



THE LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS
of Schenectady County New York

BULLETIN

www.lwvschenectady.org

December 2015/January 2016

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, December 1, 1PM

Raise the Age Concurrence & Board Meeting

1st Reformed Church
8 N. Church St., Schenectady
Contact: Helga Schroeter, 370-5042

Thursday, December 3

League Day at the United Nations

New York City
Contact: Ruth Bonn, 384-0804

Tuesday, January 12, 1-4 PM

Money in Politics Consensus Meeting

1st Reformed Church
8 N. Church St., Schenectady
Contact: Cheryl Nechamen, 346-4820

Tuesday, February 9, 5:30/6 PM

Program Planning Potluck

New members 5:30 PM/ planning potluck 6 PM
1400 Keyes Ave., Niskayuna
Contact: Carol Furman, 346-2746

Holiday Luncheon

**Wednesday, December 9
11:45 AM- 1:30 PM**

Speaker: Ken Harris, Executive Director, Albany Guardian Society

“The Village Movement and Livable Communities”

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

Entrees: Cornish Game Hen with Maple Mustard Glaze
Salmon with Honey Balsamic Glaze
Rigatoni Pasta

* Please call if you have dietary restrictions

Cost of the luncheon is \$25. **Please make your reservation by December 1st.** Contact Cheryl Nechamen at 346-4820 or cnechamen@msn.com. Your reservation is a commitment to pay unless we are able to fill unexpected vacancies with last minute reservations.

Message from the Steering Committee

It's December. The last month of the year. Short days, dark nights; lights strung up in trees and around houses...points of light in the gloom...little beacons of hope for brighter days ahead.

There have been bright spots in a rather dark 2015..., a nuclear deal was reached with Iran after decades of sanctions were unsuccessful at stopping the development of nuclear weapon capability, diplomatic relations were reopened with Cuba after 54 years, Obamacare subsidies for low income Americans were upheld by the Supreme Court. What else has 2015 seen?

January saw the offices of Charlie Hebdo attacked to punish the Paris magazine for publishing cartoons of Mohammed. In March, Hillary was revealed to have used personal email for State communications while she was Secretary of State...leading to endless hearings...and Netanyahu was invited by the Speaker of the House to speak to Congress against the Iran deal.

In April, mandatory water restrictions were imposed on Californians by Governor Jerry Brown in response to a multi-year drought. He warned, "...It's a different world...the climate is changing...we're in for tough times..." A huge earthquake hit Nepal killing over 8000 people. And Freddy Gray died in police custody in Baltimore, provoking protests against racially motivated police violence. Just one of a number of incidents of questionable police behavior toward blacks which came to public notice after Ferguson became news in August 2014.

In May, Ebola was declared over in Liberia after a yearlong effort to control and eradicate the disease. 'Grexit' was the watchword as we held our collective breath while Greece decided whether it would accept the bailout terms being offered and stay in the EU or not. It did.

Pope Francis visited the US and spoke to Congress and the UN in September...and continued on to Cuba. Speaker Boehner resigned from his position in the House of Representatives not long after the Pope's visit. After several uncertain weeks, during which Boehner did manage, with bipartisan support, to get a two year budget deal passed, Paul Ryan became the new Speaker. In Paris in mid-November, coordinated bombings by ISIS killed 130 people.

Refugees are flowing into Europe at an unprecedented rate; many from Syria, but also from countries in Africa. Syria is still at war. ISIS has become a worldwide concern. Many issues seem intractable but on the positive side, Secretary of State John Kerry is still hopeful about negotiating.

Also positive, in December, the 2015 Paris Climate Conference will, for the first time in 20 years of climate meetings, aim to achieve a legally binding agreement to keep the increase in global temperature less than 2 degrees C...believed to be the point at which life on the planet would fundamentally change.

Little points of light...may they grow and shine more and more brightly...

