



THE LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS
of Schenectady County New York

BULLETIN

www.lwvschenectady.org

February 2015

FEBRUARY EVENT

Pot Luck Program Planning Meeting

**Tuesday, February 10
5:30 PM**

at the home of Connie Young, 1400 Keyes Avenue, Niskayuna

Come to help identify priority issues for the Schenectady and NY State League
Learn about the process of developing positions for advocacy in the League
Find out more about the State League Convention in June 2015

Bring a salad to share, greet your friends in the League!
We want your input! Join us!

Contact Cheryl Nechamen at 346-4820 or cnechamen@msn.com for more information

March Events

Wednesday, March 11, 5-7 PM

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

Panelists: Robert M. Carney, Mark Caruso,
Robert Keach, III
Schenectady County Central Library
99 Clinton St., Schenectady
Contact: Helga Schroeter, 370-5042

Wednesday, March 18, noon

Advocating for Women in Schenectady

Speaker: Rowie Taylor
Executive Director, YWCA
Turf Tavern
40 Mohawk Ave., Scotia
Contact: Cheryl Nechamen, 346-4820

Message from the Steering Committee

February is the month during which we review our local League work and the priority issues we wish to address in the following year. We identify program objectives for committee work and for program planning for the year 2015-2016. You will find a list of this year's State League positions and Local Program Objectives in this issue of the Bulletin (p. 5-7) which we ask you to bring along on February 10th. Your input is important! How should we focus our efforts in the future year? What types of public education programs should we plan to hold? What issues in local government interest our members? Please plan on joining us for a fun pot luck supper as well as the program planning meeting February 10th at 5:30 PM at 1400 Keyes Ave, Niskayuna. Bring a salad to share.

This year there will be a Convention of the League of Women Voters of New York State on June 6-7 in Albany. The State League is looking for direction from local chapters like ours, to propose at the convention, priority issues and positions for study and advocacy, which are either not already covered by League positions or are in need of updating and change. For example, two areas proposed in the 2013 state convention, Ballot Access and Term Limits for State Elected Positions, have gone through a period of study in the last year, and we came to consensus on January 26th. In prior years, we added positions on human trafficking and water protection of the Great Lakes to allow for grass roots advocacy on these issues.

At the national LWV Convention 2014, representatives adopted a program focused on the key structures of democracy. Three committees were selected to collect and disseminate information on redistricting in the

various states, money in politics and the process of amending the Constitution. Reading lists will be available shortly on the member resources page of the LWV.org website and we will participate in the study of these issues.

According to the LWVUS website (LWV.org): "The Money in Politics Committee will conduct an update of the League's position on campaign finance for the purpose of addressing the lack of member understanding and agreement as to whether financing a political campaign is protected speech under the First Amendment. The campaign finance position will be updated through a study and consensus process to consider: (1) the rights of individuals and organizations, under the First Amendment, to express their political views through independent expenditures and the finance of election campaign activities; and (2) how those rights, if any, should be protected and reconciled with the interests set out in the current position."

This is how the League functions. We want to ensure that advocacy is both well informed and consistent throughout the state or nation. We utilize this process of study, and then hold representative meetings to come to consensus before we take a position and advocate on that position. Participation in a convention is very stimulating and exciting. It gives a vivid view of how the League functions and how you can contribute. The State convention is held every other year alternating with the national convention. We hope many of you will want to attend the State convention this year for either a session of interest to you, or for the entire convention. Let one of the board members know if you are interested!

Carol Furman, Lead

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)

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The **Health Committee** will meet next on Monday February 9th at 10:30 AM at the café in Proctor's Arcade. We will share information on the New York Health Bill, health issues in Schenectady, and issues of interest related to aging in place in the community. If you have not attended committee meetings in the past, call Carol Furman 346-2746 to receive any updates or changes related to this meeting. In January, Committee members attended the Albany public hearing on The New York Health Bill sponsored by the Assembly Committee on Health.

