Mission
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.

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.

Board and Committees
President, Margaret Danes, gtsophia@nycap.rr.com
1st Vice-President, Paula

LWVAC FALL GET TOGETHER
When: Tuesday, September 27
5:30 - 8 pm
Where: St. Sophia’s Church,
440 Whitehall Rd, Albany
What: HEAR WE, HEAR WE!
Yes, we want to hear from you. As a departure from our traditional potluck supper meeting with an issues program and guest speaker, we are doing an evening of light food and conversation. Come to our gathering at St. Sophia on September 27 and bring a dish. Homemade is always welcome but so is a dish from your favorite take-out (be prepared to share the source). We are doing "light bites" of appetizers, salads, "small dishes", and, of course, desserts.

But more importantly, be ready to share and listen as we explore some of the key issues that we may choose to address in the coming months. There are a number of "hot topics" for consideration including Citizen’s United, political corruption and reform; fear, prejudice, and violence so prevalent in the news; gender inequality, climate change, etc. The League has positions on these and many other issues of major concern.

At LWV June convention we were reminded about the importance of maintaining the League’s visibility following post-election times. A potential opportunity for us locally would be to collaborate with the NYS Council on Humanities in offering a series called "Community Discussions". These are ready-to-use programs on topics of current interest that we would present to small community groups and organizations. There is a "script" on a specific topic which is then followed by open discussion. (Also note--there is a small stipend from the Council for each program we offer which is a nice little bonus for us.)

The Board will also present an update on the current status of Albany County Charter Reform and the proposition that will be on the ballot this November. (This update may lead to the membership's decision to reconsider our current position on the charter reform.)

So, come join us for an evening of good food, catching up with old and new friends, and exploring programs and actions for the coming year. The evening will begin at 5:30, and an RSVP to Julie Elson at jelson510@earthlink.net or by phone at 482-0981 will be appreciated.
President's Message

"It's Not for Today. It's for Tomorrow"

So totally disenchanted and turned off by the controversial battles and personalities of the two main presidential candidates, it is understandable that voters have indicated a predilection to staying away from the polls. Add this to the continuing downturn in voter participation over the past few years, and it is a genuine cause for alarm.

On the back of our membership brochure, there is a printed warning. “Without active participation of its citizens, a democracy can no longer be the voice of the people, by the people, and for the people.” Not only do we have the lack of participation of our citizenry, add the influence of big money and PAC’s on the political landscape, and the forecast for the democratic vision of our forefathers is indeed a one of gloom and doom.

Can this negativity be overturned? Yes, indeed it can! One need only to look at the grassroots Bernie Sanders campaign to see what individual passion and persistence can accomplish. A David vs. Goliath campaign that came so close to accomplishing a monumental political upset.

Our mission as the League of Women Voters is to encourage informed and active participation in government. Our Voter Registration Team is actively working on voter registration drives. Vote411 is our website with information on the candidates. Get Out the Vote—GOTV is a mission for all of us to address.

We need to remind individuals that it's not about personalities, but about issues. Which candidates (remember there are candidates on the national level and the local level as well) support your position on climate change, gun safety, voting rights, women's equality, immigration reform, and an ongoing list of major issues and concerns. And a reminder that on the national scene, the next president will be nominating one or more candidates to the Supreme Court. And how will that affect or change some of the above concerns?

Finally, let's remind people of one very important and sometimes overlooked fact. On election day each and every citizen is equal, rich and poor, young and old coming from all walks of life. And we all, rich and poor, young and old, have that special right and responsibility to cast our vote. For we are voting, not for the past, nor for the present, but for the future of the next generation!

Yours in League,
Margaret Danes
Albany County Charter: "Clean-Up" on the Ballot in November

The only item left standing for the ballot is the housekeeping proposition. 2016 has shown to be a year where the County Legislators have actively discussed changing the County Charter. Several proposals for change were put forth, starting in August with Peter Crouse (R-24th Loudonville) breaking out his view of the changes required into three separate proposed local laws:

- **Local Law F**: Downsize in two stages; first from 39 legislators to 33 in 2024, and then to 29 legislators in 2032.
- **Local Law G**: Redistricting changes that include having two Commissions, one to represent the Majority Minority Districts, and a general Commission of 7 individuals which would be chosen by Legislative leadership from a pool of people who were widely solicited via direct mail, email, Public Service Announcements, the media, paid advertisements, and the County website.
- **Local Law H**: Changes to over 50 sections of the Charter, which have been seen as a "clean-up" of the Charter.

In response to Peter's proposals, Chris Higgins (D-5th Albany) countered with his own proposed Local Law K, cosponsored with 13 reform-minded Democrat and Republican Legislators to downsize to 25 after the 2020 census. That same day the Majority Minority District Legislators put out a Media Advisory to announce that they "will use all legal means to stop public hearings and related efforts to enact local laws that downsize the number of legislative districts."

