



The League of Women Voters of New York State

STATE BOARD REPORT

November 2008, Issue #2

Presidents Report

~Attention: LL President

Advocacy & Issues

~Attention: LL President & LL Action Chairs

Membership

~Attention: LL President & LL Membership Chairs

Voter Service

~Attention: LL President & LL Voter Service Chairs

Finance & Development

~Attention: LL President & LL Finance/Development Chairs
(Fundraising)

Program & Education

~Attention: LL President & LL Program Chairs
(SIA/LeaderSpark/NPV Study)

STATE BOARD REPORTS ARE AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE:

www.lwvny.org

(Click on Local League Resources)

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MARTHA'S MEMOS

TO: Local League Presidents
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Local League Presidents multiple-choice answers:

- (a) The State Board Report (SBR)
- (b) The State League Website: www.lwvny.org
- (c) The National League Website: www.lwv.org
- (d) The local League Presidents listserv: localleaguepresidents@yahoogroups.com
- (e) The *New York State Voter* and the *National Voter*
- (f) Regional Directors
- (g) State Board Members
- (h) State League office staff: lwvny@lwvny.org or 518-465-4162
- (i) The LWVNYS Convention: Syracuse, NY May 15-17

Now for the question: What resources are available to assist you with managing your local League?

Recognizing how very busy the lives of our local League presidents are, this plethora of options may seem more burdensome than helpful at times. However, I bring it to your attention not only to facilitate an awareness of the various options, but also to remind you that there is an organization-wide recognition of the challenges of your leadership roles and an active effort to provide ongoing support to you. Obviously, the success of our state and national organization is exponentially increased by the success of our local Leagues.

This SBR, prepared 5 times each year, is intended to provide focused and timely reminders of items to be addressed and serve as a means for your State Board and Off Board Specialists to keep you current on their activities. In addition, in response to the requests of those who had been involved in the league some years ago, the Regional Director Program has been reestablished to provide both more one-on-one and networking opportunities. Of course, the option of contacting one of your state board members or our office staff continues to remain available and encouraged. Our State and National websites, *the State Voter* and *National Voter*, as well as our various listserves designed to facilitate dialogue with other LLs throughout the state all contribute to our objective of sharing, clarifying, updating, and connecting. If you are unclear as to how to access any of these resources, please contact the state office.

While I know that you are all very busy with voter service activities currently, I want to share with you a very exciting opportunity for your consideration after this election season. Many of you may already be familiar with the **Citizen Court Monitoring** program which began in 1975 to recruit non-lawyer volunteers to observe court proceedings with findings and recommendations which are then published by the Fund for Modern Courts and released to court administrators, judges, court personnel, lawmakers, bar associations, civic groups, and the media.

This monitoring program has been influential in solving many of the problems that ordinary citizens face and has been highly successful at achieving numerous public-interest objectives. Modern Courts is now looking to expand its monitoring program of local town and village justice courts into additional counties throughout the state and is hoping to partner with local Leagues in identifying volunteers for this program. Funding will be available to cover all expenses including a stipend for an area coordinator during the approximate three to four month monitoring period. Modern Courts is also willing to provide a speaker for a local League meeting to discuss court reform efforts and recruit members to participate in this court monitoring program. Local leagues interested in more information about this program are urged to contact Laura at the state League office: laura@lwvny.org. Or call 518-465-4162.

Please be sure to read the reports included in this document. As for you, it has been a very busy time for your hard working state board as well as our wonderful office staff. Even a labor of love warrants appreciation, and I want to thank all of you for everything you do for league.

REMINDERS:

Send your **updated board list** to the state League office: lwvny@lwvny.org this information is not sent to us by LWVUS.

Dec. 2 is United Nations Briefings Day. This year's topic, "The Effect of Global Warming on Women and Children Around the World", is sure to generate great interest both with League and non-League members. You are encouraged to send in your reservation soon since space is limited and seating is on a first come-first serve basis.

LWVNYS 53rd Biennial Convention: Syracuse, NY the weekend of **May 15-17**. In addition to some outstanding speakers, presentations, and entertainment, we will introduce a pre-convention training workshop on Friday afternoon, May 15, to provide some more extensive opportunities for training and experience sharing in areas most often identified as challenging.

TO: Local League Presidents, Advocacy and Issues Directors
FROM: Helga Schroeter, Off-Board Specialist, Court Restructuring
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COURT RESTRUCTURING

Unfortunately, the current legislative session in Albany has not produced a court restructuring constitutional amendment ready for first passage by the legislature. However, there are some encouraging signs in terms of taking steps to improve on the current town and village court system.

In September of 2008, the Special Commission on the Future of the New York State Courts, appointed by Chief Judge Judith Kaye and chaired by New York City attorney Carey Dunne, released its report and recommendations, after having studied the NYS system of town and village justice courts for 18 months. Under the current system, there are 1,250 town and village courts throughout the state. Many of the justices (about 75%) presiding over these courts are non-lawyers.

The Dunne commission is offering some very sensible improvements over the current system:

1. set minimum standards for safety and fitness of the court facility
2. set minimum age and training requirements for the justices; they should be 25 years or older, hold at least a two-year college degree and attend seven weeks of training instead of the current one week
3. consolidate some of the courts with overlapping jurisdictions, potentially saving taxpayer money
4. allow defendants with misdemeanor charges to be tried before a justice who has been trained as an attorney.

The commission has stopped short of recommending that all justices be trained as lawyers. They have concentrated instead on recommendations that may be realistically achievable. The recommendations will require action by the state legislature, but no constitutional amendment.

The president of the state-wide Magistrates Association, Mark Farrell, spoke at the press conference releasing the commission's report. He expressed support for some parts of the report, but stated that his organization opposes consolidation of any of the courts and the opt-out proposal in misdemeanor cases.

While the report does not address the League's long-standing support for restructuring of the major trial courts, it does point out shortcomings in the current town and village justice court system and gives some constructive recommendations how to address them. The League should be supportive of these recommendations which would present a step in the right direction of court reform.

