

QuickTime™ and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.

MARCH EVENTS

What is New York State Doing About Climate Change?

Wednesday, March 11, 7-9pm at the Niskayuna Town Hall,
1 Niskayuna Circle (off Nott Street East)

Mark Lowery, Climate Partnership Coordinator from the NYS Office of Climate Change will speak about the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) and other activities of the Office of Climate Change.



"Aging in the Community? The Future of Long Term Care" (What is on the horizon in NYS for our long term care?)

Friday, March 20th from 10:00am- 12:00pm
Albany Public Library- 161 Washington Ave. Albany

Panelists: Courtney Burke Director, NYS Health Policy Research Center,
Rockefeller Institute
Michael Burgess Director for the NYS Department for the Aging
Mark Kissinger Deputy Commissioner for Long Term Care NY State Department of Health
Moderator: Elisa Streeter News Anchor, Channel 10 News

******For more information or to reserve your seat please call 518-221-1904 by March 16th.******
****Parking is available behind the library on Elk Street.****



THE ELECTION of the President: Whose business?

Make your ideas part of this process!

National Popular Vote Compact Consensus Meeting

Tuesday, March 24th at 7:00 PM (promptly because we have a lot to discuss.)

First Reformed Church, 8 N Church Street, Schenectady NY



*The process of electing the president is important and affects us all.
Please read the materials, inform yourself, and make your voice heard at the consensus meeting.
Also, please bring your bulletin and any printed supporting and opposing arguments you may have to the meeting.*

NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE CONSENSUS MEETING

The President is not only commander-in-chief of the armed forces, but also swears to uphold and to protect the Constitution of the United States. The process for electing the president, as we know, is extremely important. Come to the consensus meeting and express your opinion!

The LWVUS has prepared background papers, supporting and opposing arguments, and the discussion questions for the consensus meeting; all the materials are available on our website: www.lwvschenectady.org. The questions and abbreviated arguments are included here for your convenience.

According to the LWVUS's National Popular Vote Compact (NPVC) discussion list, the study is not about the Electoral College vs. NPVC but whether the NPVC can accomplish direct elections. We are not being asked to choose between the NPVC and the League's current position which is to support direct election of the president. Please read the following questions and the pro and con arguments and please join us at the consensus meeting on March 24th. Voting is League Business!

National Popular Vote Consensus Questions

Amending the Constitution

1. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.

- a. Action to alter a basic element of the Constitutional framework, which is achievable by amendment to the Constitution, should be accomplished by amendment to the Constitution.
- b. Action by states through a compact process is an acceptable way to alter the method for electing the President and Vice-President.
- c. The group could not reach consensus.

2. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.

- a. Because a compact has never before been used to address a fundamental constitutional issue such as voting, the chance that it might set a precedent for the future leads to the conclusion that it is better that the League continue to work for an amendment to the Constitution to establish the direct popular election of the President and the abolition of the Electoral College.
- b. Despite the novelty of the use of the compact approach to address a fundamental constitutional issue such as voting, the League should support the NPV Compact as a way of achieving an important goal.
- c. The group could not reach consensus.

Congressional Consent

3. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.

- a. The possibility that the NPV Compact will require congressional consent is not of sufficient concern to block the implementation of the plan.
- b. The possibility that the NPV Compact will require congressional consent is sufficient to conclude that the plan should not be implemented without obtaining such consent.
- c. The group could not reach consensus.

Enforcement

4. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.

- a. The NPV Compact contains sufficient enforcement provisions to assure smooth operation of the plan.
- b. Although it is not possible to determine whether the enforcement provisions will be sufficient to assure smooth operation of the plan, the plan should be passed anyway.
- c. Enforcement of the plan is likely to add uncertainty and bring the courts into the presidential election in ways that raise substantial concerns.
- d. The lack of adequate enforcement provisions is sufficient to conclude that the NPV is not a viable plan.
- e. The group could not reach consensus.

Uniformity

5. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.

- a. The uniformity of voting systems is more important to American democracy than the possibility that the NPV Compact can be adopted.
- b. The NPV Compact is more important than uniformity of voting systems because it would succeed in achieving the popular election of the President.

