



THE LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS
of Schenectady County New York

BULLETIN

www.lwvschenectady.org

December 2014/January 2015

Holiday Luncheon

**Wednesday, December 10
11:45 AM- 1:30 PM**

Speaker: Rowie Taylor, Executive Director, YWCA

“Advocating for Women in Schenectady”

Schenectady County Community College
Van Curler Room
78 Washington Ave., Schenectady

Contact: Carol Furman, 346-2746, cfurman@earthlink.net **by December 3rd**
See p. 10 for reservation form and entrée selections

JANUARY EVENT

Monday, January 26, 1- 4 PM

Term Limits and Ballot Access

Consensus Meeting

First Reformed Church

8 N. Church St., Schenectady

Contact: Helga Schroeter 370-5042



Message from the Steering Committee

Many thanks to those of you who worked so hard to support the League's efforts to educate and register voters, and report the election results. While Kay Ackerman, Pat MacKinnon, Lisa Dufek and Maxine Borom led these efforts, many others contributed and made their efforts successful! We can't do this work without lots of help!

According to a Rochester Democrat and Chronicle newspaper editorial, the voter turnout for this election was lower than previous recent midterms in all but 12 states, and the lowest in a New York Gubernatorial election since the 1970s. In New York, only a third of the 10.8 million voters turned out to cast a ballot.

During our registration efforts, a number of League members commented on the feelings expressed by citizens who felt their vote would not change anything. Too many citizens doubt that real change is possible. TV advertisements and mailings by well financed non-candidate PACs can mean that it is more and more difficult for candidates to compete with special interest agendas. According to the editorial cited above, about 4 billion dollars was spent by just 0.2 percent of Americans supporting candidate races in this election. When voters don't go to the polls to cast their ballot, it strengthens the effects of special interest groups. Campaign finance reform is a cause for which the League has advocated and will continue to advocate.

The League has supported early voting and other measures to increase participation by voters. There is an early voting proposal which has passed the Assembly in New York but not the Senate. Last year during our lobby day, we spoke with our Senators and Assemblymen about this bill. It is estimated by the US Census Bureau that about a third of registered voters do not vote due to illness or inconvenience. Early voting could increase the numbers participating in elections.

Proposition 1, a state constitutional amendment, passed in this election thereby changing the way new district lines are drawn. This new process will not affect our elections until after the 2020 census but it will require that lines be drawn that create compact logical districts that preserve racial, ethnic and language groupings and not favor a particular candidate or party. The process will be more transparent and the courts can be involved. This should give voters more confidence that their vote counts and that incumbents are not favored by specially created districts.

Clearly there is much ongoing work to be done by the League and others to assure that citizens have the right to vote, and have their vote count.

Carol Furman, Lead

STEERING COMMITTEE

Carol Furman	(346-2746)	Lead for November- December 2014, January 2015
Cheryl Nechamen	(346-4820)	Lead for February- April 2015
Joan Elliott	(346-4414)	Lead for May- July 2015
Ruth Bonn	(384-0804)	Lead (completed)

Bulletin Editor: Cheryl Nechamen (346-4820)

Mission Statement: The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan political organization. We encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government. We work to increase the understanding of major public policy issues and influence public policy through education and advocacy.

Aging in a Changing Landscape

On November 5th we heard from Laurie Bacheldor, Manager of the Schenectady County Department of Senior and Long Term Care Services, and Ann DiSarro, Consultant for Senior Issues, about trends and changes in services for seniors. It is no surprise that chronic conditions are consuming 75% of all health care spending and that 91% of those over the age of 65 have at least one chronic condition, and 73% have two. Clearly this will be an expanding problem as the baby boomers retire. Fifteen percent of Schenectady residents are over 65 years of age and 11% live in the city of Schenectady.

Change is occurring at every level, Federal, state, and local, in services and funding. The Affordable Care Act has brought about changes aimed at improving quality and satisfaction with the patient's experience of care, improving the health of populations and reducing the per-capita cost of health care. A funding mechanism titled the Balancing Incentive Program is designed to better manage chronic illness and improve health. It also proposes to decrease the use of emergency services and instead increase regular visits with a personal physician.

