



League of Women Voters of NYS **STATE VOTER**

April 2018

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.



From the State President

If you weren't at one of our regional meetings in Schenectady, Cortland or Rochester, you missed some good times and some even better conversations about a wide range of issues. We have so much to learn from one another and we thank all who came.

At lunch at all three gatherings we talked with all attendees about the [Assessment and Transformation Roadmap](#) that LWVUS recently shared with state Leagues and we've all been talking about a lot since. We're now able to share it with local League leaders and members, which we are doing here (click [here](#) for document).

It's a long document, and a [shorter summary](#) and [Powerpoint presentation](#) has just been shared by LWVUS, but it is totally worth looking at, especially if you're going to the LWVUS Convention in June. Change is coming at all of us faster and faster and we need to adapt or get left in the dust.

The first half is an analysis of other "federated" (i.e three-level) organizations and how some organizations somewhat similar to the League have adapted. The second half digs into the changes WE need to make.

These include working more seamlessly across the three levels of the League, using technology better to increase our communication with ourselves and with those we want to involve or serve, lightening the routine workload of our volunteers so they can focus on our mission to "empower voters, defend democracy," and generally questioning "the League way" when comfortable old ways are holding us back.

Yes, we're still not supporting candidates or parties, we're still firmly fact-based, but we need to be engaged in the political action swirling around us or other more nimble groups will try to take our place. Being engaged without being partisan can be challenging, especially right now, and we talked quite a bit about this at the regional meetings.

And of course our membership needs to reflect more accurately the communities it serves. We need only look around at a typical League meeting to recognize the gap between who we are and who we need to be. Again, the familiar is comfortable, and it's easiest to talk to people like ourselves, but we need to look for and welcome age and cultural change in our ranks.

This is a working document and not all the proposed changes will be implemented - but many, maybe most, will. Is your League up for the necessary changes? Check out the documents (click [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#) for all documents) and see what you think.

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IN THIS ISSUE

[Regional Training Workshops](#)

[Advocacy Training and Lobby Day](#)

[Legislative Updates](#)

[Youth Programs](#)

[Local League News](#)

Register for LWVUS Convention in June 2018

The League of Women Voters' 53rd National Convention will be held at the Hilton Chicago in Chicago, IL, from Thursday, June 28 through Sunday, July 1, 2018. Local Leagues should register their delegates to attend by June 1. More information and the full "first call" is [available here](#).

LWVUS Webinar on National Constitutional Convention Danger

A dangerous and misguided effort to alter the US Constitution through a Constitutional convention is being proposed and considered in state legislatures throughout the country. Many leading conservative and progressive groups, scholars, economists, lawmakers, and policy experts rightly oppose a constitutional convention, because of the unintended consequences of unraveling our nation's fundamental freedoms. [Join us on Wednesday, May 2 at 3:00 PM EDT](#) to discuss learn more about this issue and the efforts supported by the League to stop this threat to our democracy from moving forward. For questions about this webinar please contact Jessica Jones Capparell jjones@lww.org

Regional Training Workshops



Regional Training Meetings, April 2018

It was great to see so many League members and friends at the 3 regional training workshops held this spring (Schenectady, Cortland and Rochester). The discussions were terrific and Leagues shared great ideas and activities with each other to make us all stronger. The handouts from the workshops are available on the state League website - [click here](#). Feel free to print, share and use with your League. Unfortunately, we had to cancel the one workshop to be held downstate (in Mamaroneck this year) as it conflicted with one of the youth marches.

Thanks to Cindy Schultz for photos from Schenectady below.



