



THE LEAGUE OF  
WOMEN VOTERS  
of Schenectady County New York

# BULLETIN

[www.lwvschenectady.org](http://www.lwvschenectady.org)

February 2016

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### PROGRAM PLANNING POTLUCK

**Tuesday February 9**

**New Member Orientation 5:30 PM**

**Planning Potluck 6 PM**  
(bring a salad to share!)

1400 Keyes Ave., Niskayuna  
(Connie Young's home)

Contact: Carol Furman 346-2746

Please bring your February bulletin with national and local positions



### Save the Date

BPW Network to Connect Forum IV

The Other Side of Schenectady's  
"Economic Miracle"

Tuesday March 22

Contact: Elena Alvarez 377-3632

## Message from the Steering Committee

No one needs reminding that we are less than a year away from a major presidential election year. Recently it was pointed out that this election year will be one of the most important in a generation. The next president will likely name one if not more Supreme Court Justices. The importance of change in the Justices sitting on the Supreme Court on decisions regarding campaign finance and voter rights is evident in recent reversals of decisions on these two topics.

This will be the first federal election without the full protections of the Voters Rights Act of 1965. We have heard of numerous state laws passed recently which have the effect of disenfranchising voters. We in New York State have limited options for voter registration and voting options outside of our polling place on Election Day. There is much work to be done to make voting easier and to encourage participation by all eligible.

This will probably also be the most expensive federal election ever with a large portion of the dollars coming from a small number of very wealthy donors (a majority estimated to come from just 159 families).

In January our League held a consensus meeting to update a position on campaign finance to recognize the effect of First Amendment rights decisions on campaign finance regulation and allow the League to take action to protect our democratic process from the influence of a small number of large donors and the effect of large contributions from corporations and other organizations with large pocketbooks. This study was part of the process of collecting grassroots ideas from local Leagues to determine priorities.

Program planning meetings by local Leagues in 2014 resulted in approval at the National Convention in 2014 of three areas of program and study. One area was money in politics, another was a study of the process of amending the United States Constitution, and the third was a review of the redistricting process for federal Congressional offices.

This year there will be another National Convention of the LWVUS which will be held in Washington, DC in June 2016. In preparation, our League and all others will hold program planning meetings in order to identify priorities for the next two years.

Some of the most important work done by the League includes:

- 1) Registering and educating new voters on voting procedures and how to arrive at the correct polling place prepared to have their vote count.
- 2) Work done to protect the vote so that each vote cast is counted.
- 3) Empowering the vote with nonpartisan information about candidates and issues with our Voter Guides, campaign forums, and web-based candidate information at VOTE411.org.
- 4) Getting out the vote. New York has low voter turnout numbers. Many feel that elected officials don't represent their needs and that their vote does not count. Yet the best way to combat big money's influence is to get more informed voters participating in the election.

A recent survey of League members nationwide indicated that the most important issues faced by our nation today include the influence of money in politics, voter rights, redistricting, and climate change. As we hold our February 9<sup>th</sup> program planning meeting, let us identify what issues we in Schenectady County think need to be the focus of our organization on both a national and a local level and consider the positions we have previously developed to see if they allow us to take needed action. We can then provide our input to the national League for planning the direction Leagues at all levels will take in 2017-2018.

This is important work and a great way to see how the League functions as a grassroots organization. This meeting is your chance to have your opinions influence both our national League and our local Leagues. Please join us on February 9<sup>th</sup>!

*Carol Furman, Lead*

## Judicial Committee

In December, the Judicial Committee presented a concurrence meeting on the issue of "Raising the Age of Criminal Responsibility from 16 to 18 Years" in New York State. We agreed with the standard that now exists in 48 other states and we are now awaiting the statewide LWV response.

We continue to monitor the progress on nominations to the Court of Appeals. While the Governor has submitted his choice for Chief Judge by the deadline required by law, the State Senate has not yet acted on its responsibility in a timely fashion. On behalf of the State LWV, I submitted a letter to the Gazette editor which was published on January 12, 2016 (see below). We now wait for action by the Senate.

We noted with great sadness that former Chief Judge Judith Kaye has passed away at the age of 77. She was the first female Chief Judge of New York, serving for 14 years with great distinction. Her compassionate and creative approach will be greatly missed. She was particularly passionate about issues of the Family Court, promoting ways to move children out of foster care into permanent loving homes. She also created and promoted "specialty courts" to deal more constructively with drug addiction, mental health and domestic violence situations which have created more positive results in the criminal and civil justice systems.

