

LWV of Albany County

Summer 2008

Educate

Participate

Advocate



Voter Service Activities Get Involved!



Mary Ann Lettau, Director of Voter Services

You may have noticed! Election season is in full swing. That means it's time for VOTERS SERVICES to live up to its name. Our current activities are in two areas.

The first is Candidate Forums. The priority at this point is the 21st Congressional District race. As happens often in this area, the primary—on September 9 this year—will have an important effect on the outcome. We are meeting on August 1 with representatives of the Schenectady and Rensselaer Leagues to plan a joint effort. Our goal is that the forum will be broadcast so a maximum number of voters can see or hear it. We expect there will be additional forums in the weeks ahead leading to November 11th. These are interesting events that give the League great visibility in the community. Please attend and help us out; time-keepers, question-gatherers, etc. are always needed.

The second area of concentration is voter registration and education. We were invited to take part in the Independence Day celebration at Empire State Plaza, in conjunction with Rock the Vote, a youth registration drive sponsored by MTV. We had two booths and even strolling registrars. The volunteers were Marggie Skinner, Alice Brody, Lori Keegan-Brady, Jessica McMullan, Marion Schwager, Ann Brandon, Aimee Allaud and Julie Elson. Thanks to them for bringing in new voters in honor of the 4th.

We were a Community Partner for African-American Family Day, also at the Plaza, on August 2nd. We are also organizing registration drives at the Arbor Hill carnival on Aug. 16 and the Sheridan Avenue Block Party on Sept. 13. And, we are discussing possible registration activities and/or candidate forums with the NAACP. We'll also be collaborating with VOTE18, a registration project for high schoolers, which is focussing on Albany High School.

New this year is the Library Project - see page 5 for information on this exciting new venture! .

VOLUNTEERS—we need you!!: for registration drives, Library Projects, candidate forums, and, and, and..... You'll be hearing more; however you can help is appreciated. These activities go to the core of the League's purpose. Please call me(489-0212) or e-mail me (mlettau1@yahoo.com) if you can assist with any of the above endeavours. Or, contact me if you have an idea about a new activity, location, target group. I'm hoping to have your ideas and a bit of your time.

League of Women Voters of Albany County

Website: www.lwvalbany.org Email: lwvac@crisny.org

Lori Keegan-Brady and Maggie Moehringer, Co-Presidents

Carol Webster (439-1491) and Martha Kennedy (439-4559), Membership Co-Chairs

Laura Ladd Bierman, Newsletter Editor



From the Co-Presidents

We came back from convention proud to be “in League” and raring to go for the new year. The new board, the old board, and some interested onlookers gathered together in June to forge the program for the 2008-2009 year, and it looks great, if we say so ourselves! Not one, not two, not three, but four Souper Suppers, a luncheon, a pot luck and a dinner, so there will most definitely be food, but, more importantly, food for thought (and our wonderful Gael Vecchio will need lots of help!).

Our new board members have been oriented to the board and to their jobs, and they are a wonderful group; we couldn't ask for better. Our study on “greening our municipalities” has benefited from the thought and research of the study group, and is ready to go in September with a new focus and work plan; watch for both day and evening meetings for this group. We have a new membership brochure and plans for orientations for new members. We've had a summer full of voter registration activities and more scheduled for the fall. Venues have been reserved, speakers have been lined up, bulletin articles planned. LeaderSpark, the program for young leaders that we have run in the past, is sparking again. A Health Care forum with other Leagues is in the works. Etc. And summer is our down time!

In this issue are a few things to help us prepare for the coming year.

- * PLEASE FILL OUT AND SEND IN THE MEMBER INTEREST SHEET.
- * If there's a red dot on your label on this bulletin, please be sure to pay your dues; we're soon to print our membership directory and updating our mailing list, and this may be your last bulletin.
- * Under “Calendar Specifics”, there are meeting dates that you can fill in on your calendar right now. More in future bulletins about the particulars.
- * In the “Voter Service” category, there are registration drives and other activities that we'll need help with.

Here's to a great League year!

In League,
Maggie and Lori

CALENDAR SPECIFICS: SAVE THE DATES!

