



The League of Women Voters of New York State
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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS *of New York State*

State Board Updates: January 2012

The *State Board Updates* have replaced the old State Board Report. All local League leaders will receive an emailed *Update* after each state Board meeting (September, November, January, March, May and July) with information from the Board members that is important to all local Leagues. We are trying to keep the notices short and there will often be attachments and links to longer reports in case you would like more information on that topic. We also provide each *Update* as an attachment in case you want to print out the entire report. We strongly urge all leaders to read the entire *Update*.

We also have a section at the top, entitled **Local League To Do's** in which there is a list of items which your local League must return or respond about to the state office; this summarizes what you need to do and hopefully encourage you to respond to all more quickly. Information about each of these tasks is included later in the full report.

Local League To Do's (email: lwvny@lwvny.org or call 518-465-4162)

- Update membership information on national database BY JANUARY 31 to ensure correct PMP billing (call state office for assistance, if needed).
- Call state office (518-465-4162) to order 2012 Legislative Agenda Brochures if haven't already.
- Send registration forms for students selected for Students Inside Albany Conference to state office by Feb. 1, 2012.

President's Report: Betsey Swan, betsey@lwvny.org

January, named after Janus the two-headed god of the transitions in Roman mythology, is a time for reflection on the past year and celebration of the new. Within the League, we can celebrate our successes and look forward to new initiatives. [See the attached President's report](#) on the year's activities, including Vote 411, Voter Services, Advocacy, Membership and local action.

Review of local government action has long been a strength of the League. By serving as a local watchdog, the League informs the public, attracts new members, and generally burnishes its reputation as a nonpartisan good government group. This role can take many forms. The Westchester County ILO performs an annual review of the county's proposed budget. The LWV Hamptons has recently reinstated its Observer Corps. See Attachment 1 of the President's Report (*Barack Obama, MSNBC Interview, Sep. 25, 2006*) highlighting the importance of this function. We seek information about the ways in which other local Leagues serve as watchdogs in their communities. Also, contact us for assistance in establishing an Observer Corps at the local level.

Voter Service Report: Susan Multer, GSMulter@stny.rr.com

The annual Voter Services survey was distributed in November; all local Leagues were asked to respond to a series of questions as to their voter service activities during this past election season. Twenty-nine local leagues

returned the survey. They had sponsored 73 candidate forums with attendance ranging from 30 to 160. Voter registration was done by 18 chapters holding one to eight events. In coordination with the naturalization program, the Rochester Metropolitan Area league registers voters three times per month. More details on the responses will be included in the coming month.

Issues and Advocacy: Sally Robison, robintwins@gmail.com

The 2012 Legislative Agenda brochure is available now for distribution to local Leagues. If you have not already placed your order, please do so immediately. In addition to setting out the League's main legislative goals for 2012, it also contains links to key government transparency websites and contact information for key NYS government officials and can be left behind for your legislator after your lobbying visit later in the legislative session.

Legislative Packet 2012 will also be sent to local leagues in February. This is an invaluable tool for members who will lobby legislators later this session after the state budget process is finished. A hard copy will be sent to Presidents and an e-mail copy will be sent to Presidents and Issues and Advocacy Directors. *The Packet will include: Legislative Lobbying: Purpose and Timetable, 2012 Legislative Agenda, Tips for Successful Lobbying, Speaking with One Voice: Action Guidelines for Local Leagues, and most importantly, Background Information on the 2012 Legislative Agenda.*

The local Lobby Committee should fill out lobby Report Forms after the meeting. Once the Form is filled out, it should be returned to the state League office---by June 1, 2012.

2012 Lobby Day

We held our second lobbying training day in Albany recently with record attendance. Even if you did not attend, it is not too late to become involved in League advocacy. Contact the state League office if you would like to become involved. Look at the state website under Advocacy Areas for copies of the handouts that were provided at the advocacy training.

Redistricting

The legislatively-controlled state redistricting commission, LATFOR, released 2012 district lines this week although the Governor has continued to repeat his pledge to veto LATFOR drawn lines. The League, in an [attached press release](#), expressed its continued disappointment in the LATFOR process that produced the proposed state legislative district lines. The League for decades has called for an independent commission to draw fair lines devoid of partisan gerrymandering. Competitive elections are the lifeblood of democracy and these proposed lines are drawn to ensure political incumbency of the parties in power for the next decade. It is therefore no surprise that they have been the subject of so much criticism given the inherent self-interest of the process. One of the first, and clearest, critiques of the lines comes from our colleague Bill Mahoney at NYPIRG, who looked at a rising population inequality among all the districts. His analysis makes evident that the process has resulted in even more gerrymandered lines in the state Senate than those produced through previous cycles of political gerrymandering. Barbara Bartoletti, LWVNYS Legislative Director, is also testifying at the first LATFOR hearing in Albany on Monday, Jan. 30.

