



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF EAST NASSAU

# voter

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*At local, state and national levels  
the League works to influence public policy  
through education and advocacy.*

March 2015

## Save the Dates

- Tue. Mar. 3, 7:00 pm  
Merrick Library  
Candidates Meeting
- Wed., Mar. 4, 1:00 pm  
Levittown Library  
LWV East Nassau Board Meeting
- Tue., Mar. 10, 6:30 pm  
Hempstead Library  
LWV Nassau County Board Meeting
- Wed., Mar. 18, 3:30 pm  
Levittown Library  
Increasing Role of women in Politics
- Wed., Apr. 1, 7:30 pm  
LWV East Nassau Board Meeting

## SPECIAL ELECTION



On Tuesday, March 10, a Special Election will be held to fill the vacant seat in the Nassau County 19<sup>th</sup> Legislative District (formerly held by David Denenberg). The candidates for this seat are:

**Rita Kestenbaum (D, WF)**

**Steven Rhoads (R, I, C, TR)**

Both candidates have accepted our invitation to participate in a Candidates Meeting, co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters of East Nassau and the Merrick Library, on **Tuesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, at the Merrick Library, at 7:00pm.**

Join us on March 3<sup>rd</sup> to hear what the candidates have to say, to ask the candidates relevant questions and to get the answers directly from the source.

## MARCH=WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Women's History Month is a time when we recognize the important contribution that women make to our society. To celebrate, we invited two of the women on the Nassau County Legislature to discuss **WOMEN'S ROLE IN POLITICS.**

**Laura Curran (LD 5) and Laura Schaefer (LD 14)**

**Wednesday, March 18th  
Levittown Library  
3:30 pm**

Please join us for this informative presentation and invite your friends. This is an opportunity to meet your local representatives, ask questions and share your concerns. Refreshments will be served.



*It is not power that corrupts, but fear. Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it and fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it.*

Aung San Suu Kyi, Burmese pro-democracy leader

*The size of your dreams must always exceed your current capacity to achieve them. If your dreams do not scare you, they are not big enough.*

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia

## For Women's History Month, We Celebrate Our Own Woman in STEM\*



The **2014 winner of the NCWIT** (National Center for Women & Information Technology) **Pioneer Award** was **Eleanor Kolchin**, a retired computer scientist and web developer who's most well-known for her work at IBM, NYU, and the LWV of East Nassau.

Ellie graduated from Brooklyn College with a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics. After a short period of teaching math at the high school level, she was hired by IBM in 1947, and eventually became the tabulating supervisor of the computing staff at IBM's Watson Scientific Computing Laboratory at Columbia University, one of the first places to apply business machines for scientific research. While working at the Lab, she attended classes toward a master's degree in Math.

One of Ellie's first assignments was computing the orbits of a number of asteroids. The early computers were plug board computers; each program required wiring a different plug board to be inserted into the computer. One of the many projects being developed at the Lab was Fortran, a widely used scientific computer language. Another was the extremely accurate calculations of the phases of the moon, which were ultimately used in our moon landings. A very new computer built at the time was the SSEC, which occupied an entire room, enabling the computation of the orbits of the outer planets with high accuracy.

Prof. Louis Green of Haverford College came to the Watson Lab to do his research in astrophysics. After Ellie left IBM to raise her family, she worked for Dr. Green for many years solving various differential equations and doing Fortran programming. Dr. Green was given computing time on the new powerful CDC computer at NYU, which Ellie used. She was hired part-time by NYU when Dr. Green retired. One of her many jobs was as consultant to researchers using Fortran programs. She also developed web pages for various NYU projects. She retired from NYU in 2006.

During much of this time, Ellie was also an active member of the LWV of East Nassau. She was an inactive, dues-paying member at first, but in the early 1970s, she joined a study group on Education Finance, and was active from then on, until she moved to Long Beach, and later to Florida. Ellie is currently using her computer skills to maintain a web site and data base for over 1000 people at her Florida Country Club.

\* STEM = Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

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### Advocacy Training 2015

On Friday, February 5, Barbara Epstein, Mimi Hirsch, Barbara Josepher and Paula Blum attended a NYS League Advocacy Workshop in NYC. After some tasty, albeit high caloric refreshments, we heard briefings by the President and Executive Director of the state League, in addition to several of the state League's specialists and committee chairs.