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UPDATE ON GREAT LAKES ISSUES

Healing Our Waters (HOW) Great Lakes Coalition reached a milestone recently, growing to over 100 groups in the Great Lakes Region. The HOW coalition continues to grow and diversify. This growth symbolizes the importance of health of the Great Lakes, which are essential to the economic and cultural identity of our region. HOW members, who include the LWV of Michigan, Ohio, and New York State, recognize we have manageable solutions contained in the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes are a unique and precious resource, providing freshwater for 40 million people who live within the basin and supporting the region's ecosystem and economy. It is the only freshwater system of its kind in size and ecological diversity and is essential to humans and wildlife alike, providing homes, food, recreation, and economic sustainability. The Great Lakes are a vast resource, but each year rainfall and snowmelt replenish only about one percent of the water in the basin. The other 99 percent is finite and nonrenewable. That fact coupled with a growing demand for water by domestic uses and the growing impacts from climate change is cause for concern about the Great Lakes' future. Current laws are not strong enough to protect the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes Compact is an historic eight- state water management agreement that protects the nation's largest fresh surface water resource, the Great Lakes. A decade in the making, the Great Lakes Compact, for the first time ever treats groundwater and surface water as one system subject to the same standard; considers the Great Lakes and their tributaries to be one ecosystem; establishes protection of Great Lakes Ecosystems and economies as priorities everywhere in the basin; ensures that every Great Lake state will have the same fair set of rational protections, while allowing each state flexibility. The U.S. Senate and House have approved the Compact, and the President has signed it into law.

The Great Lakes Legacy Act, which provides for sediment remediation projects on rivers and harbors on the Great Lakes, passed in the U.S. House, 411 to 9. The Senate amended the bill and lowered the authorized funding to current levels, or \$50 million a year. The House had to accept the Senate amendments before the bill could go to the President for his signature, which is set to happen in the next week or so.

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INDIGENT DEFENSE

We need to let the Legislature and the Governor know that doing nothing isn't acceptable. Local taxpayers need relief. Public defense clients need quality representation. Communities need the safety that comes from a process that ensures all are treated fairly

Developments in the NYCLU Lawsuit

NYCLU Sues the State over Failure of Public Defense

The New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) has sued New York State for failing to provide constitutionally adequate public defense services. The cases of named plaintiffs from five counties – Onondaga, Ontario, Schuyler, Suffolk, Washington – illustrate statewide failure of the system, the suit charges. It was filed as a class action in November 2007. In March 2008, the NYCLU filed papers seeking emergency relief to end the widespread denial of justice to public defense clients.

Case Advances, Counties Added as Defendants

In early August, Supreme Court Justice Eugene P. Devine denied the State's motion to dismiss the case, a significant advance in the proceedings. He also ordered that the five counties chosen as illustrative of statewide problems be added as defendants in the lawsuit.

People across the state are acknowledging that the public defense system is broken. We will continue to fight so that all New Yorkers will receive high quality representation.

We hope you have a wonderful weekend!

For more information please contact the following:

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IN DEFENSE OF A NEED TO REMEDY PUBLIC DEFENSE

By: Joseph Bellacosa

*Joseph Bellacosa, a resident of Garden City, was a judge of the New York Court of Appeals
July 28, 2008*

Auto mechanics tell their customers that when it comes to preventive maintenance, they can pay now or they can pay much more later. The lesson and the warning apply even more to New York State's dilapidated public defense system for those who cannot afford privately retained counsel. But now there's an opportunity for reform.

Chief Judge Judith S. Kaye's blue ribbon Commission on the Future of Indigent Defense Services found that the current system of public defense is a fragmented, county-based, essentially unaccountable, underfunded "ongoing crisis." I'd characterize it further as a mess.

This crisis directly impacts and disserves thousands of real people. Last year a class-action lawsuit, mirroring the findings of the report to Judge Kaye, was also started to seek a financial and systemic set of remedies as a solution for this "ongoing crisis."

The bottom line of the commission report and the lawsuit is a call to repair and remedy public defense. The lawsuit pending in Supreme Court, Albany County, identifies five counties, including Suffolk, as illustrative of constitutional defects - that is, services demonstrating disparities so disproportionate and lacking in essential aspects that they really aren't services at all. The current system is so fundamentally flawed that it warrants a judicial declaration of unconstitutionality.

So the lawsuit and report tee up a real opportunity for courageous leadership. Gov. David A. Paterson, Attorney General Andrew Cuomo, Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli, the legislative leadership - including, especially, new Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos (R-Rockville Centre), working with Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver (D-Manhattan) - should move to fix the crisis, end the mess and do the right thing by creating the proposed statewide Independent Public Defense Commission.

Losing this lawsuit - a realistic possibility - could disrupt the orderly processing of criminal proceedings, delaying pending prosecutions until the public defense system is fixed. It could also open post-conviction proceedings by defendants asserting they were tried under a constitutionally deficient system.

How much better it would be to do the right thing with initiative and leadership, rather than by external compulsion.

Recent experience in Montana, where the ACLU challenged its county-based public defense system, offers some guidance. Montana's Democratic attorney general asked the parties for the opportunity to change the system, and a Republican state senator joined the effort to create an independent Montana Public Defender Commission.

Similar efforts, in some cases spurred by lawsuits, are under way in states as diverse as Utah, Louisiana, Michigan, North Dakota and Kentucky.

In New York, unrelenting efforts to create an Independent Public Defense Commission are under way and supported by every major legal, civic, religious and community group that has looked at the issue, including the New York State Bar Association. Paterson expressed support for creating an independent commission in a recent public forum. Unfortunately, the legislature took no action in the last session. So the opportunity for a solution searches for leadership and a jump start to escape the grip of litigation.

Implementing the Kaye Commission's recommendations for a state takeover of New York's

public defense system would provide other advantages. It would lift an unfunded mandate from counties, which collectively pay more than a quarter-billion unreimbursed local tax dollars a year providing public defense services mandated, but not paid for, by the state.

