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THE LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS
of Schenectady County New York

BULLETIN

April 2015

April Events

Monday, April 6, 12:30

Environment Committee
Arthur's Market
35 N. Ferry St., Schenectady
Contact: Ruth Bonn, 384-0804

Thursday, April 9, 2-5 PM

Brainstorming Session: Future of LWV
1400 Keyes Ave., Niskayuna
Contact: Cheryl Nechamen, 346-4820

Thursday, April 16, noon

**Shining A Light On Literacy: Phyllis
Bornt Branch Library and Literacy
Center to be a Beacon of Hope for
Families**
Speaker: Karen Bradley
Director, Schenectady County Public
Library
Schenectady County Central Library
99 Clinton St., Schenectady
Contact: Cheryl Nechamen, 346-4820

MAY EVENT

Wednesday, May 6, 7 PM

Land Trust and Housing in Schenectady
Speaker: Jackie Mancini
Director of Development, Schenectady
City Hall
105 Jay St., Schenectady
Contact: Joan Elliott, 346-4414



Message from the Steering Committee

The State has a new e-mail retention policy, or more accurately, an e-mail deletion policy. The executive branch handles the nuts and bolts of State government, the daily interaction between bureaucracy and citizens. E-mail is essentially the record of that interaction.

The new policy of the State government is automatic deletion of executive branch e-mails after 90 days. State employees have the option of saving and archiving what they consider to be important e-mails but the default setting is deletion. The problem is that state employees may only realize an e-mail exchange is important in retrospect, possibly years after the exchange has taken place. Lawsuits can take months, even years, to wend their way through the courts. How often will a case be dismissed because

the underlying evidence, an e-mail exchange, is no longer in the State archives? Likewise, freedom of information requests often cover time periods that exceed 90 days.

On January 29, 2014, good government groups, including LWVNYS, Citizens Union, NYCLU, Sunlight Foundation, Citizen Action and many others, submitted a letter to Governor Cuomo asking that the State conform to the federal policy of retaining e-mails for seven years.

Electronic storage is cheap; the cost of destroying public records is very high. It's time for the Governor to reverse this policy.

Cheryl Nechamen, Lead

Action Alert: Urge the President to Fully Reject the Keystone XL Pipeline

President Obama fulfilled his promise to veto legislation approving the Keystone XL (KXL) pipeline! The League is proud to stand behind the President's veto because the pipeline is not in our national interest. *But the fight is not over* – President Obama and the U.S. State Department must still make a final decision on the Keystone XL pipeline. Thank President Obama for vetoing the pipeline legislation and urge him to reject final approval of the Keystone XL pipeline once and for all!

Excerpted from LWVUS Leader's Update 3/12/15

STEERING COMMITTEE

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

Brainstorming Session

Bring your ideas to a brainstorming session to map out the future of our League. The Schenectady League has found it challenging to find members who are willing to serve in leadership positions, a challenge shared by several of our neighboring chapters. We've set aside April 9th from 2-5 PM to talk about this issue. Please join us at Connie Young's house, 1400 Keyes Ave., Niskayuna.

Shining a Light on Literacy

Karen Bradley, Director of the Schenectady County Public Library, will present "Shining a Light on Literacy: Phyllis Bornt Branch Library and Literacy Center to be a Beacon of Hope for Families" on Thursday, April 16th at noon. The Literacy Center will provide a much needed replacement for the Hamilton Hill branch library that closed when the Carver Community Center, in which it was housed, closed last year. Karen has exciting plans for the new center.

A Voice for Citizens; A Force for Change

The LWV of New York State will be holding their 56th Biennial Convention on June 6-7 at the Desmond Hotel in Albany. Saturday morning workshops cover topics for new board members, maximizing volunteer energy, advocacy, environmental issues, programming, youth programs, Vote 411, fundraising, public relations and voter services. The convention also includes plenary and information sessions and a guest speaker.

For a full listing of events, go to <http://www.lwvny.org/convention.html>. The Schenectady League has budgeted money to send two delegates to the convention. Attend the entire convention or just those parts that interest you. For more information, contact Cheryl Nechamen, 346-4820 or cnechamen@msn.com.

League Urges Congress to Continue Funding CHIP

The League joined with 1,500 leading national, state, tribal, and local organizations in a letter urging Congress to provide continued funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). The League has long supported CHIP and believes that continued funding is necessary for the program to continue to provide health coverage for millions of children.

Excerpted from LWVUS Leader's Update 3/12/15

In Collaboration with Other Community Organizations

Wednesday, April 15th, 11 AM, Ellis Hospital, Graham Auditorium. [sponsored by AAUW]
Dr. Andi Nawab will speak on "Women and Heart Disease". Contact: Eleanor Aronstein, 265-2500

The New York State Grand Jury: Should It Be Changed?