The New York Health Bill, A.5389-A/S.2078-A, is a universal "single payer" health bill introduced by Assemblyman Richard N. Gottfried and Senator Bill Perkins which would offer comprehensive universal health insurance coverage for every New Yorker with access to all appropriate doctors and providers without premiums, deductibles or co-payments. According to the Assembly Committee on Health, it would be paid for with taxes based on the ability to pay as well as Federal Medicaid and Medicare dollars. It would save New Yorkers \$20 billion dollars a year and would help cut property taxes by eliminating the local share of Medicaid costs. The benefit package described in the bill promises at least the same if not better benefit coverage than current Medicare and Medicaid benefits.

The Albany public hearing had 44 individuals signed up to speak either for or against the bill. Most speakers were in support citing the problem of not just people who were still uninsured but also others who had difficulty affording insurance or paying for co-pays and deductibles. Speakers also mentioned the difficulty of keeping a doctor as in-network lists changed, the need to focus on healthy lifestyles, and the difficulty in containing costs in the present system. There also were voices who questioned the loss of insurance jobs, the government's ability to administer the benefits, and the impact on employers. The League of Women Voters of New York State presented testimony in a previous public hearing in New York City in December in support of the bills.

While it would be better if this type of reform could come from the Federal level, it is felt that it will be more realistic for its success to be demonstrated at the state level. Vermont's failure to proceed with a single payer plan is felt to be due to how they structured their plan and failed to include federal dollars. Advocates hope that Vermont will change their approach and re-submit plans to move forward with a single-payer plan. In the meantime New York could be a proving ground for this approach to providing affordable access to comprehensive health care.

Carol Furman, Chair

The **Environment Committee** will meet at 12:30 on Monday, February 2nd at Arthur's Market, 35 N. Ferry St., Schenectady. We will be discussing the oil trains issue, listen to a report from the Recycling Committee and make

plans for the rest of the year. Anyone interested is invited to come and join us for lunch. Call Ruth at 384-0804 for more information.

Ruth Bonn, Chair

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

The grand jury system will be the topic of a panel of experts in a program March 11th presented by the League of Women Voters of Schenectady County. Panelists at the session from 5 PM to 7 PM at the Schenectady County Central Library, 99 Clinton St., Schenectady will be: Robert M. Carney, Schenectady County District Attorney; Mark Caruso, head of the Schenectady County Public Defender's Office; and Robert Keach, III, civil rights attorney.

The panel will explain the grand jury system and its use from the prosecutorial and defense

perspectives. It will also address whether changes need to be made. Recent controversial cases taken to the grand jury have raised issues about its secrecy and a process that favors the case brought by the prosecutor.

Mr. Carney has been a district attorney since 1990 and a lawyer for 26 years. Mr. Caruso has a decade each of experience as a former prosecutor and as a current defense attorney. Mr. Keach is in private practice and handles civil rights litigation.

Welcome new members

Patricia Clausi, Suzanne Hodgkins, Bill Hodgkins, Judy Stein and Cheryl Vallee

Patricia is a retired math teacher. She was a member of the LWV several years ago and has decided to rejoin. Her hobbies include reading, sewing, gourmet cooking and traveling. Health care, environmental issues, and Working Group On Girls are LWV topics that interest her.

Suzanne and Bill are retired from the New York State Tax Department. They are impressed with the work of the local LWV and would like to become involved with the issues it supports. Suzanne is a volunteer for SHARE, an organization that supports women with breast and ovarian cancer.

Judy is a retired chemist from GE. She has a multitude of hobbies, including learning Spanish, ice skating, world travel, and Tai Chi. She was

an officer for the LWV of Schenectady County in the 1980's. It was while working on Pat Rodriguez's recent campaign for Family Court Judge that she decided to renew her membership. Judy is interested in environmental, health and women's issues.

Cheryl is the Executive Director of the Center for Community Justice. She is especially interested in program development, restorative justice initiatives and making Schenectady a better place to live and work. She greatly admires the accomplishments of Helga Schroeter and the LWV. She is a supporter of CASA (court appointed special advocates). Cheryl is interested in working with the LWV on children's issues, justice, and court related issues.

