

**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
OF NEW YORK STATE**

**COUNCIL REPORT  
JUNE 2018**



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**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW YORK STATE  
FORTY-FIRST BIENNIAL COUNCIL REPORT  
June 2018**

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**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

**Dare Thompson, President, darethompson@gmail.com**

We thank all those local Leagues who voted on our annual budget and sent directions to the board in advance of our June 7<sup>th</sup> Council. 23 local Leagues participated. A total of 170 proxy votes would be available if all Leagues participated, with 17 (10%) needed to constitute a quorum. The 84 qualified proxy votes submitted provided the quorum amount, and since all proxy votes supported approval of the 2018-19 budget, that budget is now approved. It will go into effect on July 1. Much appreciated!

Besides counting the votes on June 7, we also held an informal online Council while board members were still present following a two-day board meeting. Thirteen local League members coming in online and one Albany member there in-person helped us try out new GoToMeeting software. We heard further directions to the board (to be discussed by the board in July), took questions, and had Judie Gorenstein update attendees on voter service issues. We look forward to using this software to make conference calls more less confusing and more effective.

The rest of this document is a look-back from several of us on the year that is just ending. It provides a helpful annual report for our historical records and we hope it is immediately useful to you as well. Others will talk about what happened politically so I will skip right past a topic full of bad behavior, investigations and trials, a remarkable lack of shame, and a state senate that ground to a year-end halt with 31 on each side of the aisle. And then there's what's going on in D.C. All in all, we are frustrated and deeply concerned.

Therefore, on a happier note, I remind you that 2017 was the year we celebrated women in NY getting the vote 100 years ago, which means 2018 is the year we celebrate NY women actually going to the polls. We ended the last fiscal year with the successful April 2017 women's conference in Hyde Park and New Paltz and our state convention in central NY where many of us visited the National Women's Right Historical Park in Seneca Falls and Waterloo. In this fiscal year we continued celebrating suffrage by helping organize workshops at a one-day women's conference on November 4 in Albany. It took place at the State Museum where the inspiring Votes for Women exhibit was just opening, and at the end of the conference we held a very successful reception there that filled the galleries and the auditorium.

Three days later League members helped the NY Women's Suffrage Commission chair, Kathy Hochul, celebrated Election Day by putting "I VOTED" stickers on suffragists' graves in Buffalo (Mary Burnett Talbert), Rochester (Susan B. Anthony), and Fayetteville (Matilda Joslyn Gage). At that last stop, we and the Gage House hosted a happy reception attended by Kathy, me, Sally Roesch Wagner, and many Gage volunteers and Syracuse LWV members.

Now as we get ready to leave for the LWVUS convention, we are stepping up our work with Leagues across the country to celebrate the national suffrage victory in 2020. As we do so, our organization at all three levels is undergoing a transformation to meet the needs of newly energized activists who want things done quickly, online, and soon (no doubt) in whole new ways we can't yet imagine. Our purpose is what it was 100 years ago, though it's now simply stated as "Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy." But now we need to have the determination and imagination of our foremothers to continue to re-invent the way we work to achieve that purpose. Fortunately, here in New York the suffragists' voices echo loudly.

**ISSUES AND ADVOCACY REPORT****Sally Robinson, robintwins@gmail.com****Constitutional Convention Ballot Proposal**

After discussion and review of the process under which the state board applies League positions to specific action and advocacy, and the precedent of how the League board applied the Constitutional Convention position to the 1997 ballot question, the 2017-2019 State board agreed at its first meeting after Convention 2017 that it was the appropriate responsibility of the board to decide whether to support, oppose or stay neutral on the ballot question. Under the position, the League does not have a standing position on whether or not a Constitutional Convention should be held. Instead, the determination is made by the state board every 20 years given current policy circumstances. The new board also affirmed the state League decision to support the ballot measure as a means of giving New York voters the opportunity to consider critical reforms that state government has refused to undertake, such as voting reforms, anti-corruption measures, completely independent redistricting, modernizing the court system, and further guaranteeing personal freedom and meeting basic human needs.

A wealth of information on the ballot proposal question on whether to hold a constitutional convention, including articles in favor and against the proposal, was made available on the state League website at <http://www.lwvny.org/programs-studies/con-con-edu.html>.

We believe that our pro position gave us a unique voice in this process and gave the state League a significant amount of publicity. In addition to the public forums held by our local Leagues all over the state, the state office participated in more than 20 public sessions. We were quoted in countless media outlets, invited to participate in editorial board meetings, and even included in Susan Arbetter's PBS special on the question which was aired all over the state.

