



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY

JANUARY 2016

PRESIDENT: KAY SHARP 272-4748

lwvtompkins.org

EDITOR: ROBERT SILSBEE 273-1436

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT:

CONTINUING IMPRESSIONS OF THE AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE ACT IN TOMPKINS COUNTY

Cassandra Aikman: Health Access Programs Coordinator at the Health
Planning Council in Tompkins County

Sarah Jane Blake: Outreach Counselor at the New York StateWide Senior
Action Council, Inc. and Certified Health Insurance Information
Counseling and Assistance Program Counselor

Monday, January 25, 7:00-8:30 p.m.
Borg Warner Room of the Library

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year everyone. I hope you had a good holiday season.

We have already begun planning programs for 2016. See the announcement for the January 25th presentation on the Affordable Care Act (ACA). We have two good speakers for this program. I hope you will come.

We have 85 members who have renewed their membership. We would like to have some new members as well. If you have a friend or family member you would like to have join the League, by all means contact me so I can send a them membership form.

We held our concurrence meeting on "Raise the Age" in December and sent our vote of approval to State League. Statewide, we had 25 local leagues who concurred with the proposal. This

was enough to make "Raise the Age" a position of New York State League. Our League can now begin lobbying our legislators on this important position.

You may have seen the article in the Ithaca Journal about this proposal, stating that

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Governor Cuomo signed an executive order to move 16 and 17 year olds out of adult prisons. Instead, these youths will be sent to a juvenile facility. This move will begin in August. These young people will have the opportunity to complete their sentence in an age-appropriate correctional facility. In this environment, it has been shown in other states that recidivism decreases.

It is unfortunate that the legislature as a whole did not endorse the proposal to raise the age of criminal responsibility to age 18; in particular, the Republican Senators did not. Republicans hold the notion that "you do the crime, you do the time." New York and North Carolina are the only two states who treat 16 and 17 year olds as adults. Our work on this issue has only just begun

We also have important work to do on some of the women's health and well-being issues that are related to the Women's Equality Act. Some of those issues are pay equity, parental paid leave of absence, women's right to make their own reproductive choices.

2016 is a year for important legislation and the hard work needed to make it happen.

Kay Sharp, President

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Natural Resources Committee watched with great interest as the international meeting on climate change went on in Paris. There are many conflicting reports, some of them optimistic and some pessimistic, with respect to

what will really happen in the future. A target of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels was determined to be the best to aim for but the final agreement reached was that any warming of the planet must be kept to no more than 2 degrees. Although many countries made commitments concerning cuts in emissions of greenhouse gases, the commitments are voluntary so it is unclear how great the cuts will be. The good part is that at least serious discussion is finally happening. There were many peaceful demonstrations on the streets of Paris during the talks. The people in the streets used red ribbons signifying red lines that should not be crossed. If you would like to see some pictures and clips here is a good website: http://d12.paris/?utm_medium=email

On a different front, the Natural Resources Committee was very pleased to learn of the bi-partisan federal legislation passed that will prohibit the manufacture and sale of products containing microbeads. Unfortunately, the key parts of this bill will only be phased in from July 2017 through July 2019, though already some of our local stores are removing from their shelves any products containing the beads.

Now on to matters of local interest. Although the Paris meetings were very important, it is clear that we must begin our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the local level. The Natural Resources Committee is focusing on issues around local development, in particular how that development may affect our environment in both the short and long run. As part of our work we are looking carefully at the Tompkins County Energy Roadmap. The draft

