



THE LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS
of Schenectady County New York

BULLETIN

www.lwvschenectady.org

September 2015

League Kickoff Luncheon

Wednesday, September 16
11:45 AM- 1:45 PM

Speaker: Judge Jill Polk, Family Court Judge

“Juvenile Justice: Issues and Concerns”

Stockade Inn
1 N. Church Street, Schenectady

Buffet luncheon of sandwiches, salads and desserts. Cost: \$28

Please make your reservation by September 13- see p. 6.

MORE SEPTEMBER EVENTS

Thursday, September 10

Primary Day

Tuesday, September 22

National Voter Registration Day

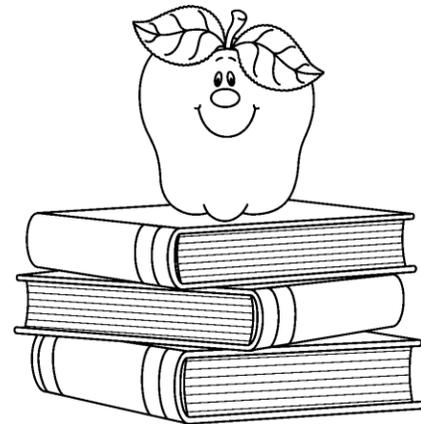
Tuesday, September 22

Health Committee Meeting

Niskayuna Library

2400 Nott St. E

Contact: Carol Furman 346-2746



Message from the Steering Committee

Sadly, summer is ending and September is upon us. But, happily, a new year of League activities is beginning. Our annual Kickoff Luncheon is Wednesday, September 16th, again at the Stockade Inn. We are delighted that Judge Jill Polk has agreed to be our speaker (even though she has to be in court at 2:00). She will speak about "Juvenile Justice Reform: Issues and Concerns". The topic is timely. In late October we will be having a concurrence meeting on "Raise the Age", the issue of raising the age at which offenders are considered adults from 16 to 18.

New York State is one of only two states in the nation which still treats 16 and 17 year-olds as adults in the criminal justice system regardless of the offence. (The other is North Carolina). In his 2014 State of the State address Governor Cuomo listed raising the age of adult criminality to 18 as a top priority for the 2015 legislative session and budget negotiations. The budget in March included \$135 million to implement the change the age policies. But, by the end of the legislative session in June, no implementation policy had been developed due to opposition in the Senate. On June 24th, Governor Cuomo took executive action to take 16 and 17 year-olds out of state prisons and house them in separate facilities. Questions about how this will be executed remain. Facilities and programming need to be developed before implementation is possible. Already overburdened Family Courts would be expected to handle youth cases. It is expected that this issue will again be a priority of Governor Cuomo in his 2015 State of the State address.

The State League convention delegates approved using the LWV Ohio's study and positions on Juvenile Justice as a basis for a concurrence on the "Raise the Age" issue. LWVNYS will be distributing information and study materials to local Leagues soon. Concurrence meetings will be held this Fall in order to position the League for lobbying for comprehensive "Raise the Age" legislation when the issue is again before the Legislature.

Arguments for raising the age are several. Youths of 16 and 17 who become enmeshed in the criminal justice system are mostly non-violent, mostly Latino or African-American and mostly lower income. The cost of incarceration and high rates of recidivism are issues. The cost to house one inmate for one year in New York ranges from \$50,000 to \$60,000 per year. Studies comparing outcomes for young offenders in New Jersey and New York show that teens prosecuted in adult courts in New York are 85% more likely to be arrested for violent crimes than those prosecuted in New Jersey juvenile courts and 44% more likely to be rearrested for felony property crimes. One mistake as a teen may ruin lives. The human brain is not fully developed until the early 20's according to neuroscience. Children under the age of 18 are still immature and should be treated accordingly and provided opportunity for rehabilitation.