A SCHOLARSHIP AT THE YWCA

A new way to help children be better prepared for kindergarten.

Many children who begin the early education program are unable to continue due to parental financial problems. This scholarship will allow the YWCA to bridge the gap in education. Continuity in learning is so important!

Rowie Taylor of the YWCA will be our speaker in March and there will be an opportunity to contribute to this worthy venture. I hope you are able to attend and learn more about this project.

Connie Young

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.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC POLICY POSITIONS LWVNY

ELECTION LAW

Support of measures to protect, extend and encourage the use of the franchise, including paperless and Election Day registration, no excuse absentee and in-person early voting. Restore integrity to the election process – specifically support for uniformity in election laws and procedures in their implementation and enforcement; promote measures that ensure the integrity of all ballots.

Support comprehensive campaign finance reform, including public financing of campaigns.

Support ballot access and fair campaign practices.

Opposition to term limits for members of the NYS Legislature.

Opposition to term limits for NYS statewide elected officials.

GOVERNMENT

Support of individual liberties, including reproductive rights, voting rights, gun control.

Support of improved measures to provide representation for legislative districts in case of a vacancy.

Support of standards to ensure equitable representation in the State legislature and Congress.

Support of responsive and responsible legislative processes which increase the role of the individual member and the committee system.

Support of effective regulation of lobbying and ethics.

Support of procedural reforms in the constitutional convention process to promote openness and nonpartisanship.

Support of the consolidation of government/shared services when it promotes effective and efficient operation of government.

HEALTH CARE

Support of measures to assure a basic level of quality physical and mental health care, including regulatory incentives to encourage development of cost-effective alternative methods of delivery; funding for health promotion and disease prevention programs; provisions for effective citizen participation in health policy decisions.

Support of measures that enable individuals to assume responsibility for their own health and to participate in decisions, including extraordinary life-extending procedures.

Support for uniform eligibility and coverage of basic health care costs through public financing with single payer concept as an acceptable approach to implementing League positions on equitable access and cost containment.

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.

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

NATURAL RESOURCES

Support for protection and management of New York's natural resources in the public interest, including energy conservation and energy options from renewable sources.

Support for measures to achieve watershed protection including limiting pesticide use and applying Best Management Practices.

Support for a state-established, intergovernmental system for land resource management.

Support for a proactive role for New York State in regional land use planning, containing urban sprawl and protecting sensitive areas.

Support of reconditioning of the New York State Erie/Barge Canal System and its development for recreational uses.

SOCIAL POLICY

Support for equality of opportunity, meeting basic human needs, child care.

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

STATE FINANCES

Support reforms for greater equity in education financing (K-12) for both pupils and taxpayers.

Support raising funds to provide New York's children with a sound basic education through increases in the New York State personal income tax, implemented in a progressive fashion.

Support for the replacement of the existing local residential property tax relief programs in which relief goes to all with programs based on need, with annual cost of living adjustment.

Oppose in principle the use of public funds to support non-public schools (K-12).

Oppose any increase in the maximum number of charter schools without improvements to the Charter School Act.

Support the funding of public higher education and the existing formula for financing the community system, 1/3 tuition, 1/3 state aid, and 1/3 county support.

Support a uniform equitable assessment and property tax system.

Support of measures to provide for openness and accountability in the operation of the New York State public authority system.

Support of a timely and responsive state budget.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Support of measures that hold marriage to be an economic partnership with a presumption of equality between the spouses.

Opposition to measures that contain a presumption of joint custody of the children.

Support for equity in employment laws and practices and equal pay for jobs of comparable worth.

Support of measures to reduce the incidence and effects of domestic violence.

LOCAL PROGRAM OBJECTIVES 2015-2016

Justice and the Law

Support improvements to the local criminal justice system by:

- * strengthening the Probation Department and rehabilitation programs in the County.
- * facilitating the implementation of alternative courts (problem solving courts) in Schenectady County and promoting collaborations to support them.
- * monitoring the juvenile justice system including Family Court and promoting community-based rehabilitation.