Medicaid Redesign has been a statewide effort to contain costs of Medicaid services at the same time as it aims to improve overall health. It too attempts to direct care to management of illness with a primary physician and limit expensive crisis care at an emergency room. Schenectady County transitioned to Managed Long Term Care in June of this year. This means that a Managed Medicaid Insurance company such as Fidelis will help determine if services can be provided in the community or in a nursing home. Thus far, areas in the state who have already made this transition have found that nursing home care is found appropriate by the insurance company less often and for shorter periods. There is an effort to coordinate between Medicare and Medicaid when an individual is covered by both insurance systems in order to find savings. Most people

would prefer to remain in the community if adequate service and support can be provided.

Aging and Disability Resource Centers "No Wrong Doors" have been created to allow families to make one contact and find out which organizations in their communities can assist them with an issue rather than getting lost in the maze of different organizations and multiple phone calls.

Funding is an issue with these well-intentioned programs. Sequestration cut the funds for senior meal sites which had a negative effect on those dependent on those meals. The Older Americans Act is up for re-authorization. This Act is responsible for funding many community-based services, caregiver and family supports like group support meetings, Alzheimer and dementia supports, and elder abuse interventions. We all need to advocate for re-authorization of this Act. Reduced or flat funding of services in the County means that there is now a waiting list for the EISEP program that provides personal care and housekeeping on a sliding scale base, a waiting list for home delivered meals, and dwindling senior meal site options. Many assume that care at home for meals, housekeeping and personal care will be covered by insurance. It is often not covered and must be paid for privately. Home aides are also very hard to find even if you can pay for this service.

One strong message from Laurie Bacheldor was that we all need to do some planning so that we don't find ourselves suddenly in a crisis with a family member, spouse, or ourselves. We need to think of how to arrange our living environment so that it will continue to be safe and supportive of our function and health. Staying active with exercise, staying healthy, and making changes in our homes or location can mean that we are able to handle life's changes more smoothly. We will need to depend more on ourselves, family and friends.

We heard much to think about at this excellent talk!

submitted by Carol Furman

Consensus Meetings on Term Limits and Ballot Access Studies

Monday, January 26th, from 1:00 PM to 4 PM, First Reformed Church, 8 N. Church Street, Schenectady

The following is some information which will be considered before answering the consensus questions on January 26th. More information can be found on the League website at <http://www.lwvny.org/programs-studies.html>.

Ballot Access Study (Helga Schroeter, Coordinator)

3 Types of Primaries

- Closed = party affiliation is necessary
- Open = voters do not have to declare party preference as a prerequisite or do so on election day
- Hybrid = a combination of Closed and Open

New York State's Primary

Closed primary = Voters must affiliate with a participating party to vote

Results:

- Turnout is high from affiliated voters
- Independent and non-affiliated voters are excluded
- Candidates views tend to align with the party platform
- Incumbents are re-elected

Open Primaries

= a broad category of primaries that mean voters do not have to declare party preference as a prerequisite or do so on election day

* Top Two Vote Getter system, both a type of primary & type of ranked choice voting, sometimes referred to as "Open Primary"

Fusion Voting

= multiple political parties endorsing the same candidate for the same office

Variations:

1. Nominating parties listed once under the candidate's name
2. New York State only: Candidate's name listed several times for each nominating party

Proponents of fusion voting say:

- Promotes effective third parties
- Mobilizes voters and encourages turnout
- Encourages major party differentiation
- Allows voters to influence important issues

Opponents Say:

- Encourages patronage to gain support from special interest groups
- Gives power to groups with a single agenda
- Threatens political party identity
- Threatens the two-party system
- Creates the illusion that the so-called spoiler effect of third party candidates is eliminated

New York State: Wilson-Pakula Law of 1947

= authorization by political party leaders allowing a candidate not registered with the party to run as its candidate in a general election

Proponents of Wilson-Pakula elimination say:

- Signatures of registered members of a party rather than party leaders
- Minor parties have occasionally offered their party line to the highest bidder

Opponents of elimination say:

- Threatens the integrity of political parties
- Leads to major parties invading minor parties
- Leads to the demise of third parties
- Party leaders should have a say in screening their own candidates
- A distraction from election reforms

Ranked Choice

= a system of voting in which the voter ranks candidates in order of preference

Variations

- Instant Runoff Voting
- Top Two Vote Getters

New York State: Unranked

= electing single candidates to a single office in a single seat district

Results:

- Lower costs
- Plurality instead of majority can occur
- Supporters of third party may abandon their first choice
- Major parties not always helped
- Spoiler Effect or crossover voting possible

Ranked Choice: Instant Runoff Voting

= requires voters to vote for every candidate by ranking them.

If no candidate receives a majority of the vote, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is removed.

This process continues until a single candidate secures a majority of support.

Instant Runoff Voting (IRV)

Proponents Say:

- Promotes majority rule
- Addresses the spoiler effect of a third party
- May provide more choices
- May encourage voter turnout due to choices
- Efficiency not requiring a second election
- Voters have a second choice

Opponents Say:

- Unfamiliar to most American voters and BOE
- Educational outreach needed to address confusion
- Changes in vote tally equipment
- May create large candidate fields
- May still result in a plurality
- Complex mathematical calculations

Top Two Vote Getters (TTVG)

= any registered voter can vote for any candidate from any party and the two candidates receiving the most votes go on to compete in the general election regardless of party affiliation

Proponents Say:

- Broader views to win
- Nonaffiliated voters have a voice
- Contested and competitive general elections
- Eliminates spoiler effect
- Major political parties not in control
- Third parties equal to major parties
- Voters have more choices
- Voter turnout may increase
- Easier to understand

Opponents Say:

- Extreme candidates could win
- Political party effectiveness
- Less choice when same party
- Primary importance increases costs
- General election access reduced for third parties
- Endorsement process may decrease transparency
- Fewer choices during the general election
- General election voter turnout may decrease
- Other reforms may be better options

Ballot Access Study Consensus Questions

1. Which do you prefer?

a) Opening New York State primaries to nonaffiliated voters OR b) Continued use of the current closed primary system in New York State

2. Do you support the adoption of ranked-choice voting in New York State?

2a. If yes, which do you support the adoption of?

a) Instant Runoff Voting OR b) Top Two Vote Getter (TTVG)/Open Primary system

2b. If you support Instant Runoff Voting, in which elections do you support its use?

(a) For Statewide Offices

(i) Primary Election (ii) General Election (iii) Both

(b) For State Legislative Offices

(i) Primary Election (ii) General Election (iii) Both

3. Do you believe that the Wilson-Pakula Act should be repealed?

4. Should New York State retain fusion voting?

If yes, should NY State retain its system of fusion voting

a) Only with Wilson-Pakula OR b) Only without Wilson-Pakula OR c) Whether or not Wilson-Pakula is repealed

Term Limits Study (Maxine Borom, Coordinator)

Key Facts

- Most of the states that have term limits enacted them through the citizen initiative process
- Term limits may be divided into two broad categories: consecutive and lifetime
- In two states (ID, UT), term limits have been repealed by the legislature
- In another four states (MA, OR, WA, WY), courts have found term limits provisions to be unconstitutional

Far-Reaching Impact on Political System

- Reshapes governmental power structures
- Alters the selection of people who make the laws
- Dramatically changes the composition of legislature
- Affects the authority of leaders
- Creates new opportunity for leadership

LWVNYS Term Limits Position

- 1991 – LWVUS opposed term limits for members of Congress.
- 1992 - LWVUS Convention reaffirmed opposition to term limits and authorized state and local Leagues to use the national positions to take action on term limits for state and local offices
- 1996 - LWVNYS Board adopted position opposing term limits for members of the NYS Legislature and NYS statewide elected officials

Arguments FOR Term Limits

- Allows more people to serve as elected officials
- Term limited legislators will pay more attention to their constituents
- Term limits will remove long time incumbents (dead wood, corrupt officials)
- The power of lobbyists and other interest groups will be weakened
- 36 states have term limits for governor
- Term limits will generate more interest and thus greater voter turnout in state elections.