Throughout the campaign, the biggest argument in opposition was the fear that a significant number of protections would be stripped from the Constitution. We countered this argument with the fact that this has never occurred at a convention. The other argument was the potential for dark money to influence a convention. We shared this fear but believed that there was no greater risk of dark money's influence than what we already experience at the state legislature. The final biggest argument was that delegates would be selected based on gerrymandered Senate districts and would likely be the same corrupt politicians currently serving. Although we agreed that the gerrymandered Senate districts were a real issue, we believed that this convention would not have the same reform gridlock currently plaguing our legislature. We were able to counter each argument made by the opposition but we were vastly outspent.

After the convention vote failed we put out a press statement reaffirming our commitment to amending our state Constitution and calling for widespread reforms:

[http://www.lwvny.org/LLresources/SBR\\_StateNews/2017/December/LWVNYS-final-statement-on-con-con-loss.pdf](http://www.lwvny.org/LLresources/SBR_StateNews/2017/December/LWVNYS-final-statement-on-con-con-loss.pdf)

We are still working in partnership with other reform organizations to advance priority Constitutional amendments through the legislative process.

**Weekly Legislative Newsletter**

During the 2018 legislative session the League launched a new initiative to help keep members up-to-date on what's going on in Albany. Our weekly legislative newsletter included what's happening at the

Capitol, upcoming events surrounding advocacy, weekly legislative committee agendas, and weekly League news clips. The newsletter was sent to all members every Friday.

**State Update and Concurrence**

At the 2017 State Convention, delegates approved two program items:

1. An update on the Charter School position adopted in 2006 to delete the following sentence. “In lieu of amendment of the Charter School Act to increase the total number of charters that could be granted, it supports retention of the current total (100) with amendment of the Charter School Act so that a charter could be reissued if a charter school ceased to function for any reason.” The 100 charter school cap has been exceeded over the years and is no longer a relevant number.
2. A concurrence with a LWV of Utah’s position on Death with Dignity.

At the state Board meeting in March 2018, the Board approved the results of the update on Charter Schools and the new position on Death with Dignity.

- **Charter Schools**

Based on the written criteria for updating positions, this proposal passed with more than 2/3 of Leagues participating and agreeing to support the recommended change.

The update allowed for the deletion of the sentence in the position regarding the numeric cap on the number of Charter Schools in the State as that number was out of date.

- **Death with Dignity**

Based on the written criteria for approving a concurrence, this proposal passed with more than 2/3 of Leagues participating and agreeing to support the concurrence.

**The new position is as follows:**

- The League of Women Voters of Utah believes state laws should grant the option for a terminally ill person to request medical assistance from a relevant, licensed physician to end one’s life.
- The League of Women Voters believes such legislation should include safeguards against abuse of the dying and protections for medical personnel who act in good faith compliance with the law.

**Legislative Agenda**

The 2018 Legislative Agenda was made available to all local Leagues. We encourage use of this booklet for education of members, legislators and the public on the issues of concern during the upcoming legislative session. As in the past, we had asked the local Leagues what issues are most important to them and their members. We used this input during our direct lobbying of the legislators and how to prioritize League resources for advocacy work.

**Legislative Activity**

Early in the session our legislative activity focused primarily on voting and ethics. Governor Cuomo once again included early voting in his state budget proposals but without funding. We submitted testimony to the Public Protection Budget Committee advocating for funding to support early voting. We also submitted testimony to the Local Government Budget Committee urging them to pass the Governor’s proposed Article VII legislation on ethics and campaign finance, including closing the LLC loophole, limiting outside income and more. On January 23<sup>rd</sup>, the League participated in a rally to advocate for including funding for early voting in the state budget. The rally was organized by the LetNYVote coalition. LetNYVote is a coalition of grassroots organizations, unions, and other advocacy groups. The

rally was a huge success with over 100 attendees including nearly 30 League members. After the rally, some League members lobbied their Senators and Assembly Members on this issue.

### **Pre Budget Legislative Packet and Meetings: Early Voting**

A pre-budget lobby packet was mailed to the President and one Co-President of each local League; it was also emailed to all Presidents. We asked local Leagues to schedule lobby visits for the February break to urge legislators to pass early voting and include funding for it in the state budget. The packet included a support memo that could be given to legislators, as well as background materials and FAQs on early voting.

