



# APRIL EVENTS

## **I.O.U.S.A.**

*One Nation. Under Stress. In Debt*

Wednesday, April 15th at 7 pm

McChesney Room of the Schenectady Public Library

Maryanne Malecke, Education Director for WAMC Northeast Public Radio will introduce the film and serve as discussion facilitator following the film.



More information within.

## **The Current State of Affairs of the League of Women Voters**

Thursday, April 16th, 7-9 pm

Laura Ladd Bierman, **Executive Director of the NYS LWV**

First Reformed Church, Church St., Schenectady

Laura will discuss her background & how she came to do what she does for the New York State League. She will tell us what the NYS League offers & how local Leagues can make use of their expertise.

*Read more about Laura in the President's Column.*

## **FRIENDLY LUNCH: A special program on AGING in PLACE**

Tuesday, April 28 at Noon.

Wynwood Commons Activity Room at 1786 Union Street, Niskayuna

Edie Sennett, Coordinator of the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program

& Nikki Dress, Marketing and Community Relations Director for the Eddy Senior Care PACE Program will be our speakers.

They are prepared to tell us about the options that are available for seniors who need specialized care but who are not ready to move to a nursing home. We will be discussing issues that we ourselves could face, as well as friends & members of our families.

Prepare for the future by learning about the services that are available and what your choices are.

## **President's Column**

By Joanne Tobiessen

Greetings,

Happy Spring! We were just away for a few days and returned to hear our first chorus of peepers and wood frogs, which always signals SPRING to us!

This month we have more interesting and thought-provoking programs as outlined on the first page. I'd like particularly to draw your attention to the visit to our League on April 16 of Laura Ladd Bierman, the NYS League's Executive Director. She is new to this position, but by no means new to the League or to Albany. She will share with us her fascinating and extensive experience with the League and also give us a closer look at what the State League actually does (and where our per member payments go). The NYS League convention will be in May in Syracuse, so Laura will prime us for that as well.

The League is a tri-level organization, advocating for our selected issues and representing its members at the national, state and local levels. We are fortunate to be near Albany to have Laura share with us what is happening there on our behalf.

Plan to join Laura and your League friends on Thursday, April 16, at 7pm at the First Reformed Church, and come with questions about the NYS League!

See you there. Joanne

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## **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

Kathryn Wolfram, Kathleen Mara & Anne Saile

Submitted by Betsy Chase

Kathryn works part time for the Northeast Regional Forensic Institute where she provides support training for DNA analysts and continuing education for forensic professionals. She holds a masters degree from SUNY Albany for Forensic Modular Biology. Kathryn taught high school biology for ten years and was a high school administrator for 2 years. She moved to Leipzig, Germany where she established a biology class for the International School. Environmental issues are important to Kathryn so she has joined the Environment Committee. She is impressed with the scope of the League's activities and knows that she will learn a lot about what is going on in New York State.

Kathleen has worked for the Postal Service for ten years. One day last fall, when Joanne Tobiessen was in the Post Office, Kathy asked her about the League's activities. Joanne, of course, told her and invited her to our New Member Meeting. Kathy came to the meeting and picked up a DVD about the National Popular Vote and hopes to gain more knowledge about voting issues in New York State and is still considering what other issues she has time to explore with us.

Anne served as President and CEO of Bellevue Women's Hospital from October 2001 until November 2007. Before joining Bellevue, she was the Executive Director of the NYS Office of Professional and Medical Conduct, and prior to that was the Vice President of the Center for the Disabled of the Capital District. She has served on many Boards, including the Health Care Advisory Board in Washington DC from 2001-2005. Anne currently operates The Saile Group LLC, a change management company. She is writing a book about change.

Anne is also a mentor for the Women in Government Program at SUNY Albany. She will lecture there in April on "Ethics in Leadership." She has recently joined the Board of the American Heart Association and has been a registered lobbyist in NY and Washington DC for women's health care issues and the American Heart Association. Anne wants to do whatever she can to contribute her knowledge of government and health care to the LWV.