These may be lean and hard fiscal times, but my 30 years in various roles in the judicial branch taught me there are smart ways to work through road bumps.

And the cost is measured in more than dollars. It's paid every day by poor people incarcerated because of their inability to gain even temporary freedom so as to mount an effective defense to charges against them. A system of "meet 'em, greet 'em and plead 'em" - a description from Louisiana, that's also applicable to New York, where overworked defense attorneys actually don't even meet clients before disposition hearings - is a recipe for wrongful convictions and a pervasive lessening of respect for the rule of law.

The path to fixing the public defense crisis has been laid out by the Kaye Commission. Albany decision makers should now lead and embrace the challenge and opportunity posed by the lawsuit and do what their own independent experience and good judgment must show them to be the right thing: Create a statewide Independent Public Defense Commission and honor our state's pre-eminent and treasured commitment to equal justice.

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newsday.com/news/opinion/ny-opbel285779781jul28,0,3650429.story

TO: Local League President; Advocacy & Issues Directors
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PAY EQUITY

Background – This SBR focuses on the activities of the NYS Pay Equity Coalition (NYSPEC), of which the LWVNY is a primary member.¹ With League guidance, NYSPEC takes actions to provide pay equity for equally evaluated job titles and equal pay to employees in New York State.

Activities – while waiting for the election and the next legislative session

As noted in the last SBR, in June the New York City Council unanimously passed a resolution urging the New York Legislature to pass the NYS Fair Pay Bill. This was brought about through the encouragement of NYSPEC member organization NY Women’s Agenda (NYWA) and the Equal Pay Coalition NYC, a growing collective of civic organizations, advocates and experts.

Inspired by the NYC model we worked to get a similar resolution passed by the Albany Common Council. We contacted council member Catherine M. Fahey who agreed to sponsor the resolution and we lined up three people to speak in favor of the resolution. The League’s Maggie Moehringer spoke eloquently in support of the resolution during the council meeting’s public comment period. She noted that the League does not support an issue until it has done a thorough study of its merits and that equal pay for comparable worth is an important economic and family issue that impacts pensions and social security as well as current household income. Representing NYSPEC, I also spoke for the resolution and Tom Comanzo of the Public Employees Federation (PEF) also spoke about the importance of pay equity.

The Albany Common Council passed the resolution unanimously. I have attached a press release distributed by NYSPEC. The resolution’s passage received both newspaper and radio coverage. WAMC put together an informative piece, interviewing Tom Comanzo of PEF and myself.

Now we are working on passage of a similar resolution by the Buffalo City Council. Buffalo League members JoAnn Ross and Nuala Drescher are instrumental in this effort. We are also making contacts in Nassau County to work on passage there.

¹ Other organizational members include NYSPEC’s founding organization, Women on the Job Task Force (based on Long Island), many unions including NYSUT, UUP, UPSEU,SEIU, and DC37, many women’s and civil rights organizations such as AAUW, NOW, BPW, and NAACP, Girl Scouts of America, Women’s Sports Foundation, Capital District Labor and Religion Coalition, the NY Women’s Agenda, the National Association for Female Executives (NAFE) and the Northeast Council of YWCA.

NYSUT SRP Convention

In many school districts Teachers' Aids, Assistants and Associates still make less than the male dominated cleaning staff despite the fact that these teaching support staff positions are required to have Associate degrees and high responsibility for children both at play and in the classroom. Thus it is important the NYSPEC have a presents at the School Related Professionals Convention. This year's convention was held on September 26th at the Desmond in Albany. Jan Conti (a former NYSUT trainer) and I represented the Pay Equity Coalition at this Convention.

Governor Paterson's Office Contact

At our June 5, 2008 meeting with David Weinstein, Assistant Counsel to the Governor, Mr. Weinstein requested copies of Canadian pay equity legislation and information about Canadian implemented. We provided this information. Mr. Weinstein suggested that we contact him again for a meeting in September. We have done that and dates are being discussed.

Upcoming Events

The NY Women's Agenda is sponsoring a panel on fair pay on November 19th at Hunter College.

Want to know more about this issue and how it relates to equal pay? A PowerPoint presentation is available, as well as speakers.
Call: 518-464-0991



New York State Pay Equity Coalition
c/o Women on the Job, A Project of the
Long Island Fund for Women & Girls
1740 Old Jericho Turnpike
Jericho, NY 11753

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 4, 2008

Lois Haignere (518) 464-0991

Albany Is Second City in State to Call Upon NYS Legislature to Pass Fair Pay Bill
Albany Common Council Votes for Pay Equity Bill Passage

Common Council Member, Catherine M. Fahey (7th Ward) introduced legislation at the September 4, 2008 Albany Council meeting calling upon the New York State Legislature to pass the New York State Fair Pay Act (A.2712/S.3936).

“Every worker in New York State deserves fair pay,” Council Member Fahey stated. “Many jobs that are typically held by women and people of color are undervalued and the workers under paid. Though less obvious, it is a form of discrimination that must end. Passing the NYS Fair Pay Bill will help achieve that.”

Lois Haignere, Upstate Coordinator for the New York State Pay Equity Coalition pointed out, “State level protections are crucial given the Supreme Court Ledbetter Decision. That decision destroyed the weak Federal equal-pay for equal-work protections we thought we had, by rendering them unenforceable. We have no way to know when we will again have a Supreme Court and Federal laws which protect employees from discrimination in pay. Given this Federal level void, the laws of New York State must make it clear that workers of all races and genders are to be paid fairly in our state.”

Tom Comanzo, Regional Coordinator of the Public Employees Federation, and Maggie Moehringer of the League of Women Voters spoke in support of the pay equity resolution during the meeting’s public comment period. They noted that this is a family issue that impacts pensions and social security as well as current household income.

A National Academy of Sciences study documents that the more an occupation is dominated by women, the less it pays. According to the data analysis of over 300 job classifications provided by the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics, women are paid less in every occupational classification for which sufficient information is available.