In October we will also be hosting candidate forums for local elections. Forums will be held in Glenville, Niskayuna, Rotterdam and the City of Schenectady. The AAUW will be co-hosting. Volunteers will be needed to help at all sites. Please help if you can and encourage people you know to attend. For VOTE411.org, another voter service of the League, we will be collecting information from local candidates and publishing it online. This year, Stewart's Shops will publicize this service for voters on their milk cartons! National Voter Registration Day is September 22nd. We will be registering voters at a number of sites and help will be needed and most welcome! When someone registers to vote that person may now also sign up to be an organ donor on the same form. This option will be explained to prospective registrants.

This is for starters. There's more to comeStay tuned! Hope to see you at an event soon!

Ruth Bonn, Lead

Health Committee Annual Report

The Health Committee spent much of its time and attention this year on issues related to aging and on the New York Health Act which describes a single payer health insurance plan for New Yorkers. We invited Laurie Bacheldor from Schenectady County Department of Senior and Long Term Care Services and Ann DiSaro, consultant in aging services, to present "Aging in a Changing Landscape of Services and Resources- Challenges and Opportunities". Collaborating with AAUW, Schenectady County Retired Teachers, the Jewish Community Center and the Department of Senior and Long Term Care Services brought out a sizable audience and enthusiasm for the program.

We spent time in the winter studying the New York Health Act and participated in a public hearing sponsored by Assemblyman Gottfried. The Assembly passed the Act but the Senate

did not bring it to a vote before the session ended.

In April, we examined the Community Health Assessment done in 2013 and invited Erin Simao, Outreach Health Coordinator for Ellis Medicine to speak with us about the Schenectady Coalition for a Healthy Community, its action plan to address certain health outcomes, and what the League might do to help the Coalition improve community health outcomes. We have started to look at a collaborative project to prevent falls among residents over 65 years of age and will continue with this work into the Fall of 2015.

A meeting of the Health Committee is tentatively set for September 22nd at the Niskayuna Library. Please contact Carol Furman at 346-2746 for details.

Carol Furman, Chair

League Advocates for Continued Funding to Restore the Great Lakes

The League joined other organizations in sending a letter to the Office of Management and Budget requesting continued funding for Great Lakes restoration priorities. Investments in Great Lakes restoration projects are having on the ground effects in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan,

Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

*Excerpted from LWVUS League Update
August 6, 2015*

STEERING COMMITTEE

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

Bulletin Editor: Cheryl Nechamen (346-4820)

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.

Schenectady County Family Court Judge Jill Polk to Talk about Juvenile Justice and Court Issues

Schenectady County Family Court Judge Jill S. Polk will kick off the League of Women Voters of Schenectady County Fall programming with a talk September 16th at the Stockade Inn in Schenectady.

Judge Polk, newly elected Family Court Judge in 2014, will discuss juvenile justice and family court issues in her presentation to the League at its luncheon from 11:45 AM to 1:45 PM.

Judge Polk was a senior attorney at the New York Commission on Judicial Conduct prior to assuming her current family court position. She prosecuted judges for ethical violations. She has wide experience, having served as a defense attorney, prosecutor, and special referee. Judge Polk received her J.D. degree from Albany Law School.

Voter Services Volunteer Opportunities!

Voter Registration The League will provide opportunities for voter registration again this year. We will join in National Voter Registration Day on September 22nd at several sites around the County. Please let us know if you could help us with this League endeavor---especially on September 22nd. We have also agreed to conduct Voter Registration at Schenectady County Community College on September 16th. If you can help with either of these dates, please contact Kay Ackerman. Other voter registration opportunities will be announced soon!