Arguments AGAINST Term Limits

- Term limits interfere with the fundamental right of voters in a representative democracy to elect their representatives
- Term limited legislators will seek short-term solutions to problems rather than thinking of long-term consequences
- Term limited legislators will not have time to gain institutional knowledge and policy expertise
- Removing experienced and knowledgeable legislators weakens the legislative branch of government

How Can New York State Enact Term Limits?

- Term Limits in New York can only be adopted by amending the State Constitution
- There are two ways to amend the New York State Constitution:
 - Legislative Process
 - Constitutional Convention

Term Limits Study Consensus Questions

1. Should there be term limits for the office of New York State Senate, which currently has a term length of 2 years?
 2. If the answer to 1 is yes:
 - a) How many years in total should a Senator be allowed to serve?
 - b) Should a person who has served the maximum number of years in the Senate be able to run again after sitting out one or more terms?
 3. Should there be term limits for the office of New York State Assembly, which currently has a term length of 2 years?
 4. If the answer to 3 is yes:
 - a) How many years in total should an Assembly member be allowed to serve?
 - b) Should a person who has served the maximum number of years in the Assembly be able to run again after sitting out one or more terms?
 5. If term limits for Assembly and Senate were adopted, should the term limits apply to service in one house or service in both houses combined?
 6. Should there be a term limit for the following statewide offices in New York State, all of which currently have term lengths of 4 years?
 - a) Governor b) Lieutenant Governor c) Attorney General d) Comptroller
 7. If the answer to 6 is yes, how many years in total should a person be able to serve in each of the following elected offices?
 - a) Governor b) Lieutenant Governor c) Attorney General d) Comptroller
 8. If the answer to 6 is yes, should a person who has served the maximum number of years in that specific office be able to run again for the same office after sitting out one or more terms?
 - a) Governor b) Lieutenant Governor c) Attorney General d) Comptroller
 9. The current term for both Assembly and Senate offices is 2 years. The current term for New York statewide offices is 4 years. If New York State changes the current term lengths for any of these elected offices, should the League reconsider its position on term limits?
-

Election Results

On election night a group of wonderful volunteers from the LWV and AAUW collected the polling results from most of the locations in Schenectady for the news media. For their efforts, the two organizations received a small reimbursement. The collectors included the following people:

Kay Ackerman, Ellen Auerbach, Ruth Bonn, Trudy Carpenter, Betsy Chase, Sandra Daly, Sally Dewes, Robin Eddy, Janet Elliot, Joan Elliott, Nancy Goldblatt, Ann Gray, Ann Hicks, Roy and Susan Keats, Carol Kirk, Pat Lambert,

Cathy Lewis, Helen MacDonald, Pat MacKinnon, Barbara McEvoy, Susan Meggs, Reba Mehan, Judy and John Middelkoop, Cheryl Nechamen, Inge-Lise Pangburn, Jeri Pinkerton, Carol Reynolds, Roberta Richardson, Helga Schroeter, Dick Shave, Pat Shuff, Pat and Dick Terry, Joanne and Peter Tobiessen and Faith Weldon.

Heartfelt thanks to all of you! (It should be noted that this is an example of our many "unsung" activities to promote democracy!)

Maxine Borom, Chair

VOTE411 Informing the Public

This year our VOTE411 work managed to post information for all but two of the Schenectady County candidates. It also included LWVNY information about the three propositions. Working together, the Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady Leagues advertised VOTE411 on the side of 15 CDTA busses for the month of October.

We do not yet have the statistics on our local information, but Megan Brown, LWVUS, said, "Phew, we made it! Voters all across the country were looking at your voter guides yesterday (Nov. 2). The final count for just yesterday was over 177,000 users accessing the voter guides! That means, in two days, we had almost 300,000 voters looking at your candidate information!"



Together we published over 10,000 races and covered over 18,000 candidates in our voter guides. We also published almost 600 candidate debates/forums on VOTE411. This is amazing work!"

Pat MacKinnon

Committee News

The **Environment Committee** will meet on Monday, December 1st at 12:30 at Arthur's Market, 35 N. Ferry St., Schenectady. The discussion topic will be oil trains and fracking. An informational program is being planned for spring. Email Ruth Bonn at rooty@nycap.rr.com if you have questions or are interested in becoming involved.