New York State ranks in the bottom third of all states at 40th in the nation for the proportion of women who live above the poverty line according to a 2008 IWPR report and studies conducted by professors Figart and Lapidus (1995) and Stone and Kuperberg (2005) show that the application of equal pay for jobs of comparable worth standards lifts many workers out of poverty.

The New York State Fair Pay Bill (A.2712/S.3936) has been introduced and passed by an overwhelming majority in the NYS Assembly every year since 2002, but it is never released from committee for a vote in the NYS Senate.

The Albany Common Council was the second local legislative body in the state to urge the State Legislature to enact pay equity for employees working in our state regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity. The New York City Council passed a similar resolution in June, 2008.

NYSPEC is a coalition of organizations supporting the passage of pay equity legislation in NY State including unions, women's and girls' organizations, civil rights and civic organizations. Following is a partial list of NYSPEC members: New York State United Teachers, United University Professions, United Public Service Employees Union, Service Employees International Union, Public Employees Federation, New York State Nurses Association, District Council 37, NYS Girl Scout Legislative Network, Women's Sports Foundation, Capital District Labor and Religion Coalition, National Association for Female Executives, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, National Organization for Women, American Association of University Women, NYS Business and Professional Women, NY Women's Agenda, Long Island Fund for Women & Girls, the NYS League of Women Voters, Northeast Council of YWCA and Women on the Job Task Force (NYSPEC's founding organization).

TO: Local League Presidents, Advocacy and Issues Directors
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FINANCING PUBLIC TRANSIT AT RISK DESPITE SUCCESS

Recent trends show that the public is traveling on public transit in droves, at levels of ridership not seen in five decades. American Public Transportation Association (APTA), the professional organization of public transit systems, reported that “Americans took more than 2.8 billion trips on public transportation in the second quarter of 2008. This is almost 140 million more trips than last year for the same time period.” In comparison, the APTA noted that “the Federal Highway Administration has reported that the vehicle miles traveled on our nation’s roads declined by 3.3 percent in the second quarter.”

www.apta.com/media/releases/080909_ridership_report.cfm

Such success should be rewarded, right? States and Congress should be supporting public transit enthusiastically, with both educational campaigns and funding. After all, when more of us are taking public transit, everyone benefits in key areas of the common good: economic productivity, environmental protection, energy conservation, public health. However the reality is quite different.

In New York State, the budget deficit looms large in the transportation sector. The news I heard at a recent planning meeting of the MPO in the Buffalo area was that they had to prepare for a one-third cut, across the board, now. These adjustments were likely to take the form of deleting some projects and slowing down the completion of others.

At the transit agency, such cuts in funding expected from NYS could even result in a fare hike--despite the increased revenue from attracting more customers!

How shall we respond to this financial squeeze on our successful public transit?

When we speak with state and Federal candidates, let’s emphasize public transit as the first priority for scarce transportation dollars, followed by maintenance only for highways and bridges--no new highways or added lanes of pavement.

When we meet with our current NYS elected officials, encourage them to consider seriously some innovative ways to produce transportation revenues, to supplement the gas tax--and insist that such revenues go straight to transportation, not into the general fund for later allocation by the legislature.

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REPORT ON SPRAWL AND LAND USE ISSUES

A reminder: Our state position on land use and sprawl is

In order to conserve natural resources and improve the quality of life for its residents, New York State should take a proactive role in regional land use planning, enhancing urban neighborhoods, containing urban sprawl, and protecting agricultural land, open space, watersheds and other sensitive areas.

Smart Growth Bill Vetoed by Governor Paterson

The Governor's recent veto of the State Smart Growth Principles Act A-7335A was a disappointment to smart growth advocates. The bill, the "first smart growth bill ever to pass Assembly and Senate," was hailed as a victory even though it was a pale shadow of the original A7335 proposed by Assemblyman Sam Hoyt.

The State Smart Growth Infrastructure Policy Act, the bill originally sponsored by Assemblymember Sam Hoyt and passed by the Assembly, would "require certain state agencies ...to fund infrastructure in a manner consistent with smart growth principles. These agencies would give funding priority to existing infrastructure and projects that are consistent with local governments' plans for development." The revised version, proposed by Senator Marcellino as S.8612 and passed by both houses, directs state agencies to "*consider* smart growth principles in the implementation of state policies and programs." (italics added)

The purpose of the original bill was "to provide for state funding of infrastructure in a manner that is consistent with smart growth principles." In contrast, the purpose of the revised bill is "to outline state smart growth principles and to direct state infrastructure agencies to implement these principles in funding future policies and programs."

The original bill's intent was to establish criteria for state infrastructure funding decisions. It states: "state infrastructure funding decisions have supported a pattern of settlement and land use which necessitates expansive and expensive infrastructure resulting in new roadways, water supplies, sewer treatment facilities, utilities and other public facilities at great cost to the taxpayer and the ratepayer.... New York State needs to focus on smart spending that supports existing infrastructure and development in areas where it makes economic and environmental sense."

The revised bill's justification states, "As development increases, shortsighted and poorly planned suburban and urban sprawl continue to threaten the well-being and quality of life of citizens of

the State. A recent survey revealed that, while the population in upstate New York grew by 2.6% from 1982-1997, the amount of land developed in the same area increased by 30%. This bill recognizes the State's role in encouraging smart development by defining smart growth principles and requiring state agencies to recognize them when implementing new programs."

Clearly the original bill had more teeth and was focused on redirecting funds spent by the state on infrastructure to areas where it already existed, thus saving money and saving open space. The revised version generally espoused smart growth principles, but avoided emphasis on funding or criteria for funding decisions.

Governor Paterson's veto message criticizes the Smart Growth Principles Act saying, "This bill cannot be implemented.... The bill's smart growth definitions are extremely amorphous and in some instances are little more than aspiration...while these are certainly worthwhile goals, they do not provide the type of clear and objective standards that are necessary to guide implementation, prescribe agency discretion, and allow for a fair and effective assessment of compliance."