Candidate Forums This is a year of major local elections. In October, American Association of University Women (AAUW) and the League will be working together to hold candidate forums in the City of Schenectady and Towns of Glenville, Niskayuna and Rotterdam for citizens to meet and hear candidates' views and positions on local issues. Many volunteers are needed to carry out this important community service. We need folks to help set up for the forums, greeters to meet the attendees and hand out the program and index cards for their questions, people to review these questions to avoid duplication and weed out inappropriate comments/questions such as personal attacks, and people to watch the clock so candidates stay within the time limits. Dates are being confirmed as the Bulletin

goes to press---so if you might have an interest and willingness to help---contact Kay Ackerman for more information or the Candidate Forum Coordinator for a specific forum:

Glenville – Betsy Chase
399-9070, davsmlltrt@aol.com
Niskayuna – Maxine Borom
370-2662, omahborom@msn.com
Rotterdam – Marsha Mortimore
lmortimo@nycap.rr.com
City of Schenectady – Connie Young
393-7061, cyoung50@nycap.rr.com

Election Result Collection Every year the League and AAUW partner to collect the election results at as many polling places in the County as possible. We are paid for these efforts of reporting results to a central registry that tabulate and report election results to area media. The proceeds from this effort are used to pay for the taping of candidate forums held in October which are broadcast on Schenectady's Public Access Station. The more polling places we cover, the more we receive in payments. So if you would be willing to be at an assigned polling place (could be your own!) at 9 PM on Election Night, November 3, 2015 to collect returns, please contact Kay Ackerman at 393-5000, kaydonack@aol.com.

League Kickoff Luncheon

Speaker: Judge Jill Polk, Family Court Judge

Luncheon will include buffet with salads, sandwiches, desserts, and beverage. Cost is \$28.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Number of reservations: _____

Please make your reservation by **September 13th** by contacting Ruth Bonn, 384-0804, ruthbonn47@gmail.com. Your reservation is a commitment to pay unless we are able to fill unexpected vacancies with last minute reservations.

LWV Withdraws from Fair Campaign Practices Organization

Four Leagues of Women Voters of the Capital District announced today that they are withdrawing from participation in Fair Campaign Practices for the Capital Region, Inc. (FCP) that was founded in 1999 to promote fair and honest political campaigns.

Barbara Thomas, designated as spokesperson for the Leagues of Women Voters of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady Counties, said the Leagues made the decision "regretfully" but they no longer believe that they can be effective in carrying out the organization's original purpose which was to improve the tenor of political campaigns in the four counties. Political campaigns are increasingly influenced by Political Action committees (PACs) over which candidates have no control.

According to FCP President Mick Drown, the Interfaith Alliance, Capital District Chapter, will continue its participation in FCP and plans to recruit other organizations to join with them to carry out the goal of supporting fair campaign practices and educating the public when unfair practices have been used.

As volunteer organizations, the Leagues have had to make difficult decisions on where to focus

their resources and have decided to focus on voter registration and education, candidate forums, and campaign finance reform, among other issues. In recent years, the Leagues have found it increasingly difficult to recruit its members for Board of Directors and leadership responsibilities for FCP. The Leagues also noted a recent decline in complaints to FCP filed by political candidates and a decline in candidates' willingness to sign pledges to conduct fair campaigns.

FCP was founded by the Leagues of Women Voters of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady Counties and the Interfaith Alliance, Capital District Chapter, for the purpose of educating the public about misleading and unfair campaign practices which are used by some candidates to gain an advantage over their opponents. FCP tried to encourage factual accuracy and relevance in campaign literature and advertisements. In its history, FCP heard complaints and issued 52 findings; complaints were filed in the four counties. Each year FCP has asked local political candidates in the four counties to sign a pledge that they would honor principles of fair campaigning and FCP has tried to publicize those principles that result in a climate in which candidates conduct honest campaigns.



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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 _____

Facebook _____ Electronic Publicity _____

Other Technical Skill? (Describe) _____

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September Calendar of Events

Thurs. Sept. 10...Primary Day

Wed. Sept. 16...Kickoff Luncheon
11:45 AM, Stockade Inn, Schenectady

**Tues. Sept. 22...National Voter
Registration Day**

Tues. Sept. 22...Health Committee Meeting
Niskayuna Library, Niskayuna

League Kickoff Luncheon

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“Juvenile Justice: Issues and Concerns”

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