The Governor's executive original budget proposal included legislation to allow for early voting but not funding to assist counties with implementation. In his 30 day budget amendments, the Governor added \$7,000,000 in funding for early voting. We were elated with the new funding and quickly issued a statement thanking the Governor for prioritizing voting reforms.

During this entire month of March, the League and our good government partners advocated for this funding. We encouraged members to reach out to their legislators and the Governor to explain to them the importance of including funding for early voting. The League also submitted testimony on the Governor's proposed voting reforms to the Joint Budget Committees on Public Protections.

In addition to our voting work, our Education Specialist, Marian Bott, testified to the Joint Budget Committees on Education. She advocated to increase funding for low income school districts and to fully implement CFE.

During March we continued our advocacy efforts around early voting in the state budget. We targeted members of the Senate IDC (Independent Democratic Conference) who had previously expressed their support of including voting reforms in the state budget in the December "One New Yorker Budget Agenda". They were supportive of the reform in meetings but we faced an unforeseen roadblock, the Assembly Democratic Conference. Many Assembly Members expressed to us that they have received push back from members during closed door conference meetings over the roll out of the proposal and the cost. In addition to meeting with members, we met with Governor Cuomo's office to discuss the proposal. Unfortunately early voting was not included in the final budget proposal.

### **Post Budget Lobbying**

Each year we ask League members to lobby their state legislators after the state budget is done, giving local League members and legislators an opportunity to exchange ideas and discuss the League's Legislative Agenda for the session. In 2018 for our core League issue of **election reform**, covered seven reforms that would make voting easier and more accessible. These included early voting, lowering the voter registration deadline, automatic voter registration (AVR), online voter registration, primary consolidation, no-excuse absentee voting, and ballot access.

In addition to voting reforms, we also advocated for four major **campaign finance and ethics reforms** including closing the LLC Loophole, banning pay to play, creating a Database of Deals for state contracts, and imposing limits on outside income

### **Executive Order on Restoration of Parolee Voting Rights**

Currently individuals on probation can vote but those on parole cannot vote under New York law. Many local Leagues have been approached by other organizations to work with them on reforming this law and allowing those on parole to vote. After we initially told the locals that we did not have a position but upon



further review of broader LWVUS elections positions, after consideration the state Issues Committee decided that the League can support restoring parolee voting rights. In April, Governor Cuomo issued an executive order that restored voting rights to individuals on parole on a case-by-case basis. We have been following the Executive Order and working with the Governor's office as well as the Department of Corrections to ensure that parolees who have their right restored are made aware in a timely manner.

### **Advocacy Training Day**

The League held its annual Advocacy day in April of 2018. 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, Jennifer Wilson, 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.

### **End of Session**

The 2018 legislative session proved to be difficult for all advocacy groups. The League worked with our coalition partners on a number of different issue areas including health care, reproductive choice, sex-education, and education funding. Our main issue areas were voting and anti-corruption reforms. Throughout the session we conducted countless lobby visits, participated in several large rallies, and held numerous press conferences with our coalition partners. Even with our combined strength we were unable to move any meaningful reforms in both legislative houses.

Election law reforms, single payer health care, the Reproductive Health Act, the Contraceptive Coverage Act, and closure of the LLC loophole all passed in the Assembly but were not taken up by the Senate. Our two priority anti-corruption bills, the Database of Deals and Procurement Integrity Act, were passed by the Senate but not the Assembly.

Typically, towards the end of session, the "three men in a room" (the Governor, Senate Leader, and Assembly Speaker) get together and make a deal on what issues they are willing to trade in order to pass a large package of reforms known as "the big ugly." This year, there was no package of reforms. Instead of meeting with the house leaders, the Governor appeared on several national news stations to chastise the federal government over family separation (an issue our National League has been working on ending).

Many unexpected changes took place over the course of the 2018 legislative session. A Special Election and the reunification of the breakout Senate Independent Democratic Conference with mainline Democrats created increased tension in the state's upper house. Additionally, all state seats are up for re-election this year leaving many members afraid to vote on reforms that might cost them their re-election bid.

It was a disappointing year in terms of passage of reforms but we were very pleased with this year's member engagement.

## **MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

**Membership Team:** LWVNYS board members Betty Ann King (North Country), Suzanne Stassevitch (NYC), Dare Thompson (Mid-Hudson) plus off-board members Susan Schwarz (Rivertowns and Westchester Co. ILO), Lisa Scott (Smithtown and Suffolk Co. ILO), Kathy Stein (St. Lawrence Co.), and Carole Torok Huxtable (Utica-Rome).