He further stated, "Moreover, this bill is unnecessary." Governor Paterson has continued the executive order issued by his predecessor establishing a "Smart Growth Cabinet" consisting of high-level policy makers from state agencies that have an impact on development in the state. "The Cabinet will (1) identify barriers and opportunities to the incorporation of "Smart growth" principles in State policies and decision-making, including state programs that provide technical and other assistance to local government; (2) consider how to align state grant and capital programs to foster "smart growth" development in appropriate regions of the State; and (3) make recommendations to the Governor on effective ways to promote smart growth initiatives.

"The use of the Cabinet, in contrast to the bill's broad mandate, will allow a more deliberate consideration of what specific smart growth principles are most appropriately applied to a particular agency, program or policy; will result in recommendations for necessary changes to legislation and regulations to ensure that appropriate principles are properly and fully adopted; and will ensure that the incorporation of these principles does not conflict with other important State initiatives and priorities."

Since the bill was so weak, it is hard to know whether the Governor's veto is to be regretted. His message seems to indicate that he would support a stronger bill with clear standards, exactly what the Senate bill was written to avoid.

It appears that the Governor is aware of the State's role in influencing development and is placing considerable responsibility with the Smart Growth Cabinet. However, the Cabinet has as yet not produced any results. We will need to keep watching.

TO: Local League Presidents, Membership Chairs
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MEMBERSHIP MINUTE

'Tis the season!

You must have a bias for marketing especially during this high visibility for your League!

- ✓ Elections are a major opportunity to not only build an informed electorate – but also build the League!!!
- ✓ Time to be visible in what we do
- ✓ Time to ask people to join. They value us, respect us and we need to strengthen our organization with new members, volunteers, and potential leaders
- ✓ People are tired of partisanship – what better group than the LWV to voice their concerns?

Leagues that understand that everything they do is marketing, and who see every act, from program planning to how the phone is answered, as a marketing opportunity to pursue their mission and increase membership.



PUT YOUR LEAGUE MEETINGS ON YouTube!

There is a very good concise 10 minute video tutorial that covers all the steps. This very basic tutorial is located on YouTube. To watch this tutorial click on the following link:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3WdQmwHnLk>

YouTube is a [video sharing](#) website where users can upload, view and share [video clips](#). YouTube was created in February 2005. The service uses [Adobe Flash](#) technology to display a wide variety of [user-generated video content](#), including [movie clips](#), [TV clips](#) and [music videos](#), as well as amateur content such as [videoblogging](#) and short original videos. In October 2006, [Google Inc.](#) announced that it had reached a deal to acquire the company for [US\\$1.65 billion](#) in Google stock. Unregistered users can watch most videos on the site, while registered users are permitted to upload an unlimited number of videos.

Conference Calls

Thank you all for participating in our Regional Conference calls! The feedback is positive. Networking, problem solving and staying connected are components of this effort and you are to be commended! Be sure to join the next call!

Fair, Vibrant and Strong

53rd Biennial LWVNYS Convention

May 15-17, 2009

Doubletree Inn, Syracuse.

This is the theme for our next convention which is starting with a pre-convention workshop on the afternoon of Friday, May 15th that will enhance your skills and knowledge in your leadership

roles. If you are a new leader, you DEFINITELY should attend. If you are a seasoned leader, there are modules specifically geared to your level of expertise.

Membership Moments

Be sure to sign up for the LWVUS listserv for membership chairs - lwv-membership@lists.lwv.org.

I send a valuable tip twice a month.

Keep Your League in the News!

- Assemble a list of media outlets in your area (your press list).
- Get your press list in shape by calling each media outlet and finding out how they prefer to receive information (hardcopy? FAX? E-mail?).
- Find out what geographical area they are interested in covering.
- Be sure to include at least one contact person for each story (Usually you would list the PR person and also one person in your League who has more in depth information on that story). Having the name of the contact person is not enough, provide phone numbers and emails. Remember that old news isn't news at all.
- Radio stations usually want the copy in a form that is easy for the announcer to read. Ask them what their requirements are. Some don't use any locally supplied news at all.
- Some media have special features such as Calendars, Bulletin Boards, Volunteer of the Month, and Letters to the Editor. Find out how they want the copy to be structured, any word limits, and the deadline for inclusion.
- Remember that weeklies have a deadline several days ahead of publication, so plan ahead.
- Contrary to what you learned in journalism class, most newspapers will use a headline you supply. Try to work LWV into it, but keep it short.
- Keep track of which outlets use your copy. If some never use it, call and find out why, but don't badger them.
- Try to establish a relationship with reporters, by phone, by talking with them when they come to cover events, by occasionally walking copy into the office.
- If there is more than one newspaper or radio station with the same coverage area, be careful not to play favorites. Send press releases to them all, and remember that reporters change frequently, and sometimes to the other paper. On the other hand if they have a policy of only publishing a Letter to the Editor if it is theirs exclusively, design a different one on the same subject for the other paper, or get a different signer.

Act Now to Get Your Database in Shape!

The Per Member Payment (PMP) that your League will be charged by LWVUS and LWVNYS on July 1, 2009 is based on the number of members listed on the LWVUS database on the official membership count day at the end of January 2009. You won't want to pay for people whose memberships have expired, so send them a dues reminder notice now, and if that doesn't work, call them up. If they say they aren't planning to renew pay attention to the reason why. (Keep a list of these reasons and see if there are some that your League can address). But also take them off the database. Your goal should be to have every paid member on the list by January 15, 2009, and not to have any unpaid members listed.

New memberships should be added to the LWVUS database as soon as they are received by your League. This ensures that they receive all mailings, including the *National Voter* and the *New York State Voter*. It helps to connect them to League.

Not sure how to make changes in the LWVUS database? Just call Stephanie at the LWVNYYS office or e-mail her (stephanie@lwny.org) and she will help you through the process.