Ruth Bonn, Lead

STEERING COMMITTEE

Carol Furman	(346-2746)	Lead for December 2015, January, February, June 2016
Cheryl Nechamen	(346-4820)	Lead for March – May, July 2016
Ruth Bonn	(384-0804)	Lead (completed)

Bulletin Editor: Cheryl Nechamen (346-4820)

Money in Politics

We will hold a consensus meeting on the topic of Money in Politics on January 12th from 1- 4 PM at the First Reformed Church, 8 N. Church Street, Schenectady. This study will fill the gap which currently exists in the LWVUS position on campaign finance with regard to the First Amendment of the Constitution which addresses free speech. The Supreme Court decided in the case *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* that campaign speech is central to American democracy which the First Amendment protects.

Background materials and consensus questions can be found on the Schenectady County LWV website www.lwvschenectady.org under "League Studies" and then "Money in Politics" and also on the LWVUS website at <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/money-politics-review>. Some of the questions included in the consensus are:

What should be the goals of campaign finance regulation?

What activities are examples of political corruption?

Should spending to influence elections be limited?

Should the influence of the press coverage of candidates and elections be limited?

What goals for campaign finance regulation should the League support?

How should campaign finance regulations be administered and enforced?

If you would like to participate in the study group, contact Cheryl Nechamen, 346-4820 or cnechamen@msn.com.

Put this meeting on your calendar, read some of the background materials on the website, and plan to participate in giving your input on how the League should advocate on this issue. Remember that the League does not take a stand on an issue without a position which is developed using consensus with regional and national representation. See you there!

Carol Furman

Program Planning Potluck

We will be holding our annual Program Planning Potluck on Tuesday, February 9th at Connie Young's house, 1400 Keyes Ave., Niskayuna. New members are welcome at 5:30 PM to learn

more about the League and we will start the program planning part of the meeting at 6 PM. This is when we identify priority issues for the local and State Leagues for the year.

Fundraising Committee

The Fundraising Committee will be meeting in January to discuss activities and events for the rest of the year. We need new ideas and new blood. Please contact Kay Ackerman at 393-

5000 or kaydonack@aol.com if you would be willing to lend us a hand.

Kay Ackerman, Fundraising Chair

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.

Holiday Luncheon

Ken Harris, Executive Director of the Albany Guardian Society, will speak to League members at the Holiday Luncheon on December 9th at 11:45 AM about the village movement and livable communities. The village movement has gained popularity in recent years as it allows seniors to “age in place”. Seniors pay an annual fee to the village which acts as a liaison to services performed by younger members of the community. Livable communities, in which land use, housing and transportation are designed around walkable neighborhoods, fit in well with the village movement. Join us for lunch at Schenectady County Community College. Cost of the luncheon is \$25. Place your reservations and entrée choice (Cornish Game Hen/Salmon/Rigatoni) with Cheryl Nechamen, 346-4820, cnechamen@msn.com by December 1st.

We will collect donations to support Bethesda House at the luncheon.

Health Committee

The Health Committee is working on a project with the Schenectady Coalition for a Healthy Community to reduce falls among seniors in Schenectady. We have facilitated two meetings of a Falls Prevention Workgroup so far and are forming a coalition of organizations to undertake interventions to reduce the rate of falls in Schenectady. As part of the process, we have heard a presentation of evidence-based programs like STEADI, Stepping On, A Matter of

Balance, Moving for Better Balance, Fallscape, and others, which have been implemented in communities and which have resulted in fewer falls. The importance of taking steps to maintain independence and to age in place in the community is a focus of these programs. Members who are interested in working with this project should call Carol Furman, 346-2746.

Carol Furman, Health Chair

Voter Services

November concludes the busiest time of year for Voter Services. Four candidate forums were successfully conducted in October in Glensville, Niskayuna, Rotterdam and the City of Schenectady. Each forum was videotaped by Open Space Media and presented on their website and on Time Warner and Verizon FIOS Public Access TV stations. Thanks to many volunteers and Coordinators Connie Young, Maxine Borom, Marsha Mortimore, and Cheryl Nechamen.