MOVE Act

Federal Judge Gary Sharpe issued a decision on Friday, Jan. 27 concerning the non-Presidential federal primary date for New York State. Judge Sharpe has set June 26, 2012, as the date for the Congressional primary. This is a victory for both the Election Commissioners' Association and good government groups, including the League. As you may know, the League has had a position on a June primary dating back to 1957. The federal court was asked to change New York primary date to satisfy the 2009 federal MOVE Act, requiring states to get ballots to overseas military voters at least 45 days before the federal election since the state legislature had not changed the

primary date to comply with the federal law. This is also a victory for the voters of NYS; however, if the legislature remains recalcitrant in leaving the state primary election in September, this could set up a three primary election season that would be expensive for local municipalities who administer the elections. It is estimated that it could cost up to \$50 million more statewide.

Hydrofracking Comments

January 11, 2012 was the deadline for submitting comments to the DEC on the revised draft SGEIS and the proposed hydrofracking regulations. You can find LWVNY, and other League, extensive and thoughtful comments on the website under Legislative Action/ Hydraulic Fracturing.

Capitol Beat Returns

The League's Capitol Beat Blog, written by our Legislative Director, Barbara Bartoletti, made a return last week as a new legislative session begins. Look for it at the end of each week as we hope to keep it lively and up to date. There is a link to the blog from the state League's website in the upper right corner of the page; just click on the link.

Transportation Issue Specialist: Gladys Gifford (schuford@earthlink.net)

- Funding for public transit continues to be in crisis. Gov. Cuomo's Executive Budget, released 1-17-12, eased the burden somewhat, but did not go far enough. Please continue to contact your NYS legislators and Gov. Cuomo in support of increasing State Transit Operating Assistance in the 2012-2013 budget. The need is great in all areas of the state, and should motivate down-state and up-state to work together. As the League and others have testified, in the current economic crisis there is an even greater need to invest heavily in public transit-- rather than forcing service cuts and fare increases.
- The Executive Budget does include new funding under the New York Works program that will help deal with crumbling bridges and highways. Funding for this effort combines Federal and state sources, and relies on the new "Design-Build" legislation passed in December, 2011, to speed up completion of projects. Leaguers should watch this development carefully, to ensure that public input is honored throughout the process.
- The Executive Budget compensates for the elimination of the MTA (transit in metro NYC) payroll tax by allocating \$250 million subsidy for MTA operations in 2012-2013. However, this subsidy comes from the General Fund, and may be an inadequate replacement for the payroll tax revenues. A better solution will have to be found for future years.

* There has been no new action on Bill S1071, the "bridge and road investment and dedicated fund guaranteed enforcement (BRIDGE) reform act." This BRIDGE act pushes NYS to abide by the law enacted in 1991, to ensure that the NYS gasoline tax is used only for road and bridge repair and maintenance. Please let me know if your legislator is willing to push this legislation forward.

Court Restructuring Issue Specialist: Helga Schroeter (helgasasquith@verizon.net)

The Fund for Modern Courts recently held a meeting to discuss future plans to promote court simplification and strategies used to achieve this goal; the state League co-sponsored the event. [See the attached report](#) summarizing the meeting.

Membership: Georgia DeGregorio, georgiatd@frontiernet.net

A questionnaire was sent to all Members at Large (MALs), both state MALs and members of our MAL Units (newly-forming local Leagues). Of the 136 MALs, we only received responses from 13 people. We did find out, though, that some had not heard from the League so we will be sure to follow up and distribute information to our MALs on a regular basis.

LWV of Bronxville, East Chester, Tuckahoe is considering disbandment because of problems finding leaders. Please contact me or the state League if your League is experiencing similar issues before it is too late. We will help any local Leagues strengthen and build leadership within its own organization.

Individuals in Delaware County have contacted the state League to inquire about starting a new League there; we are exploring ideas with them.

Youth Programs and Citizen Education: Judie Gorenstein, JudieL728@aol.com

We are receiving the registration materials from many students selected for the 2012 Students Inside Albany Conference to be held in March. We are excited by the increasing interest for this program; we expect a record number of participants this year. The agenda is currently being developed. If your League is sending a student, make sure to get the student's forms in by Feb. 1 (or call us if they will be late).

Public Relations: Arlene Hinkemeyer, ahinkemeyer@optonline.net

We now have the name and contact information for the PR/publicity person in 52 of the 56 Leagues in NYS (thank you all for responding!), so soon I'll be able to send out sample news releases/flyers and other publicity information that I hope will be helpful. Forty of the 56 Leagues are reaching out to their "publics" with a website. For those considering Facebook, I've surveyed the eight Leagues in NYS on their experiences with Facebook (hope to hear from Eastern Putnam County ASAP) and will forward the results to them and to any other Leagues interested in the findings.