



The Voter

Summer
2015

Published by the [League of Women Voters of Rensselaer County](#), NY

A Tale of Two Houses: LWVRC Fall Meeting to Discover Kate Mullany, Amanda Cluett, and Their Places in 19th Century Troy

Their social circles never overlapped. In fact, as far as we know, they never met. Yet Kate Mullany and Amanda Cluett each were influential figures in 19th century Troy and beyond. **The League of Women Voters of Rensselaer County invites its members to learn more about these women and their respective homes at its Fall Membership meeting on Tuesday, September 22nd.** We will gather at the Rensselaer County Historical Society, 57 Second Street in Troy (Amanda Cluett's home during her lifetime) at 4 pm. Half of us will stay there to learn about Amanda's life in the "Marble House.". The other half of our group will travel to the Kate Mullany House at the corner of 8th and Hoosick Street in Troy and learn about Irish immigrant and laundry worker Mullany, who at the age of 23 organized 300 women into the Collar Laundry Union in 1864. At the end of an hour, the groups will reverse, with the Mullany group going to the Historical Society to learn about Amanda Cluett, and the Cluett group going to the Mullany House. (This arrangement is necessitated by the small size of the rooms in the Mullany House, which will not accommodate more than 20 people.)

Kate Mullany may have lacked Amanda's financial resources, but she made up for it in her energy and passion for the women's labor movement. At the time she first organized the collar laundry workers, both their wages and living conditions were deplorable. Women (laundry workers were all women) toiled for 12-14 hours a day washing, bleaching, starching and ironing men's shirt collars, all by hand. Their hands were constantly in harsh chemicals; often they were burned by the hot starching machines and steam irons. It took courage to organize and to join a union; many feared losing their jobs if they did so. But through sheer persistence, Kate managed to persuade 300 women to join in the effort, and after a 5 ½ day strike, their wage demands were met. Although not all subsequent strikes were as successful, Kate had shown that women could stand up for their rights as workers as well as men could. Her place in the American labor movement has been assured ever since. Her home at 350 Eighth Street is the only surviving structure associated with her life; despite its small (to us) size, it was considered a grand dwelling for a working family.

Amanda Cluett, wife of Cluett Peabody owner George Cluett, also worked to advance the cause of women, but in a very different way. As a prominent figure in Troy society, she could not appear to be embracing the cause of her husband's workers, but she was active in many charities that made the workers' lives easier. The Troy Day Home (one of the first day care centers in the United States), the Troy Orphan Asylum (now

Vanderheyden Hall), Wiawaka House (a vacation home on Lake George for working women), the Troy YWCA, and many other charitable organizations received her financial and personal support. Her family also was active in supporting the Troy Female Seminary (today the Emma Willard School) and in the founding of the Samaritan Hospital School of Nursing. These activities were in addition to raising five children and in managing her large household.

Kathy Sheehan, Rensselaer County and Troy City Historian and Registrar at the Rensselaer County Historical Society, will lead the talk on Amanda Cluett.. Paul Cole, Executive Director of the American Labor Studies Center at the Kate Mullany House, will be the speaker there. **There is no cost for this program, but attendance is limited to 40 people. Reservations must be made by Monday, September 14th.** If there are places available after that date, the event will be opened to the public.

To reserve your place, e-mail Judy Meyer, Co-President at jdymyr@yahoo.com, or call Chris Salmon at 272-6587. Join us to find out how these two very different women each shaped the events of their time – and ours

Co Presidents Message

Welcome to the new year of League activities,

At our Annual Meeting we elected Bettyann Johnsen to the Board and thanked Diane Bell for her many years of service on the Board. A complete list of Board members may be found in the Voter. Please contact us at any time.

Jill Nagy has been a member of the City of Troy Charter Commission which will present Charter Revisions to the voters in September. Steve Muller, Judy Meyer and Margaret Story spoke at the public hearings during the summer.

We will again be facilitating the vote on budgets and election of Board members for the East Greenbush Community Library on September 10 and the Troy Public Library on September 29.

Judy and Margaret distributed Voter Guides and Voter Registration Forms at the Conversation with the Mayoral Candidates at the YWCA in Troy on August 20. We will also be assisting the Troy 100 Forum with their Mayoral Candidate event on October 26.