Judge Kaye will be sorely missed, and we wish for the incumbent leadership to follow her course.

*Helga A. Schroeter, Chair*

*Letter to the Editor, The Daily Gazette, published 1/12/16:*

### **Delay on chief judge vote will delay justice**

The League of Women Voters of New York State strongly agrees with The Daily Gazette's Jan. 6 editorial, "No excuse for delay on chief judge," drawing public awareness to the serious consequences of the state Senate's refusal to address the appointment of the new chief judge in the timely manner required by law.

The chief judge is not only one of the seven members of the Court of Appeals, but he or she also acts as chief administrator, prepares the annual budget and oversees the functions of the courts. In addition to the absence of a new chief judge, the court also has a second vacancy

since the resignation of Associate Judge Susan Reed, leaving the panel of five with an overload of cases to be heard just in the upcoming weeks. It reminds of the saying, "Justice delayed is justice denied."

Thank you for your editorial advocating for prompt action on these crucial judicial appointments.

Helga A. Schroeter  
*The writer is a judicial specialist for the League of Women Voters of New York State*

### **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)

## Program Planning

What should be the focus of League of Women Voters study in the years 2016-2018?

Join us for a potluck supper on February 9<sup>th</sup> at 6 PM at 1400 Keyes Avenue, home of Connie Young, followed by a program planning meeting. We will set goals for our Schenectady work for the upcoming year and make recommendations for study to the national League of Women Voters. Please bring the February bulletin with National and Local

positions to the meeting and a salad to share.

New or potential members are welcomed at 5:30 PM for a short introduction to the LWV prior to the program planning meeting. This meeting is a wonderful way to meet other LWV members and to get a view of how the League develops its positions and the focus of its advocacy efforts. Hope to see you all there! Call 346-2746, Carol Furman if you have questions.

## Health Committee

The Health Committee has facilitated three meetings of a Falls Prevention Workgroup made up of area organizations that provide services to seniors as part of a collaboration with Schenectady Coalition For a Healthy Community. Work towards the goal of reducing falls among seniors that results in injury and death is being encouraged and supported by the NYS Department of Health.

This year the State Health Department is funding some free training for providers, for programs for increasing balance and

strengthening and other interventions to help seniors remain active and in the community as they age.

The Workgroup is focused on increasing the number of persons trained to provide successful falls prevention programs and the access to those programs. In addition, the group would like to identify what resources the County has for both prevention programs and home modification services. If you are interested in working with the Health Committee on this project, call Carol Furman, 346-2746.

## Welcome New Member Ann Hatke

Ann recently retired from the College of St. Rose. She was Office Manager of the Art Department. Prior to that she was Director of Noninstructional Services at the Hartland School for children with reading disabilities which is located at College of St. Rose. This program is currently administered by BOCES.

Ann is an avid reader. Currently, Ann is volunteering with the US Committee on Immigrants and Refugees. She is interested in the Working Group on Girls and the Environment Committee.

**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.

## 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 adequate and equitable funding for all school districts so the 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 and develop recommendations for local options.
- \* Encourage and support countywide comprehensive health care planning and access to health care.

## LWVUS PUBLIC POLICY POSITIONS

**REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT: Promote an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive.**

### Voting Rights

Citizen's Right to Vote. Protect the right of all citizens to vote; encourage all citizens to vote.

**DC Self-Government and Full Voting Representation.** Secure for the citizens of the District of Columbia the rights of self-government and full voting representation in both houses of Congress.

### Election Process

**Apportionment.** Support apportionment of congressional districts and elected legislative bodies at all levels of government based substantially on population.

**Campaign Finance.** Improve methods of financing political campaigns in order to ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and promote citizen participation in the political process.

**Selection of the President.** Promote the election of the President and Vice-President by direct popular vote. Support uniform national voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. Support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates.

### **Citizen Rights**

**Citizen's Right to Know/Citizen Participation.** Protect the citizen's right to know and facilitate citizen participation in government decision-making.

**Individual Liberties.** Oppose major threats to basic constitutional rights.

**Public Policy on Reproductive Choices.** Protect the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.

### **Congress and the Presidency**

**Congress.** Support responsive legislative processes characterized by accountability, representativeness, decision making capability and effective performance.