Local Government

* Monitor activities of county governmental units, including town boards, the Schenectady City Council and the Schenectady County Legislature, monitor activities of other quasi-governmental units, public authorities and agencies such as Metroplex, IDAs and Planning Boards, monitor activities of elected public Boards of Education.

* Support standards of high professional qualifications and political nonpartisanship in manager form of government.

* Evaluate opportunities for inter-municipal cooperation and examine options for the consolidation of governmental services in Schenectady County.

Children at Risk

* Collaborate with other organizations to identify the needs of children in Schenectady County, facilitate programs on their behalf and educate the community about their needs and challenges.

Local Education

* Monitor local initiatives related to schools and promote and advocate for adequate and equitable funding for all school districts so students can reach their potential.

Environmental Issues

Support the protection of environmental resources, land, water and air in Schenectady County:

- * Advocate for the protection of water resources in the County.
- * Promote understanding of global climate change and support efforts to mitigate its effects.
- * Support energy conservation and development of renewable energy alternatives.
- * Support solid waste management programs that increase reuse and recycling in the County and City.

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 and develop recommendations for local options.
- * Encourage and support countywide comprehensive health care planning and access to health care.

While we all know that **Carrie Chapman Catt** fought tirelessly for women's suffrage both here and abroad and that she founded the League of Women Voters, here are some facts about this remarkable woman of which we may not be aware:

- Originally interested in practicing medicine, Catt received a Bachelor of Science degree in general science in 1880. She was the only woman in her class.
- When her husband died in 1885, Catt made a living by becoming San Francisco's first female newspaper reporter.
- By 1900, Catt succeeded the 80-year-old activist Susan B. Anthony as president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), the organizational predecessor to the League.
- Catt returned to NAWSA as president in 1915. Catt's relentless campaigning is credited with helping win President Woodrow Wilson's respect and support — which ultimately led to the passage of the 19th Amendment.
- Catt was close friends with Eleanor Roosevelt, a fellow League leader and women's rights pioneer.
- She supported efforts for both the League of Nations and the United Nations, the latter of which the League of Women Voters helped establish.

Carrie Catt described the League as a "mighty experiment". Nearly 95 years later the League is still a mighty experiment in making democracy work through citizen education and engagement.

Excerpted from LWVUS

In Collaboration with Other Community Organizations

Wednesday, February 18th, 1 PM, Schenectady County Central Library, 99 Clinton St., Schenectady [sponsored by AAUW] **Paul and Mary Liz Schwartz** will talk about the Underground Railroad in the Capital Region. Contact: Eleanor Aronstein, 265-2500

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 _____

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Other Technical Skill? (Describe) _____

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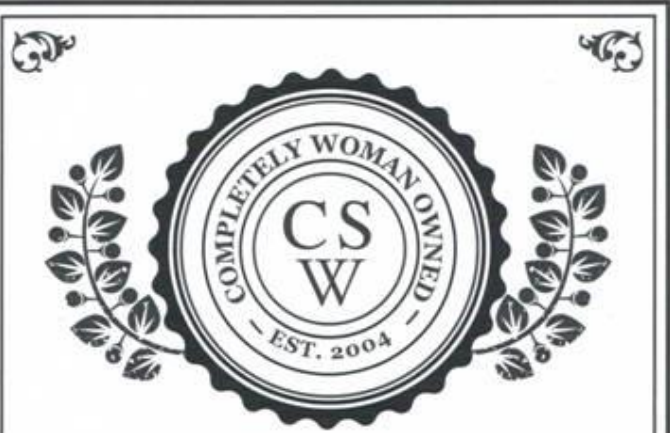
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Calendar of Events

Mon. Feb. 2...Environment Committee
12:30, Arthur's Market, Schenectady

Mon. Feb. 9...Health Committee
10:30 AM, Proctor's café, Schenectady

Tues. Feb. 10...Pot Luck Program Planning
5:30 PM, 1400 Keyes Ave., Niskayuna

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