Sally Robinson (President) discussed lobbying at the national and state levels, and she and Barbara Bartoletti (Legislative Director) discussed ethics and campaign finance reform, a key topic these days. Barbara also discussed what is happening now with the Women's Equality Coalition. Marion Bott (Education Finance Specialist) brought us up-to-date on Education and charter schools, and we got updates from Beth Radow (Energy, Agriculture & Environmental Committee Chair), Madeline Zevon (Healthcare Committee Chair), and Aimee Allaud (Election Law Specialist).

The speakers were excellent, we learned a lot, and we will share our new knowledge at the next board meeting on March 4th. All members are welcome at board meetings, so please join us then.

## Health Care - Update - Need to Know



Since passage of the Affordable Care Act, the non-elderly uninsured rate fell from 20% in August, 2013, to 15% in May, 2014 (9.5 million people), with a drop in every demographic except Black. In states that expanded Medicaid, the uninsured rate fell to 10.1%; in states not expanding Medicaid, the rate remains over 18%.

Studies report that Medicaid patients with the ten deadliest cancers are 44% more likely to die of their disease than those with non-Medicaid insurance; the uninsured rate is 47%.

Health Care spending was expected to rise 6.7% in 2014 to \$3.05 trillion, 17.7% of GDP. The cost for an employer-insured family of four would be \$23,215, with the family paying \$9,696 out of pocket.

Recently several BIG PHARMA companies merged with out-of-country manufacturers, then re-incorporated abroad to avoid US taxes. Prices of 73 brand name medicines have surged over 75% since 2007 (6X consumer price index). An example is Sovaldi, for Hepatitis C at \$1000 for one pill that costs \$1.00 to produce; the U.S. price for a 12-week course of Sovaldi is \$84,000.

“Medicare Advantage in some areas costs as much as 25% more than standard Medicare.

(Source: LWV Rivertowns)

### **HELP WANTED**

*LWVEN does not currently have a Health Care Director, either on or off board. If you are interested in being Health Care Director, being part of a Health Care committee, or just learning more about the possibilities, please let Barbara Epstein know – 221-1948.*

## Speaker's Arrest Prompts Call for Sweeping NYS Ethics Reform

Backroom dealing and secrecy undermine public confidence and breed public cynicism and apathy. Central to all policymaking are rules by which legislatures decide what to do. The League, with other good government groups, calls for four main changes:

1. Increase the strength and efficiency of committees by:
  - a. Reducing the number of standing committees, and the number upon which members can sit;
  - b. Allowing Senate members to vote in committee only if they are physically present;
  - c. Clarifying the rule on petition for hearings, so that 1/3 of members can ensure a hearing on a bill unless a majority of members object;
  - d. Requiring a public reading and mark up process for bills before they can be passed through committee;
  - e. Requiring that all committees must post their agendas and notices online a full two days in advance of the meeting (with exceptions only for those additions that are agreed to by the ranking minority member of the committee); and
  - f. Requiring that all bills that pass out of committee include reports that set forth the purpose of the bill, proposed changes to existing law, a section-by-section explanation of the bill, a cost-benefit analysis, the bill's procedural and voting history, and any individual members' comments on the bill.
2. Encourage greater participation by all legislators by providing the opportunity for a simple majority of members to bring any bill to the floor for consideration and a vote, regardless of leadership objections.
3. Foster equity and comity through the fair allocation of resources between the majority and minority parties by ensuring that funding for central staff is proportionate to a conference's size and tightening rules prohibiting the use of resources for political purposes.
4. Increase transparency by making access to information on the Legislative Retrieval Service free and following through with the creation of the State Government Public Affairs Channel (often referred to as "NYSPAN").

# After the Climate March – What Should We Do Next?

Source: Sierra Club

Use our traditional tool - the Ballot Box to unlock road blocks to effective legislation.  
Curb population growth.  
Conserve energy, use it more efficiently.  
Use natural resources more efficiently.  
Reduce pollution.

Expand renewable energy.  
Support planning and zoning that stops sprawl.  
Reduce public subsidies to fossil fuel.  
Develop green, sustainable communities.  
Protect critical environmental areas.  
Ban fracking and natural gas export.

Advocate wherever, whenever possible.



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## Water Issues Continue

For years, many LI companies were putting the byproducts of their processes into steel drums and burying those drums in the ground. This practice was condoned by the government, since no one realized how significantly the chemicals could affect us. As should have been expected, over time, drums rusted and burst, and the chemical contaminants ended up in the ground.