Additional thanks to all the people who helped collect election returns on November 3rd. Dick Shave and Maxine Borom coordinated this effort. We recruited enough volunteers to cover 93 out of 102 Election Districts. This is an important activity for the League. We are paid for every election district report we make which

helps pay the cost of taping the aforementioned candidate forums.

For both of these activities, which are very volunteer-intensive, we are grateful for the partnership with AAUW. This has been a cooperative venture for our organizations for many years.

Finally, a thank you to Pat MacKinnon for gathering information from candidates for local offices and posting these on VOTE411.org. This provides a source for voters to learn about candidates' views and positions on local issues and helps them make a decision on how they will cast their ballots.

Kay Ackerman, Voter Services Chair

MONEY IN POLITICS CONSENSUS QUESTIONS

This update on Money In Politics builds on the League's current position on campaign finance. The consensus questions in Part I address the goals of campaign finance regulation in terms of democratic values. The questions in Part II relate to the extent to which First Amendment protections like free speech and freedom of the press should apply to various speakers and activities in the campaign finance context. Part III asks about methods of campaign finance regulation. **You are asked to respond to the questions without regard for the Supreme Court's current views on the First Amendment.**

For each of the three question parts below we have matched papers to provide helpful background information on those topics. All of the readings can be found at <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/money-politics-review>.

PART I QUESTIONS: Democratic Values and Interests with Respect to Financing Political Campaigns

Background Readings

The following readings provide background on the issues that the Part I questions are asking about and can be found at <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/money-politics-review>.

- ***Money in Politics: Introduction and Overview***
- ***Shifts in Supreme Court Opinion about Money in Politics***
- ***The Role of the Supreme Court in Interpreting the Constitution***
- ***Evidence of Spending's Impact on Electoral and Legislative Outcomes***
- ***Corruption and Rationales for Regulating Campaign Finance***

1. What should be the goals and purposes of campaign finance regulation?

(Please respond to each item in Question 1 with Agree/Disagree/No Consensus)

- a. Seek political equality for all citizens.
- b. Protect representative democracy from being distorted by big spending in election campaigns.
- c. Enable candidates to compete equitably for public office.
- d. Ensure that candidates have sufficient funds to communicate their messages to the public.
- e. Ensure that economic and corporate interests are part of election dialogue.
- f. Provide voters sufficient information about candidates and campaign issues to make informed choices.
- g. Ensure the public's right to know who is using money to influence elections.
- h. Combat corruption and undue influence in government.

2. Evaluate whether the following activities are types of political corruption:

(Please respond to each item in Question 2 with Agree/Disagree/No Consensus)

- a. A candidate or officeholder agrees to vote or work in favor of a donor's interests in exchange for a campaign contribution.
- b. An officeholder or her/his staff gives greater access to donors.
- c. An officeholder votes or works to support policies that reflect the preferences of individuals or organizations in order to attract contributions from them.

d. An office holder seeks political contributions implying that there will be retribution unless a donation is given.

e. The results of the political process consistently favor the interests of significant campaign contributors.

PART II QUESTIONS: First Amendment Protections for Speakers and Activities in Political Campaigns

Background Readings

The following readings provide background on the issues that the Part II questions ask about and can be found at <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/money-politics-review>.

- ***The First Amendment***
- ***The Debate: Can Government Regulate Money in Politics?***
- ***Hard, Soft and Dark Money***
- ***Independent Expenditures***
- ***The New Soft Money, pp. 17-27***

1. Many different individuals and organizations use a variety of methods to communicate their views to voters in candidate elections. Should spending to influence an election by any of the following be limited?