The Schenectady County League of Women Voters held a panel discussion on the grand jury system on March 11th in the McChesney Room of the Schenectady Public Library. The program was cosponsored by AAUW, NYCLU, SICM, CCJ and the Human Rights Commission and was well attended. The panelists were District Attorney Robert Carney, Public Defender Mark Caruso and Civil Rights Attorney Robert Keach.

Mr. Carney described how the system was brought over from England and is now used in the federal system and the different states in various forms. In the federal system, a witness in his or her own testimony is immune from prosecution. In New York, a judge empanels the jury, proceedings are secret to protect the reputation of the accused, and witnesses are shielded from repercussions and intimidation. Twelve jurors out of a total of 23 are needed to indict. They can also send a case to Family Court or choose a lesser charge. The standard for indictment is "reasonable cause" rather than the more rigorous "beyond a reasonable doubt" required for conviction.

Having worked as both prosecutor and defense attorney, Mr. Caruso explained that the prosecutor submits an abbreviated version of a trial. Few defendants appear before the grand jury and defense attorneys do not always prepare defendants adequately. He has urged his defense attorneys to spend more time preparing their clients before grand jury proceedings. Mr. Keach said that the District Attorney (DA) holds all the cards; he or she is the only legal advisor to the grand jurors, there is no judicial supervision, no meaningful adversarial process and a lack of transparency. There is a potential conflict when police officers are involved, because

they have a close working relationship with the DA.

Various reform proposals were outlined by Mr. Carney. A judge may review the grand jury indictment. The Attorney General has proposed that the Governor appoint an independent prosecutor in cases involving police officers. Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman is concerned about the perception of the public when police officers kill or injure an unarmed citizen. He would like to see supervision by a judge and to allow a report to be issued in case of a "no bill" or lack of indictment by the grand jury. He would also consider appointing a special prosecutor. The Governor's proposal would involve a special monitor in cases involving police and civilians.

Mr. Caruso understands the importance of transparency and said that he could see the issue from both sides whereas Mr. Keach "puts his trust in trial juries", because their proceedings are public. He thinks that Judge Lippman's proposals don't go far enough. He promotes preliminary hearings for people in custody.

Mr. Carney pointed out that the DA has a responsibility to do justice. His office carefully screens cases before bringing them to a grand jury. He recuses himself if he is close to the officers involved. He feels strongly that there should be disclosure in the Staten Island case and finds the "no bill" verdict very puzzling. He supports the Governor's proposal to have a special monitor for cases involving the police.

There is some hope that the Legislature will address these concerns and work towards a more transparent system, restoring public trust in our judicial system.

Helga A. Schroeter, Judicial Chairperson

Oil Train Program – Meeting with CSX Corporation Representatives

The Environment Committee invited representatives from CSX Rail Corporation to speak with it about the safety of oil trains which increasingly are moving through Schenectady County.

Maurice O'Connell (Regional Vice President for State Government and Community Affairs) and Robert Rohauer (Manager of Community Affairs and Safety) for CSX Corporation met with the Committee on March 9th. They described the work CSX does to build safeguards into the system and the training they do in the handling of hazardous situations on the railroad for local first responders and their own employees. Oil trains were a significant part of the discussion.

CSX Corporation operates a 21,000 mile rail network across 23 Eastern states and into Quebec and Ontario. Oil trains are not a large part of their business, accounting for approximately 2% of the total. The tanker cars are not owned by the railroad but are owned by the shippers (customers of CSX) or by leasing companies. They are packed by the shippers in accordance to guidelines established by the Federal Government (new guidelines may be issued as early as May or June 2015). As long as the rail cars are packed in compliance with the prescribed guidelines, the railroads are obligated to move them. The railroads are governed by interstate commerce laws rather than state laws. The railroad's role is to ship the oil from its point of origin (the Bakken fields of North Dakota) to its destination. Oil trains are handed to CSX from Canadian Pacific (CP) in Chicago. The

vast majority of the CSX trains go through Selkirk to Philadelphia or New Jersey. The CSX trains that go to Albany offload to large Buckeye Oil storage tanks; from the tanks the oil is taken on barges to New York City and then to refineries on the coast. CP also ships oil to Albany, serving the Global Partners Oil Company. The CP cars are the ones that can be seen along I-787. This oil is stored in tanks behind the Ezra Prentice Apartments, which is a concern to residents of that area. The oil trains that go through Glenville are operated by PanAm which takes over from CSX in Rotterdam Junction.