Ruth Bonn, Chair

The next **Health Committee** meeting will be on Monday, December 15th at 10:30 AM at the café in Proctor's Arcade, 432 State St., Schenectady. We will discuss future steps in studying issues related to pharmacy benefits and housing models allowing people to age in place. We will also discuss the upcoming public hearings on single payer health insurance sponsored by the Assembly Health Committee. Call Carol Furman at 346-2746 for further information if you do not currently receive e-mail reminders from the Committee.

Carol Furman, Chair

The **Judicial Committee** will meet on Thursday, December 11th, at 4 PM at Helga Schroeter's house, 1436 Lowell Road, 518-370-5042.

The Committee will get an update on recent developments in the areas of juvenile justice (e.g. raising the age of criminal responsibility from 16 to 18 years), streamlining the funding of indigents defense services in light of the recent court settlement involving five NYS counties, update on filling Court of Appeals vacancies, etc. The Committee will also work on planning a March meeting.

Helga Schroeter, Chair

League Holiday Luncheon

Name: _____
Phone: _____
E-mail: _____

Entrée selections:

____ Lemon Broiled Salmon ____ Stuffed Chicken Breast ____ Vegetarian Burrito

*Please indicate any dietary restrictions

Cost is \$30.

Please make your reservation by December 3rd. Call 346-2746 or e-mail cfurman@earthlink.net. Send check payable to LWV Schenectady to Carol Furman, 1540 Keyes Ave., Niskayuna, NY 12309 or pay at the door. Your reservation is a commitment to pay unless we are able to fill unexpected vacancies with last minute reservations.

Welcome new members Nancy Goldblatt and Lenore (Nori) Bowler

Nancy, a resident of Rotterdam, is a librarian in the Cobleskill-Richmondville High School. She learned about the LWV when her sister was running for the Stillwater School Board and also picked up information about the LWV from our voter registration table at the Schenectady Greenmarket. She is interested in volunteering to highlight local politics and getting people out to vote. Education and environmental issues are some of her other interests.

Nori has joined the LWV as an inactive member. She spends half the year in Greenville, South Carolina, so is unable to participate in the organization's local activities. She believes in and supports the goals of the LWV.

Betsy Chase

In Collaboration with Other Community Organizations

Wednesday, Dec. 3rd, 8:30 AM- 4 PM, Proctors Theatre, 432 State St., Schenectady [sponsored by The Schenectady Foundation]

Keynote speaker Ruby Payne will speak at "Bridges to Youths: A Call to Action for Schenectady's Youth" conference. Registration fee required. Call 393-9500 for more information.

Saturday, Dec. 6th, 11 AM, Glen Sanders Mansion, 1 Glen Ave., Scotia [sponsored by AAUW]
Holiday Buffet with entertainment. Contact: Eleanor Aronstein, 265-2500.

Wednesday, Jan. 21st, 1 PM, The Glen Eddy, 1 Glen Eddy Dr., Niskayuna [sponsored by AAUW]
Presentation by Maxine Borom and Miriam Cajuste on their visit to Cuba. Contact: Eleanor Aronstein, 265-2500.

Girls' Day Out

This was our Sixth Annual Girls' Day Out at the Glen Sanders Mansion to which the Working Group on Girls invited 150 seventh grade girls from Schenectady City School District to attend a day designed especially for them.

Dr. Nichelle Rivers, gave the keynote address on the theme: 'Change Begins with Me; I'll Be the Change.' This is the fourth year that Dr. Rivers has contributed in a major way to our program. She loves the Day and being with the girls so much that she drives up from Long Island where she is Executive Director for School Improvement, Accountability and Funded Programs with the Hempstead Union Free School District. Besides being our keynote speaker, she was our MC and led the arts workshop on Singing.



The girls began the day with breakfast in the ballroom at the Glen Sanders Mansion. In the morning, the girls chose two workshops (out of six). Benita Zahn contributed stories of her experience to the discussion of 'Surviving Seventh Grade & Beyond'. There was a lot of discussion about bullying, fighting, loving yourself and walking away. There was a panel of girls who spoke from their first hand experience as did the attendees.