- c. The group could not reach consensus.

Popular Election of the President

6. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.

- a. It is more important to achieve the goal of national popular election of the President than it is to achieve the goal of abolition of the electoral college.
- b. It is more important to amend the Constitution to abolish the Electoral College than it is to achieve the goal of popular election of the President by alternative methods, such as the NPV Compact.
- c. The group could not reach consensus.

Achievability

7. Which statements reflect the views of the group?

- a. The NPV Compact will have problems being passed because of the need for congressional consideration and the need for action by so many states.
Agree Disagree No Consensus
- b. A constitutional amendment to establish the direct popular election of the President and the abolition of the Electoral College will continue to have problems being passed.
Agree Disagree No Consensus

Background for the National Popular Vote Compact

The League has a long-standing position in support of the direct election of the president by popular vote. Now, League members have the opportunity to consider whether to support the National Popular Vote Compact (NPV Compact) as a viable process to achieve that result. The NPV Compact would avoid the need for a constitutional amendment abolishing the Electoral College (EC), and would assure that the individual receiving the most votes would become president.

The NPV Compact proposal uses the mechanism of the EC. States that legislatively enact the NPV Compact would agree that their state electors would vote for the individual that received the most votes nationwide. Thus, the popular vote count from all 50 states and the District of Columbia would be added together. State elections officials in all states participating would award their electoral votes to the presidential candidate who receives the largest number of popular votes.

This alternative method of assigning a state's EC votes would take effect only when enacted by states collectively possessing a majority of the electoral votes. This 270-vote threshold also corresponds essentially to states representing a majority of the people of the United States.

The plan includes procedural provisions to help assure smooth functioning of the agreement – conditions that deal with states deciding to withdraw from the Compact at the last moment, enforcement issues and recounts.

Currently four states have passed legislation to enact the NPV Compact.

Support for the National Popular Vote Compact

Because the League already supports direct election of the president, arguments against the Electoral College (EC) are not included in the material supporting the National Popular Vote Compact (NPV Compact).

Constitutional Issues The NPV Compact is a way to assure that every person's vote counts equally and that the person receiving the most votes is the winner of the presidency. The same result would be achieved by constitutional amendment but the U.S. Constitution is difficult to amend. The NPV Compact is a viable way to attain the same goal as amending the Constitution to eliminate the EC.

A constitutional amendment is not needed to effectuate the NPV Compact because states already have the right to implement changes in how electors are appointed.

The NPV Compact is a compact between states—a method of concerted state action that has long been sanctioned by the Constitution and the courts.

Evaluating Fairness A candidate can be elected president by receiving the most electoral votes even though he or she did not receive the most popular votes. This is not a result voters expect or desire. As election campaigns are now waged, major emphasis and resources are concentrated in key EC battleground states because that is where elections are won or lost. The NPV Compact would eliminate the emphasis on battleground states and would be more apt to assure campaign strategies that appeal to a broad spectrum of the electorate which would foster greater voter participation.

The argument that the plan would negatively impact states' rights is countered by poll results showing that most voters want their individual vote to count, rather than allotting them to electors representing the state as a whole. Any claim that the NPV Compact is an unprecedented disregard for the U.S. Constitution ignores the reality that voting rights have been changed through state action many times. Women's suffrage, for example, was instituted by twenty states before passage of the constitutional amendment that made the right universal.

Mechanical Considerations Those opposed to the NPV Compact cite mechanical issues that might lead the NPV to fail, but the Compact includes provisions that address issues of enforcement, winning levels and recounts.

Other Issues The Voting Rights Act and the NPV Compact are in harmony, assuring equality of votes throughout the United States.

League Issues Opponents say that the NPV Compact conflicts with the League's support of uniform voting standards. Supporters of the Compact advocate its passage in all states, which would result in uniform voting standards. It is true that the NPV Compact could be in effect for an interlude when not all states had signed on to it. The same could be demonstrated for other laws, such as the Equal Rights Amendment. Nonetheless, it must be remembered that uniform voting standards are not now in effect. The NPV Compact could help assure that every vote would be counted equally.

Further, implementation of a method which assures direct election of the president by popular vote is in keeping with the League's long-held position.