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*Call Lynda Nichols, Membership Chair at 374-1643 for membership information.*

Report on the Consensus Meeting: NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE COMPACT  
Submitted by Judy Middelkoop

After months of preparation and planning, the time for our March 24th National Popular Vote Compact consensus meeting finally arrived. We had tough competition that evening because Andrew Cuomo, NY Attorney General, was simultaneously holding a forum at the Community College on other pertinent issues including health care, the environment, and consumer fraud. Nevertheless, 22 members came to share their opinions and discuss the National Popular Vote Compact.

We found several questions needed more debate than others, and we unanimously agreed that one question was irrelevant. Members had strong opinions as to whether the National Popular Vote is feasible or not, and we had to come back to several questions. However, we did finally reach consensus on all the questions.

Overall, we agreed that although the National Popular Vote Compact has its shortcomings, the compact approach may be an acceptable way to alter the method for electing the President and Vice-President until the goal of amending the Constitution to abolish the Electoral College is achieved. After all, the constitutional amendment to give women the right to vote was initiated at state level. A special thanks to Connie Young, Julie Burgess and Betsy Chase for all their tireless work in researching the topic and helping to facilitate the consensus meeting!

*More about "I.O.U.S.A.: One Nation. Under Stress. In Debt."*

The Schenectady County League of Women Voters and Schenectady County Public Library will host a screening of the 2008 documentary film, "I.O.U.S.A.: One Nation. Under Stress. In Debt." on Wednesday, April 15, 2009, in the McChesney Room of the Central Library, 99 Clinton Street, Schenectady. The 90-minute film will begin at 7 PM, followed by a 30 minute discussion about the economy and ways in which Americans can begin to address the nation's long-term financial condition. Maryanne Malecki, Education Director for WAMC Northeast Public Radio, will introduce the film and serve as discussion facilitator for the event. The program is free and open to the public.

I.O.U.S.A. examines the rapidly growing national debt and its consequences for the United States and its citizens. The ultimate power of I.O.U.S.A. is that the film moves beyond doomsday rhetoric to proffer potential financial scenarios and propose solutions about how we can recreate a fiscally sound nation for future generations. Independent filmmaker Patrick Creadon uses candid interviews with Warren Buffett, Alan Greenspan, Paul O'Neill, Robert Rubin, and Paul Volcker, along with the Peterson Foundation's David Walker and Bob Bixby of the Concord Coalition, a Foundation grantee. The film is sponsored by the Peter G. Peterson Foundation, a nonpartisan organization dedicated to increasing public awareness of the nature and urgency of several key challenges threatening America's fiscal health, and the Concord Coalition.

For further information contact the Schenectady County Public Library Reference Desk, 388-4511. Maryanne Malecki, Education Director - Student Town Meetings, WAMC Northeast Public Radio 465-5233 ext. 135 [www.wamcstudenttownmeetings.org](http://www.wamcstudenttownmeetings.org)

**Mission Statement:** The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan political organization. We encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government. We work to increase the understanding of major public policy issues and influence public policy through education and advocacy.

*President:*

Joanne Tobiessen 393-0477

*Vice-President:*

Connie Young 393-7061

*Newsletter Editor:*

Helen MacDonald 346-7006

## WHAT IS NEW YORK DOING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE?

Submitted by Nancy Peterson, Environment Committee

On March 11 at the Niskayuna Town Hall, Mark Lowery from the New York State Office of Climate Change gave a very informative presentation on the work being done by this DEC agency. The two major methods of approaching the problem of climate change are mitigation (efforts to reduce green house gas emissions) and adaptation (plans to learn to live with climate change). Both of these must be included in our solutions to this problem.

A major attempt to mitigate green house gases is the cap and trade program in progress under the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). Ten states in the northeast are working together to mitigate greenhouse gases. Each state limits emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> from electric power plants, creates CO<sub>2</sub> allowances and establishes participation in CO<sub>2</sub> allowance auctions. Regulated power plants will be able to use a CO<sub>2</sub> allowance issued by any of the ten participating states to demonstrate compliance with an individual state program. As the Obama administration moves in this direction, RGGI will probably serve as a model for the mitigation of greenhouse gases. New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) runs the auctions and has an active voice in the use of the proceeds. These monies are dedicated to energy efficiency programs.

