highlighted in a copy of the document posted on the website. At the annual meeting members will be asked for approval of these changes. Please take some time to review this on the website.

There are minor changes, e.g., changing "month" to 30 Days"; simplifying English, moving some Sections to more appropriate Articles; and in some Articles, delineating information that was in one paragraph to several sections for clarity.

Significant changes include:

- Adds an inclusion policy that prohibits discriminate based on gender, race, ability, age, sexual preference, creed, economic position, or national origin.
- Adds that the immediate past president shall serve in an ex-officio capacity on the Board, but may not vote.
- Articulates that the board has fiduciary responsibility for the League of Women Voters of Albany County
- Clarifies that the Recording Secretary shall now keep minutes of all meetings of the Board of Directors and Membership meetings where business is conducted and appropriately distribute them for approval and shall properly archive all official records and minutes where business takes place.
- Clarifies that the fiscal year is from July 1st until June 30th of each year; however, the Membership Year is the calendar year.
- Clarifies that any member who fails to pay dues by June 30th shall be dropped from the membership rolls. Dues paid by new members joining after June 30th will be applied to the following calendar year.
- Adds an Audit Committee that will examine the Treasurer's books 30 days prior to the Annual Meeting, consisting of at least three voting League members, at least one of whom is not an elected Board member. The Board may select an outside auditor any time it deems necessary. An audit report will be presented at the first general meeting after the Annual Meeting.
Save These Dates

April 8 Equal Pay Day
Equal Pay Day is an advocacy event of the New York State League of Women Voters. It is focused on lobbying the members of the New York State Legislature and is intended to raise awareness of the pay inequities present for women in the workforce. On April 8, 2014 the average pay for a woman in New York State finally catches up to what a man would make for calendar year 2013! This is 50 years AFTER passage of the equal pay act. This fact continues to highlight the disparities in pay for women and minorities. The League continues its advocacy for passage of legislation to address the inequities in salary discrimination through both the women's equality act and the NYS fair pay act. The New York State Assembly has already passed the women's equality act and is scheduled to pass the fair pay act on April 8. Please contact your Assembly member with thanks for their support and contact your Senator to know that this year we want this legislation to pass. Contact Lois Haignere, LWVNYS Pay Equity Specialist, at haigner@nycap.rr.com for more information.

April 25 Naturalization Ceremony
This is an ongoing service of the League of Women Voters of Albany County. At the Federal Courthouse, Broadway, Albany, League volunteers provide new citizens with voting information and provide them with a registration opportunity. Contact Monique Roeth at monique1bt@mac.com or 518-533-7444 if you would like to volunteer.

Calendar

April 1 LWVAC Board Meeting, 7 P.M., St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 16 Elsmere Avenue, Delmar; call Paula Philo, Secretary, 475-9213, for directions. All members are welcome.

April 8 Equal Pay Day, LWVNYS Action Day in the NYS Legislature, see article.

April 8 LWVAC Salad Supper Meeting, 5:30 P.M., St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 16 Elsmere Avenue, Delmar, RSVP to Tina Raggio, 439-7569, tragio@nycap.rr.com, or Julie Elson, 482-0981, jelson510@earthlink.net. Speaker: Barbara Bartoletti, LWVNYS Legislative Director, Update on the NYS Budget, legislative actions, and the Moreland Commission.

April 14 Albany County Legislature, 6:30 P.M., Legislative Chambers, Albany County Courthouse. Observe legislature meeting as member of LWVAC Observer Corps., call Margaret Danes, 438-7218, or mdanes@nycap.rr.com.

April 25 Naturalization Ceremony at Federal Court House, Broadway. Contact Monique Roeth at monique1bt@mac.com or 518-533-744518-533-7444 for further details or to volunteer at this event. League members help answer questions and register voters.

May 6 LWVAC Board Meeting, 7 P.M., St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 16 Elsmere Avenue, Delmar; call Paula Philo, Secretary, 475-9213, for directions. All members are welcome.

May 12 Albany County Legislature, 6:30 P.M., Legislative Chambers, Albany County Courthouse. Observe legislature meeting as member of LWVAC Observer Corps., call Margaret Danes, 438-7218, or mdanes@nycap.rr.com.

June 6-10 LWVUS Convention, Dallas, Texas. The 2014 Convention theme is Power: Our Voices, Our Votes.

June 12 LWVAC Annual Meeting, 6 P.M., Italian-American Community Center, Washington Avenue Ext.
Membership 2014 - Join & Make a Difference

Name: __________________________ Telephone: _________________
Address, City, Zip: ________________________________________________
Email: _________________________________________________________

___ 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

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