



The Voter

Winter
2015

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WINTER GOT YOU DOWN?

PERK UP with the League of Women Voters of Rensselaer
County Post-Holiday Party!

Thursday, January 29, 2015

Krause Center, 2212 Burdett Avenue, Troy (across from Samaritan Hospital)

Social Time: 5:30 Potluck Dinner: 6 pm

Come join us for a fun evening! Troy attorney, author and musician Jack Casey is preparing a special historical presentation just for us. Diane Bell's English country dance band, Heartsease, will regale us during the social time with their lively and graceful tunes. Bring a dish to pass, catch up with old friends, and meet new ones! Hope to see you there! RSVP to Chris

Salmon, csalmon@nycap.rr.com or 272-6587

You're invited to a College of St. Rose Event
Climate Change: A Call to Action

A speech and discussion with EPA Regional Administrator and College of St. Rose

alumna Judith A. Enck



Thursday, February 12, 2015 at 7 pm

The College of St. Rose

Thelma P. Lally School of Education, Touhey Forum

1009 Madison Avenue, Albany, NY 12203

2014 was the hottest year on record. The only way that we can rise to the challenge of climate change is if every one of us gets involved. Come and learn about the scope of the problem, major steps that EPA is taking to fight climate change and tips on how you can help. Bring your questions for the Regional Administrator because there will be a question and answer period. There is no cost to attend this event.

RSVP to Jennifer May-Reddy at may.jennifer@epa.gov *Directions and parking: Click [here](#) for directions to the College of St. Rose. Please park your vehicle in the Lally parking lot located behind the School of Education, use street parking or park in the LaSalle lot located 415 Western Ave. The College of St. Rose [interactive map](#) is helpful for both campus map and parking instructions*

Letter from a Co-President

I always debate with myself – does the New Year start in September or in January? September, of course, begins a new program year for the League – but January is when the people elected in November take office, a new legislative session begins, and our work of “shining a light on democracy” begins anew. The League has taken positions on a wide range of issues; they are outlined in the 2015 *Legislative Agenda* brochure, which can be found on the lwvny.org website. If you would like to take part in the 2015 Lobby Day (February 4th), where local Leagues call on their elected state representatives in Albany and lobby on the League’s positions, contact LWVRC member Anne Burton at anneburton10@gmail.com or call her at 283-3499. You can also find more information about League lobbying on the State League website at <http://lwvny.org/advocacy/html>.

A reminder that our winter membership meeting, aka the Post-Holiday Party, takes place at the end of this month. An invitation with all the details is in this edition of the *Voter*. This event should be a lot of fun, and we encourage everyone to brave the cold and come out! You’ll be glad you did!

And finally, the postponed production of “The Stone that Started the Ripple” is now scheduled for **Thursday, March 26th**. It will be held at 7 pm at the Bush Memorial Hall at Russell Sage. This promises to be a fabulous production! Ticket information will go out shortly; **please make an effort to sell tickets to your friends, co-workers and neighbors**. A good crowd will benefit us, Sage, and the hard-working young actresses who will be performing that night!

Stay warm, stay healthy, and stay informed!

Chris Salmon

Jill Nagy Appointed to Troy Charter Commission

Mayor Lou Rosamilia has announced that Jill Nagy, long time member of the League of Women Voters of Rensselaer County and currently a member of the Board of Directors, has been appointed to the nine member commission. She was selected by the City Council Majority. The commission will review the current charter and recommend changes to be voted on in November.

LWV 2014 Election Reporters

Did you ever wonder how local TV and radio stations got the early election results of last November’s elections? Well, in Rensselaer County, at least, volunteer election reporters coordinated by our League go to polling places in the county when they close to get the results and phone them in to Capital District Election Services, a consortium of local media. This is a significant source of revenue for our League. We want to thank all those who volunteered as election reporters last November (and apologize to anyone inadvertently left off the list), and

also acknowledge election reporting coordinators Kate Jankowski, Judy Meyer and Steve Muller. Election reporters get an early look at the results and can also see the voting on minor party lines. If this sounds like something you would like to do, contact Kate, Judy or Steve.

November 2014 Election Reporters

Mary Abbot

Judy and Roger Armstrong

Catherine Caruso

Sue Clark

Sandra Colatosti

Beth Delaney

Gail DeMarco

Stacy Draper

Gerry Grasso

Margaret Harvey

Barbara Jones Higbee

Paul Hohenberg

Fran Hyde

Kate Jankowski

Nancy Kapp

Hazel Landa

Judy Meyer

Steve and Mary Muller

Jill Nagy

Joyce Neary

Karen and Gerry Norlander

George O'Connor

Terry O'Connor

Miriam Russell

Kathy Sheehan

Margo Singer

Cynthia Smith/RPI students

Lorrie Smith

Fred Stein

Margaret Story

Ellen Tolan

Barbara Urban

David Wolcott

Kristina Younger

Troy Farmers' Market Schedule for LWV Rensselaer County

Our voter registration table is set for the Farmers' Market for 2015! The dates are as follows: April 18: our Earth Day and Climate Change table and last day of the inside market.