Tough political times at least have translated into membership growth and the state as a whole increased its membership, a wonderful new trend which happened in spite of the disbandment of the Harrison and Somers local Leagues. We welcome a new and very energetic Members-at-Large (MAL) unit in Allegany and Cattaraugus Counties and also note that the Saugerties League has just merged with the Mid-Hudson Region League, increasing opportunities for members in both communities.

We extend congratulations to **the many local Leagues whose membership numbers grew or held firm:** Albany, Brookhaven, Broome/Tioga, Buffalo/Niagara, Cazenovia, Chautauqua, Cooperstown, Geneva, Huntington, Mid-Hudson, New York State (MALs), New York City, North East Westchester, Oneonta, Port Washington, Putnam, Rensselaer, Rivertowns, Rochester, Rockland, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schuyler, Shelter Island, Smithtown, Syracuse, Utica/Rome, White Plains.

**Our mission is to put ALL local Leagues on the “growth list.” Efforts include:**

**Regional Meetings**, held in years without a state convention, took place in NYC on March 17 in Schenectady, April 7 in Cortland, and April 14 in Rochester. (A Westchester meeting had to be canceled because it conflicted with March for Our Lives and couldn't be rescheduled.) Laura Bierman, Jennifer Wilson and I attended all three. Judie Gorenstein attended the Cortland one.

Local League turn-out was good and conversations were lively and energizing at all of them. Topics this year included League management, candidate events and other voter service activities, engaging new and younger people as members and activists, civics, and “You're richer than you think” – how Leagues can maximize *all* its assets, not just money. A thread running through all discussions was the challenge of remaining non-partisan in a time when voters are increasingly polarized. It's not easy to be both the trusted “adult in the room” and a relevant, engaged activist, and we constantly need to be creative and tough as we collectively monitor and discuss our Leagues' behavior.

At all three meetings we introduced the [LWVUS Transformation Roadmap](#), which outlines a new way of operating for the whole LWV and includes the new pithy mission statement – “Empowering Voters, Defending Democracy.” For those going to the national convention in Chicago at the end of June, the Roadmap is must reading. Ultimately the LWVUS transformation will transform state and local Leagues, as well so all League leaders should at least read the executive summary.

While nothing beats face-to-face meetings, **Grassroots Phone Calls** also give local Leagues an opportunity to interact with one another and with state League leaders about important League and public policy issues. These have been about engaging youth, voter service, advocacy issues and more. Both Betty Ann and Judie have also set up **On-Going Communication Systems** via Facebook (re engaging youth) and Google groups (re voter service) which all interested members are welcome to join.

Meetings, phone calls, and online groups all supplement **on-going e-mail and online communication** from the state League via

- **State Board Updates** (SBUs)
- the state *Voter*
- the constantly updated **website (www.lwvny.org)** where basic League documents are found (e.g. Impact on Issues, In League), latest action at the Capitol or voter service information is highlighted, training handouts are posted, SBUs, Voters and local League newsletters are archived, and so much MORE can be found.

And the LWVUS management section has just been newly revised too. Go to: <https://www.lwv.org/League-management>.

Last but hardly least, local Leagues have learned that having a **Membership and Leadership Development (MLD) COACH** helps them

- keep on track with the plans they’ve made
- remember to use “best practices”
- incorporate new League-building tips sent on monthly by LWVUS.

Current coaches are Lisa Scott, Kathy Stein, Dare Thompson, and other leaders as appropriate. They consult regularly with our national coach Melissa Currence of Cincinnati, OH who is a past member of the LWVUS Young People’s Task Force and a current nominee to the LWVUS board. If your League would like a coach or if you would like to BE a coach, contact **Lisa Scott, state MLD coordinator, at lisawscott@gmail.com.**

The Membership Team members and all LWVNYS staff and board members welcome your questions and comments any time. It is the grassroots work you all do that makes the League a truly unique and powerful civic organization, and we are here to help you stay strong. Use us!