Monday evening, July 18th, 2016, the League held a special meeting to review the proposals versus our current consensus position in preparation for providing testimony at the Public Hearing. While we debated our current position on downsizing, we concluded that we could not support Local Laws F and G as they were written versus our consensus. Due to the vast size of Local Law H, we did not feel ready at that time to discuss it.

Public hearings were held on July 26th, with the League giving testimony. The majority of speakers in the hearing addressed concerns about the minority community being harmed by downsizing. Our testimony spoke largely about the work of Charter Review Commission, and the Supplemental Report they published with their results. While they clearly stated that they felt the legislature should be downsized to 25, they also said that "...reducing the size of the County Legislature is a profoundly important and complicated exercise, necessitating a complicated redistricting process." In the Commission's view, any proposal that imperils the voting rights of minorities, inappropriately favors some municipalities and communities over others, or threatens the viability of a robust two-party system in County government, would be a bad proposal and would call into question the validity of a reduction in size. We also spoke to specific changes that we would like to see in order to improve the redistricting process in Local Law G.

With the Legislative session of August 8th, there was significant discussion on the Charter, with the session lasting long into the evening. Agenda items called for votes on Local Laws F, G, and H, a Public Hearing of Local law K, and Local Law O was introduced by the Republicans along with support from Democratic Reform members as an
alternative to Peter Crouse's Local Law H. After much debate, Local Law F (Downsizing) did not pass. Local Law G (Redistricting) also was highly debated, including a Republican alternative proposal that was defeated. Although the vote was 19-17 in the roll call vote, it did not pass as it did not have the required 20 votes needed (there were 3 absences). The discussion around Local Law H versus the new proposed Local Law O showed that this was one of the first times there was real dialogue amongst the legislators on the topic. The vote on Local H passed 20-15, and it was approved by Dan McCoy on September 6th.

The League continues to do the research on Local Law H, and to discuss its position on downsizing. We hope to work with the legislators to have them come to agreement on a revised redistricting law for next year's ballot.

See LWVAC website for local laws mentioned in article (www.lwvalbany.org).

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**News Briefs**

**Voter Registration and Women's Equality Day**
Our League has been busy participating in and planning for events aligned with our core goals of voter engagement and advocacy. Over the summer we participated in voter education and registration activities in support of Women's Equality Day (August 26) and at the Syracuse-based New York State Fair from August 25 through September 5. Because the League tables were self-service at the 10 Albany Public Library branches joining us in celebrating Women's Equality Day, we don't know the tally of voter registration application forms completed but do know that more than 250 forms were dispensed because we were called back to replenish depleted stocks. Tallies at the State Fair show 485 voter registration forms completed, plus 77 requests for absentee ballots and 17 completed organ donor forms. And, for September 27, National Voter Registration Day, we will be doing voter registration from 4-6pm at the Watervliet Public Library, 1501 Broadway, Watervliet NY for those who may wish to volunteer.

What better way to engage new voters than to reach out to our newest citizens with registration and educational materials (and donuts!) League members continue a long tradition of staffing tables at naturalization ceremonies held throughout the year at both county and federal courthouses. From approximately 7:30am until 11:00am volunteers from the league greet new citizens, help them complete voter registration forms, scan completed forms for accuracy and either mail in or hand deliver the documents at the end of each session. Our website www.lwvalbany.org contains dates and places for upcoming naturalization ceremonies and contact information on how to volunteer. In August, of 47 new citizens sworn in during one ceremony, 35 successfully submitted voter registration forms as a result of League volunteer effort. Not bad for a morning's work!

**Get Informed! Come to a Candidate Forum!**
For voters wanting to learn more about the candidates, the league is partnering with neighboring leagues for two Meet the Candidate Nights, October 18 and October 25. Details appear in the Calendar section of this bulletin and in email member updates.

The first forum is a panel discussion with candidates for the 20th Congressional District at the Clifton Park-Halfmoon Library. Discussion will be by Karen DeWitt, Capitol Bureau Chief, NY Public Radio, and Matthew Hamilton of the Albany Times Union. The following Tuesday, October 25, candidates for the 46th NY State Senate District will be the focus of the discussion.

