



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

January 2019

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.



From the State President

On what I pray is one of the coldest days of this whole winter I have been warmed by reading the first full draft of the **state League's 100 year history**. So much about League work over the years is so familiar, but how inspiring it is to see all they've accomplished and at what a high level.

And how comforting to learn that they too struggled to get even newly-franchised voters to the polls. We're hurrying and scurrying to get this book finished in time to have copies at Convention. Keep watching for more details as June approaches. (We also would greatly appreciate support for this expensive endeavor - [donate to the League's EF](#) to ensure the book's quality and completion!)

Speaking of Convention, I hope you have your calendar marked for **June 7-9 in Albany** and that you're paying attention to all the Convention related items coming from the state office. The nominating committee is hard at work, the budget committee is being formed, speakers are being lined up, and the office and board will soon be sending out information about how your League can try to win an award. The board is also eager to hear any program suggestions you have.

Just typing the word June warms me up, but so does the image of all of you heading to Albany from across our big, sprawling state for three very lively days. Our history shows us that in many ways, our modern League conventions are much like the early ones so you'll be taking your place in an impressive line of activists. Just last week an enthusiastic and hard-working group held their first official Orange County MAL (Member-at-Large) meeting in Middletown, so expect some eager new faces in that line too. **Welcome, Orange County!**

Of course I am also being warmed by news coming from Albany about all sorts of laws we've wanted for years finally becoming reality. Goodness, what a difference a single election can make. If your Assembly member and/or Senator voted right, be sure to send thanks. Remember, **they need to hear from us in good times too**. Cheers to them and cheers to us!

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Travel with the League



Click [here](#) for trips and itineraries.

Advocacy Training Day in Albany - April 30

Mark your calendar now for **April 30** in Albany! This will be our annual advocacy training day with opportunity to lobby your state legislators in Albany. More details coming.

Member Phone Call on Legislative Updates

Now that the Governor has signed 5 of the 7 voting bills passed by the Assembly and Senate, the League will be switching its focus to advocate for appropriate funding and regulations.

Call in on Thursday, February 7, for an update on the new statutes and to find out how you can help us advance funding for these reforms in our state budget.

**Call In: (800) 220-9875
Code: 24883385**

Email Jennifer if you would like to register at Jennifer@lwvny.org

State Convention is Coming!

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN
VOTERS** fighting
of New York State **for democracy**

100 YEARS STRONG

The League's state Convention is scheduled for June 7-9, 2019, at the Hilton in downtown Albany. We will be sending out more information and details as soon as we can - the registration packets will be mailed in late February. In the meantime, we'd like to remind you of a couple of upcoming requests:

Program Planning

This is the time when you discuss the state's positions and which you want to keep, delete or update, as well as if there are any new studies or concurrences you want to be considered. Each League should schedule a time to discuss program planning with your members. You can schedule it as part of a board meeting (that is open and advertised to all members) or part of a membership meeting or educational event.

Bylaws Amendments

We ask each local League to propose any changes to the state bylaws by March 1. You can discuss this with your board and/or members and send an email with any proposals you might have to laura@lwny.org. See current [state League bylaws](#)

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



Ethics Constitutional Amendment Presser

Last week Laura attended a press conference calling for reforms to JCOPE. This press conference was put together by Evan Davis' group that is seeking to pass Constitutional amendments to reforms a number of different areas of NYS law including voting, ethics, women's health, environmental conservation, and education. See:

<http://www.gothamgazette.com/state/8184-as-session-starts-legislators-and-advocates-push-overhaul-of-state-ethics-enforcement>



Voting Package

The League is off to a busy start this legislative session. Last week the legislature passed a package of voting reforms that includes early voting, same day voter registration, no-excuse absentee voting, pre-registration for 16 and 17 year olds, primary consolidation, state-wide voter registration transfer, and closing the LLC loophole. We were active at the Capitol the whole day and had League members from NYC, Syracuse, Saratoga, and Albany come for the day to watch the proceedings. Even Barbara made the trip to the Capitol to come and watch.

We participated in a large press conference and rally. It was a bit of a fight between all the groups to get press but we were featured in a few articles and later this week Jennifer will be appearing on Empire State Weekly to promote the success. On Wednesday morning she also was interviewed by a Binghamton radio station.

The state League's statement on the passage was as follows:

"As the New York State League proudly celebrates its 100th anniversary this year, it is a truly monumental achievement to finally see the passage of early voting, same day voter registration, and primary consolidation in New York State! Each of the reforms passed by the Assembly and Senate are huge advances to New York's election procedures. With these new policies in place, New York should no longer rank among the worst states in the Nation in voter participation.

Since the 1960's the state League has fought for comprehensive voting reforms. We are proud to be a part of this historic event and we applaud the New York State Assembly and Senate for finally passing these reforms. We thank Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie for their leadership and dedication to these issues. We commend the legislators who have long supported these voting reforms, even in the face of previous gridlock. Finally we want to recognize our members who have fought tirelessly to see New York's voting system made more accessible to all New Yorkers. We look forward to working with the Legislature and Governor on the roll-out of these new policies."