Watch for Vote411 to be online soon. Lorrie Smith and Anne Burton are working with it this year. Access it through our website lwvrc.org. Voter Guide I is available at lwvnys.org and in early September at your local library.

We will again be collecting Election Night reports in Troy, North Greenbush, Brunswick and Rensselaer. Be ready to say yes when contacted by Steve Muller, Judy Meyer or Kate Jankowski.

We will be participating in the National Voter Registration Day September 22.

We hope to see you at the membership meeting featuring tours of the Kate Mullany house and the Hart-Cluett House on September 22.

It's a great season for the League of Women Voters of Rensselaer County... choose one or more activities that interest you and be involved,
Margaret and Judy

LOCAL NEWS

RPI Off-Campus Student Fair Voter Registration

If you want to be heartened by the eagerness of young people to begin their voting lives, then stop by the RPI Off-Campus Student Fair in front of the RPI Student Union on 15th Street in Troy on Wednesday, September 2nd from 11 to 1. John Sniezyk, Lorrie Smith, and Chris Salmon from our League will be registering students to vote at this event, which is a showcase for local vendors and organizations of interest to students. Many of the students have recently turned 18; while some prefer to register at their home locale, others want to make their voting voices heard in the place where they will be students for four or more years. We explain that they have to choose one location where they want to register; if it's in New York State, we point them to their county Board of Elections and give them a NYS Voter Registration form. (If they want to register out of state, we tell them how to find their county BOE.) If they want to register in Rensselaer County, the same process applies, except we will give them a form pre-addressed for the Rensselaer County Board of Elections. Either way, they are always very excited at the prospect of making their voices heard in upcoming elections. This is always one of our major voter registration venues of the year. So if you're in the area of the RPI Student Union between 11 and 1 on September 2nd, stop by and watch the beginnings of democracy in action!

City of Troy Charter Revision Committee by Jill Nagy

The Troy Charter Review Commission is making final changes to its proposal for a revised charter and will submit the document to the Board of Elections by September 3 for inclusion on the November ballot.

The new document eliminates pages of outdated and redundant material; shifts some administrative decisions, such as meeting dates and times, from the Charter to the City Code; and is gender neutral. More significant changes include:

- Reduction in the size of the City Council from nine members to seven by eliminating two of the at-large positions;

- Direct election of the City Council president, who will serve a four-year term concurrent with the mayor's;
- Appointment of an independent redistricting commission to review U.S. Census data and, if necessary, modify district boundaries;
- Combining the Department of Public Works and the Office of Parks and Recreation into a Department of General Services;
- Qualifications for some professional positions were updated; and
- Provisions were made to improve public access to information.

Elected officials will still be limited to eight years of service: no more than four two-year terms for Council members representing districts; no more than two four-year terms for the mayor and City Council president.

The entire document is available on the City of Troy website, troyny.gov, under the heading "Bulletins." The current charter is also on the website.

The commission, of which I was a member, is a nine-member, nonpartisan panel of volunteer citizens. Despite a diversion of opinions on several matters, the panel worked well together and was able to reach consensus on virtually all issues; only two issues actually came to a vote.

Ian Silverman, the Troy corporation counsel, chairs the commission. Other members are Flora Carr, William Dowd (our chief draftsman), Kevin Glasheen (vice chair), Patrick Madden (secretary), Patrick Morphy, Kevin Vandenburg, and Ken Zalewski.

We held several public hearings before we began our work and a final hearing after we completed a draft revision. At the hearings, we received input from city officials and employees as well as members of the general public. In addition, we received comments by mail and email. All of our meetings were open to the public and the press.

Leagues Withdraw from Fair Campaign Practices Group by Steve Muller

The four local Leagues (Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady) that had joined with the Interfaith Alliance, Capital District Chapter in 1999 to form the group Fair Campaign Practices for the Capital Region (FCP) have voted to withdraw from FCP. FCP's major purpose was promoting fair campaign practices and hearing complaints from candidates who believed they had been victims of unfair campaign practices. Over time it became increasingly difficult to find volunteers to serve on the FCP board and to staff the hearing panels. In addition, the nature of political campaigns changed, with many unfair campaign practices initiated by third parties such as PACs beyond the control of candidates. The Leagues decided it was better to focus our limited resources on tradition league activities such as voter registration, voter education and issue advocacy. Interfaith Alliance will now manage FCP on its own. We thank League members who participated in FCP activities and encourage members to continue to serve in an individual capacity on hearing panels. The press release announcing the Leagues' withdrawal has been posted on our League's Web site.