Opposition to the National Popular Vote Compact

There is little respect for the Electoral College (EC). The League opposes it and most voters want a direct popular vote. But is the National Popular Vote Compact (NPV Compact) an appropriate way to achieve that result?

Evaluating Fairness Voters supporting the candidate who receives the majority of votes in their state want their state's electors to support their choice. Adoption of the NPV Compact may require a state elections official to direct its state's electors to cast their ballots in support of a candidate who was not favored by the voters of that state.

Passage of the NPV Compact will result in the emphasis of presidential campaigns shifting from the battleground states to areas of large concentrations of population. So, while some voters are disenfranchised by the EC, others might be disenfranchised by the NPV Compact. Because the Compact requires entry into a contract with other states which binds state elections officials to direct electors to vote in a certain way, regardless of the outcome of the election in their state, states' rights are diminished.

In addition, one can question the advisability of a method that bypasses the normal constitutional amendment process in this manner.

Constitutional Issues Many constitutional scholars argue that this plan will lead to extensive litigation involving challenges to the NPV Compact on issues such as the scope of constitutional powers, the Compact itself, the need for congressional approval, the concerns of non-compacting states, and constitutional protections of state interests and their role in elections.

Mechanical Issues/Flaws The methods for enforcement of this plan are unclear. Opponents question the power and timing to withdraw from the Compact and the power to enforce compliance.

Others express concern about an onslaught of lawsuits between compacting and non-compacting states, as well as procedures in close elections.

The plan, allowing the election of a president by a plurality of votes, does not improve on the current system; neither the present system nor the NPV Compact requires that the president be elected by a majority.

Other Issues The Voting Rights Act requires pre-clearance for legislative changes. This, too, has the capacity to engender lawsuits to ensure compliance.

League Issues This proposal does nothing to achieve the goal of uniform standards of voting. The NPV Compact is effective when passed by states representing 270 electoral votes, effectively negating the impact on presidential elections of the voters in states which represent the other half of electoral votes. A system which assures no voter disenfranchisement is a better way to assure that every person's vote counts.

The League has long supported the abolition of the EC. Although the NPV Compact purports to foster the same result, it creates additional concerns. Amending the U.S. Constitution is a difficult process, and we should seriously consider supporting the normal amendment procedures to abolish the EC versus this specific "work-around."

*****There are pros and cons to this plan, which are discussed in full in papers found on the LWVUS Web site. Summaries of these papers are also available. © 2008 by the League of Women Voters of the United States

The Health Care Committee met recently and decided to focus on 3 Issues this year:

1. **National and State Health Care Reform** will be monitored. Information will be shared with League members and our community so that informed advocacy can occur. Pat Kessler will continue to take responsibility for this issue
2. **Comprehensive health care planning** for Schenectady County has been a League concern because of the changes that have occurred over the past two years (affecting Bellevue, St. Clare's and Ellis). Members are concerned that hospital centered planning does not address the broad community issues and need. Carol Furman and Ruth Bonn will undertake a fact finding process to prepare recommendations to the Board.
3. **Long term health care** was identified as an issue that needs to be researched and goals identified. Plans for the new Schenectady County Nursing Home raise questions about community and home based services that could allow people the opportunity to "age in place". Mary Pritchard and Betsy Chase have agreed to lead this effort.

Two major activities scheduled for this spring are:

1. **Participation with State LWV and the Saratoga, Rensselaer, Albany League** Chapters to sponsor a major spring program. The original focus on National and State Health Care Reform was changed because the new President has not had an opportunity to present his plan and fiscal issues are delaying State activities. The Program was changed to address another major issue – Long Term Health Care. Information about this program is included in this issue of the newsletter. We hope to have a large attendance at the March 20th Forum at the Albany Public Library.
2. The committee will prepare information on all three Issues to present to the Schenectady County Board of Representatives at the **Legislative Breakfast** in April.

For more information, please contact Pat Kessler at 374-2713 or patkessler@aol.com .

