



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: November 2011

The *State Board Updates* will replace 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 will 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 will also have a section at the top, entitled **Local League To Do's** in which there will be a list of items which your local League must return or respond about to the state office; this will summarize 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)

- [Return Voter Service Survey](#) by **December 8, 2011**.
- [Return Order form](#) for Legislative Agenda brochure (these are free but must be ordered in advance) by **Dec. 30, 2011**.
- Contact State Office with date for Increasing Voter Participation Forum and interest in training.
- Email [Aimee Allaud](#) with anecdotes and media coverage from election issues and problems.
- Update the LWVUS database with new members or changes in contact information (contact [Katrina](#) at State League office if you have problems).

President's Report: [Betsey Swan](#)

Vote411

Now that the elections are behind us, it is time to reflect on our successes and to plan for the upcoming year. Of particular importance is the launch of Vote411, our electronic voters guide, by fifteen Leagues around the state. **Kudos and thanks to Chris Alexander and Francine Rodger**, both of the Saratoga County League, who spearheaded the committee that made this possible and spent endless hours answering questions as they arose and working through the production process with local Leagues.

It is fair to say that our first statewide venture has been a learning experience. Chris, Francine, and I are developing a questionnaire to assess the successes and difficulties incurred of participating Leagues in the first year of operation. Many Leagues that did not participate this year indicated a willingness to jump into the waters with further training from the state. I am now seeking funding, which will allow us to move forward. The hope is that the state League can obtain a small grant, which will enable it to produce Vote411 in 2012 expand on instruction manual, and bring local League members to Albany for training.

Rancor on the Campaign trail

We have been alerted to a number of incidents of uncivil and disruptive behavior in candidate debates. The state League, in consultation with national leaders, is revisiting its policies and portions of *Road to the Voting Booth* to assess whether changes are in order. More to follow.

Local League Planning

Last month I met with the Nassau County Leagues last to brainstorm as the first step in a process to reinvigorate membership and leadership. The first thing we did was to complete a questionnaire of League health, developed with input from the LWVUS Membership Recruitment and Leadership Development Initiative (MLD). We then began a discussion of what attracted members to the League, core League function, and how to streamline League processes while maintaining the essence of League operations. Any local League that is interested in undergoing a similar process should contact me.

Voter Service Report: [Susan Multer](#)

Given the concerns raised by local leagues regarding candidate forums this fall, the annual survey of voter service activities will likely reveal areas in which more guidance would be welcome before the next election. Please ***complete the attached survey and return it to the state office by December 8th***. Remember to include any photos and/or media coverage of League activities.

The board discussed a new opportunity for voter registration: Occupation of Wall Street. See if there's a spin off in a city or town near you.

Issues and Advocacy: [Sally Robinson](#)

Based on the responses we had from local leagues with suggestions for the 2012 legislative agenda, and consideration of both resources and legislative opportunities for the next year, the Board adopted the following as the League's 2012 Legislative Agenda.

Steps To A Better New York (2012 LWVNYS Legislative Agenda)

Election Reform

Improve election processes to extend, encourage and protect voting, including paperless and Election Day registration, better ballot design, improved polling place management/ poll worker training, and measures to ensure the integrity of all ballots

Campaign Finance Reform

Support lower contribution limits, increased disclosure and public financing. In particular, support stronger and effective campaign finance enforcement with increased civil and criminal penalties for violations.

Other Government Positions

Support structural reform to legislative redistricting; support effective ethics enforcement and open and transparent government processes; monitor impact of the property tax cap on localities and schools.

Health Care

Support affordable and effective health care for all New Yorkers.

#Natural Resources

Support protection and management of New York's natural resources in the public interest.

Other League Positions

The League also has positions on the Judiciary, State Finances, and Social Policy under which we can and do take action

The Legislative Agenda brochure will serve as a guide to the details contained in the legislative packet we send out to local leagues for purposes of lobby visits with their legislators after the budget is done. Remember, as is indicated on the brochure, we can and do take action on all issues on which we have positions as opportunities arise. **Orders for the brochure are due Dec. 30, 2011, to the State Office ([form attached](#)).**

Redistricting

Local leagues have continued to give testimony at LATFOR hearings around the state, and participated in other forums on redistricting issues. We are the only group that has had a presence throughout the state. The Governor has pledged to veto any district lines drawn by LATFOR but expectations are dwindling for a major structural change from LATFOR to an independent commission for 2012. The League remains committed to a long-term constitutional solution.

Hydrofracking Hearings

Several public meetings are being held around the state by the Department of Environmental Conservation on the High-Volume Hydraulic Fracturing draft SGEIS. If your league plans to either submit written comments or appear at a meeting, please contact the state league office beforehand. The state league plans to submit written comments and we can help you with a template for oral comments. For a full list of the hearings scheduled, click here: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/78246.html>.