Railroads support tougher federal safety standards for new tank cars and retrofitting of existing cars used to transport crude oil. The railroads are liable for accidents that occur on their tracks so they have a vested interest in preventing hazardous situations on the railroad and in mitigating the impact of any that do occur.

CSX hosts training programs for emergency responders in local communities. CSX also has its own highly trained HAZMAT field officers who are trained to respond to incidents, especially those related to hazardous materials including oil. In 2013, following the Lac Megantic disaster in Quebec (which took place on an independent short line), new government standards including inspections, wayside detectors and new braking requirements and training of all first responders on Class I lines were issued. All class I railroads in the USA and in Canada adopted these standards.

Betsy Chase and Ruth Bonn

Environment Committee Meeting- Monday, April 6th at 12:30 at Arthur's Market. You are welcome to join us. Call Ruth Bonn at 384-0804 with questions. We will be discussing the oil train issue and developing a program on the topic. Water infrastructure issues and a report from Schenectady Recycles! are also on the agenda.

Changes in State Positions and Local Program Objectives

The LWV of Schenectady County recommended several changes to State League Positions at the February program planning meeting. We recommended interpreting the Judicial Position of *Support of alternatives to incarceration* to include raising the age of criminal responsibility to 18. The League also advised updating the Social Policy Position of *Support for equality of opportunity, meeting basic needs, child care* to add the word affordable to child care and to add living wage to the position.

We also recommended that “standards” be deleted from the Health Services Local Program Objective to *Educate our membership and others about long term care standards and develop recommendations for local options*. The recommendations for changes to State Positions were sent to the LWVNYS; the change to the Local Program Objective will be voted on at the annual meeting in June.

PUBLIC POLICY POSITIONS LWVNYS [*recommended changes in bold italics*]

JUDICIAL

Support of a unified state court system with improved provisions for judicial selection.

Support of statewide guidelines for law enforcement at all levels to prevent racial and economic profiling.

Support of measures to improve pretrial procedures in the criminal courts.

Support of measures to promote a fair and efficient jury system.

Support the rights of indigent defendants to representation at public expense.

Support of alternatives to incarceration (*reinterpret*).

Opposition to the death penalty, with life without parole as the primary alternative.

SOCIAL POLICY

Support for equality of opportunity, meeting basic human needs, **affordable** child care, **living wage**.

Support measures to meet the needs for affordable and accessible housing through use of state funds and incentives to localities.

LOCAL PROGRAM OBJECTIVES 2015-2016 [*proposed change in bold italics*]

Health Services

* Educate and advocate for national/state/local health care reform that provides quality physical and mental health care for all citizens.

* Educate our membership and others about long term care **standards** (*delete*) and develop recommendations for local options.

* Encourage and support countywide comprehensive health care planning and access to health care.

Proposed Slate of Candidates

Steering Committee	Ruth Bonn	2016
Steering Committee	Carol Furman	2016
Steering Committee	Cheryl Nechamen	2016
Treasurer	Judy Middelkoop	2016
Secretary	Helen MacDonald	2017
Action		
Inside Albany	Mary Pritchard	2017
Letters to Editor	Joan Elliott	2017
Lobbying	Sally Knutson/Maxine Borom	2017
	Suzanne and Bill Hodgkins/Carol Fischer	2017
Voter Services	Kay Ackerman	2016
Candidate Forums	Scotia Betsy Chase	2016
	Niskayuna Connie Young	2016
	Schenectady Dianne Hartigan Alois	2016
	Rotterdam Marsha Mortimore	2016
	Sch'dy BOE Education Committee	2016
	State and Fed Pat MacKinnon	2015
Poll Reporting	Maxine Borom/Nancy Goldblatt	2016
Vote 411	Pat MacKinnon/Kathy Hargett	2016
Voter Registration	Lisa Dufek	2016
Bulletin Editor	Cheryl Nechamen	2017
Nominating Committee	Sally Knutson/Connie Young	2016
	Johanna Petersen/Maxine Borom	2016
	Board Member	2016
Membership	Connie Young/Johanna Petersen	2017
Community Outreach		
Flyers	Gwynneth DeLong	2016
Press Releases	Joan Elliott	2016
Committee Events	Committee Members	
Quarterly Events	Steering Committee	
Forums	Voter Services	
MailChimp	Judy Middelkoop	2016

Mike Brewster, Pres.

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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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April Calendar of Events

Mon. April 6...Environment Committee
12:30, Arthur's Market, Schenectady

Thurs. April 9...Brainstorming Session
2-5 PM, 1400 Keyes Ave., Niskayuna

**Thurs. April 16...Shining a Light on
Literacy**
Noon, Schenectady Central Library

Save the Date!

June 10th
Annual Meeting and Dinner

Guest Speaker:
Former NY State Senator
Cecilia Tkaczyk