Mr. Lowery mentioned other programs the Office of Climate Change is involved in. They are in close contact with other states, regions, and countries that are working on climate change issues. Other regulatory initiatives include vehicle emissions, carbon capture and sequestration, biofuels policy, and early signs of sea level rise, such as saline levels in Long Island aquifers. An example of adaptation would be anticipating the threat of future water shortages by protecting our aquifer from depletion by privateers.

The Climate Smart Communities Pledge is a program for the participation of local governments and agencies. An Earth day program is being planned; communities that sign up before April 22 will be recognized as leaders in this initiative. We were encouraged to be proactive in getting our community involved. A program inviting public comment is the State Energy Plan, initiated by Gov. Paterson in March 2008. The Energy Plan should be ready for public comment by the end of March '09. For more information, go to [www.nysenergyplan.com](http://www.nysenergyplan.com).

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## GIDEON DAY IN ALBANY

Submitted by Maxine Borom and Helga Schroeter

On Mar. 18 Helga Schroeter and Maxine Borom attended GIDEON DAY in Albany. Named for the landmark 1963 Supreme Court Decision, Gideon vs. Wainwright, which brought about representation for all defendants in court, the conference brought together a coalition of organizations working to improve and make more equitable legal representation in the different counties for those who cannot afford to pay. The request of the legislature and the governor was/is that the state allocate \$3 million for the Independent Public Defense Commission. The money would come from the Indigent Legal Services Fund in the 2009 budget. This money is already available, so would not further burden the taxpayers of the state.



Participants in the Conference heard speakers on subjects ranging from equitable distribution/use of funds for indigent legal services to incarceration of innocent people because of these inequities. Even the structure of delivery of legal services varies widely from county to county. Some, like Schenectady, have a public defender system, others use assigned counsel, and still others use legal aid societies. In addition, within those categories services vary widely.

Anyone who wishes to convey the simple message, "Please allocate \$3 million for the independent Public Defense Commission from the Indigent Legal Services Fund in the 2009 budget," call the governor at 474-8390, your assemblyperson at 455-4100 and Senator Farley at 455-2800.

## AGING IN THE COMMUNITY

Submitted by Pat Kessler, Chair Health Care Committee

March 20<sup>th</sup>, the place to be was definitely Albany Public Library. The Schenectady League partnered with the New York State League and 3 other Chapters (Albany, Saratoga and Rensselaer) to sponsor a program on “Long Term Care”. Over 120 people attended this outstanding program hosted by Elisa Streeter of WTEN NEWS.

The three presenters are wonderful professionals who were able to excite the audience with helpful information about what is available now and what could become a reality in the future. Courtney Burke is the Director of Rockefeller Institutes’ NYS Health Policy Research Center. She reviewed many of the technical terms and current resources available in New York. The amount of money spent on long-term care is staggering – over \$207 billion in 2005 – with over half of this amount paid for by Medicaid. Nursing home care is the most expensive choice and usually the one least desired by seniors in need of services. The alternative of aging in one’s own home is the most desirable choice but presents many challenges! Family care givers experience difficulty locating and coordinating community services. Caregivers also need support and respite. Medicaid does not pay for community based housing. In spite of this, a large portion of community care is provided outside of government and the efforts to increase this approach to care delivery is increasing at a more rapid pace than Nursing Home growth. Between 1999 and 2004, Nursing homes added 91,877 individuals which is a 6% increase. In the same period, Home and Community Based Waivers allowed States to add 401,850 people representing a 43% growth.

Michael Burgess, Director of the NYS Office for the Aging (SOFA), stated that the goal of this office is to help older New Yorkers to be as independent as possible for as long as possible. The Office encourages advocacy, development and delivery of person-centered consumer oriented and cost effective policies, programs and services which support and empower the elderly and their families, in partnership with the network of public and private organizations which serve them. (whew, what a mouthful!) Mr. Burgess pointed out that most individuals with chronic conditions or disabilities in New York live in the community- approximately 2.3 million adults. Most have inadequate or fragmented access to formal services. However, dynamic changes in the state’s elderly and impaired populations are being brought about by the transition of the Baby Boom generation to the Elder Boom Generation! He also emphasized a concept of viewing older persons as a resource, not a burden! With large numbers of Boomers entering retirement, there is an increased need to encourage the numbers of mature workers and to recognize the enormous contribution they make as volunteers in the community. Numerous programs and initiatives were presented. Internet access is available for more details at [www.aging.ny.gov?NYSOFA](http://www.aging.ny.gov?NYSOFA).

