



THE LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS
of Schenectady County New York

BULLETIN

www.lwvschenectady.org

March 2016

UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, March 3, 4 PM

Judicial Committee Meeting
1436 Lowell Rd., Schenectady
Contact: Helga Schroeter, 370-5042

Wednesday, March 9, noon

Update on Schenectady Police Review Board
Speaker: Flora Ramonowski
1st Reformed Church
8 N. Church St., Schenectady
Contact: Joan Elliott, 346-4414

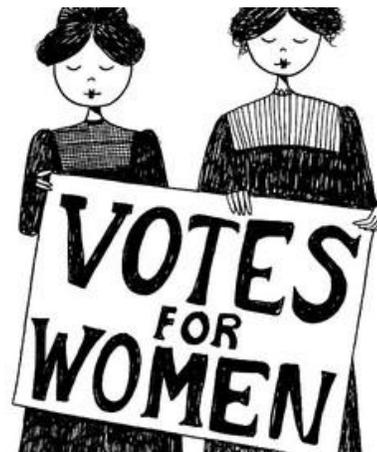
Saturday, March 12, 2 PM

Vote Here! Vote Now!
Dialog & Debate: Why Your Vote Counts!
Exhibit Opening Reception
Speaker: Jami Floyd, WNYC
Schenectady County Historical Society
32 Washington Ave., Schenectady
Contact: Mary Zawacki, 374-0263

Sunday, March 20, 3 PM

A Declaration of Sentiments Concert
Musicians of Ma'alwyck
Druthers Brewery
1053 Broadway, Albany
Preconcert panel discussion, 2 PM
Contact: Ruth Bonn, 384-0804

Note: BPW Network to Connect Forum IV has
been postponed.
Contact Elena Alvarez, 377-3632



Message from the Steering Committee

We held a well-attended program planning meeting in February and reviewed our local program objectives as well as our National League positions. This meeting represents the process of obtaining individual member input to focus the time and resources of the League on particular areas for study or education. It is held before the Convention of either the State or National League (they alternate biennially) and before our own annual meeting.

We had a good discussion of local issues of importance which can help direct our efforts in Schenectady. Issues of decreased funding and unavailability of subsidized child care, inadequate space to expand preschool education despite increased funding and the importance of preschool education, introducing more programs teaching meditation and mediation in schools to develop alternatives to acting out violently or disruptively, increasing voter turnout, and the funding and regular maintenance of water infrastructure by towns and municipalities were ideas brought out during our meeting. We also made several recommendations for additions to our current objectives in the areas of justice (concerning parole and the support of restorative justice programs) and health (adding equity and safety considerations).

At the meeting, we reviewed the recommendations of the LWVUS Board to consider a program of action in the area of Key Structures of Democracy rather than suggest new areas for study. Much work has gone into studies and updates in the areas of a Constitutional Convention, money in politics, and redistricting in the last two years. The Board recommended that we put our emphasis on influencing these important issues over the next two years. Our planning group agreed. We also discussed supporting an update recommended by the LWV of Tacoma Washington concerning adding a statement to our position on climate change to support positive action toward building community resiliency in the face of climate change. Our planning group agreed to support this proposal.

Having just completed our consensus meeting on Money in Politics in January, we are able to appreciate how this cycle functions. We give ideas and recommendations for areas of emphasis and study. The LWV Board at the State or National level (depending on the alternating year) reviews the recommendations and decides which recommendations to make to the convention delegates. At the convention, delegates can propose other recommendations which were not suggested by the Board and the convention delegates then decide which areas are to be studied, updated, or adopted from other Leagues. A committee is formed to prepare background materials and questions for consensus or concurrence (when we decide to adopt a position already accepted by another State or local League after their study) and then local Leagues study and vote.

Many local Leagues from many States recently participated in a study of the Constitutional Convention process. The National League Board has just announced that as a result of the consensus on this issue a new position has been developed. You will find this new position in this Bulletin.