LEAGUE NAME	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Albany County	272	257	255	231	235	173	192	184	159	153	163
Bronxville	127	142	121	80	82	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brookhaven	99	90	84	74	70	70	65	67	63	63	69
Broome and Tioga Co.	128	126	111	109	109	109	100	100	93	97	97
Buffalo/Niagara	371	377	321	238	225	224	213	193	190	197	210
Cazenovia	46	46	47	37	41	35	32	24	29	32	32
Central Nassau	43	48	49	39	35	35	27	20	20	26	22
Chautauqua County	124	126	108	93	88	88	83	84	88	86	89
Chemung County	27	35	29	34	15	20	20	20	14	14	10
Columbia County	33	27	35	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cooperstown Area	39	36	33	24	34	40	47	35	47	67	84
Cortland County	25	26	30	26	29	29	24	23	28	31	29
East Nassau	83	78	80	59	53	53	47	51	45	47	39
Geneva	78	77	60	55	53	50	46	38	34	39	42
Great Neck	67	74	58	39	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**COUNCIL KIT**

**June 2018**

Greater Oneida Area	13	15	11	11	10	8	7	7	6	5	4
Hamptons	187	187	165	144	135	124	133	125	116	119	117
Harrison (disbanded 2017)	60	50	49	41	43	34	36	39	35	29	0
Huntington	70	78	91	90	87	85	89	88	97	69	70
Larchmont/Mamaroneck	149	131	102	89	90	76	83	74	108	107	71
Long Beach	97	86	51	44	42	47	27	31	33	41	10
LWVNYS	133	141	88	94	91	89	57	36	33	31	52
Mid Hudson Region	129	108	114	88	94	91	90	92	92	86	120
New Castle	184	163	128	103	85	92	86	84	94	112	102
New Rochelle	110	101	95	85	89	77	74	59	45	56	51
New York City	665	541	500	243	265	205	199	223	217	275	350
North Country	40	37	38	36	32	42	52	43	40	42	33
North East Westchester	57	44	40	27	28	37	28	31	31	35	44
Oneonta	105	79	67	57	52	48	46	38	41	35	36
Orleans County	22	26	18	12	13	14	0	0	0	0	0
Port Washington/Manhasset	147	132	132	108	133	118	142	128	100	118	132
Putnam County	0	15	23	20	5	5	5	5	9	12	19
Rensselaer County	100	98	101	89	84	77	81	80	81	76	101
Rivertowns	93	78	87	47	41	53	73	75	86	89	99
Rochester Metro	287	289	278	146	135	131	132	145	139	137	138
Rockland County	75	69	73	47	50	50	34	37	27	32	32
Rye, Rye Brook & Port Chester	57	39	49	47	53	37	51	57	47	54	43
Saratoga County	181	177	169	150	144	150	161	130	141	146	205
Saugerties (merged with Mid Hudson 2017)	24	18	25	22	14	24	24	17	15	14	0
Scarsdale	299	290	259	275	223	203	220	216	205	201	209
Schenectady County	167	156	162	149	131	132	129	126	134	138	136
Schuyler	54	49	45	39	39	21	21	17	14	10	11
Shelter Island	79	83	38	34	33	46	42	44	44	40	42
Smithtown	55	51	46	37	38	37	36	28	29	30	34
Somers (disbanded 2017)	129	128	126	134	116	105	99	87	94	59	0
Southwest Nassau	122	127	116	101	83	82	76	66	50	34	21
Steuben County	20	23	22	23	25	24	24	25	26	26	18

Syracuse Metro.	103	94	93	86	85	102	100	90	71	69	73
Tompkins County	148	130	123	121	106	103	90	82	92	78	74
Utica Metro. Area	52	57	55	54	53	57	54	56	44	52	52
Warren County	0	0	0	18	17	9	13	0	0	0	0
White Plains	165	153	141	130	125	134	145	125	117	121	124
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>5940</b>	<b>5608</b>	<b>5141</b>	<b>4179</b>	<b>3958</b>	<b>3695</b>	<b>3655</b>	<b>3445</b>	<b>3363</b>	<b>3430</b>	<b>3509</b>
MAL Units											
Hamilton			11			8	0	0	0	0	0
Orange			17			0		0	0	0	0
Wayne			9			17	13	10	10	6	6
St. Lawrence/Jefferson			23			21	13	7	8	6	13
Southern Westchester						19	14	0	0	0	0
Allegany & Cattaraugus											20

**VOTER SERVICE REPORT**

**Judie Gorenstein, Judiel728@aol.com**

This past year has been both challenging and rewarding for voter service committees and Leagues throughout the state. With our country becoming more polarized than ever, all our candidate events needed to not only be nonpartisan but perceived as nonpartisan. At the July 2017 board meeting the new board adopted two policies. The policy on "Open or Empty Chairs in Candidate Events" that had been discussed and contested at the June 2017 LWVNY convention was adopted. It was decided that it was extremely important for Leagues to speak with one voice and have a clear, consistent and nonpartisan policy. An "open or empty chair" candidate meeting will not be allowed for any level of government for any reason. Any League sponsored event that invites a candidate will be considered a candidate meeting and must abide by this policy. Also adopted was a revised policy on holding candidate events for primaries. When a League is sponsoring a primary candidate event for a race in one political party, the League must now OFFER to sponsor a primary candidate event for any party that is holding a primary for that same race.