Grumman, one of the aforementioned companies, poured chemicals down floor drains directly into the ground and even put them into ponds to evaporate. When planes were built, they were washed with chemicals that ended up in the ground as well. As we know now, many of those chemicals filtered down into the aquifer system, LI's sole source of drinking water. And, we must keep in mind the fact that none of these procedures was in any way illegal at the time. The result, however, is a series of toxic plumes in our aquifers, which have continued to spread.

Cleanups have been done in some places on LI, as well as elsewhere around the country, but in limited numbers. Some water purveyors use well head treatment to clean up the water they pump, so that their customers get safe water, but the cost is significant, and this does not stop the plumes from spreading. If nothing is done, these chemical plumes will reach the Great South Bay in the not too distant future. No one is clear as to what the consequences of this will be.

Some claim that hydraulic containment is necessary to clean up the water and to prevent the plumes from spreading further. The water would be drawn out in different places, treated and returned to the aquifer. In order to protect people's health and the environment, something must be done to stop the encroachment of the plumes and to remove the chemicals.

But, how will this be accomplished? Who will finally take the responsibility to see that it is done, correctly? Now more than ever, we need an Aquifer Management Compact, with the ability to manage our water supply, so that future generations will have the water needed to allow them to live on Long Island.

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## Enabling Solar Power



The growth of the solar industry has been huge in the past five years. In the past two years, the vast majority of new power plants installed in the USA have been solar plants. Just last week, a 550 megawatt solar power plant came online in California. That's enough to power 160,000 homes! To accelerate the adoption of solar power, state governments have instituted various incentives. These include tax credits, grants, production credits and net metering.

What is going on in New York? Thanks in large part to Gov. Cuomo's NY-SUN initiative, this year, NY finally got into the top 10 states regarding solar installations. There is new legislation in progress in NY that would enable residential customers to "remote net meter" with a central solar power plant. Since not all residences have a suitable place to put solar panels, this will allow many more people to go solar. The bottom line is, more solar power means, not only cleaner energy, but also more local jobs!

(Source: Broome-Tioga VOTER)

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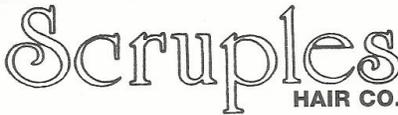


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Women's History Month**

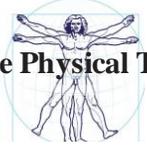


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Yes, I want to support the LWV's work in citizen education and advocacy.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

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Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Areas of interest: \_\_\_\_\_

**Enclosed is my (our) check  
payable to LWV of East Nassau for**

\_\_\_\_\_ **membership dues** (\$50 Individual / \$75 household)

\_\_\_\_\_ **contribution**      **Total:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please clip & send with your check to:  
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LWVEN Treasurer  
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The League of Women Voters® a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.



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*Thank You*  
**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS of East Nassau**  
*for your dedication and commitment to the residents of Nassau County*

*There is no better time than now to express my deepest appreciation and gratitude for giving so freely of yourselves. "Unless someone like YOU cares a whole awful lot - nothing is going to get better. It's not."* Dr. Seuss

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# Ten Ways the League of Women Voters Has Helped Improve Our Country

By: Renee Davidson 02/04/2015

This year, the League of Women Voters celebrated its 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Founded by suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt on February 14, 1920 – just six months prior to passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment – the League was charged with “finish[ing] the fight” to ensure that every eligible voter has free and fair access to the polls. Ever since, the League has been at the forefront of efforts to empower citizens to play an active role in our democracy.

**In honor of 95 years of Making Democracy Work<sup>®</sup>, here are 10 ways the League has helped strengthen our democracy and ensure equality throughout the past century.**