- Board meetings will continue to be the first Tuesday of the month, 5:45, and will be held at various locations; watch your bulletin. The September 2nd meeting is at Maggie Moehringer's – 12 Coventry Rd in Glenmont. Members are always welcome.
- Souper Suppers will be held on November 4th, February 24th, March 26th and April 28th; the luncheon is December 10th.
- LWV of Rensselaer will host a program on the National Popular Vote to which we are invited on September 20th, 10-12, at the East Greenbush Library. Our consensus is due March 1st, and this will be a great opportunity to hear from the study designers and advocates.
- Check “Voter Services” for registration drives you can help with.

New Member

Joanne Van Buren Albany

Welcome!

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan citizen organization that promotes the informed and active participation of citizens in government, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Any person of voting age, male or female, may become a League member.

This newsletter is published by the League of Women Voters of Albany County, 12 Coventry Road, Glenmont, New York 12077 and mailed to League members. The frequency of publication is as follows: one mid-summer issue followed by nine monthly issues from September to May.

LWVUS Convention: We Had a Great Time!

Lori Keegan-Brady, Mary Ann Lettau and Maggie Moehringer traveled to Portland, Oregon for convention, and thank all of our members for sending us! It was truly an inspiring 4 days, and we came back energized, informed, educated, and with lots of good ideas for our own League's activities. For those of you who have been to National Convention, you will probably agree that seeing all those Leaguers in one big convention hall conducting business in our orderly, civil and deliberative fashion makes one proud to be in League.

The plenary speakers on Health Care Reform and Climate Change left us all breathless, and anxious to do what we can on a local level to make sure that our members and the public are adequately educated to make the important decisions and changes we all must make in the coming years.

Some mundane things happened (our local League's payments to National League will go up, but then we knew that), but some pretty exciting things happened also.

First, we rejoice with our friends in the Saratoga League in the adoption of their study item: "The advisability of using the National Popular Vote compact among the states as a method for electing the President." SO WE HAVE A NEW STUDY! Last year our plans to address this topic were postponed when National reserved this as a national issue, and now Leagues nation wide will study this issue because of Saratoga's (and their supporters) hard work and tireless lobbying at convention. Note, however, that this will be a "fast tracked" study, since much of the research, study questions and materials were already done in preparation for the foiled NYS study. Consensus is due March 1, so expect some information forthcoming in your bulletins, and a consensus meeting, probably in January.

We also adopted a LWVUS Board recommendation "to adopt a Health Care program to educate members and communities in order to be better prepared to do health care advocacy as needed." This means that LWVUS will pour resources into providing local Leagues with informative materials so that we in turn can educate our members and the community in time for the November election and the introduction of the new President's health care program.

Similarly, we adopted "a Multi-Level Education and Advocacy Campaign" on the National level "to promote solutions to global climate change". So we can expect National to devote additional resources to advocate strongly on a national level on this issue, and to make extra efforts to educate local Leagues and the public.

And Portland! What a great city! What wonderful gardens! What a zoo! AND what a great light rail system! (see the article on LRT elsewhere in this bulletin).

THANKS FOR SENDING US!

National Popular Vote

The League of Women Voters of Rensselaer County is pleased to announce a program on the Compact for a National Popular Vote. Co-sponsored by the East Greenbush Community Library, the program, which is open to the public, will take place at the East Greenbush Community Library on September 20, in East Greenbush, NY, at 10 a.m. until noon. The LWV of Rensselaer County will also be holding a voter registration at the Library on that day, and we've requested some display space at the library for League memorabilia. The library will also be doing a book display on voting and elections, and will have articles and periodicals on the reference list on National Popular Vote available for review. It will be an extravaganza!!

The presenters will include Lori Dawson and others from the Saratoga County League as well as other volunteers from the Rensselaer County League. The Albany County League and Schenectady County League have been invited to join us! For more information, go to the National Popular vote website, www.nationalpopularvote.com, the State League website, www.lwvny.org/npv.html. For directions to the Library, go to the website, www.eastgreenbushlibrary.org.
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LWVUS Immigration Position

Ann Brandon, Chair, Immigration Committee

Below is the immigration consensus approved by the national League board in March. This position is the result of local League studies across the country, including Albany County. Thanks to all who participated in our study, both as committee members and participants at our League meetings. I think they agreed with most of our positions!

The League of Women Voters believes that immigration policies should promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business and employment needs of the United States; and be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises. Provision should also be made for qualified persons to enter the U.S. on student visas. All persons should receive fair treatment under the law.