TO: Local League President, Voter Service Directors
FROM: Maggie Moehringer, Vice President, Voter Service
12 Coventry Road, Glenmont, NY 12077
E-mail: mmoehrin@nycap.rr.com

VOTER SERVICE / YOUTH SERVICES REPORT

Attached is this year's voter service survey (yellow sheets). We ask that you complete and return it by December 1st. Please notice that there is a special added question about services that you have provided for youth, not only for this fall but since January of 2008. In last year's Voter Service Survey, we frustrated some Leagues that are very active in youth programs by not asking for any information related to their activities in that area. So this year, we are asking a special question related to youth programs, and would like to encourage Leagues to answer the question at great length!

Citizen Education is a very important part of the Voter Services area on the State Board, and Jo Ann Ross, Director for Citizen Education, and I would like to bring a special focus in this SBR to programs for youth. We will be collaborating on two things for the State Convention in May: a special new award for "Youth Programs"; and a workshop on the various existing models for youth programs. Your report on your youth-oriented programs will help us to identify Leagues that are deserving of recognition and that can help us get the word out to other Leagues at convention about how to conduct successful programs.

We have entertained some criteria for good youth services programs, and here is a DRAFT of what evaluative factors might be appropriate (your feedback is welcome):

A good Youth Services program:

- is presented in a way that will energize and motivate youth to vote and become civically involved
- involves a substantive number of young people
- is completely non-partisan and does not espouse positions on issues
- provides the students skills and knowledge needed to make changes in their lives, their community, and in government.

It also ideally might:

- involve and energize a significant number of local League members
- involve and energize the parents of young people
- attract media attention
- attract funding
- make creative use of different media – web, video, audio, print, etc.

Some National Models for Youth Programs

We'll not take the space here to describe *LeaderSpark* and *Students Inside Albany*; Jo Ann addresses them in her Citizen Education portion of this report. Here are some other program models that we know local Leagues have used and the links to their web sites:

National Student/Parent Mock Election (www.nationalmockelection.org)

“The National Student/Parent Mock Election makes students and parents aware of the power of their ballot by actively involving them in a full-fledged campaign and national election. In 2004, the last presidential election year, over 4 million students, parents and teachers participated in all 50 states, Washington, D.C., and 14 countries/territories around the world where Americans have schools. Over 40 million have participated since the project began. The National Student/Parent Mock Election is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization. The National Student/Parent Mock Election has put millions of dollars worth of free voter-education materials into the schools through its past partnerships with McGraw-Hill, The New York Times, and TIME magazine. The Division of Elections in Trenton, N.J., served as national election headquarters in 2004 and in the two previous presidential elections CNN Studios in Atlanta served as headquarters. A CNN Web cast in which students from all across the country and around the world discussed national issues was held in conjunction with the broadcast of the 2000 Mock Election. The Web cast had twice the number of hits of any previous Web cast on CNN. This year’s Mock Election’s national headquarters will be at the Hartford Courant in Hartford, Connecticut. The National Student/Parent Mock Election is run by a nationwide network of volunteer state and school district coordinators including the League of Women Voters, educators, public officials, newspaper-in-education coordinators, etc., who put hundreds of thousands of volunteer hours into the project. There is no charge to participate in the National Student/Parent Mock Election, nor is there any charge for curriculum materials. Every American student and parent is invited to join.”

Kids Voting USA (www.kidsvotingusa.org)

“KVUSA is working to secure the future of democracy by preparing young people to be educated, engaged voters. We operate through a national network of community-based affiliates that partner with schools and election officials to offer students in Kindergarten through high school a wide range of opportunities for civic learning. It is the combination of classroom instruction, family dialogue and an authentic voting experience that makes Kids Voting USA a powerful strategy for achieving long-term change in voting behavior. KVUSA classroom civics activities introduce students to the concepts of citizenship in the earliest grades and continue throughout their school years. This ongoing education develops strong skills and habits for living in a democracy. After classroom preparation, students take part in a voting experience using a ballot that mirrors that of the adults with the same candidates and issues. This “real life” practice dispels the mysteries of the voting process and reinforces the knowledge and skills gained through Kids Voting classroom activities. It’s all designed to work with the social studies curriculum currently used so teachers can choose activities that are appropriate to lesson plans and that fit time requirements. Kids Voting USA classroom materials are not an “add-on” to an already full teaching schedule. These activities are tools to help teachers meet the standards outlined in the National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies as well as state curriculum standards for social studies.”

Vote18 (www.vote18.org)

“Vote 18 is a fun, fast-paced interactive game taught at high schools during one class period. It teaches students the history of voting, makes it relevant in their lives, and engages them in the world of politics. The goal of Vote 18 is to motivate students to register to vote when they turn eighteen, show them the value of their vote, and motivate them to stay politically engaged over

the long term. We believe that students who are inspired to take part in politics will become lifelong voters. Vote 18's objective is to energize the next generation of young Americans to be involved citizens, register them to vote and empower them with the tools they need to be active participants in the political process. Using a fun fast-paced interactive game that teaches students the history of voting, the program makes voting relevant in their lives, and engages them in the world of politics. The goal is to motivate students to register to vote when they turn eighteen, show them the value of their vote and motivate them to stay politically engaged over the long term. Vote 18 is successful because instead of just telling students they should vote, the program creates a forum where the students show themselves WHY they should vote. What makes Vote 18 so effective is its unique teaching and role-playing technique. During one class period a facilitator takes the students through the history of voting, graphically illustrating voting laws and voting dynamics through student role-playing. While the facilitator leads the class, it is the students who drive the class. Through the dynamics of exclusion, frustration, mock elections, group interaction and rewards, students become emotionally invested in the political process, and learn how they can affect its outcome. Vote 18 makes voting personal. The game creates intense feelings of inclusion and exclusion then leads participants to resolve their conflicts and issues through the political process. Emphasis is placed on the economic and social impacts of voting. The facilitator uses the student mock election to demonstrate why voting is important for both individuals and communities. The game concludes by taking students through the voter registration process and discussing how their participation can benefit both themselves and their communities. Target Participation - High School Students age 15 to 18."

Note: Judi Roth is on the board of Vote18; she is the Executive Vice President of the League of Women Voters of the Hamptons and Chair of its Education Committee.