**The Presidency.** Promote a dynamic balance of power between the executive and legislative branches within the framework set by the Constitution.

### **Privatization**

Ensure transparency, accountability, positive community impact and preservation of the common good when considering the transfer of governmental services, assets and/or functions to the private sector.

## **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: Promote peace in an interdependent world by working cooperatively with other nations and strengthening international organizations.**

**United Nations.** Support a strong, effective United Nations to promote international peace and security and to address the social, economic and humanitarian needs of all people.

**Trade.** Support U.S. trade policies that reduce trade barriers, expand international trade and advance the achievement of humanitarian, environmental and social goals.

**U.S. Relations with Developing Countries.** Promote U.S. policies that meet long-term social and economic needs of developing countries.

**Arms Control.** Reduce the risk of war through support of arms control measures.

**Military Policy and Defense Spending.** Work to limit reliance on military force. Examine defense spending in the context of total national needs.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES: Promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest.**

**Natural Resources.** Promote the management of natural resources as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems.

**Resource Management.** Promote resource conservation, stewardship and longrange planning, with the responsibility for managing natural resources shared by all levels of government.

**Environmental Protection and Pollution Control.** Preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the ecosystem, with maximum protection of public health and the environment.

**Air Quality.** Promote measures to reduce pollution from mobile and stationary sources.

**Energy.** Support environmentally sound policies that reduce energy growth rates, emphasize energy conservation and encourage the use of renewable resources.

**Land Use.** Promote policies that manage land as a finite resource and that incorporate principles of stewardship.

**Water Resources.** Support measures to reduce pollution in order to protect surface water, groundwater and drinking water.

**Waste Management.** Promote policies to reduce the generation and promote the reuse and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes.

**Nuclear Issues.** Promote the maximum protection of public health and safety and the environment.

**Public Participation.** Promote public understanding and participation in decision making as essential elements of responsible and responsive management of our natural resources.

**Agriculture Policy.** Promote adequate supplies of food and fiber at reasonable prices to consumers and support economically viable farms, environmentally sound farm practices and increased reliance on the free market.

**SOCIAL POLICY: Secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all. Promote social and economic justice and the health and safety of all Americans.**

**Equality of Opportunity**

**Equal Rights.** Support ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and efforts to bring laws into compliance with the goals of the ERA.

**Education, Employment and Housing.** Support equal access to education, employment and housing.

**Federal Role in Public Education.** Support federal policies that provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through grade 12.

**Fiscal Policy**

**Tax Policy.** Support adequate and flexible funding of federal government programs through an equitable tax system that is progressive overall and that relies primarily on a broad-based income tax.

**Federal Deficit.** Promote responsible deficit policies.

**Funding of Entitlements.** Support a federal role in providing mandatory, universal, old-age, survivors, disability and health insurance.

**Health Care.** Promote a health care system for the United States that provides access to a basic level of quality care for all U.S. residents and controls health care costs.

**Immigration.** Promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business and employment needs of the United States; be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises; and provide for student visas. Ensure fair treatment under the law for all persons. In transition to a reformed system, support provisions for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status.

**Meeting Basic Human Needs.** Support programs and policies to prevent or reduce poverty and to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families.

**Income Assistance.** Support income assistance programs, based on need, that provide decent, adequate standards for food, clothing and shelter.

**Support Services.** Provide essential support services.

**Housing Supply.** Support policies to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.

**Child Care.** Support programs and policies to expand the supply of affordable, quality child care for all who need it.

**Early Intervention for Children at Risk.** Support policies and programs that promote the well-being, development and safety of all children.

**Violence Prevention.** Support violence prevention programs in communities.

**Gun Control.** Protect the health and safety of citizens through limiting the accessibility and regulating the ownership of handguns and semi-automatic weapons. Support regulation of firearms for consumer safety.

**Urban Policy.** Promote the economic health of cities and improve the quality of urban life.

**Death Penalty.** The LWVUS supports abolition of the death penalty.

**Sentencing Policy.** The LWVUS believes alternatives to imprisonment should be explored and utilized, taking into consideration the circumstances and nature of the crime. The LWVUS opposes mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses.

Whatever the issue, the League believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibilities, adequate financing, coordination among levels of government, effective enforcement and well defined channels for citizen input and review.



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**Skip Smith**  
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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** (half-year dues reduction available- contact Connie Young at 393-7061)

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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