Other recent evidence of our LWV program planning process was the announcement by the LWVNY of a recommendation from a committee formed at last year's State convention to look at our ability to advocate for a living wage. The committee's recommendation defined a living wage using the Buffalo/Niagara concurrence with the LWV Kansas position and further recommended using a calculator for a local living wage by using the MIT calculator or one developed by the Empire Justice Center/NYS Community Action Association. We should hear soon about our State Board's decision whether to accept this recommendation.

The State League's Legislative Agenda can be found at http://www.lwvny.org/advocacy/2016/LegislativeAgenda_2016_DoublePg.pdf. The Legislative Agenda guides local Leagues' advocacy efforts.

(cont'd on p. 3)

Message from the Steering Committee (cont'd)

Program planning is different from giving input on Legislative priorities. A recent survey undertaken by the LWVUS on program priorities indicated that members prioritize money in politics, voting rights, redistricting, and climate change in a plan for programs. Legislative priorities for the upcoming year at the National level were recently stated and ranked in two tiers. The first tier priority is representative democracy, which includes voting rights and election administration, money in politics, redistricting reform and work on a Constitutional Convention. The second tier is climate change. And the LWVUS will continue to monitor action on several issues including immigration, health

care, reproductive rights and environmental protection.

We are reminded of the power of a grass roots organization when we see this process of identifying issues of importance and the methodical way we assure member understanding and agreement with positions for advocacy. We will send one or two delegates to the LWVUS convention in June. We are still looking for one more member to attend. This is a wonderful opportunity to see how the League works and to share ideas with other regions. Let me know if you would like to attend.

Carol Furman, Lead

Position on Constitutional Conventions under Article V of the U.S. Constitution (LWVUS)

The League is concerned that there are many unresolved questions about the powers and processes of an Article V Constitutional Convention. The League believes such a convention should be called only if the following conditions are in place:

- a) The Constitutional Convention must be transparent and not conducted in secret. The public has a right to know what is being debated and voted on;
- b) Representation at the Constitutional Convention must be based on population rather than one State, one vote, and delegates should be elected rather than appointed. The delegates represent citizens, should be elected by them, and must be distributed by U.S. population;
- c) Voting at the Constitutional Convention must be by delegate, not by State. Delegates from

- one State can have varying views and should be able to express them by individual votes;
- d) The Constitutional Convention must be limited to a specific topic. It is important to guard against a "runaway convention" which considers multiple issues or topics that were not initiated by the States;
- e) Only State resolutions on a single topic count when determining if a Constitutional Convention should be called. Counting State requests by topic ensures that there is sufficient interest in a particular subject to call a Convention and enhances citizen interest and participation in the process; and
- f) The validity of State calls for an Article V Constitutional Convention must be determined by the most recent action of the State. If a State has enacted a rescission of its call, that rescission must be respected by Congress.

STEERING COMMITTEE

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

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.

Position on Considerations for Evaluating Constitutional Amendment Proposals (LWVUS)

The League will only support a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution if it advances and conforms to an LWVUS position. In addition, the League believes the following should be considered in identifying an appropriate and well-crafted Constitutional Amendment:

- a) Whether the public policy objective addresses matters of such acute and abiding importance that the fundamental charter of our nation must be changed. Amendments are changes to a document that provides stability to our system and should be undertaken to address extreme problems or long-term needs;
- b) Whether the amendment as written would be effective in achieving its policy objective. Amendments that may be unenforceable, miss the objective, or have unintended consequences may not achieve the policy objective;
- c) Whether the amendment would either make our political system more democratic or protect

individual rights. Most adopted amendments have sought to make our system more representative or to protect the rights of minorities;

d) Whether the public policy objective can be achieved by a legislative or political approach that is less difficult than a Constitutional Amendment. In order to expend resources wisely, it is important to consider whether legislation or political action is more likely to succeed than an amendment; and

e) Whether the public policy objective is more suited to a Constitutional and general approach than to a statutory and detailed approach. It is important to consider whether the goal can best be achieved by an overall value statement, which will be interpreted by the courts, or with specific statutory detail to resolve important issues and reduce ambiguity.