Center for Civic Education: Project Citizen (www.civiced.org)

"Project Citizen is a curricular program for middle, secondary, and post-secondary students, youth organizations, and adult groups that promotes competent and responsible participation in local and state government. The program helps participants learn how to monitor and influence public policy. In the process, they develop support for democratic values and principles, tolerance, and feelings of political efficacy. Entire classes of students or members of youth or adult organizations work cooperatively to identify a public policy problem in their community. They then research the problem, evaluate alternative solutions, develop their own solution in the form of a public policy, and create a political action plan to enlist local or state authorities to adopt their proposed policy. Participants develop a portfolio of their work and present their project in a public hearing showcase before a panel of civic-minded community members. The curriculum was first used in the 1995-96 school year as a pilot in 12 states. Since then the domestic program has expanded to include schools in every state as well as American Samoa, the District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico. As of September 29, 2008, approximately 32,200 teachers have taught Project Citizen to over 1,955,000 students."

2008 VOTER SERVICE SURVEY
(including services for youth)

League _____ Responder _____

Please participate in this statewide voter services survey to gather information about this fall’s activities and to celebrate the League’s impact on local communities. We would also like information on programs that your League has conducted on civic education and voting for young people this year since January, 2008. Please use extra pages if necessary to complete this form. **Please return to the State office by December 1, 2008.**

CANDIDATE FORUMS/DEBATES

1. Did you conduct forums/debates in your local area? If so, how many different events? For which offices? Together with other Leagues? Co-sponsored with other organizations? If so, which organizations? Who moderated?

Please send copies of your publicity with this report.

2. Were all parties included or did you use your Debate Policy/Guidelines to exclude some candidate(s)? If so, did this exclusion cause any problems? (Please attach a copy of your debate policy.)

3. What was the attendance at your event(s)?

4. What format(s) did you use for your event(s)? Traditional? (Opening statement, closing statements? Cumulative time? Panels? Cross-questioning? Candidates' Fair? Empty chair? Other?)

4.1 If you used a combination of formats, please elaborate.

4.2 Did questions come from the audience? Were they written and screened? Were questions asked by individuals at a microphone? Were there any problems during the question and answer period?

5. Was the event(s) televised? If so, how many times was it broadcast? Was your event covered by the print media?

6. What was the most significant accomplishment in putting your event(s) together? What was the biggest challenge/problem?

7. Did your League provide any services such as moderating or timekeeping for an event(s) sponsored by another organization? If so, did you request payment for this service? How much?

VOTERS GUIDES

1. Did your League use the State Voters Guides? _____
For information about registering and voting? For information about the two statewide ballot proposals? As part of your League’s Voters Guide? To publicize the League?

2. How many did you distribute? Where were they distributed? Were they distributed free? Did you charge for them? If so, how much?

3. Please make suggestions about how the State Voters Guides could be improved.

4. Did your League publish a local Voters Guide? _____

If so, please send a copy with this report.

5. How did you publish your local voters guide? Through local newspapers? As a self-supporting publication? On your website? Other?

6. When, where and how did you distribute your voters guide? How many did you print?

VOTER REGISTRATION

1. Did your League conduct voter registration drives? If so, how many and where?

2. How many voters did you register?

3. Did you distribute absentee ballot applications? If so, how many?

GET-OUT-THE-VOTE EFFORTS

Did you use appearances on TV or radio? Letters to the editor? PSAs? Other?

OTHER SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES, IDEAS, QUESTIONS?

SERVICES AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR YOUTH

If your League, since January 2008, conducted activities for youth, please describe them for us. For example, did you follow a national model (such as Rock the Vote, Vote18, Take Me to Vote, Student Mock Elections, *LeaderSpark*, *Students Inside Albany*, Kids Voting USA, etc.)? How did, and how successful was, the program at energizing and motivating youth to vote and become civically involved? How many young people did the program reach? Did it involve many of your League members? Parents? Media? Funders? Please use another sheet to fully describe your youth programs if necessary.

RETURN TO THE STATE LEAGUE OFFICE BY DECEMBER 1, 2008

**via e-mail (lwny@lwny.org), fax (518-465-0812), or snail mail at:
*LWVNYS, 62 Grand Street, Albany, New York 12207***

TO: Local League Presidents, Development Chairs
FROM: Betsey Swan, Vice President, Development
10 Norwood Drive, Menands, New York 12204
E-mail: faircamp@nycap.rr.com

DEVELOPMENT REPORT

I. CENTENNIAL PLAN

The Centennial Plan was adopted by the board at its September meeting. Visit our website to see the final version.

II. WISH LIST

This board report will mark the beginning of a wish list for the state League, in which one area of League operations will be highlighted, with a request for a benefactor or benefactors to fund it.

This month's item is website development. Increasingly the web is our link with the outside world. Although many of our members do not use this resource, our ability to attract and retain younger members is in part dependent on our on-line image. As many members noted during development of the Centennial Plan, although the state League's website has improved, it fails to adequately reflect the many dynamic activities in which the League is involved. Furthermore, the state League has failed to maximize its use as a tool for sharing presentations, reports, and other materials with other Leagues.

Budgetary constraints are partially responsible for this shortfall. We have budgeted \$10,000 for the 2008-2009 fiscal year, representing a 150% increase over last year. We have substantially increased our budgeted amount in this area as we understand the importance of having a functional and timely website. We must redesign the website to make it more user-friendly and current – and we must update it on a daily basis to keep it current and active. The website is an essential tool in our ability to recruit and retain younger members, but it also is a critical tool for all members to access information, take action and remain involved in the League. We are looking for funds in the amount of \$10,000 to supplement our current budget, so that we can continue on our redesign and update. Either 1 angel providing the full amount, 10 individuals providing \$1000 each, or a mixture of small donations from individuals and local Leagues would help us reach our goal.

Anyone interested in making a contribution should send a check with a “website development” notation to the state League office. For further information, contact Betsey Swan at 518-426-3711 or faircamp@nycap.rr.com.