The New York State Department of Health was represented by Mark Kissinger, Deputy Commissioner for Long Term Care. Commissioner Kissinger pointed out that the population of New Yorkers age 65 years and older will increase by 30.4% between 2000 and 2020. These demographic projections reveal a five to ten year window of opportunity for planning and policy change to address future long term care. He believes the principles of reform must include:

- Increased consumer choice and control for older individual
- Ensuring access to appropriate array of home and community based supports
- Enhancing quality measurement to enable high quality care in the most appropriate setting
- Reducing cost growth and reward better performance
- Improving coordination of long term care and acute care services
- Utilizing enhance health information technology
- Encouraging person planning for long term support needs, including private funding

One of the efforts by the Department of Health is the development of a new Uniform Assessment Tool to provide an automated, standardized, empirically validated uniform assessment. The process should provide cost savings through reduced administrative and duplication of information. It can also improve service quality through individualized care plans that are truly consumer driven. And it should provide a comprehensive data set, which will enable the monitoring and evaluation necessary for determining future service system needs. Additional information is available at [www.health.state.ny.us](http://www.health.state.ny.us)

## **Do Lever Machines Provide a Better Voting System for Democracy?**

Aimee Allaud, Elections Specialist, New York State League of Women Voters

Wanda Warren Berry, Executive Director, New Yorkers for Verified Voting

Some New Yorkers are seeking the support of our organizations for their misguided attempt to keep the lever voting machines instead of implementing the paper ballot-optical scanner system purchased last year by the county commissioners. This purchase was funded by millions of dollars allotted to New York under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) specifically for the replacement of lever machines. Our commitment to high standards for verifiable and accessible voting prevents us from supporting retention of the levers once the scanners pass New York's rigorous certification process. Lever voting machines, though they have worked fairly well for over 100 years, do not meet current standards for voting systems. Even if New York were not under a federal court order requiring their replacement in 2009, we believe New Yorkers have learned to ask for a higher level of accessibility and accountability than levers can provide.

In "Citizens' Right to Vote" (2006), the national League of Women Voters resolved to support only voting systems which:

- ! Provide a voter-verifiable paper record that is the official record of the voter's intent.
- ! Allow the voter to verify this paper record while still in the process of voting.
- ! Allow verification of vote totals by an independent hand count of the paper record.
- ! Allow routine audits of the paper record in every election.

Lever machines do not meet these standards. They retain no record of individual votes. During voting, one can see the small lever go down, but cannot see that the inner workings of the machine register the intended vote. In addition, levers include no record of individual votes that can be hand counted or audited to verify the totals. At the close of Election Day, they provide only the totals for each contest. Occasionally these totals have been known to be wrong; but there were no records to re-count. The federal Election Assistance Commission strongly recommends and is expected to require such records in the future.

Both HAVA and our own democratic standards ask that voting systems be accessible to persons with special needs. Lever machines are not. To compensate for this serious limitation, those advocating retention of the levers say that counties can continue to use the ballot marking devices (BMDs) used last Fall to allow persons with disabilities or with need for alternative languages to mark a paper ballot to be hand-counted. This plan shows no sensitivity to the right of persons with disabilities to cast a secret ballot using the same voting system as others. If most voters were using the levers, many poll sites would have only a small number of ballots marked with BMDs. This would make it difficult to preserve the anonymity of those ballots during Election Night hand-counts. With the paper ballot-scanner system, such ballots are submitted to the same precinct-based scanners as those marked by hand by other voters. They also are counted along with others in any re-counts and in mandated audits. This promises both independence and privacy to voters with special needs.