LWV-TC CALENDAR—2015-2016				
<i>(Tentative dates and programs in italics)</i>				
Jan 25	Mon	7:00 pm	THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT — FOLLOW UP	TCPL
Feb 1	Mon	7:00 pm	Board Meeting	Old Jail
Feb 22	Mon	7:00 pm	<i>VOTING RIGHTS: FEDERAL & STATE LAWS & PROCESSES</i>	TCPL
Mar 7	Mon	7:00 pm	Board Meeting	Old Jail
Mar 19	Sat	12:00 pm	Soup & Bread Luncheon	TBA
Apr 4	Mon	7:00 pm	Board Meeting	Old Jail
Apr 25	Mon	7:00 pm	<i>LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE AND PLANNING</i>	TCPL
May 9	Mon	6:00 pm	Annual Dinner Meeting	TBA
Jun 6	Mon	7:00 pm	Board Meeting	Old Jail

of the plan at this stage is really a feasibility study, but it is quite interesting and suggests meaningful ways that the county can look ahead. Our committee expects to have some thought provoking discussions as we study the plan and investigate other aspects of local development.

As part of our current work the committee realized that we need to have a better understanding of how decisions are made in our local governments and agencies. With this in mind, the board of the Tompkins County League is looking for members who would like to work on updating the T.C. League's brochure on our local government. It is no longer in print and has not been updated in a very long time. A new version will be able to make extensive use of websites in order to help residents obtain the information that they want or need.

As always, we would love to have more members join our committee. If you are interested in joining us or if you would like to be involved in updating the brochure on local

government get in touch at 539-3322 or CMW18@cornell.edu .

Kay Wagner, Chair
Natural Resources

MEMBERSHIP

I want to thank all of you for renewing your membership. There are only 10 more people who we hope will send in their renewals before January 25. I say that date because I have to let LWVUS and LWVNY know our membership numbers as of January 31st. They base our dues (Per Member Payment) to them on the number of members. They also use the total number of members to determine the number of voting delegates we can send to attend the national and state conferences.

So your renewal by January 25th is very important to us. Thank you.

Kay Sharp, President

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY: BOARD 2015-16

LWV NYS website

www.lwvny.org

LWV US website

www.lwv.org

LWV-Tompkins County

contact
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6/17	Director	Natural Resources	Kay Wagner	539-3322 cmw18@cornell.edu
6/17	Director		Sorel Gottfried	272-3910 sorel9@gmail.com
6/16	Director		Runjini Raman	940-300-4592 rr595@cornell.edu
	Director	Membership	vacant	
	Director	Communications	vacant	

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Health Care	Debbie Levin	273-7746	dlevin01@twcny.rr.com
Youth Services	vacant		

**VOLUNTEER FOR VOTER SERVICES:
A GREAT NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION!**

With a presidential election on the horizon, 2016 promises to be an exciting and busy year for Voter Services. There are many voter education activities being planned and we need your help. Please consider serving the League this year by volunteering for one of our voter registration events, or play a more behind-the-scenes role by helping us contact volunteers, organize the events calendar, or work on Vote 411. And, of course, let us know if you hear of a good opportunity for League participation in a community event. We are interested in finding the best ways to reach new voters throughout Tompkins County. Voter participation is at the heart of our democracy — help us encourage all eligible voters to be a part of this critical process. Contact Lucia Sciore at luciasciore@gmail.com or Amy Panek at amy.panek@gmail.com to volunteer or share your thoughts. Thank you and best wishes for a happy and healthy 2016!

Amy Panei, Lucia Sciore: Co-chairs
Voter Services

**REPORT OF THE LWVNY
LIVING WAGE COMMITTEE**

December 7, 2015

The Living Wage Committee was charged by the LWVNY Convention 2015 to determine what is an appropriate living wage for our state and its localities.

LWVUS has said that Leagues may take action on a living wage under the national position on Meeting Basic Human Needs that includes the 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 position further states that, "one of

the goals of social policy should be to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families." Guidance from LWVUS requires that state and local leagues do the research necessary to determine what an appropriate wage is for their own community.

The committee further defined a living wage using the Buffalo/Niagara concurrence with the LWV Kansas position: *A living wage should provide sufficient income without government assistance, for food, clothing, housing, energy, transportation, health care, education, child care, and a small amount of discretionary income.*

We recommend to the board of LWVNY that a living wage for localities in NYS can be determined by using either of the following calculators (or one that may in the future be developed which includes the same items), whichever has been updated most

recently. Each of these calculators presents its findings of the costs involved in meeting basic human needs on a county-by-county basis, for families of different sizes and composition, and indicates the wage needed to meet those costs on an hourly, monthly and annual basis.