May 23, June 27, July 25, Aug 22, Sept 26, and 2 Saturdays in October, TBD.

These are all the 4th Saturdays of the month except for April 18. Please come and visit us; and, better yet, sign up to participate! It's fun and rewarding!

Please e-mail Anne Burton at anneburton10@gmail.com to choose your dates!

Thanks, Anne Burton

“The Stone that Started the Ripple” coming to Rensselaer County!

How much do you really know about the struggle for women's suffrage? Do you think the battles the early suffragists fought have any relevance to us today? For an entertaining and thought-provoking portrayal of four women whose lives were spent fighting for women's

equality, come to the League of Women Voters of Rensselaer County's production of "The Stone that Started the Ripple." This play, written by past Saratoga League President Pat Nugent, is a humorous dramatization of a modern-day reunion of suffragists Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and Sojourner Truth. The actual words of these women are embedded in the script, which is continually updated to reflect current events. The suffragists will be portrayed by professional young actresses and directed by Saratoga League member Lezlie Dana. "The Stone" was performed to a sold-out audience and rave reviews in Saratoga last winter. The play's title comes from one of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's last speeches:

Our successors have a big work before them—much bigger, in fact, than they imagine. We were only the stone that started the ripple, but you are the ripple that is spreading and will eventually cover the whole pond.

As Ms. Nugent says, "The audience doesn't know the story because history books don't elaborate on these crusaders who were shouted down, ridiculed, spat upon, kicked, shoved, jailed, force-fed and even killed. All because they wanted to vote, a right we now take for granted—a dangerous apathy since the Supreme Court recently gutted the Voting Rights Act. We must tell the story of these forgotten heroes who put their lives on the line just to participate in the democratic process. Because it is *our* story."

"The Stone that Started the Ripple" will be performed on Thursday, March 26th, at 7 pm at Russell Sage College's Bush Memorial Auditorium. Tickets are \$10; student tickets are \$5. Tickets will be available at the Post-Holiday Party and upon request to csalmon@nycap.rr.com thereafter. Please plan to attend and bring your friends!

STATE NEWS

League Day at the UN

On November 13, 2014, I was fortunate enough to attend the annual League Day at the United Nations. This event, held every year at the UN headquarters in New York City, combines a tour of the UN buildings, a buffet lunch in the delegates' dining room, and a briefing on a topic of international impact. This year the talk was on "Water for Life," a look at how water scarcity is being addressed by the UN around the globe.

The first thing you notice when you arrive at the UN is the extremely tight security. You are given a visitor's badge and assigned to a group of no more than 14 people; each group is given a guide. Throughout your visit, your group must be accompanied by your guide at all times. If one person needs to use the restroom, everyone and the guide troops to the restroom, and the guide waits outside until everyone is ready to move forward once again.

Our first stop was the sculpture garden on the side of the UN facing the East River. A number of nations have donated sculptures, each one denoting a theme particular to the donating country. I especially liked the sculpture from Ireland, which showed Irish immigrants boarding a boat, presumably to leave during the Potato Famine. We then entered the buildings and toured the various chambers where debates and presentations take place. They all seemed to have been donated by various Scandinavian countries and featured lots of blonde wood. Artwork in different media – sculptures, quilts, paintings -- donated by other countries dotted the hallways. There was even a piece of the Berlin Wall! Finally we were led to the delegates' dining room, with its spectacular view of the East River. There we enjoyed a wonderful luncheon buffet offering dishes from many different international cuisines.

After lunch came the heart of the day, the briefing. The presentation was introduced by Rosalee Keech, the LWVUS Observer to the UN. She spoke of the ways the League, working with conjunction with the UN and its coalitions, had influenced interventions like providing the Saudi Arabian women with the vote and working to prevent human trafficking, especially of children.

The main topic of water scarcity was presented in the context of climate change. Dan Thomas, the Head of Communications for the UN Secretary-General's Climate Change Support, spoke about Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon's Climate Change Summit which was held in September 2014. Mr. Thomas's remarks were introduced by a very moving video showing clips of the summit, including an address by Mrs. Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner of the Marshall Islands. Mrs. Jetnil-Kijiner and her husband have an infant daughter; the video showed how their village is already beginning to be lost to rising water levels, and in a poem the mother laments how her daughter may never be able to know the village as her home. Mr. Thomas noted that many of the gains made in sustainable development in the past 15 years could be undermined by climate change. World governments have agreed to meet in Paris this year to sign an agreement to limit the increase in global temperatures to 2 degrees. The UN hopes the Paris summit will mobilize enough political will to make it a meaningful and universal catalyst for action.