Advocacy Training and Lobby Day, April 24



Thank you to everyone who attended our lobby day this week! We had representatives from all over the state including Utica Rome, Rochester, North County, Mid-Hudson, Albany, Saratoga, Rensselaer, Schenectady, and New Castle. A total of 55 members attended the trainings and conducted lobby visits with more than 16 legislators. Our members were trained by experts on our various issue areas. Barbara Thomas, LWVNY Issues Specialist on Women's Issues and Medical Aid in Dying, briefed members on reproductive choice, contraceptive coverage, salary history, and medical aid in dying. Alex Camarda, Sr. Policy Advisor at ReInvent Albany, briefed members on ethics and campaign finance issues including the Database of Deals, Clean Contracting, pay-to-play, and closure of the LLC loophole. LWVNY Legislative Director (me J) shared information on

the League's current voting reform agenda and single payer health care. The session ended with a brief overview of the do's and don'ts of lobbying and a quick rundown of how to track bills using the Assembly website, as well as a plug for the League's Political Action Tool: Voices.

After the training, the Leagues broke out into groups to attend their lobby visits. It was a great day with awesome turnout by our members. Thank you again to everyone who attended! Thanks to Tom Loughlin, Jr, of the Utica/Rome League for the photos below:



Legislative Updates

Sally Robinson, sally.s.robinson@gmail.com, and
Jennifer Wilson, jennifer@lwvny.org



Current Legislative Action

This month the League focused its efforts on **ethics, campaign finance, and voting reforms**. After the Legislature returned from their two week spring break, we held a joint press conference with our good government partners calling on the Legislature and Governor to pass reforms that would address the ethical issues raised by the trial of top aide to Governor Cuomo, Joe Percoco. Following the press conference, our groups conducted several lobby visits with key legislators to garner support for the reforms.



We are feeling confident that the **Database of Deals**, legislation to mandate a public database of state government contract awards and spending, will pass before session ends. Our other priority reform **Clean Contracting**, legislation which would give the Comptroller back his oversight authority of all state contracts, is a work in progress. We believe this reform has a chance of passing although we still have a lot of work to do in winning over members who are concerned over how the legislation could affect Women and Minority Owned Businesses.

Later in the month, the Assembly passed several voting reforms including **early voting, no-excuse absentee voting, online voter registration, and closure of the LLC loophole**. We were very pleased to see the Assembly pass these reforms but troubled that their early voting proposal did not include a funding component. In the Senate, an early voting bill with a funding tie to the Abandon Properties fund, was introduced by Senator Kavanagh earlier this session. The bill is virtually identical to this Assembly bill except it contains a mechanism for funding. We had hoped the bill sponsor would amend his bill to include a funding component and disappointed to see he did not. Although both reforms have identical mechanisms for early voting, it is crucial to pass a bill that would not result in an unfunded mandate on counties.

That same week, the Governor issued **an executive order restoring parolee's right to vote**. We were very excited at the news. It was only within the last month that the State League Board accepted a recommendation by the Issues Committee to support this reform. Up until this point, we did not believe that the National position on voting rights covered restoring parolees' right to vote. We reviewed the position again after being asked about our position by several Local Leagues and other good-government organizations. We found that several other states supported this reform and we were able to approve our own support in March.

The executive order will allow the Governor to "pardon" parolees so that their right to vote will be restored. This is not a blanket order restoring the right to vote automatically for all parolees. Although we are pleased the Governor has taken the lead on this reform, we have many concerns over the actual roll out. There are no clear guidelines as to how or when the Governor will sign these commutations. There are also no clear deadlines as to when parolees' voting right will actually be restored. We are fearful that there will not be an adequate mechanism in place to alert parolees when their right has been restored. A lag between the time in which the commutation is signed and a parolee re-registered has the potential to prevent some parolees from exercising their opportunity to vote.

On the same day as our Lobby Day, the Assembly Elections Committee took up legislation that would amend election law to allow parolees to regain their right to vote immediately after serving their sentence. This bill will ensure that parolees are re-registered immediately and that they are informed their voting right has been restored in a timely manner. We will support this legislation and urge its passage.

On April 23rd, our new Issues Specialist on Medical Aid in Dying, Barbara Thomas, testified before the Assembly Health Committee at a hearing on the **Medical Aid in Dying** legislation. Barb has been an expert for the League on Women's Issues for many years and we are delighted to have her as a Specialist on this topic. Barb testified about the League's new position and her own personal experience with end of life choices. You can watch the archived testimony [here](#).