III. MEMBERSHIP – PRESS EVENT ASKING PUBLIC OFFICIALS TO JOIN

The League is planning a press conference in Orange County asking public officials to join the League. Assemblywoman Nancy Calhoun from the 96th A.D. is the impetus for the event, and there will be officials from both parties in attendance. The

press conference will be held a week or two after the election. If Leagues from adjacent counties would like to participate, please contact Betsey Swan, so that invitations can be sent out.

IV. CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM PROJECT

The League has sent its Campaign Finance Reform questionnaire to candidates for the Assembly and Senate. Although the response has not yet been overwhelming, we anticipate that this will become a multi-year project and that it will both educate elected officials about campaign finance reform and serve to build support for meaningful reform over time. All responses will be posted on-line by the third week in October.

The state League will also hold a press conference in Albany to publicize results. Any local League that is interested in holding a local press conference should contact Betsey Swan for press materials, including the proposed campaign finance reform bill, the League's questionnaire, the results, press releases, and supportive materials

V. EDUCATION MATTERS

We are in the process of developing the Education Finance portion of the Website. Materials from our last study will be placed on-line. In addition, the website will contain materials about No Child Lefty Behind, the federal law up for renewal in 2007, and a PowerPoint presentation interweaving the League's position on tax caps and foundation aid.

TO: Local League Presidents, Program/Education Chairs and SIA/LeaderSpark Coordinators
FROM: JoAnn Ross, Citizen Education Director
116 Cranburne Lane, Williamsville, New York 14221
E-Mail: jross18@roadrunner.com

CITIZEN EDUCATION REPORT

Youth Leadership Initiative/LeaderSpark and Students Inside Albany

A component of the League of Women Voters of New York State Education Foundation, Inc. is the Youth Leadership Initiative which encompasses two programs, *LeaderSpark* and *Students Inside Albany*. The overall goal of the Youth Leadership Initiative is to prepare youth for a future of civic participation by building leadership skills and allowing opportunities for application of that learning.

Program Updates

LeaderSpark : Stephanie Lopez LWVNYS Program Director and JoAnn Ross, LWVNYS Citizen Education Director have been working with Karen Dawson, LeaderSpark Executive Director to incorporate more of a League focus and direct connection to *Students Inside Albany* into the *LeaderSpark* curriculum and the Facilitator/Coordinator training. Dates and locations for this year's training for LeaderSpark coordinators and Facilitators are still in the planning process allowing an opportunity for your League to still participate in this year's program. Every league is encouraged to join the growing LeaderSpark team. Remember, that in addition to offering Leadership opportunities to the youth of your community, the program offers your league the opportunity to partner with others in the field of education, with non-profit organizations, businesses and others. These relationships can possibly result in new League members. For additional information on LeaderSpark contact LWVNYS Program Director, Stephanie Lopez at Stephanie@lwvny.org or 518 465 4162.

Students Inside Albany Youth Conference: It is once again planning time for the next *Students Inside Albany* Youth Conference. The 2009 event will be held **April 19-22, 2009** at the Hampton Inn & Suites in Albany. Additional information on the conference itself including guidelines and suggestions for criteria for choosing students will follow as plans are finalized.

Our Youth: Our Future

Is your League doing its part to engage the young people of your community to be the League and community activists of tomorrow? At the LWVNYS convention being held in May 2009, a workshop will be conducted which will focus on programs that prepare the youth of our communities for a future of civic participation.

TO: Local League Presidents, Local Study Committee Chairs,
Action and Issues Chairs

FROM: Lori Dawson, LWNYS National Popular Vote Study Chair,
4 Marion Place, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
E-mail: iddawson@skidmore.edu
JoAnn Ross, Citizen Education, Director
E-mail: jross18@roadrunner.com

**THE ADVISABILITY OF USING THE
NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE COMPACT AMONG
THE STATES AS A METHOD FOR ELECTING THE PRESIDENT**

New Deadline for the L WVUS NPV consensus is May 1, 2009

For now, the text of the Compact, which describes the way the NPV will operate, is the only study item available on the L WVUS Web site. The L WVUS NPV Study Committee is conducting their business by email and free conference calls and will produce study materials, including pros and cons, for posting on the L WVUS Web site later this fall.

Members of the L WVUS National Popular Vote (NPV) Compact Study Committee are:

Carolie Mullan	(TX) (L WVUS Board Liaison to L WVNYS), Chair
Gail Dryden	(CA)
Barbara Klein	(AZ)
Sue Lederman	(NJ)
Carol Mellor	(NY)
Jack Sullivan	(CA)

New L WVUS NPV Study Discussion List

I encourage Leagues to have someone in their League subscribe. Please note that one does not sign up from the same page as all of the other League sponsored email lists. Instead sign up at: http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=National_Popular_Vote_Compact&Template=/TaggedPage/TaggedPageDisplay.cfm&TPLID=157&ContentID=11960
OR you can find it indirectly by going to: <http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home>
For Members – Projects and Programs – National Popular Vote Compact – NPV Study Discussion List

Enter the email address that you wish to use to post emails to and/or receive emails from other Leaguers across the country who have also signed on to the list. You will be sent an email confirmation to which you need to reply. Once you are signed up, you can manage your subscription type (how you receive mail - individually, daily digest, etc.). As explained on the L WVUS web site about discussion lists:

This discussion list is a tool for League members to use to engage each other in conversation about the study process, resources, pertinent state and local legislation and/or information, and ways to best educate members and communities. Because the study is strictly educational, discussion on this list on the pros and cons of issue is not appropriate.

NY Leagues have already hosted NPV educational meetings by using the LWVNYS NPV Materials

LWV Schenectady held a NPV education meeting on September 10th. Christopher Pearson from National Popular Vote presented the mechanics of the NPV compact. Channel 16 public access TV recorded the event for LWVNYS. The recording on DVD can be purchased & shipped for \$10. Contact the LWVNYS office to get a copy.

Check our web site periodically for updates on the NPV study: <http://lwvny.org/npv.html>.