League of Women Voters of Albany County
Advice for the Upcoming Elections

As voters prepare to go to the polls, the League of Women Voters of Albany County wants to advise them of three important items for this year: (1) the information they need to cast their ballots is now available online at the League’s Vote411 website; (2) early voting is possible; and (3) an important proposition supported by the League will appear on the back of the ballot. The first two items are new and will significantly ease the burden placed on our citizens.

Vote411, the League’s national online voter guide, can be accessed at www.vote411.org and will remain available through Election Day, November 5. It is an informational website that provides state voting information, such as registration and absentee voting, as well as voter specific information targeted to the user’s address. After entering his or her address, the voter will see ballot information specific to the voter’s district.

Along with a description of the positions for which there is a race in the voter’s district, including salary information, there is information about the candidates who will appear on that voter’s ballot. All candidates in Albany County have been invited to submit information about themselves, and the submission of every candidate who has responded is available on the website. This information is not edited by the League unless it includes derogatory language, so the voter will be reading exactly what each candidate has to say about himself or herself and the issues being debated. It includes contact information and links to a candidate’s web pages/social media where provided by the candidate. This is especially valuable in a year in which there are only local elections, where the names and positions of the candidates are difficult to find without investing substantial time and effort. This year, there is information on the website for 105 different races, 47 of which are contested. It also includes information about Proposition One that will appear on the back of the ballot in Albany County amending its charter, the County’s governing instrument. A click makes all of this information available to any voter.

Candidates who have not yet done so are urged to submit information about themselves and their candidacy. If no submission has been received, the website will state that the “Candidate Has Not Responded.” Responses will be posted as soon as received.

The second significant change is a reform of New York’s election law to allow early voting, a reform supported by the League. Voters who have difficulty making it to the polls on November 5, Election Day, will be able to vote any day between Saturday, October 26 and Sunday,
November 3. Significantly, a voter need not give a reason for voting early; every voter is entitled to choose this option. The ballot at early voting polling places will be identical to the ballot on Election Day, but most voters will have to go to different polling places, as there will be fewer open locations. Each voter must go to the location for his or her address. In addition, voters need to check the hours that these locations are open, as they will vary from day to day. One change that a voter may notice is that an electronic, rather than a paper, signature will be required. For complete information, a voter can go to https://my.lwv.org/new-york-state/albany-county or the web site of the Board of Elections of the county of the voter’s residence.

In Albany County, there will be a proposition on the back of the ballot amending the County Charter as it concerns the process of the redistricting of the County Legislature, a requirement following each decade’s census count. The County Legislature’s three prior efforts were all overturned by the courts. The proposed amendment would create a commission, with an additional minority commission on diversity, that would replace the Legislature in drawing the district lines for that body, although final approval would remain with the Legislature. The amendment, if passed, would require an open process with public input. Standards contained in the amendment would assure equitable and diverse districts and recognize communities of interest. The League supports this proposition and urges a “yes” vote.

League President Patricia Sibilia, in seeking to inform voters about the upcoming election, said: “The League has long supported efforts to make it easier for voters to exercise the right given to them by our constitution and to reform of the redistricting process. The creation by the League of an informational web site allows each voter to obtain both important procedural information with regard to casting a ballot and the information that the voter needs about the candidates seeking office in order to make an informed choice. New York’s adoption of early voting allows voters to exercise their right to vote on nine days in addition to Election Day, with each voter free to choose on which day to vote. Proposition One, if approved, would authorize a fair, open and less political redistricting process for the County Legislature. With voting made easier and the possibility of creating a new and equitable redistricting procedure for the Albany County Legislature, a large vote in support of a meaningful reform seems possible.”