Youth Programs

Betty Ann King, bettyannking4@gmail.com



There is never a more opportune time to engage youth in the democratic process, than right now! The response of our youth to the Parkland Massacre Shooting of 17 students has been swift, intelligent, and powerful. We have witnessed a national student walkout on March 14 and on March 24th a national MARCH FOR our Lives that saw an estimated 800,000 students in Washington, DC demanding safe gun regulations with a message to the public that youth will be heard, youth will vote, and youth will register others to vote.

I am hearing from some Leagues that students have been running voter registration drives, asking for training, launching civic programs for the public, soliciting help in organizing forums on gun control, as well as showing up at school board meetings.

High school students are on fire. People are listening.

Let us help them engage others in registering to vote and to get out the vote! Each League needs to be active in helping NOW before the school year ends. Contact your League if you want to help!

From LWV of Huntington:

Our Running and Winning workshop held on April 18 was a huge success even surpassing our high expectations. Thirty one students from six schools attended. This was an extraordinary group of female students from very diverse backgrounds who all were extremely engaged for the entire program. The six elected public officials (three Republican and three Democrats) with the two women (one from the Green Party and the other an independent) who had recently run for office but did not win all told their stories and experiences from their hearts and inspired the students. Our 11 youth committee members all were prepared and knowledgeable being excellent facilitators as well as organizers. The different candidates and campaigns that were presented by the six groups of students after lunch demonstrated the students' concerns on important issues ranging from the environment to gun safety, their desire to grapple with these issues, and their creativity in creating a virtual candidate and campaign. Each presentation was different although all of the candidates were single women. The evaluations as well as the oral testimonials from public officials, students and teachers which were made during the last half of the program exemplify that our goal for this program was accomplished. It would not be surprising if some of the attendees not only considered a political career but in the future will run and win. At minimum they will all be informed and involved and once eligible to vote at 18 will consistently do so. They got the message so often articulated by the public officials that they can be anything they want, they can make a difference, and they will. Our future is in good hands.



Local League News

The **LWV of Broome and Tioga Counties** had Suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton talk about her life and times at the Phelps Mansion in Binghamton. Stanton, portrayed by Dr. Melinda Grube of Cayuga Community College, discussed her struggles with the suffrage movement and answered questions. See the media coverage from the event at: <http://www.wicz.com/story/38065883/elizabeth-cady-stanton-visits-phelps-mansion>



This is a picture of Flora Schwartz (a member of the **Southwest Nassau League**) pointing to the place on the voting machine that indicated the lever to pull to vote for women's suffrage in NYS. The machine used to be in the front office of the Nassau County BOE.

The **League of Women Voters in Saratoga County** wasted no time supporting the planned actions of student walk-out leaders in response to a recent school shooting in Parkland, Florida. That's because since 1990, the LWVUS has supported strong federal measures to limit the accessibility and regulate ownership of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons. The League recently invited three student walkout leaders to speak at our forum on the First Amendment. Click here to read what they said (page 3). Matthew Taylor, of Saratoga Springs High School, stated, "Every progressive accomplishment in human history is due to people standing up, fighting back, and demanding what is right. As James Baldwin once said, "Not everything faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." So, do not back down. Lift one another up; we must change hearts and laws. The more we protest, the more we march, the more we sit in, and the more we walk out, the more vibrant our democracy will be."

In **Buffalo/Niagara LWV**, League volunteers have been very busy recently at naturalization ceremonies. Joyce Bol and Kate Wagner welcomed 108 new citizens from 37 countries at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery on March 22. On March 29, Lynne Vallone and Janet Goodsell represented the League at West Seneca West High School's ceremony for 54 new citizens from 25 countries. (Lynne reported that this was her first visit to her alma mater since graduation!) At the U.S. Courthouse on April 5, Barbara Brooks was present when 52 applicants from 27 countries became citizens, and Janet Goodsell and Judy Weidemann welcomed 53 applicants from 25 countries there on April 17. League volunteers have been successful in registering our newest citizens to vote with assistance from representatives of the Board of Elections.