Press Links:

<https://blog.timesunion.com/capitol/archives/285565/election-reform-react-o-mat/>

<https://buffalonews.com/2019/01/10/key-changes-to-states-voting-laws-heading-for-monday-vote-in-albany/>

<https://www.rochesternewspaper.com/rochester/legislature-passes-genda-election-reforms/Content?oid=9330778>

<http://legislativegazette.com/legislature-passes-major-voting-reforms/>



The League was also invited to attend the signing of these laws by Governor Cuomo on January 24th in NYC. See Dare Thompson, President, just left and behind the Governor.

Budget Release

Last Tuesday the Governor released his budget proposal at his annual State of the State. We decided to forgo putting out a statement until we saw the actual budget language. He released his budget language and it looks like he has not

included funding for voting reforms. Other reforms in the budget include a large package of ethics and campaign finance proposals. He has also proposed some contract procurement reforms. The budget language is available here: <https://www.budget.ny.gov/>

Election Commissioners Association Conference

This month Jennifer and Kate Doran, Election Specialist for NYC, attended the annual Election Commissioners Association Conference. This conference brings together election commissioners of both parties from all over NYS. The conference features panels and workshops on different elections issues. This year it was particularly exciting because all of the commissioners seemed to be in agreement that new election reforms were coming (whether they liked them or not). We spoke with many commissioners from all of the state and got a lot of great information about how different counties function and the issues they expect to face with the new voting reforms.

Fair Elections Coalition

We have been continuing to keep an eye (and ear) on the Fair Elections Coalition that is fighting for public campaign financing. Jennifer attended a presser they had in Albany just to show support. They have been coupling their campaign finance reforms with some voting reforms. They have been having weekly calls in which Jennifer has been listening. They have a lot of plans for the rest of session that will involve grassroots advocacy and some grass-tops lobbying.

Census Coalition

Under direction of the board, the New York State League has signed on as an organizational partner to New York Counts 2020. New York Counts 2020 is a broad-based, statewide coalition composed of racial, ethnic, immigrant, religious, health, education, labor, housing, social services, and business groups working in partnership with state and local government officials. Their aim is to ensure that New Yorkers across the state - particularly marginalized communities in hard-to-count districts - can fully maximize their participation in the 2020 Census. As a partner, the League will be working with the coalition to create and distribute educational materials and trainings. You can find out more about New York Counts 2020 [here](#).

Health Care Committee Update

Madeline Zevon, Co-Chair, madeline.zevon@gmail.com

This is an exciting time for the possibility of passage for the New York Health Act, the single-payer legislation in New York State. Along with other progressive issues the League has been fighting for, the Senate change since the last election increases the chance that the bill will finally be brought to the floor for a vote. Many of the newly elected legislators ran on support of this bill. Our Health Care Committee is working to educate the public through grassroots techniques such as letters-to-the-editor, op-ed articles, presentations to various local groups, providing local forums, and lobbying legislators about the facts of the legislation. The current bill is being amended to include long-term care. New York State can serve as a testing ground for the future of American medicine if passage and implementation is achieved.

Voter Services

Judie Gorenstein, Judie1728@aol.com



Voting Reforms

Voting is about to get easier for New Yorkers. New York has long been behind most of the country when it comes to voting. Our election laws are archaic making it difficult for people in our state to vote, and resulting in low voter turn out. However, both the Assembly and Senate passed 7 election laws bills week of Jan 14. Then on Thursday, Jan 24, Governor Cuomo signed them into law with League present. However, not all will become effective immediately and some will require additional money to be added in the state budget.

What can new Yorkers expect if the bills are signed into law?

EARLY VOTING will take place for the first time in New York. (Thirty-seven states and District of Columbia have already instituted in person early voting.) Voters will be able to vote at designated poll sites 10 days prior to election day. Each County Board of Elections will follow the law designating the number of and placement of the early voting poll sites. The boards will notify their voters of the days, hours, and locations of the early polling sites. This act will take effect immediately and first apply to the 2019 general election: i.e., early voting will begin Oct. 27 2019 and go through Nov. 3, 2019. All polls will be open Election Day Nov. 5, 2019. This law and electronic poll books which enable early voting to be feasible will require money being added to this year's budget.

PRIMARY CONSOLIDATION amends certain deadlines to combine federal and state primaries into one primary on the fourth Tuesday in June and maintain compliance with the federal Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act. This ends New Yorkers having to go to two primaries in nonpresidential years and three primaries in presidential years, saving our state about \$25,000,000. In addition to cost savings, it should increase voter turnout. This act will take effect immediately beginning in 2019 one primary day in June.

SAME DAY VOTER REGISTRATION would allow voters to register and vote on Election Day. In order for this to become law, the NYS Constitution which requires registration to vote to be completed at least 10 days before Election Day, needs to be amended. Changing the constitution would require the same bill that passed this year being passed in both assembly and senate following the 2020 general election and then being passed by voters in a referendum in 2021. Therefore, first time this could go into effect would be in 2022. Currently, New Yorkers need to be registered 25 days before Election Day (constitutional and legislative requirements).