In the fall of 2017, Leagues had many questions about these new policies and some Leagues resisted. Change is often slow and it is often difficult to give up old ways of doing things. However, most Leagues in the end did comply with the new policies. Most Leagues did run successful candidate nights. In fact, of the 27 Leagues that responded to the November Voter Service Survey, only two did not hold any candidate event and only 2 Leagues had not complied with the no empty chair policy. Some followed this policy for the very first time with good results. Although many of the Leagues who had argued against the policy feared it would lead to many cancellations, the surveys indicated only 4 were cancelled because of the new policy. Many Leagues also feared that cancelling especially if it is the incumbent who would not attend, gives the incumbent control. LWVNY advised the Leagues to keep the public informed about

the cancellations, i.e., why and because of who. Leagues did use press releases, candidate guides, social media, and letters to keep their communities informed. Interestingly an incumbent, who refused to attend a candidate event resulting in it being cancelled, lost his election. We will never know if results would have been different if he had agreed to debate.

The fact that local Leagues followed recommendations in the past from the LWVNYS and now have a clearly written debate and video taping policy has decreased problems Leagues have had especially regarding taping and airing. More and more Leagues are including their policy with invitations to the candidates and requiring them to sign and return them. Leagues continue to have questions about write-in candidates this year. It is recommended that only the candidates who appear on the ballot be invited but this is being left up to each League. However, the policy regarding candidate selection must be in their written policy. As early as December 2017, Leagues were encouraged to review their policy and make any needed changes. At that same time, LWVNYS began looking at Road To The Voting Booth and looking at revisions we needed to make. During the next couple of weeks, we will have a one page list of "Essentials for Candidate Events." Within the next two months, we will have a revised Road to the Voting Booth Part II with more details helping you from the beginning planning stages, to the running of and then evaluation of your event, including a tool kit (something many Leagues have requested in their surveys responses.)

The LWVNY voter service webpage will also include a tool kit for voter registration drives. As usual, in the summer and fall of 2017 our Leagues did a wonderful job reaching out and registering voters. The women's movement and more people being engaged and interested in politics resulted not only in increased membership but increased requests for voter registration drives. The number of drives Leagues held ranged from 1 to 25. This year, the February 14 shooting at Parkland High and the March for Our Lives movement that followed has sparked student activism. The requests for voter registration drives, especially by students for students is a new phenomenon. What can we do to meet this demand? At our LWVNY training workshops this spring, we discussed the opportunities and challenges we face. Of primary importance is our being extremely careful to be and be perceived as non partisan. Leagues need to have visible signage at all their voter registration tables station clearly stating "LWV does not support or opposed and party candidate or party." We are the gold standard and cannot allow this to be tarnished. We also cannot meet all the demand ourselves. We can train volunteers, but if they cannot be totally nonpartisan when they do voter registration, they certainly cannot do it under our banner even if they are willing to be League members. However, we need not only train volunteers for League-run voter registration drives. Some Leagues have already been holding voter registration workshops where they not only train League members but train people from other organizations how to run a voter registration drive. We are seeing that students in particular are looking to hold their own drives and we know that youth can certainly engage youth. Our job is to give them the tools and knowledge to run an effective voter registration drive. The tool kit for voter registration should enable you to not only help your own volunteers but others run effective drives.

In the responses to the 2017 survey, it was clear that most Leagues were struggling with Vote 411. The effort and time VOTE 411 took, the fact that most Leagues who participated only got responses from less than 50% of their candidates, the fact that many Leagues did not participate at all and those areas of the state where there were no Leagues were not covered at all, resulted in LWVNY looking for an alternative to Vote 411. After careful evaluation, we contracted with Ballot Ready, which is now on-line and available for voters all over the state to read about their candidates running in primaries for congress. This is new to us all but promises to offer more information to voters in NYS and easier for our Leagues to use.