Other workshops in the morning included 'Mean Girls, Frenemies and BFF's,' 'Lose the 'Tude' about learning to relax in stressful times; and 'Can We Talk? Parents Just Don't Understand' in which Shirley Readdean and Gherian Foster

engaged the girls in role play, exploring options for more productive interactions with family.

After a delicious lunch in the ballroom, the girls participated in afternoon arts expression workshops, including Singing, Dance and Hip-Hop, Visual Art, Self Defense, Zumba, Spoken Word, Yoga Movement, and Drumming. After their workshop, they all returned to the ballroom to demonstrate and share what they learned.

The Finale is filled with high energy and excitement. Sponsors attended to join the celebration. Laura Ladd Bierman, from the LWVNYS, supporter of the program through the NYS Education Fund, was there. Larry Spring, Superintendent of schools in Schenectady, was there to praise the program, saluting the volunteers who make this program work, saying that it is "valuable and important for our girls and our community".

Following Girls' Day Out, the participating girls are invited to join a Girls' Circle in their school led by volunteer women who have been trained as 'Muses' to encourage discussion and craft projects that focus girls on self-esteem, taking responsibility for defining themselves, pursuing healthy relationships and exploring future options. Girls can continue in Girls' Circles in 8th grade and into high school.

Many League members have participated on the Planning Committee of the Working Group on Girls as well as contributing as Muses in this program which was started under the auspices of the League of Women Voters of Schenectady.

With grateful thanks to our sponsors: The Schenectady Foundation, The Covenant Fund of the 1st Reformed Church, The Henry M. Butzel Family Foundation, John Picotte Family Foundation, Stewart's Shops, Planned Parenthood Mohawk Hudson, Schenectady Federation of Teachers, New York State United Teachers, LWVNYS Education Foundation, Golub Foundation/Price Chopper, Angelo Mazzone, members of the WGG Planning Committee and all of the organizations and individuals who donated gift items.

Joanne Tobiessen

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Our League goals are to educate citizens about government and public policy, encourage citizen participation in elections, and influence public policy relating to issues we've studied. Dues money makes working on our goals possible.

DUES for July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015

Return to: LWV of Schenectady County, P.O. Box 9135, Schenectady, NY 12309

New or Renewing Members Please Confirm this Contact Information

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

_____ \$60 Individual _____ \$85 Household _____ \$20 Full-time student

_____ Additional support for the League, dues plus \$10 contribution (\$70 or \$95 – circle one)

(Confidential arrangements for special payment or partial assistance can be made. Contact Connie Young at 393-7061 with any questions. Dues and contributions are not tax deductible.)

.....

_____ *I am sending my membership dues payment, but please consider me an **INACTIVE** member.*

.....

ACTIVE MEMBERS: The League depends upon the work of its members, even for a short task. Please check any activities that interest you. We appreciate your help.

Committees Judicial _____ Health Care _____ Working Group on Girls _____
 Environment _____ Observer Corps _____ Housing _____ Education _____
 Membership _____ Fundraising _____

Voter Services Voter Registration _____ Candidate Forums _____ Voter Information _____

Computer Skills Graphics/Layout _____ Databases _____ Website Work _____

Facebook _____ Electronic Publicity _____

Other Technical Skill? (Describe) _____

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Calendar of Events

Mon. Dec. 1...Environment Committee
12:30, Arthur's Market, Schenectady

Wed. Dec. 10...Holiday Luncheon
11:45 AM, SCCC, Schenectady

Thurs. Dec. 11...Judicial Committee
4 PM, 1436 Lowell Rd., Schenectady

Mon. Dec. 15...Health Committee
10:30 AM, Proctor's café, Schenectady

Mon. Jan. 26...Consensus Meetings
1-4 PM, 1st Reformed Church, Schenectady

Holiday Luncheon

Wednesday, December 10
11:45 AM- 1:30 PM

**Speaker: Rowie Taylor, Executive Director,
YWCA**

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