Dr. Virginia "Ginny" Horvath, the 13th President of the State University of New York at Fredonia, will be the speaker at the annual meeting of the **LWV of Chautauqua County**. She will speak about, "A Nation at Risk: Public Higher Education in America."

LWV of Albany County held a meeting for their over 50 new or returning members (since 2016) to showcase the many activities, tasks and events of the League. The new and returning members were encouraged to get active in an activity of their interest.

The **LWVs of New Rochelle, Larchmont/Mamaroneck and Rye, Rye Brook and Port Chester** hosted the new County Executive, George Latimar, to discuss his First 100 Days at their annual luncheon.

On Saturday March 24th, the **Syracuse Metro LWV** was represented at the "March For Our Lives" event in Syracuse. Heather Allison Waters and Roberta and Dan Millert staffed the booth offering voter registration services to the attendees. The organizing students eloquently shared their views on school safety and desired gun control legislation. They also encouraged everyone to VOTE. Over 1,000 individuals participated in the event.

March and April have proven to be successful months for the **LWV of New Rochelle's** registration volunteers despite the crazy weather! Our campaign to register as many students as possible before their finals begin is well in hand: 70 students from Ursuline registered to vote for the first time, and another 70 from Iona College, Monroe College, and CNR combined also registered to vote. We dropped off 75 registration forms to the NRHS Alternative school. During the rest of April and May, we will focus on Iona Prep, NRHS and the 3 colleges.

In the Hamptons, the League enlisted four speakers to share their perspectives on immigration within a framework that acknowledges that we are a nation of immigrants and that immigrants have been, and are, a significant labor source for the regional economy. The speakers will be: Martha Potter, League Board member and historian, will address the history of immigration legislation and how it has impacted Long Island; Michael Nenner, General Manager of Gurneys Montauk, will discuss immigrant issues raised in the hospitality industry; Rob Carpenter, Administrative Director of the Long Island Farm Bureau based in Riverhead, will speak about the impact of immigration on East End agriculture; and Larry Cantwell, former East Hampton Town Supervisor, will outline some ways that immigrants impact government services.

The **LWV of Tompkins County** will host a viewing of the film, *Making a Killing - Guns, Greed and the NRA*. The Robert Greenwald film features personal stories from people who have been affected by gun violence including unintentional shootings, domestic violence, suicides, mass shootings and gun trafficking. It exposes the profit of gun companies and the role of the National Rifle Association. It explores ways that we can reduce gun violence in our communities. Following the film there will be a brief presentation of New York's current gun laws by Assemblywoman Barbara Lipton's aide, Septh Murtagh.

The Opioid Epidemic in Schenectady: How Does this Affect Me? Can I Prevent this Addiction Epidemic From Affecting My Loved Ones? is the topic of a meeting organized by the **LWV of Schenectady County**. Forum participants include Darin Samaha LMSW, Director of Community Services Schenectady, Lisa Ayers RN,BSN Director of Public Health Schenectady, Nancy Jones MHS, CPP, Director of Prevention, New Choices Recovery Center and others from Ellis Hospital, There will also be a person in recovery and a representative from the Schenectady Police Department.

LWV of Brookhaven worked with the Suffolk County League of Women Voters to address a concern with pay-to-play issues in local government. County Legislator Trotta had introduced legislation to make it illegal for contractors and public employee unions to make campaign donations to government officials that might result in the award of contracts based on politics rather than merit. We spoke at the County Legislature commending Trotta for trying to find a solution, and we urged all the legislators to work together to correct this.

The **LWV of Rochester** has had cooperative efforts with organizations such as the National Council of Jewish Women, the Susan B. Anthony House, La Cumbre government committee, and so many others in the areas of Program and Voter Services. An exciting new voter registration effort is in the formative stages with the Islamic Center. In addition, a new partnership is being formed with Nazareth College, focusing on Getting Out The Vote (GOTV) among students. We hope to learn from the Nazareth students, and use that knowledge in future GOTV efforts at other local schools.

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