**New LWVNYN Study On NYS Legislature Procedures: Join Our Committee!**
Participation in the coming elections requires both voter registration and education but is challenging when the public is faced with a cloud of political corruption overhanging many of its races, particularly those of the NYS legislature. As part of national and state advocacy efforts to protect the integrity of the voting process, the NYS league is undertaking a short term study of how to improve Legislative procedures related to the part time nature of legislative office and associated issues of staggered election cycles, outside employment, term length and tenure limitations on leadership positions. These issues have all had repeated publicity connected to political scandals. In fact, the 2013 Moreland Commission report showed that since 1999 one out of every 11 legislative office holders had their tenure disrupted by either criminal or ethical findings! Not a praiseworthy statistic! The LWVAC committee for this study is forming. It will meet during November and present findings to league membership in early December. Those interested should look for sign up information on the League website.
I attended a community conversation on race, diversity and community policing on Monday, August 15. The event was initiated by Albany County Executive, Daniel McCoy and moderated by Rex Smith, editor of the Albany Times Union. The panel included Dr. Alice Green, The Center for Law and Justice Albany; Aaron Mair, Sierra Club; Deb Ritano, Albany County Interfaith Coalition; Steve Heider, former chief of the Colonie Police Department; Perry Junjulas, The Albany Damien Center; and former Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, Howard Hubbard. Additional participants were students from local colleges and the director of the Arbor Hill Community Center, Harris Oberlander. I noted no representation from the schools or from environmental justice communities.

The panel addressed systemic racism, discrimination, unequal enforcement of laws. Audience participation included Albany Police Chief Cox who described police efforts including training and community involvement, but ultimately, police enforce laws made by legislators that reflect cultural norms and approval of constituents. Two former Albany defense attorneys outlined the problems encountered by accused people of color, especially youth in the justice system. Another point made was Black Lives Matter is not a racial protest movement but a CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT and should be treated accordingly. Today, we are seeing several challenges to citizens' right to peacefully protest.

The LWV, both national and NYS have addressed aspects of justice reform and civil rights.
- Emphasize Alternatives to Incarceration as a way to treat non-violent offenders and prevent repeat incarcerations and destroy offenders' chance for productive lives.
- Repeal drug laws that have a disproportionately, negative effect on People of Color.
- Adopt a basic living wage so people don't struggle for basics while employed
- Oppose use of the criminal justice system as a substitute mental health system by funding support for mental health and other treatment programs.

My brief search of public websites and the media did not reveal any follow-up coverage. Future meetings may be held later in the year but with a different focus. Maybe LWV Albany County could extend the current discussion by holding a program on some of these positions or forming a committee on Judicial Reform to work with local issues.

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**Calendar**

*Welcome Back! Coming Events!*

Sept. 27  National Voter Registration Day, at Watervliet Public Library, 4-6 PM.  
call Barbara Frankel, barbarameg@mac.com.

Sept. 27  LWVAC Pot Luck and Welcome Back, St. Sophia's church, 440 Whitehall Road, see front page for details

Oct. 3  LWVAC Board mtg., 6:30-8:30, St. Sophia's church, 440 Whitehall Road, all members are welcome.

Oct. 13  Albany County Legislature, 7:00 PM, Albany County Courthouse, Legislative chambers, 2nd floor,  
public comment is 6:30 p.m. LWVAC contact: Patricia Sibilia, psbranch@verizon.net.

Oct. 18  Candidate Forum, 20th Congressional District, 7-8:45 PM, Clifton Park Half Moon Library, 2475 Moe Road,  
Clifton Park, 12065 Let's carpool! contact Margaret Danes, stsophia@nycap.rr.com for info

Oct. 25  Candidate Forum, 46th State Senate, 7:00-8:45 PM, all candidates invited,  
Guilderland Public Library, 2228 Western Ave., Albany

Oct. 21  Naturalization Ceremony, 7:45 AM, Federal Courthouse, 445 Broadway, Albany, contact Julie Elson  
at jelson510@earthlink.com, or 813-0074.  Join the team!

Nov. 4  Naturalization Ceremony, 7:45 AM, Federal Courthouse, 445 Broadway, Albany, contact Julie Elson  
at jelson510@earthlink.com, or 813-0074.  Join the team!

Nov. 7  LWVAC Board mtg, 6:30-8:30 p.m. St. Sophia's Church, 440 Whitehall Road, Albany, all members welcome

Nov. 8  General Election, polls open 6 AM-9 PM VOTE!!! And at 9 PM LWVAC members can help the League with  
getting the results at polling places in Albany county and telephone them to the Voter News Service.  
Call Marggie Skinner, 489-5311, mpskinner3@yahoo.com.

Nov. 14  Albany Co Legislature, 7 PM, Albany Co Court House, Legislative chambers, 2nd floor,  
public comment is 6:30 p.m.

Nov. 17  League Day at the United Nations. Watch for info from LWVNYS.
League of Women Voters of Albany County
PO Box 611
Slingerlands, NY 12159

Membership 2016-17 –
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
___ I'd like to join; this is the best I can do   ___ Please send me more information

___ tax deductible contribution to LWVNY State Education Fund
Mail to: League of Women Voters of Albany County, PO Box 611, Slingerlands, NY 12159