Irene Wynnyczuk donates a check to the Rensselaer County Historical Society's Curator Stacy Draper in front of a portrait of Mary Stierer at the Hart-Cluett House and Museum.

Mary Stierer Making Democracy Work Award

The Mary Stierer Making Democracy Work Award for 2014-15 was presented to Irene Wynnyczuk at the Annual Meeting in May. A long time League member Irene has provided leadership to countless programs. She has a special interest in school financing and voter service.

The League of Women Voters of Rensselaer County allocates \$200. for the award. The recipient may choose among four organizations of interest to Mary. Irene chose to donate \$100. each to the Arts Center of the Capital Area and the Rensselaer County Historical Society. The presentations were made in July.

Observer Corps by Lorrie Smith

One of the functions of the League is to hold our elected officials accountable to the people who elect them. Individually, we do that by electing those who represent us at all levels of government. Another way is to keep a watch on how they function,

making sure that they enact laws and budgets that reflect what we believe the government should be doing.

While many of us count on the press and other media to keep us informed, it is also important that we watch our governments ourselves. Our League would like to further this ideal by asking you to consider attending your local government meetings. We are not asking for a big commitment - only that you try to attend some meeting and send a short report that can be used to inform the rest of us of what is happening in your City, Town, school board, fire district, or at the County level. No need to sign up with us - just go to a meeting, or possibly watch on the TV or internet if the meeting is broadcast. This will provide another set of eyes and ears besides the paid media to keep us all informed.

Please send a short summary (might only be a paragraph) to me at lorrie.smith24@gmail.com. Maybe you will be the one to alert our members and the public of the next big story in Rensselaer County!

We Remember

Cheryl MacNeil, a former Board member, passed away April 25. Cheryl was particularly interested in youth programs.

Joyce Neary, a longtime member died May 10. Joyce was an Election Night Reporter and Library Vote volunteer.

Alexej Wynnyczuk, passed away July 20th. Alex was a member of the League for many years and also a supporter of Irene's League activities. Our sympathy to Irene and their sons Peter and Gregor.

Calendar

2015-16 Calendar

August 2015

Aug. 20: **LWV Board, 7 p.m., Krause Center**

Aug. 21: Last date to register address change for Primary
Election

Aug. 24: **Voter Deadline**

September 2015

- Sept. 7:** Labor Day
- Sept. 9:** Last day to apply for absentee ballot for Primary Elections
- Sept. 10:** **East Greenbush Library vote**
- Sept. 13:** Rosh Hashanah begins at sundown
- Sept. 10:** Primary elections, noon to 9 p.m. NB: This is a
Thursday
Also, last day to deliver absentee ballot
- Sept. 17:** **LWV Board, 7 p.m., Krause Center**
- Sept. 21:** **Voter Deadline**
- Sept. 22:** **Membership Meeting, Kate Mullaney House and
Hart-Cluett Mansion**
- Sept. 23:** Yom Kippur
- Sept. 26:** **Voter Registration, Troy Farmers Market**
- Sept. 29:** **Troy Library Vote**

October 2015

- Oct. 9:** Last day to register for Primary Elections
- Oct. 12:** Columbus Day
- Oct. 14:** Last date to register address change for Primary
Election
- Oct. 15:** **LWV Board, 7 p.m., Krause Center**
- Oct. 19:** **Voter Deadline**
- Oct. 26:** Troy 100 Mayor's Forum

- Oct. 27:** Last day to postmark application for absentee ballot
- Oct. 31:** Halloween
- November 2015**
- Nov. 1:** Daylight Savings Time ends at 2 a.m.
- Nov. 2:** Last day to apply in person for absentee ballot, last day to postmark mail-in absentee ballot
- Nov. 3:** Election Day. **Pick up election results**
Last day to deliver absentee ballot
- Nov. 11:** Veterans Day
- Nov. 19:** **LWV Board, 7 p.m., Krause Center**
- Nov. 26:** Thanksgiving Day