The League supports federal immigration law that provides an efficient, expeditious system (with minimal or no backlogs) for legal entry of immigrants into the U.S.

To complement these goals the League supports federal policies to improve economies, education, job opportunities, and living conditions in nations with large emigrating populations.

In transition to a reformed system, the League supports provisions for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status

The League supports federal payments to impacted communities to address the financial costs borne by states and local governments with large immigrant populations.

Criteria for Legal Admission to the U.S.

The League supports the following criteria for legal admission of persons into the United States:

- * Family reunification of spouses or minor children with authorized immigrants or citizens;
- * Flight from persecution or response to humanitarian crises in home countries;
- * Economic, business and employment needs in the U.S.;
- * Education and training needs of the U.S.;
- * Educational program opportunities; and
- * Lack of a history of serious criminal activity.

Administration and Enforcement

The League supports due process for all persons, including the right to a fair hearing, right to counsel, right of appeal and right to humane treatment.

The League supports:

- * Improved technology to facilitate employer verification of employee status;
- * Verification documents, such as status cards and work permits, with secure identifiers;
- * Significant fines and penalties for employers who hire unauthorized workers;
- * Improved technology for sharing information among federal agencies;
- * More effective tracking of individuals who enter the United States; and
- * Increased personnel at borders.

The League also supports programs allowing foreign workers to enter and leave the U.S. to meet seasonal or sporadic labor needs.

Unauthorized Immigrants Already in the U.S.

In achieving overall policy goals, the League supports a system for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status, including citizenship, by paying taxes, learning English, studying civics and meeting other relevant criteria. While policy reforms, including a path to legal status, remain unachieved, the League does not support deporting unauthorized immigrants who have no history of criminal activity.

Library Project

Mary Ann Lettau

You can make a big contribution to our voter registration effort without even leaving your neighborhood. Join the Library Project. The prototype at Bethlehem Public Library shows a real interest in voting and need for information among the public. Starting July 1, at the initiative of member Maureen Cooley, we set up a table in the entrance hall; we stocked it with registration forms, requests for absentee ballots, some general information pamphlets and a brochure about the League. There is a simple display about the qualifications for voting and the deadlines for submission of forms for voting in the primary and general elections. In the first week, over 40 items were taken. Maureen restocks as needed; the table is up for a month. We even got publicity in the town weekly. It's simple and effective. If you are interested in the Library Project, please call (489-0212) or e-mail me (mlettau1@yahoo.com). I will help you set up in your library.

Who's Running and When?

IMPORTANT ELECTION INFORMATION. Here are the particulars for Albany County. The Primary Election is September 9, 12-9 PM; General Election day is November 4, 6 AM to 9 PM. The races for national office: President/Vice-President and Congressperson for the 21st District. State office races are as follows: Justice of the Supreme Court 3rd Judicial District, Senate 46th District (Neil Breslin, incumbent), and Assembly 104th District (John McEneny, incumbent), 106th District (Ron Canestrari, incumbent), 108th District (Tim Gordon, incumbent) and 109th District (Bob Reilly, incumbent). For Albany County, the only race is for District Attorney (David Soares, incumbent). In the cities, Albany will elect 2 members of the Board of Education, and Watervliet a member of the City Council. There are few elections at the town level; Green Island will elect 3 Trustees, and Westerlo a Councilman. We'll be monitoring which races become contested. Right now, the 21st Congressional District is the League's focus.

Health Care Reform: Planning Activities

The League is participating with Leagues in the Tri-City area to plan and present a forum on health care reform. Tentatively scheduled for Saturday, October 25, 2008 this two hour program would give our members an opportunity to learn first hand the important issues surrounding proposed changes at both the national and state level. The planning committee is still working to shape this pre-election capital region program but some of the ideas that are being discussed include:

- having representatives from the national presidential campaigns discuss their candidates approach to the reform issue
- the York State State Health Plan and other current proposals including Single Payer, the incremental approach and the Freedom Plan
- discussions by experts from the Urban Institute and the Manhattan Institute who are currently working on the numerous policy implications of these plans
- presentations by experts such as Assemblyman Richard Gottfried, Paul Sorum and Ken Adams

If you are interested in being kept informed on the progress of this forum and on the status of the health care reform issues currently being promoted, please contact Marian Schwager at either schwager@nycap.rr.com or phone at 518-439-0344.