The second briefing was by Nicolas Franke, an Associate Expert in Water Policy at the Division of Sustainable Development of the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs. He explained that 2.7 billion people around the world (half the current population) live at least one month of the year in water scarcity. This is being exacerbated by unsustainable practices. For example, in the US, we use 80-100 gallons of water per person per day. This rises to 1,800 gallons a day if you include the water used in food cultivation and product manufacturing. To produce one loaf of bread uses 110 gallons of water. Production of one pound of rice uses 1,300 gallons of water. One pound of beef uses 2,000 gallons of water. Mr. Franke feels that it is important for governments to imbed water resource restrictions in their policies throughout the world; otherwise, companies will simply move from Europe to Asia to Africa, or wherever regulation is less. We must work to ensure availability of water for agriculture and manufacturing, regulate safe sanitation practices, and provide equitable access to clean drinking water for all.

For those of us who have little experience with water scarcity in our personal lives, the afternoon's presentations were challenging and thought-provoking. An interesting exercise is to use the online "water footprint calculator," a web-based tool presented by Grace

Communications (a co-sponsor of the UN Day); it helps you calculate how much water your household uses in a typical day and can be found at www.gracelinks.org/1408/water-footprint-calculator. I left UN day wondering what the worldwide impact would be if we all paid as much attention to water efficiency as we do to energy efficiency. My thanks to the League for raising my awareness of this vital topic! If you have the chance to attend the UN Day next year, I would encourage you to go. You'll meet people from Leagues all over the region, enjoy a delicious lunch, and expand your thinking, all in one day. Watch the *Voter* next fall for announcements of this event.

Chris Salmon

NATIONAL NEWS

4 Solutions to Fight the Corruptive Influence of Money in Politics

By: Jessica Jones 01/21/2015

Every January we mark the anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in [Citizens United v. FEC](#). It has become an occasion when we acknowledge the damaging effects of the decision while strengthening our resolve to address the problem of money in politics.

Spending levels for the 2014 election are the newest evidence of the lasting effects of the *Citizens United* decision. An estimated [\\$4 billion was spent on the 2014 election](#), making it the most expensive midterm election in U.S. history. Money poured in to Super PACs and other outside groups, and was also funneled to secret dark money organizations. Over \$600 million dollars was raised and spent by Super PACs. These supposedly "independent" groups could raise and spend unlimited amounts because of weak regulations by the Federal Election Commission (FEC). Too often, our elections have become about electing candidates who will do the bidding of their big-money and secret donors rather than addressing the interests of the people they represent.

What's more, this type of system is also impacting state and local elections, including the election of judges across the country. The next big fight on the corrupting influence of money in politics will be decided by the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of [Williams-Yulee v. The Florida Bar](#), which focuses on the constitutionality of prohibitions on direct solicitation by candidates for judicial office. The [amicus brief](#) joined by the LWVUS and the [League of Women Voters of Florida](#) argues in favor of the prohibitions because the public must have confidence in the independence and impartiality of judges.

While the outlook may seem bleak, there is actually much work that can be done to stop the influence of money in politics. Here are just four things that the League will be working on in the coming year.

1. **Improve Disclosure:** Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy said: "Disclosure permits citizens and shareholders to react to the speech of corporate entities in a proper way." Citizens have a right to know who is trying to influence their vote and disclosure of donations and spending is necessary to shine a light on secret money. The League is a

longtime supporter of the [DISCLOSE Act](#) and we will continue to push for passage of this important piece of legislation.

2. **Establish a Public Financing System:** The League believes that public financing is the best long term solution to getting big money out of politics. States like Arizona, Connecticut and Maine have had success in public financing with state house and statewide elections. The League continues to look for [ways to limit the size and type of contributions](#) from all sources as a means of combating undue influence in the election process.
3. **Strengthen Regulations on Coordination:** The Federal Election Commission (FEC) is the federal agency in charge of our nation's campaign finance laws, but so far they've [done practically nothing](#) to address the U.S. Supreme Court's disappointing decision in *Citizens United*. Under existing law, the FEC can work to define "coordination" as a way of cutting back on the "independent" expenditures that really are coordinated with candidate campaigns, but thus far they have refused to do so.
4. **Vote:** If the American public wants to get money out of politics, it's time to take our elections back. Voting is the most powerful form of expression that a single citizen has. When citizens vote, politicians have to listen. We must improve voter turnout and engage within our communities to combat the undue influence of money in our political system. [Get registered!](#)

In addition to our work with the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government, we are engaging in a review of our [campaign finance position](#). The League of Women Voters is observing the 5th anniversary of *Citizens United* with a renewed resolve to limit the influence of money in politics.