Board of Directors

League of Women Voters of Rensselaer County
2015-2016

Co Presidents - Judy Meyer
Margaret Story

Vice President - Anne Burton

Secretary- Jill Nagy

Treasurer- Steve Muller

Directors - Kate Jankowski
John Sniezyck
Christine Salmon
Lorrie Smith
Irene Wynnyczuk
Joyce Chupka
Bettyann Johnsen

STATE NEWS

The State League Needs You!

by Sally Robinson,

We are looking for volunteers for three different issues-related committees. Please email me (or Laura@lwvny.org) with any questions about the committees. If you have an interest in serving on the study committee for the **Legislative Procedures update**, please contact the state office (Katrina@lwvny.org). The update would be focused on two aspects of our current position in particular, although it might consider other parts:

- the reference to a part-time legislature
- the ambiguous reference to length of terms.

A recent LWVUS announcement interpreted the Meeting Basic Human Needs position to permit state and local Leagues to lobby in support of raising state or local minimum wages or adopting a living wage position. The state League is forming a committee of League volunteers to look at the issue and possibly make a recommendation on a state minimum wage to the Board. For more information on the **minimum wage concurrence**, contact Carol Mellor, Grassroots Lobby director (Carolmellor140@gmail.com).

We are also forming a **long-range program planning committee** to look at the last decade or two of program planning, what studies and updates were undertaken, and analyze the effort involved and the results. Please email or call the state office (Katrina@lwvny.org or 518-465-4162) if you are interested in serving on either committee.

NATIONAL NEWS

08/20/2015

Nancy E. Tate Leaves League after Fifteen Years at Helm

by Kelly Ceballos

Washington, D.C. - The League of Women Voters announced today that executive director Nancy E. Tate would be leaving her position at the League in early September. A search for well-qualified and talented candidates who can build on Nancy's achievements is in the final stages and an announcement is expected this fall.

“Over the past 15 years, we’ve seen profound changes in the country and in the world that have impacted our electoral politics, our national and economic security, as well as the way in which people engage with each other in the civic arena,” said Elisabeth MacNamara, president of the League of Women Voters of the U.S. “Over that period of time, the League has been fortunate to have a creative and strategic executive director at the helm of the national office in Nancy Tate.”

“Nancy has guided the staff and inspired the national Board to think and act strategically and lead us into the 21st Century,” MacNamara said. “From establishing VOTE411.org as the preeminent national online election resource to launching the League’s Public Advocacy for Voter Protection program working at the state level to remove barriers to underrepresented voters, Nancy’s leadership has been effective, forward-thinking and enabled the League’s impact to grow nationwide.”

“As a League member and former local League president in Arlington, VA, it is, and has always been, a privilege to work for and with the best organization, leaders and volunteers in America,” said Tate. “I came to the League when the issues central to the organization’s mission were thrust onto the national stage following the 2000 election. In the years since, we have mobilized our resources at the national, state and local levels to fight against voter suppression, excessive money in politics, partisan gerrymandering and other challenges and can claim some important successes. The challenges continue. But I leave the organization knowing it will continue towards its goal of Making Democracy Work®, by keeping the power of our democracy in the hands of the people, and working to ensure our elections are fair, free and accessible to all eligible voters.”

“I am proud of the role the League has played in improving our system of government, said Tate. “The sky is the limit for an organization like the League. We’ve grown our national network significantly over the last 15 years and continue as a vital force with nearly 800 Leagues in communities nationwide. As we have done since our founding, we have empowered millions of people to make their voices heard in the political process. And we stepped up, mobilizing our supporters to take action on the critical issues of voter suppression, money in politics, climate change, clean air, healthcare reform, and others. We have a great deal to be proud of and so much more to do as we approach the 100th anniversary of the organization in 2020,” Tate said.

“We are incredibly grateful for Nancy’s leadership and the many achievements throughout her tenure, and hope that there may be other ways to engage her with the work of the LWVUS in the future,” concluded MacNamara. “This year, the League of Women Voters proudly celebrates our 95th birthday as a stronger, forward-facing organization, and much of that is due to the leadership of Nancy Tate.”

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