1. This is the link to the MIT developed calculator for a living wage, which is available by County in NYS: <http://livingwage.mit.edu/> Originally done in 2004, it was updated in 2014.

2. The Self-Sufficiency standard developed by Empire Justice Center/NYS Community Action Association <http://www.selfsufficiencystandard.org/docs/New-York-State2010.pdf>

We further recommend that the minimum wage, if set state-wide, be set no higher than, but close to, the living wage for a family consisting of one wage earner and 2 children, in the county with the lowest living costs. The League has long supported equal pay for equal work, and does not recommend that the minimum wage be set, or employers pay employees, based on the number of their dependents.

The committee recognizes that raising the minimum wage to become a living wage will require economic adjustments. We particularly note the difficulty that non-profits in the child care, health, mental health, elder-care and home-care fields (where many of their workers make very close to the current minimum wage) will face if the state does not increase its grants and reimbursements to keep pace. Some of this increase in state costs will be off-set by decreasing the need for government assistance to meet basic human needs.

Studies can be found to support positions on both sides of the issue of raising the minimum wage. The most positive result is the redistribution of dollars to lower wage workers reducing income inequality and shifting the cost of need for tax supported benefits to the private sector.

The raise in minimum wage has little or no effect on employment or hours and the increase in consumer costs is moderate and less in percentage than the wage raise. It does cause some additional shifts to technology, happening throughout the wage structure. It has some stimulus effect on the economy from the increased money spent on goods and services. It also reduces employee turnover saving employment and training costs.

ALTERNATIVES RELEASES LIVING WAGE STUDY

(from Tompkins Weekly, June 29-July5, 2015)

The first Living Wage study was conducted in 1994 in order to determine how much Alternatives should pay its employees as a starting salary. The credit union engaged an intern from the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University to work with then Assistant Manager Leni Hochman to conduct the study. (Alternatives has partnered with student interns from the ILR School for each subsequent Living Wage study.) Initially intended for internal use, the credit union's

board of directors decided that the information was valuable and released the study to the community. Alternatives has continued to update the Living Wage study every two years.

This year's intern, Michelle Yinjie Lu, a masters' candidate in Cornell's ILR School worked with Karl Graham, Alternatives' Director of Community Relations and Development to update the study. At its May 28 meeting, Alternatives' Board of Directors voted unanimously to raise the credit union's starting wage to the new Living Wage level. According to the updated Living Wage Study, the cost in 2015 for a single person working full-time to live in Tompkins County is \$28,637.40 a year or \$13.77 per 40 hour work week. The new Living Wage figure is an increase of 9.13% from \$12.62 per hour two years ago.

The categories in the study include housing, food, transportation, internet and cell phone, healthcare, and other necessities, as well as a modest allowance for recreation and savings. Two categories increased over 10% from the previous study: Rent increased 12.8% and payroll, federal and state taxes increased 9.1%, 15.37% and 14.02% respectively. Communication (internet and cell phone) increased 8.7%. Health care increased a relatively modest 7.07%. The rate of \$13.77 per hour represents the Living Wage for an individual whose employer provides health insurance. For employers that don't offer health insurance, a rate of \$14.34 per hour would be needed to allow their employee's to purchase the Excellus Silver Plan on the NYS Health Insurance Exchange/Marketplace.

THE MIT CALCULATOR

The MIT Living Wage Calculator

<http://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/36109>

is well worth a few minutes of your time. It allows comparison of the living wage with the county minimum wage, poverty wage and typical salaries for a variety of professions in Tompkins County.

YOUR REPRESENTATIVES IN WASHINGTON

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ASSEMBLYWOMAN

Barbara Lifton 518-455-5444; 607-277-8030 www.assembly.state.ny.us/mem/Barbara-Lifton

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