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National Popular Vote

In a nutshell, and directly from the website," the National Popular Vote bill would guarantee a majority of the Electoral College to the presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The bill would reform the Electoral College so that the electoral vote in the Electoral College reflects the choice of the nation's voters for President of the United States." Four states have already ratified this bill; they are: Maryland, Hawaii, Illinois and New Jersey. These 4 states possess 50 electoral votes – 19% of the 270 necessary to bring the law into effect.

You are welcome to come and participate in what promises to be an exciting and enlightening program!



GREENING OUR COMMUNITIES

Taking Mass Transit: Making Riding Appealing to Motorists

Our program in September will concentrate on one element of greening our communities: mass transit. Community planning efforts must work hand in hand with mass transit companies to make driving less necessary and less attractive (if gas prices don't do that for us on their own). Our topic for the Pot Luck Supper is mass transit and the CDTA. Among other things, you will hear discussion of their plans for limited implementation of "Bus Rapid Transit", or BRT. In order to ask great questions, you might like to bone up on the advantages of BRT, especially over its alternative – Light Rail Transit, or LRT. Many small cities have implemented light rail as an attractive consumer alternative. BOTH implementations need appropriate investment, good planning, monitoring, branding, marketing, and attractive vehicles and facilities in order to succeed.

Bus Rapid Transit:

Definition: "A flexible, rubber-tired rapid transit mode that combines stations, vehicles, running ways, and intelligent transportation systems (ITS) into an integrated system with a strong positive identity that evokes a unique image." (Transit Cooperative Research Program). An articulated bus, running with fewer stops along a traditional route (which seems to be the initial CDTA Rt 5 corridor proposal) is not really a full BRT implementation.

Advantages over LRT:

- Less expensive to implement usually, depending on the implementation.
- Routes can be more flexible and changeable; fewer transfers necessary.
- More frequency and more stops possible.
- Less time-to-implementation.
- Favored by the FTA.

Light Rail Transit

Definition: "A form of urban rail public transportation that generally has a lower capacity and lower speed than heavy rail and metro systems. The term is used to refer to modern streetcar/tram systems with rapid transit-style features that usually use electric rail cars operating mostly in private rights-of-way separated from other traffic but sometimes, if necessary, mixed with other traffic in city streets." (Wikipedia)

Advantages over BRT:

- More appealing to consumers; image is extremely important to attract ridership.
- An established, proven technology – evolution of trams and streetcars.
- Higher carrying capacity.
- More segregated from regular traffic and immune to traffic patterns.
- Can use narrower lanes and tunnels.
- Less polluting, noisy.
- More comfortable ride.
- Contributes interest, liveliness, and economic benefits to the urban street, and encourages renovations of buildings along the street.

The Albany County Board of Elections needs YOU!

County boards throughout the state are in great need of election inspectors (poll workers), especially since the technology supporting the voting process is going to change. To qualify, you must be a registered voter in Albany County, be enrolled in either the Democratic or Republican party, and be able to speak, read and write the English language. You will be trained by the Board of Elections, and it's a paying job! This is a great way to serve the process. Call the Albany County Board of Elections (487-5060 or boardofelections@albanycounty.com) to find out more!

Public Transportation and CDTA

Sept. 25, 5:00 pm - St. Sophia's Church - Annual Pot Luck Dinner.

Ray Melleady, Executive Director of CDTA will be the speaker at our September Pot Luck dinner. Mr. Melleady will speak on "Making the Case for Improved Public Transportation". His discussion will include:

- An Overview of CDTA
- The Current State of Affairs:
 - Ridership, performance, and challenges
 - Why does transit matter? Why should we care?
- A vision for the future of transit in the Capital Region

CDTA ridership has grown approximately 20% in the last year, thanks largely to gasoline prices. You've been reading in the Times-Union about some of the challenges in providing good service with tight budgets (ours and CDTAs), rising gas prices, and growth that is greater than expected. Join us for this timely discussion, including a Question & Answer session. Plan to bring your friends and neighbors.