(Please respond to each item in Question 1 with Spending Banned/Some Spending Limits/Unlimited Spending/No Consensus)

- Individual citizens, including wealthy individuals like George Soros and the Koch Brothers.
- Political Action Committees, sponsored by an organization, such as the League of Conservation Voters, Chevron, the American Bankers Association, and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), whose campaign spending comes from contributions by individuals associated with the sponsoring organization, such as employees, stockholders, members and volunteers.
- For-profit organizations, like Exxon, Ben and Jerry's, General Motors, and Starbucks, from their corporate treasury funds.
- Trade associations, like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Wind Energy Association, and the American Petroleum Institute, from the association's general treasury funds.
- Labor unions, like the United Autoworkers and Service Employees International, from the union's general treasury funds.
- Non-profit organizations, like the Sierra Club, Wisconsin Right to Life, Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, American Crossroads, and Priorities USA, from the organization's general treasury funds.
- Non-partisan voter registration and GOTV (get out the vote) organizations and activities, like the LWV and Nonprofit Vote.
- Political parties, like the Republicans, Libertarians, and Democrats.
- Candidates for public office spending money the candidate has raised from contributors.
- Candidates for public office spending their own money.

2. The press plays a major role in candidate elections through editorial endorsements, news coverage, and other communications directly to the public that are often important to the outcome. Should such spending to influence an election by any of the following be limited? (Please respond with Spending Banned/Some Spending Limits/Unlimited Spending/No Consensus)

- a. Newspapers, like the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal.
- b. Television and other electronic media, like Fox News, CNN, MSNBC and CBS.
- c. Internet communications, like Huffington Post, Breitbart, Daily Kos, and individual bloggers.

PART III QUESTIONS: Methods for Regulating Campaign Finance to Protect the Democratic Process

Background Readings

The following readings provide background on the issues that the Part III questions are asking about and can be found at <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/money-politics-review>.

- ***Options to Reform Money in Politics***
- ***Action in the States***
- ***Enforcement of Federal Campaign Finance Law***

1. In order to achieve the goals for campaign finance regulation, should the League support? (Please respond to each item in Question 1 a and b with Agree/Disagree/No Consensus)

- a. Abolishing SuperPACs and spending coordinated or directed by candidates, other than a candidate's own single campaign committee.
- b. Restrictions on direct donations and bundling by lobbyists? (Restrictions may include monetary limits as well as other regulations.)
- c. Public funding for candidates? Should the League support:
(You may respond to more than one item in Question 1 c.)
 - i. Voluntary public financing of elections where candidates who choose to participate must also abide by reasonable spending limits?
 - ii. Mandatory public financing of elections where candidates must participate and abide by reasonable spending limits?
 - iii. Public financing without spending limits on candidates?

2. How should campaign finance regulations be administered and enforced?

(You may choose more than one response for Question 2.)

- a. By an even-numbered commission with equal representation by the two major political parties to ensure partisan fairness (current Federal Election Commission [FEC] structure)?
- b. By an odd-numbered commission with at least one independent or nonpartisan commissioner to ensure decisions can be made in case of partisan deadlock?
- c. By structural and budget changes to the FEC (e.g., commission appointments, staffing, security, budget, decision-making process) that would allow the agency to function effectively and meet its legislative and regulatory mandates.
- d. No consensus.

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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, 2015 – June 30, 2016

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 _____

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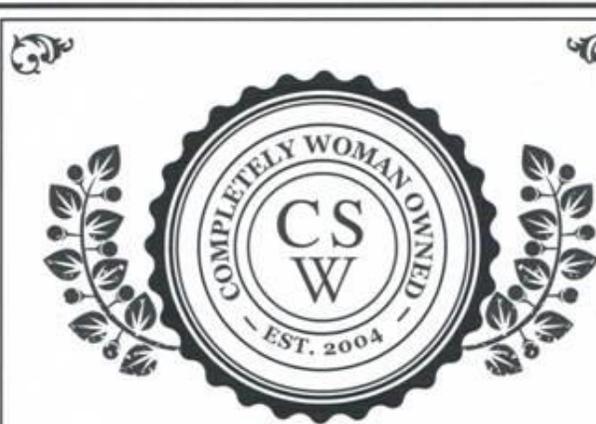
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Calendar of Events

Tues. Dec. 1...Raise the Age Concurrence
1 PM, 1st Reformed Church, Schenectady

Thurs. Dec. 3...League Day at the UN

Tues. Jan. 12...Money in Politics Consensus
1-4 PM, 1st Reformed Church, Schenectady

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