1. The Sheppard-Towner Act of 1921, a groundbreaking law providing federal funding for maternity and child care, was the League’s first major success.
2. Following World War II, the League helped lead the effort to establish the United Nations.
3. In 1952, the League joined NBC and Life magazine in sponsoring the first-ever televised U.S. presidential debate. We served as the official presidential debate sponsor from 1976 to 1984. Today, Leagues across the country continue to sponsor candidate debates at the state and local levels.
4. McCarthyism and the witch hunt period of the 1950s inspired the League to help educate Americans on their individual rights and liberties as guaranteed by the Constitution. This work culminated when LWVUS President Percy Maxim Lee testified before Congress against Senator Joseph McCarthy's abuse of congressional investigative powers in 1955.
5. Between 1950 and 1970, the League increased its effectiveness in regard to both public education and advocacy, prompting Senator George Aiken to remark, “Only 135,000 of them? I thought there were millions.”
6. Throughout the 70s and 80s, passing the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was a top League priority at the national and state levels. The League organized the National Business Council (NBC) for ERA, the first formal structure to bring major business leaders into the fight for ratification.
7. In the 1990s, the League was at the forefront of the fight to pass the National Voter Registration Act, better known as Motor Voter. We even have President Clinton’s pen from the signing!
8. Following five years of campaigning, the League helped pass the McCain-Feingold bill, also known as the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA), in 2002. The legislation closed the most significant loopholes in campaign finance regulation at the time, making historic strides in helping protect our nation’s elections from secret money.
9. In 2006, the League launched VOTE411.org, the go-to online resource for voter registration and elections-related information. In 2014, over 1.5 million people used VOTE411.org to find the election information they needed to vote. *VOTE411.org has all the information you need to cast your ballot, including polling place locations, candidate information, voting requirements and more.*
10. In 2014, the League and our partners helped collect 8 million public comments encouraging the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to cut carbon pollution and fight climate change. We’re still pushing ahead in 2015.

The League is one of our country’s oldest and strongest nonpartisan civic organizations. Ninety-five years after the League was founded, we continue to hold fast to the belief that our nation is at its strongest when citizens are engaged with our democracy, from voting rights and voter education to campaign finance reform and environmental defense.

*“There will never be a true democracy,” said Carrie Chapman Catt, “until every responsible...adult in it, without regard to race, sex, color or creed has his or her own...voice in government.” Cheers to that – and to the next 95 years and counting!*

**(Editor’s note: More than a few current members have been in League for a significant part of the last 95 years, and are proud of it. This is certainly very positive, but the negative is that we do not have as many younger members as we need to continue our work. Can you bring a younger member into League?)**

**What can League do to educate the public about the importance of local elections and get them to the polls this year? After all, this is what League is all about. Barbara Epstein would welcome your ideas. Call her at 221-1948 or send her an email at epsteinb1@gmail.com.**

## Update on League Priorities and Activity

“Every year, the LWVUS Board meets in January to, among many other things, set federal legislative priorities for the year. The League has many positions from which to take action but establishing a focus for our national advocacy is a critical responsibility of the LWVUS Board as it is for every League Board.... In setting legislative priorities the Board considers a number of factors, the most important of which is focusing League effort where it can have the greatest impact. For 2015 the LWVUS legislative priorities are, as usual, ranked in two tiers. The first tier priorities are **voting rights and election administration and money in politics**; the second tier priorities are **climate and environmental protection, immigration and health care (including reproductive choice)**.

... President Obama, in his State of the Union address, devoted a lot of time to what he called middle class economics. Practical political considerations dictate that the League, at the national level, can most effectively work for the greatest good by focusing on core democracy issues. Much of the inequality, economic and otherwise, that exists in our society results from uneven and unequal access and participation at the ballot box and beyond. However, the LWVUS Board reminds Leagues that we have a national position on **Meeting Basic Human Needs** that includes the following statement: “People who are unable to work, whose earnings are inadequate or for whom jobs are not available have the right to an income and/or services sufficient to meet their basic needs for food, shelter and access to health care.” The [National] Board is aware that in setting their own legislative priorities for this year, there are communities in which League Boards may find both the interest and the opportunity to take action on local or state legislation to which this position may apply. Every League Board has the serious responsibility to do its due diligence on any proposed legislation that addresses Meeting Basic Human Needs and judge whether there is member understanding and agreement that the proposed legislation meets the criteria quoted above. If it does, then the Board should carefully deliberate and make a decision based upon both the position and the needs of its own community. What fits other communities can only be addressed by the relevant League.

With the understanding that the LWVUS Board has not interpreted this provision of our position on Meeting Basic Human Needs to define a so-called ‘living wage’ at the national level or to support a federal minimum wage, action on state or local legislation using this or any other national position is in the discretion of the League Board at that governmental level. At the national level, Board and staff will continue to say that we have no member understanding and agreement as to a definition of a ‘living wage’ and that we cannot support a federal minimum wage. On the other hand, we do not presume to anticipate every possible legislative scenario that Leagues may confront in their own communities to which the language of the Meeting Basic Human Needs position may apply.

Questions regarding the application of this position at the state and local level may be directed to LWVUS Advocacy Chair Chris Carson at [carsonlww@yahoo.com](mailto:carsonlww@yahoo.com).” (Source: Elisabeth MacNamara, Pres. LWVUS)

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### The League of Women Voters of East Nassau

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