The area where Leagues have been in the past and were in 2017 the weakest was in getting out the vote. A few Leagues did PSAs last year on tv, radio, and also college campuses. Some Leagues had visible signs in their communities. Some League sent emails reminding newly registered voters right before Election Day. They got contact information from people who wanted to be reminded to vote and sent them emails. This year Leagues need to decide if they are going to do follow up. Before they hold drives they need to decide how contact will be made, what they need, and who will make it. Leagues need to explore new ways and possibly network with other nonpartisan groups who may be better at getting out the vote than we.

The upcoming election season promises once again to be challenging and rewarding. The voter service power point presented to those who attended the 2018 council meeting by teleconference was prepared to help Leagues meet the challenges. The upcoming revised Road to the Voting Booth and toolkits for candidate events and voter registration drives should also help Leagues meet the challenges and continue to maintain the gold standard and our excellent reputation.

### **Youth Programs**

**Betty Ann King, [bking8213@charter.net](mailto:bking8213@charter.net)**

By January, it became clear to our Leagues throughout the state of New York that our country was suffering from pains of political chaos exacerbated by a level of ignorance regarding how government functions and astonishment that changes at all levels require consistent and active participation. Amidst all of this political unrest exists passion and a desire for activism, and youth are anxious to become involved. We needed a vision for 2018, one that would carry on the tenets of our already existing youth programs and one that would create new possibilities at all age levels.

#### **Vision 2018:**

That each League participates in a youth program that encourages civic responsibility at any level.

Some steps along the way:

- A. Identify persons in each League interested in working with youth
- B. Investigate a partnership with other groups, organizations, schools that share vision Partnerships help to maintain enthusiasm, create new ideas and share the work burden
- C. Encourage brainstorming! Often the smallest and most “out of the box idea” gleans wonderful results
- D. Follow through and share!

In February, with the help of Laura Bierman and Jennifer Wilson and crucial input from Judy Gorenstein, a telephone conference was held with youth chairs and presidents. Jennifer set up a closed Facebook page for local League Presidents and youth chairs who were invited to post and share any project or program involving youth participation in democratic activities. Brainstorming is encouraged and any suggestion to help enhance an idea or to help overcome an obstacle is welcomed.

Topics covered by phone conference:

- A. Accessing Face Book Group (League of Women Voters of NYS Youth Leadership)
- B. Obstacles Leagues are facing in youth involvement
- C. Guidelines for posting and sharing
- D. Questions

We currently have 14 members. If your League would like to participate please contact Jennifer at [jennifer@lwny.org](mailto:jennifer@lwny.org) or myself at [bking8213@charter.net](mailto:bking8213@charter.net). There are many great ideas posted by Leagues. you can also send your ideas to me directly and I will post. At least one League youth program is highlighted each month in the State Board Update. highlighted each month in the State Board Update.

Just a few examples of Leagues' programs involving youth in 2018:

- Running and Winning  
Citizenship and Political Activism (CAPA) in NYS Symposium with high school students and legislators from state, county, city, town school board
- Suffolk County Student Day - Students met county legislators, ran mock debate and voted on bill. Debate focused on having an armed guard from sheriff's office in each school. Bill failed
- .LWV Cortland participated in two Deliberative Dialogue's conducted by Institute for Civic Engagement for SUNY Cortland students: (two students have joined their board)
  - Where have all the voters gone?
  - Mass shootings
- Partnerships with Girl Scouts involving all levels from Daisies to Scouts to help scouts earn Suffrage Patch
- Training students to run League style non-partisan voter registration drives
- Women's History Month (March) poster contest at either the elementary (4th and 5th grade) level or the middle school. The posters hang on the school walls for a month and then prize winners are honored at a televised School Board meeting. It is largely about seeing women as active participants in making history."

Throughout the state, Leagues are consistently doing a great job registering students!

What lies ahead? At the end of the month, a survey form regarding information pertaining to any sponsored youth program(s) or ideas a local League has publicly sponsored or promoted will be emailed to Leagues president or youth chair.

The purpose of the survey will be to create a bank of ideas and contacts that will further encourage the interactive process of helping youth learn and participate in the democratic process....and also to gather a list of Leagues who would love to show off their successes at the 2019 State Convention in Albany.

We also need to take a look at what the impact of increased activism may have on numbers of first time voters at the polls.

### **2018 Students Inside Albany Conference**

The 2018 Students Inside Albany Conference had 59 attendees representing 38 local Leagues, MAL Units and ILO's. The students came from all over New York State from Long Island to Buffalo and Plattsburgh to Binghamton. They ranged from sophomores to seniors in high school. They were energetic and enthusiastic to learn about New York State government. Because of the legislative calendar, this year's program was different than in years past.