Report from the Observer Corps: Schenectady City Council

Mayor McCarthy has created Schenectady's Smart City Advisory Commission chaired by Mark Little. The Commission is charged with making Schenectady a "smart city" by incorporating technology into areas such as education, health care and public safety with the goal of boosting efficiency and cutting costs. After some controversy, it has been decided that some meetings will be open to the public.

Carver Community Center in Hamilton Hill has been foreclosed on. The City Council members voted not to pay back taxes owed to the city. Members of a group attempting to raise funds to buy the building brought their concerns to the City Council. There is ongoing fundraising with hopes of bringing back the Community Center.

Concerns from the public include, why is taxpayer money to be spent on the Schenectady Municipal Golf Course whereas only fundraising money is to be used for the nationally recognized Rose Garden in Central Park, which is run by volunteers.

Plans are in the works for investing in improving City parks, including demolishing blighted buildings and plans for a \$15 million train station.

Groundbreaking for the construction of the Rivers Casino and Resort at Mohawk Harbor began (to which the Mayor and City Council members gave their OK), and is expected to open in early 2017.

There have been the usual concerns brought before the City Council. To name a few:

- 1) The need to hire minorities and people with disabilities
- 2) Traffic going through red lights and speeding
- 3) Why does Schenectady continue to put fluoride in the water while other cities are discontinuing this practice
- 4) More attention needs to be paid to neighborhoods requiring City help.

Flora Ramonowski

2016---Every Time You Turn Around It Will Be Time to Vote, Again!

There are four elections in 2016:

- Presidential Primary on April 19
- Federal Primary (Congress) on June 28
- State and Local Primary on September 15
- General Election on November 8

And besides these, there will be school board elections on May 17!!!

If you are voting in the Presidential Primary for the first time you have until Friday March 25 to register by mail (registration form must be postmarked no later than March 25 and received by the Board of Elections by March 30). Or you can register in person at the Board of Elections until March 26. Notice of change of address must be received by the Board of Elections by March 30.

If you need an absentee ballot you can request the ballot by mail postmarked no later than April 12 or you may request the absentee ballot in person until April 18. You can download an Application for Absentee Ballot on the Schenectady County Board of Elections website or on Vote411.org. You may also request an Absentee Ballot by sending a letter to the County Board of Elections. The letter must be received by no earlier than March 19 and no later than April 12. The letter must contain the following information:

- the address where you are registered
- an address where the ballot is to be sent
- the reason for the request, and
- the signature of the voter.

An application form will be mailed with your ballot. The application form must be completed and returned with your ballot. If you cannot pick up your ballot, or will not be able to receive it through the mail, you have the right to designate someone to pick it up for you. Only that person designated on your application may pick up and deliver your ballot.

Persons who are permanently ill or disabled have the right to receive an Absentee Ballot for each subsequent election without further application. Simply file an application with the County Board of Elections indicating permanent illness or physical disability. You will then automatically receive an absentee ballot for every election until your registration is canceled.

The Schenectady County Board of Elections address is 388 Broadway, Schenectady, NY 12305.

Don't neglect your responsibility and privilege as a citizen to vote!

Kay Ackerman, Chair, Voting Services

Health Committee

The Health Committee continues its work with the Schenectady Coalition for a Healthy Community on a workgroup addressing falls among seniors. Our last meeting on February 25th concentrated on how to reach providers and volunteers who could make falls prevention programs available in Schenectady and how to assemble and share a resource list for programs and providers of home modifications. The Committee is also following the media coverage of discussion of single payer plans in the Presidential Primaries and in New York in relation to the Assembly New York Health Act. Call Carol Furman if you would like to join us, 346-2746.