Check out the CDTA website at www.cdta.org



2008-2009 LWVAC Calendar

Date	Event	Location
September 2	Bd meeting	Maggie's Home
September 20, 10 am	NPV- Rensselaer LWV	East Greenbush Community Library
September 25 (Thur)	Pot Luck Speaker: Ray Melleady, Executive Director of CDTA	St. Sophia's Church, Albany
Oct 7	Bd meeting	Lori's Home
Oct	WMHT: Tentative Health Forum	
Nov	Bd Meeting	Maggie's Home
Nov 4 (Tues)	International Relations Souper Supper: Speaker to be Announced	Bethlehem Public Library
Dec	Bd Meeting	Lori's Home
Dec 10 (Wed)	Holiday Luncheon Speaker: Mike McNulty	Normanside Country Club
Jan	Bd Mtg	Maggie's Home
Jan	Legislative reception	Alb. County Court House
Jan 12	National Popular Vote Study	Bethlehem Library
Feb	Bd Meeting	Lori's Home
Feb 24 (Tues)	Greening of Albany Co. Bethlehem Public Library Souper Supper	
March	Bd Meeting	Maggie's Home
March 26 (Thur)	Gun Violence Task Force Souper Supper	Bethlehem Public Library
April	Bd Meeting	Lori's Home
April 28 (Tues)	Legislative Update Souper Supper: Speaker Barbara Bartoletti	Bethlehem Public Library
May	Bd Meeting	Maggie's Home
May	Annual Meeting	



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ALBANY COUNTY

RENEWING MEMBER INTEREST SHEET

Please Complete form (both sides) and return

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____ E-MAIL _____

(The above information is provided as a convenience to our members and is not circulated to the public. Please circle anything you do not wish to have published in our membership directory.)

The League of Women Voters of Albany County has a number of ongoing activities for which we welcome volunteers. **Please complete BOTH sides of this form and return to address listed on page 9.**

Please check as many of the following in which you would like to be involved:

Action

E-mail- members are alerted by email of the need for legislative action. You will be given information about proposed legislation and asked to contact your legislator. Contact may be written, electronic or by telephone

Lobbying- spend some time with a State League lobbyist, visiting our local legislators at the State Capital to lobby on League issues; training and background information will be provided.

Albany County Government (attending a monthly meeting of the Legislature)

Financing Education- action.

Global issues/Great Decisions: day _____ evening _____ (study/discussion).

Health Care (universal health insurance).

Greening our Towns (new study).

National Government Issues.

Natural Resources/Environmental Issues.

State Government Issues

Speakers' Bureau (we receive requests to provide speakers on a variety of topics; the State league has prepared speakers notes on many of these topics.)

**RENEWING MEMBER INTEREST SHEET
(continued from page 8)**

Voter Service

- Voter registration;
- candidate forums: moderator; time keeper; organizer;
- poll reporting (get election results at a polling place on election night from about 8:45-9:30 pm);
- serve on Fair Campaign Practices Committee (advocate for positive, issue-oriented campaign by asking candidates to sign fair campaign pledges and hearing complaints on campaign practices.)

Member Development

- Planning social events to promote membership growth;
- mentoring a new member;
- operating a LWV booth at events and festivals of other organizations;
- calling new or prospective members regarding planned activities.

General Assistance

- Writing articles for the league bulletin on topics that interest you;
- fundraising;
- distributing League materials or fliers about League events;
- providing rides to meetings for other members;
- helping with set-up or clean-up at membership meetings;
- making a pot of soup or a dessert to share with others at a membership meeting;
- other (any particular expertise or talent which you are willing to share with the league).

Other Areas of Interest:

Please list any other issues or topics that you think the League should add to its agenda.

Financial support, only: you prefer to support the League through your membership only.

**Please return this survey to:
League of Women Voters
PO Box 611
Slingerlands, NY 12159**

League Calendar

See page 9 for the Full Year Calendar!

Dues are Overdue!

NOTE TO ALL MEMBERS

If you see a red dot on your bulletin address label, it means that you have forgotten to pay your dues! **THIS MAY BE YOUR FINAL BULLETIN!** Dues are \$45 for individuals and \$60 for households, payable to LWVAC, and should be sent to LWVAC, PO Box 611, Slingerlands, NY 12159. We are preparing our LWVAC Membership Directory now, and if we don't receive your dues payment quickly, you won't be in it! *The League needs YOU in this important election year!*

And, don't forget to complete and return the Interest Sheet on pages 7-8!

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ALBANY COUNTY
PO Box 611
Slingerlands, NY 12159

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