In addition, the attempt to keep the levers does not recognize the financial and managerial problems posed by the suggestion that the already purchased ballot markers continue to be used alongside the levers. Those who argue that keeping the levers would save taxpayers' money do not take into account that HAVA funds for the replacement of lever machines would need to be returned if levers are retained. Also significant is the fact that most counties purchased ballot markers that cannot function apart from the scanners. If this equipment is used along with levers, counties have to maintain, store, program, test, and deploy at least two large machines with different technologies for each polling place; this would increase operating costs. The long process of gaining certification of new voting equipment for New York has been frustrating. But neither this frustration nor our sense of economic crisis should lead us to sacrifice the superior standards for verifiable and accessible voting that we have come to see as important to democracy. Lever machines cannot meet those standards.

More information can be found at [www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org) or [www.nyvv.org](http://www.nyvv.org)

## **Finance Committee Update**

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From Athena Pagnotti

### **The Schenectady County League of Women Voters gratefully acknowledges the following individuals and corporations for their generous support:**

Doris Aiken	Karen Brown Johnson	Elaine Hickok	Emily Ross
Faye Bailey	Julie Burgess	Analine S. Hicks	Helga Schroeter
Dr. N. Balasubramanian	Angela Calabria	Leslie & Kathleen Hull	Paul Sorum
Ruth Bergeron	Michael R. Cuevas	Janet Hutchinson	Joanne Tobiessen
L. Ann Bish	The Golub Foundation, Inc.	Ross & Patricia MacKinnon	Rita Van Der Zee
Ruth Bonn	George & Joan Gould	Mary McGinnis	Time Warner
Vicki Bremer	Julia Helfman	Judith & John Middelkoop	

An updated list of contributors will be presented in June.

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You may have noticed that we did not send our annual fund raising plea (as was customary in the past) during the month of March. During election season last fall with greater public attention on the League, we mailed an invitation and donor card, like the one below, to all League members, and other interested parties. At the February 2009 board meeting, we decided that our annual fund drive will continue to take place in the fall.

If you missed the opportunity to support us in last fall's fund raising effort and would like to contribute now, please detach the donor card below and mail your contribution today to: Schenectady LWV, P O Box 9135, Schenectady, NY 12309.

Your support (as a member, donor, active participant) is always greatly appreciated!

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### **SUPPORT YOUR LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS**

There are two funds; you may contribute to either or both.

1. Checks payable to **LWV of Schenectady County** (Local League operating fund)

\_\_\_\_\_ \$35    \_\_\_\_\_ \$65    \_\_\_\_\_ \$100    \_\_\_\_\_ other

2. Checks payable to **NYS-LWV Educational Foundation** (Tax-deductible fund for educational purposes)

\_\_\_\_\_ \$35    \_\_\_\_\_ \$65    \_\_\_\_\_ \$100    \_\_\_\_\_ other ( \_\_\_\_\_ company matching fund, e.g. GE \_\_\_\_\_, other \_\_\_\_\_ )

Please earmark my \_\_\_\_\_ \$250 contribution or \_\_\_\_\_ \$500 contribution as **Underwriter** for the following educational programs

and services: \_\_\_\_\_ LeaderSpark    \_\_\_\_\_ Legislative Reception    \_\_\_\_\_ Program Video Taping and Broadcasting

Please send your contribution to the League of Women Voters, PO Box 9135, Schenectady, NY 12309

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for your support! Your contribution will be acknowledged by mail.*



## April Meetings

Mon. April 6...Environment Committee, 12 noon, SAAC-TV, 115 Broadway. *Strategies for meeting with Legislators and the planning of Earth Day events will be discussed. Call Carol Furman 346-2746 with questions.*

Mon. April 6... Working Group on Girls, 3:30pm, YWCA in the Stockade. *Planning for our Girls' Day Out. Call Joanne Tobiessen 393-0477 for more information.*

Tues. April 7...League Board, 4pm, 1400 Keyes Ave.

Wed. April 15...I.O.U.S.A. One Nation. Under Stress. In Debt; McChesney Rm., Schenectady Public Library

Thurs. April 16 -The Current State of Affairs of the LWV, First Reformed Church, Church St. 7 pm.

Tues. April 28...Aging in Place, Wynwood Commons Activity Room, Noon

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please send this membership form with your dues to Lynda Nichols, 1038 Maryland Ave. Schenectady, 12308

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

Membership choices: Student \$20 Individual \$55 Family \$75 (Needs Adjustments can be made.)

*These yearly dues are not tax deductible.*