NO-EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING would remove the need for a cause to vote on an absentee ballot. Currently in NY, you can request absentee ballot for five reasons; i.e., absence from county on election day, temporary illness or physical disability, permanent illness or physical disability, duties related to primary care of individual(s) who are ill or disabled, patient or inmate in VA, or detention in jail/prison awaiting trial, action by grand jury or convicted of crime which is not a felony. Currently 28 states and District of Columbia allow voters to vote absentee without a cause. No-excuse absentee voting would also require a constitutional amendment and could not take place until passing both houses again in 2020 and then passing a referendum in 2021.

PREREGISTRATION FOR 16 AND 17 YEAR OLDS. Currently the only time 17 year olds can register to vote is if they are turning 18 in that calendar year even if their birthday is after Election Day. This new bill would allow 16 and 17 year olds to preregister. The voter registration form would be modified to include a space where there is an explanation of preregistration and allow for the registration to be pending. This act would not take effect until January 2020.

The League of Women Voters along with other good government groups will continue to advocate for funding to cover the cost of early voting, monitor forthcoming regulations, advocate for constitutional amendments that are needed for same day registration and no excuse absentee voting, and educate the public as to the upcoming changes in laws. We will continue lobbying for new laws to enfranchise all voters. Our democracy works best when everyone participates.

Youth Programs

Betty Ann King, beltyannking4@gmail.com



The following people have committed to being a member of the State Board Youth Committee:

Margie McIntosh (Cattaraugus/Alleghany)
Mary Jenkins (NY City)
Betsy Metz (North Country)
Judy Gorenstein (Huntington)
Ruth Goldberg (White Plains)

The preliminary goals of the committee are:

1. To define means of offering support to Local League development and execution of Youth Programs
2. To enhance the lines of communication between State Youth Committee and local Leagues to create a dialogue that includes accessing programs, people, and educational tools from LWV New York State to facilitate increased youth activity.
3. What vision does the committee have for League youth involvement in five years? What steps are needed to accomplish this vision?

With rose- colored glasses, progress report for next month should be substantial. And....with the passing of very recent voting reforms, there are even more opportunities for youth to be involved in voter services!

Local League News



Marianna "Polly" Kuhn, long-time member of the **League of Women Voters of New Castle** (most recently LWV Somers), 50-year resident of New Castle, and former member of the State League Board, died on December 31, 2018 at age 92. She will be greatly missed by the League, friends and her community. [See her obituary here.](#)

All of the hard work on registering organ donors, as well as voters, worked! More New Yorkers joined the New York State Donate Life Registry in 2018 than in any other year since the consent Registry was established in 2008. "A record-breaking total of 604,163 New Yorkers documented their consent to donate organs and tissues in the New York State Donate Life Registry. This represents a growth of 12.3 percent," said Aisha Tator, Executive Director of Donate Life New York State, a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing organ, eye and tissue donation throughout New York State. Thanks to all the local Leagues and members!

The **Albany League** is honoring Black History month (February) with "A Conversation with Ken Screven," former news anchor of a local TV broadcast station. Ken was the first African-American TV news anchor in our Albany market. He is also a community activist and blogger. He will share some of his history as both a news anchor and community member.

LWV of Rochester is celebrating Susan B. Anthony's birthday with keynote speaker Dr. Irma McClaurin, co-chair of the 2018 Seneca Falls Revisited Conference, past President of Shaw University, black feminist speaker and author.

The second in a series Making Democracy Work by **LWV of Saratoga** will be a panel discussion, Women Rising: A New Wave of Leadership. The panel of three women representing business, advocacy, and politics will discuss their experiences, including challenges, growth, overcoming adversity and finding their inner strength or resilience.

In December, **LWV of New Rochelle** hosted a luncheon with speaker Westchester County District Attorney Anthony Scarpino. He presented info on recent crime trends, including the opioid problem.

LWV of Steuben County hosted a discussion of the 2018 elections and what is up politically for 2019 with Tracy Mitrano, 2018 Democratic Party candidate for Congress, Howie Hawkins 2018 Green Party candidate for Governor, and Joe Sempolinski, chair of the Steuben County Republican Party .

Presenters for a program with the **LWV of Tompkins County** are Hilary Lambert, Steward of the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, and Andrew Zepp, Executive Director of the Finger Lakes Land Trust. Hilary will talk about environmental problems confronting Cayuga Lake and the many tributaries that feed it. Andy will talk about projects the Land Trust is working on that will help to protect the lake and rivers from runoff, sometimes by means of improving critical wetlands.

LWV of Utica/Rome participates in the Great Decisions program. The next topic, Cyber Conflict and Geopolitics, will be presented by Jake Mihevc, Associate Dean of Business, Cybersecurity, and Computer Sciences at MVCC.

LWV of Buffalo/Niagara will celebrate Black History Month with an award-winning pillar of its community! Community activist, retired teacher, newspaper columnist and author of a dozen books on African and African American History, Eva Doyle is a natural as well as professional storyteller. Her recounting of the history we know - and much we do not - is sure to intrigue and inspire.

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