On Sunday evening, Jennifer Wilson, LWNYS Legislative Director, presented information on how New York State Government works. She explained the roles of the various branches of New York State government and the differences between the state government and the other levels of government, eg, national and local. She also discussed the leadership and management of the 2 legislative houses.



Because the Assembly was not in session on Monday, we organized a mock debate for the students in the Assembly. We surveyed them ahead of time and found that gun control/safety was their first topic of interest. On Sunday evening, Jennifer discussed some of the bills being considered in the legislature and the students chose to consider a repeal of the Safe Act and a bill concerning mental health issues related to gun access. A Speaker, Majority Leader and Clerk were all selected at random from the students. The students then broke into groups to prepare their debates and discussion on the bills.

On Monday, the students toured the state Capitol and heard about whose faces are on those engraved stones and the secret of the fireplaces in the Senate Chambers. They then went into the Assembly Chambers and took their seats. Russ Haven, NYPIRG General Counsel; Barbara Bartoletti, former LWVNYS Legislative Director; and Assemblymember John McDonald, assisted the students during the “session.” The students followed legislative procedures and did a great job. Debate on the repeal of the Safe Act was so popular that we didn’t have time to consider the second bill. The repeal failed 54 to 4 votes.

On Monday afternoon, League Legislative Director Jennifer Wilson provided the students with the do’s and don’ts of lobbying the legislators – how to approach them, make your arguments and be persuasive. Also on Monday, Marina Marcou-O’Malley, Policy and Operations Director, Education Advocate, from the Alliance for Quality Education, presented information to the students on education issues and the methods they use to advocate for these issues. The topic was of particular interest to the students who asked many questions on financing education, Common Core and APPR. Liz Moran, Environmental Health Associate of Environmental Advocates of New York spoke as well, about their lobbying efforts to ensure clean air and water, especially in low income areas. She discussed the PFOA issue in Hoosick Falls, NY, as an example of their activism.

On Tuesday morning, the students had a tour of the Chambers of the Court of Appeals and heard about the different levels of the judiciary in New York State from Gary Spencer, Public Information Officer of the Court. The students then continued on to the Capitol to watch the Assembly in session. Many Assemblymembers came to the back of the Chamber and met the students from their districts.

After lunch, the students watched the Assembly session for a short time before going to meet their Senators and staff in their offices. Usually, the students then accompany the Senators and/or staff to the floor or the Senate. The legislature had scheduled a joint session of the Senate and Assembly on Tuesday, however, to appoint the new Attorney General. This was a rare event – only held when a statewide officer needs to be appointed. The students were able to watch this joint session from the floor or the gallery of the Assembly. Many students even were able to get a photo with the new Attorney General, Barbara Underwood.

After dinner on Tuesday, the students heard from a panel of media representatives: Rachel Silberstein of the Times Union, Dan Clark of PolitiFact, and Tim Williams of WCNY. The students asked insightful questions on sources, “fake news,” and also about careers in the media.

On Wednesday morning, Jennifer Wilson engaged the students in a discussion of what they saw in the Assembly and Senate. Much of the discussion surrounded questions on procedures and voting especially related to the joint session. The students were also presented individually with a certificate for attendance at the Conference. A few students noted that they had been offered internships in the legislators’ offices for the summer.

Just for fun, the students also went bowling one night at a local bowling alley that provided laser lights, disco lights, black lights, and runway lights combined with the latest music videos on a giant screen. The group also enjoyed dinner at a local Italian restaurant with free time at a recreational space in a local middle school.

Quotes from some of the students included:

- It's life changing in the sense that you learn to listen and understand the opinions of others from all over even if they're conflicting to your own.
- SIA provides an access to Albany that you can't find anywhere else.
- You get a new perspective on state government and meet many cool people.
- I learned how to become an intern and try to encourage peers to be active, vote and take a stand.
- I learned how state government works which is something not taught in a conventional classroom setting.
- Awesome place to learn about state government, understand its relevance and think about career options that had never crossed my mind.
- Made me more passionate about politics and gave me confidence to get more involved.
- Incredibly informative with a great taste of activism and great connections.

Thanks to our chaperones: Carol Glansberg (LWV of Saratoga), Deb Cosher (LWV of Huntington), Betty Ann and Jim King (LWV of the North Country), Jennifer Wilson and Laura Ladd Bierman. Thanks also to our sponsor, CSEA.