Carol Furman, Chair

Proposed Leaders of LWV of Schenectady County 2016/2017

President	*Cheryl Nechamen	2018
Vice President	*Ruth Bonn	2017
Treasurer	*Judy Middelkoop	2018
Secretary	*Ann Hatke	2018
Action		
Students Inside Albany	Mary Pritchard	2017
Letters to Editor	*Joan Elliott	2017
Lobbying	Sally Knutson/Maxine Borom	2017
	Suzanne and Bill Hodgkins/Carol Fischer	2017
Voter Services	*Kay Ackerman/Peggy King	2018
Forums	Glenville: Betsy Chase	2018
	Niskayuna: AAUW	2018
	Schdy City: Connie Young	2018
	Schdy BOE: Vicky McGowan/Peggy King	2018
	Rotterdam: Marsha Mortimore	2018
	State and Fed: Pat MacKinnon	2017
Poll Reporting	Dick Shave/Maxine Borom	2018
Vote 411	Pat MacKinnon/Pat Lambert	2018
Voter Registration	Connie Young/Sally Knutson	2018
Bulletin	*Helen MacDonald	2018
Nominating Committee	*Sally Knutson/Connie Young	2018
	*Johanna Petersen/*Vicki McGowan	2018
	*Mary Pritchard	2018
Membership	Connie Young/Johanna Petersen	2017
Community Outreach		
Fliers	Gwynne DeLong	2018
Press Releases	*Joan Elliott	2018
Committee Events	Committee Members	2018
Membership Mtgs	Connie Young, Carol Furman	2018
Sept. Dec. June		
Mail Chimp	Judy Middelkoop	2018
At Large	*Dick Shave, *Cathy Lewis	2018

Bold face* indicates proposed candidates for election in June 2016

A Declaration of Sentiments

Celebrate the Suffragettes and Bicentennial of the Birth of Elizabeth Cady Stanton

presented by The Musicians of Ma'alwyck and the Siena College Chorus and Chamber Singers
on Sunday March 20th at 3 PM

at Druthers Brewery, 1053 Broadway, Albany

\$15 for adults, \$5 for students; dinner and beer tastings also available
call Druthers Brewery at 650-7996 for more information.

The works of female composers will be featured. A new work, commissioned for this event, based on Suffragette writings, will be premiered. A special "Anti-Suffragette" beer is being brewed.

A **Preconcert Talk** will be held at 2 PM in the brewery. Composer Kathleen Ballantyne, Brewmaster George de Piro, and Temperance song expert and music engraver Byron Nilsson will be on the panel.

All of the events are a co-production of Musicians of Ma'alwyck, Siena College, Ten Broeck Mansion/Albany County Historical Association, League of Women Voters, and Druthers Brewery. The Sienna College Chorus and Chamber Singers are under the direction of Dr. Timothy Reno.

Judicial Committee

The concerns voiced in the January Bulletin have been addressed. The State Senate confirmed the Governor's choice for Chief Judge, and Janet DiFiore was sworn in on February 8, 2016. She is the second female Chief Judge; Judith Kaye, the first woman in the position, passed away in January of this year.

The State League has received a positive response from individual Leagues to concur with the juvenile justice position on raising the age of criminal responsibility from 16 to 18 years of age. We will now have to wait for legislative action in order to voice our support.

I am planning to hold a Committee meeting at my house (1436 Lowell Rd.) on Thursday, March 3rd at 4 PM to discuss our plans for the year. Please call me at 518-370-5042, if you are interested in attending with some fresh ideas.

Helga Schroeter, Chair

Vote Here! Vote Now! Dialog and Debate: Why Your Voice Counts!

March 12- November 18, 2016

Schenectady County Historical Society
32 Washington Ave., Schenectady

Exhibit opening reception March 12 at 2 PM
Guest speaker: WNYC's Jami Floyd

The Schenectady County Historical Society, in collaboration with the LWV of Schenectady County, is opening an exciting exhibit designed to serve as a source for information about candidates and issues, explore our legacy of democracy and encourage the community to discuss issues and take action by voting.

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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, 2016 – June 30, 2017 (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 _____

Facebook _____ Electronic Publicity _____

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March Calendar of Events

Thurs. March 3...Judicial Committee Meeting

4 PM, 1436 Lowell Rd., Schenectady

Wed. March 9...Update on Schenectady Police Review Board

Noon, 1st Reformed Church, Schenectady

Sat. March 12...Vote Here! Vote Now!

2 PM, Schenectady County Historical Society, Schenectady

Sun. March 20...Declaration of Sentiments Concert

3 PM, Druthers Brewery, Albany