Increasing Voter Participation Project

The CD and background paper for the Increasing Voter Participation Project will be distributed to all local Leagues by early December. Please have someone in your local League take a look at the materials. We will offer training, onsite in NYC and Albany, and by conference call elsewhere, to all who are interested. Please contact Katrina at the State League office, if you haven't already, to let us know when you plan to present the program and if you would like to participate in the training. Education of our members and the public will be important for our advocacy efforts for reform. Also, we are exploring new grants related to this project on poll worker training and paperless voter registration systems. Watch for more information.

Elections/HAVA Issue Specialist: [Aimee Allaud](#) ([Full report](#))

Although LWVNYS did not ask members to participate in a survey of voter experiences at the polls as we did in 2010, we are always interested in hearing about what you observed. Please send me your anecdotal reports, as well as local newspaper reports, which may be valuable for the State League to know, especially if they indicate that solutions could be addressed through legislation or with the State Board of Elections.

County Boards of Elections still have HAVA funds available for multi purposes. Leagues should contact their county boards of elections and ask how the county intends to use their remaining allocation. ([more info attached](#))

NYS Assembly is holding a Hearing on Administration of Elections in NYS in compliance with the federal HAVA, in New York City, Thursday, December 1, 10:30 a.m. The stated purpose of the hearing is to examine the impact of the enacted State Fiscal Year 2011-2012 state budget on NYS's implementation of the HAVA on the State Board of Elections and local boards of elections and to identify any legislation that may be needed to promote the efficient administration of elections. LWVNYS will be testifying. *If you have any relevant information from your local perspective, please get it to me by Saturday, November 26.*

Transportation Issue Specialist: [Gladys Gifford](#)

* As expected in my March, 2011 report to you, transit systems in upstate are hurting for shortage of funds from NYS, known as State Transit Operating Assistance (STOA). The current budget levels are squeezing upstate transit systems and require them to consider fare increases and service cuts, at the very time when increased usage

by riders is boosting demand for their service. Actions to take: contact your NYS legislators and ask them to write Gov. Cuomo in support of increasing STOA in the 2012-2013 budget; connect with your transit agency, to encourage them to communicate the need for STOA with their riders; write letters to editors of local news outlets.

* The project to replace the Tappan Zee bridge shows recent movement. Gov. Cuomo is pushing for a final decision about the project, so that construction can begin. Extensive public participation has revolved around whether to include infrastructure for public transit. In the rush to jump-start the project, the website for this project suddenly dropped all the documents relating to public participation-- unleashing a storm of protest. The LWNYS supported that protest, and shortly thereafter the documents were restored to the website.

* Roads and bridges are crumbling everywhere in New York State. The upkeep of NYS roads and bridges is supposed to be funded through the Dedicated Highway and Bridge Trust Fund, established in 1991 and nourished by the gas tax. But this fund has been raided regularly, and is now supporting the operations of the Department of Motor Vehicles, snow and ice removal for NYS roads, and NYS debt service.

Bill S1071, the "bridge and road investment and dedicated fund guaranteed enforcement (BRIDGE) reform act," was introduced in the previous legislative session and passed the Senate but stalled in the Assembly. This act would restore the Fund to its original intent. Actions to take: Leagues may advocate for this legislation, to see it re-introduced and passed by the whole legislature. This legislation may also be take up as an effort to promote good government, since the BRIDGE act pushes NYS to abide by the law enacted in 1991.

Membership: Georgia DeGregorio

We have reached a point in NYS where membership numbers cannot go any lower. There are four different groups of leagues in NYS that need immediate specific attention: Nassau County Leagues, MALs (Members at Large), local Leagues who have lost 50% membership in last 10 years, and MAL Units (developing local Leagues). The State League Membership Chair and team of Regional Directors are taking action on each of these areas. [See attached report for more information.](#)

Youth Programs and Citizen Education: Judie Gorenstein

Much work has gone into updating our youth program webpage. All local league presidents are urged to go to that webpage and have their board members do likewise. If your league has a program listed, after clicking on and reading about it, decide if there is new updated information you would like us to add. If you do not have a youth program or are interested in adding another one, learn all about the programs that are listed and email the contact person of that program with any questions, [Judie Gorenstein](#).

Students Inside Albany Conference

The Students Inside Albany Conference will be held in Albany on March 25-28, 2012. All local Leagues are encouraged to find a student to represent their League; the only cost is transportation to and from Albany. Forms to be completed by selected student(s) will be emailed in early December.

Public Relations: Arlene Hinkemeyer

I hope all Leagues were successful in garnering pre-and-post event publicity for your candidate debates. Forty of the 57 Leagues in NYS now have websites. I've sent a questionnaire to the eight known Leagues that are on Facebook--Albany County, Buffalo-Niagara, Eastern Putnam County, Mid-Hudson Region, NYC, Rochester Metro, Rye/Ryebrook/Portchester, and Saratoga County--to gather their experiences. If there are any others, please let me know.