SUSPENSION OF THE PUBLICATION OF *THE NATIONAL VOTER* MAGAZINE

At its January meetings, the LWVUS Board of Directors decided to suspend publication of *The National Voter* magazine (paper and digital) until the League's finances are healthier. Publication costs for *The Voter* are prohibitive in a time of budget cutbacks. The Board and the LWVUS staff are committed to finding new ways to deliver information to our members and supporters. We will keep you informed as we move forward. Please read the weekly Leaders' Updates on our Web site. Please also share them with other members and remind them to send us their e-mail addresses. Questions and comments can be sent to Board Member Nancy Eitrein at neitrein@speakeasy.net.

Environment Committee Report

Carol Furman, Environment Committee Chair

The Environment Committee meets at noon on the first Monday of the month and therefore will meet at Noon on Monday, March 2 in the board room of the Schenectady Action Cable Council Building at 115 Broadway. We will discuss our plans for our program in March on initiatives of the NYS Office of Climate Change. Plans will also be made for a program on the pros and cons of nuclear power expansions. We will hear about Issues affecting the Great Flats Aquifer which were recently presented at the Water Quality Coordinating Committee. All are welcome to join us. Questions: Carol Furman 346-2746

CIVILIAN POLICE REVIEW BOARD Report
Submitted by Joan Elliott

Joan Elliott reported to the Board that the Review Board, on which she serves as a representative of the League, is evaluating its status and value to the citizens of Schenectady as its effectiveness is in question. There is a delay in appointing new members and currently there are three vacancies. There have been no responses by the Police Department administration to recommendations on juvenile policies, training, and hand-cuff use. There has been no response to a request for the SPD Policy and Procedure manual, or for disposition case reports. There are systemic problems with excessive time in the process of handling complaints and lack of compliance with legislation. Additionally, there are many procedural problems:

- a) there is no tracking system of complaints or of police officers involved in complaints
- b) there are audio/video malfunctions or non-activation
- c) the SCPRB chair is unable to view the audio/video tapes
- d) witness statements are problematic and sometimes missing
- e) officers are not interviewed separately so there is concern over collusion
- f) the SCPRB has been unable to use its special investigator due to obstacles introduced by the PBA and the city administration
- g) the Board has been unable to see letters sent to complainants
- h) there has been an inability to get the mediation process initiated for low level complaints especially courtesy complaints
- i) The Police Benevolent Association has been unwilling to meet with the Review Board to discuss bettering community-police relations and removing obstacles to the complaint process.
- j) Three members will likely resign due to lack of input

The Board was asked for its recommendations and there was a lively discussion. Many recommendations were made. They included 'stay, don't give in,' 'get more publicity, be a voice for the community,' and 'all members should unite in public ways.' The group recommended making the issues public.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE Report
Lynda Nichols, Membership Chair

The Membership Committee met on February 17 to discuss expanding the diversity of our Schenectady County League membership. We have an active group of members, but we would like to reach some women and men in the community who have not previously participated in our League. The Committee decided that the first step in attracting more members is to get our name and information out into the community in a more planned way. We will be redesigning our Schenectady League brochure, and then we will distribute the brochure more widely in the community.

Helga Schroeter participated with the Membership Committee brainstorming session, and she provided us with some valuable insights. We would also appreciate input from League members who might have ideas about ways to encourage people to join and locations to place our publications. Email ideas to nicholsL@nycap.rr.

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.

WELCOME NEW MEMBER

Submitted by Betsy Chase

Sabrina Holiday-Harder was encouraged to join the League by Helga Schroeter. She has been the Office Administrator for the Schenectady Inner City Ministry for a year. She enjoys working for an organization that serves the low income population of Schenectady. She was previously the after School Program Director at Mont Pleasant School.

Sabrina is most proud of her success in getting the "Three Angels Dream" playground built in Central Park in memory of her daughter (who had Cerebral Palsy and severe kidney disease) and two other children who were severely disabled. She managed to get over one million dollars in grants for the project which was started in the summer of '08 and completed last October. The grand opening is May 8, 2009. Governor Patterson is expected to attend. She is involved with the National Kidney Foundation of Northeastern New York and will be lobbying March 3 at the State Assembly. Sabrina expects to acquire a wealth of information and skills from the League to enable her to continue to pursue her interests of promoting disability awareness, equal access and funding for people with disabilities. Sabrina will be a member of the Law and Justice Committee.

In her own words, Sabrina states that the reason she joined the League is, "I am very interested in voter education and registration. I worked with a couple of organizations last year during election season doing both. It is especially important to me, as an African-American, to reach out to all the traditionally disenfranchised communities. Also, I think my background is very different from many of the women I have met at the meetings that I have attended so far. I hope to bring a new perspective on the some of issues. Peace and Blessings, Sabrina"

Welcome Sabrina.

UNSUNG HEROINES

Submitted by Helga Schroeter

The Schenectady YWCA recently honored three women as "Unsung Heroines" at its 16th annual celebration of Black History Month. Two of the women honored are local LWV members.

1) Malinda Myers was honored as the first African American Woman to be hired by the City of Schenectady in its law department. Malinda also served as the first woman on the local NAACP board, including as president. Malinda was instrumental in founding the Schenectady County Community College and she also served on the board of the Schenectady County Library. She has received many honors, including the Human Rights Award and the Susan B. Anthony Award. Malinda has been a long-time LWV member.

Shirley Readdean was honored as the first black woman to serve on the Schenectady City School Board, including as president. Shirley has been a very active community member as YWCA president, as member of the SCED (Schenectady County Embraces Diversity) steering committee, as a delegate for her Methodist Church, etc. Shirley is a recipient of the Susan B. Anthony Award and a member of the local LWV.

The third person honored was Classie Cox, who was hired as the first black teacher in the Schenectady City Schools system in 1947. She taught at Riverside School which is now a condominium. Her niece, Paulyn Cox, received the award in her honor.

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: 346-7006

Check out our website at www.lwvschenectady.org.

Some money-saving, NO cost or very low cost ways to cut your use of gasoline and diesel fuel:

1. Combine your trips. If you do multiple errands in one trip you not only save fuel but time.
2. When going to an event, see if you can carpool with a neighbor or friend.
3. Find out the proper number of pounds for your tires and make sure they are inflated to that pressure. Check once every month. Under-inflated tires (very common in cold weather) can cause you to lose 1-2 miles per gallon, as it's like driving with your parking brake on.
4. Don't be an aggressive driver. The faster you drive (over 60 miles per hour) or the more jackrabbit starts you make, the more gasoline you waste – anywhere from 5 percent around town to 33 percent at highway speeds.
5. Observe the speed limit - each mile driven over 60 miles per hour is like paying 20 cents more per gallon.
6. Avoid unnecessary idling. Particularly when the weather is cold, let the car idle while warming up for 30 seconds and then drive it slowly (35 mph) until engine is totally warmed up. Newer engines do not need longer "warm-ups."
7. Turn your car off even when you're just running into the store or post office. Idling guzzles gas and produces unnecessary pollution! It does not take more gas to restart the engine than it would save from turning off the engine.
8. Have your air filter inspected every time you change your oil. If it is dirty, replace it, as a dirty air filter can cause you to lose 10 percent of your gas mileage
9. Have your gas cap inspected. If it is damaged, loose or missing, replace it and avoid having your gas vaporize. Gas vapors cause ozone (smog) formation. Gas caps need to be airtight to avoid loss of fuel.
10. Have your spark plugs inspected and replaced if dirty. If spark plugs are misfiring, that costs mileage.
11. Keep your engine tuned. Fixing a vehicle that is noticeably out of tune can improve gas mileage by 4 percent. Fixing a serious problem such as a faulty oxygen sensor can improve gas mileage by as much as 40 percent.

These and other points of interest can be found at www.fueleconomy.gov.

March Meetings

- Mon, March 2....Environment Committee, 12 noon,
SAAC-TV, 115 Broadway.
- Tues, March 3....League Board, 4pm, 1400 Keyes Ave.
- Mon, March 9...Working Group on Girls, 3:30 pm, YWCA
- Wed, March 11...Climate Change Meeting, 7pm.
Niskayuna Town Hall
- Fri, March 20...Long Term Care Meeting, 10 am,
Albany Public Library
- Wed, March 24....NPVC Consensus Meeting, 7pm,
1st Reformed Church