



League of Women Voters of Albany County

November 2010

Educate

Participate

Advocate



Don't Miss It

The Perfect Fit: Shoes Tell Stories

Tuesday November 16th 2010

6:00 PM to 9:00PM

Albany Institute of History and Art

Cost \$ 15.00 per Person

Make your reservation NOW (see page 5)

An exclusive tour of

"A Perfect Fit and Old Soles"

*followed by light refreshments of
special coffees, teas and desserts*

DON'T MISS IT

REDISTRICTING

Sat., Nov. 13 at 2:30 pm

at Howe Branch Library of the

Albany Public Library

105 Schuyler Street at intersection of

Schuyler and Broad Street near the

Schuyler Mansion

see pages 3 and 4 for more information.



League of Women Voters of Albany County

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

Mary Berry, President

Monica Sharp (475-9736) and Margaret Danes (438-7218), Membership Co-Chairs

Laura Ladd Bierman, Newsletter Editor



From the President

What a busy month October was! We certainly lived up to one of our objectives - that of promoting informed and active participation in our government. Education sessions were conducted at various locations to teach about the newly revised absentee ballot application (thank you, Aimee Allaud!), the new optical scan voting machine (again, thank you, Aimee!) and the proper way to fill in those little circles on the ballot (completely – no Xs or check marks). We sponsored five candidate debates from Albany City School Board candidates and NYS Assembly and Senates races to a forum with those vying for a judgeship in the Albany County Surrogate's Court. Thank you to Mary Ann Lettau, our voter service director for all the organizing that goes into preparing for these events.

In furtherance of our goal of focusing our fall programming on election topics, we were pleased to have as a guest speaker Steve Greenberg, Siena Research Institute's political polling spokesperson, who led a very informative and lively discussion on political polling. Thank you to Congregation Beth Emeth for hosting this program.

Now on to November. Depending on when this bulletin reaches you, you may have already voted and participated in one of our fund raisers – poll reporting on election night. Thank you to Marggie Skinner for organizing and thank you to all of you who collected the data for the news services. If it is not yet November 2 when you read this – don't forget to vote!

The topic of our November program is redistricting -a very important piece of our electoral process whereby the locations of voting district boundary lines are reconsidered every ten years based on the national census data reports. Come and learn more about this process and the league's position on it on Saturday, November 13 at 2:30 PM at the Howe Branch of the Albany Public Library.

Then for some fun! After all our efforts leading up to Election Day a little fun is in order. Please come to our event at the Albany Institute of History and Art on the evening of Tuesday, November 16 at 6 PM. We have reserved a room in which to socialize, have a cup of coffee or tea and a little dessert and to learn about shoes - then spend time in the museum's new exhibit on shoes – both old and new. Come, bring a friend and wear your favorite shoes - will they be pumps? moccasins? boots? or flip flops? Can't wait to see.

Hope to see you all on the 13th and the 16th.
Yours in League,
Mary
mayb424@aol.com

**DON'T FORGET TO
VOTE ON
NOVEMBER 2**

HELP NEEDED

We are seeking volunteers to help us with our goal to make better use of electronic communication. We are looking for assistance with web design, web maintenance and a videographer to tape events for replay on our web site.

Membership also needs some help; if you have some time, please contact Monica Sharp at 475-9736 or sharpmonica@yahoo.com/.

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, PO Box 611, Slingerlands, New York 12159 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.

Education on New Voting Machines

The LWVAC was contacted by the Watervliet/Cohoes Housing Authority to present an educational training program for their residents on the newly revised absentee ballot application form and the new voting procedures. On Tuesday, October 12, Mary Ann Lettau and Mary Berry gave programs at the Eugene J. Hanratta Apartments in Watervliet, the McDonald Towers and the Ogden Mills apartments in Cohoes. A discussion was held at each apartment building about the history and importance of voting, how to fill out the absentee ballot application form and a review of a sample ballot specific to each city as well as a discussion of the change from the old lever voting machines to the new optical scan equipment.

For more information on the new voting machines and to watch a video on the new machines, see the state League website at www.lwvny.org.

New Members

Susan Berzinis - Delmar

J. Dominian - Latham

Charlotte Koerner - Slingerlands

Welcome!

Educational Forum on Redistricting

Redistricting: Who should draw the lines? Voters should choose their representatives rather than having government representatives choose their voters! Every ten years a census is taken in the United States - those figures are then used by our state legislature and governor to redraw the lines for our congressional and legislative districts.

Are the lines fairly drawn? What is gerrymandering all about? Come learn about this process, problems and solutions and the League's position on this issue. **Saturday, November 13** at 2:30PM at the Howe Branch of the Albany Public Library, 105 Schuyler Street Albany NY (intersection of Schuyler and Broad Streets). Read about the issue and League's position on page 4 - and more information at www.lwvny.org.

Bulletins: Email or Snail Mail?

How do you want to receive your bulletin? We are exploring the many options available through technology in which to send our bulletin to you. The bulletin is posted on our website, we can email it to your personal email address or we can send it to you by snail mail. Please let us know your preference by either sending an email to lwvac@lwvalbany.org or mailing to "The Bulletin" PO Box 611, Slingerlands NY 12159.

Membership 2010-2011 - Join & Make a Difference

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address, City, Zip: _____

Email: _____

Individual Membership \$50/year

Household Membership \$75/year

Student Membership \$15/year

Contribution in support of my local League

Please send me more information

For financial aid information, contact Monica Sharp, 475-9736

Mail to: League of Women Voters of Albany County PO Box 611, Slingerlands, NY 12159

New York State's Redistricting Process: A Case for Reform

Executive Summary

(full document at www.lwvny.org)

Reformers have long argued that the method the state uses to draw legislative and congressional district boundary lines is undemocratic and in need of reform. These sentiments are echoed by the public, which overwhelmingly supports redistricting reform. This report examines the negative consequences that result from New York's redistricting practices and proposes reforms.

It is well known that an important factor in maintaining New York State's political culture is *Gerrymandering*,¹ the practice of allowing the majorities in both houses to draw the district lines every ten years. In effect, this practice allows legislators to choose their voters, rather than the voters choosing their legislators. Historically, governors, who must ultimately approve the legislation containing the proposed new district lines each decade, have done little to change to the *status quo*.

Politically motivated mapmakers exploit weaknesses in state law to further their efforts to "rig" district lines in favor of the majority parties in each house and the re-election prospects of incumbents. As lawmakers begin to consider how to reform the state's previous redistricting approach, it is important to examine the effects of the most highly partisan redistricting techniques, which taken together, reduce competition and ultimately, diminish government accountability.

* **Finding #1:** Only 29 of 212 state legislative districts (14 percent) have been drawn within one percent of the "ideal size." The ideal size is the size of a district if each legislator represented the same amount of people as other legislators in their house. In a representative democracy, ensuring districts of similar size ensures fair presentation.

* **Finding #2:** Only 25 of the 212 state legislative districts (12 percent) were drawn to have a similar number of major party enrollments. The enrollments in the rest favor one party or another by a wide margin. This small number drastically limits the number of "competitive" elections in New York. This lack of competition helps insulate lawmakers from the wishes of their constituents.

* **Finding #3:** Mapmaking practices have allowed for the creation of district shapes that ignore the state's constitutional requirement that districts be "compact."

* **Finding #4:** Mapmaking practices have been used to remove significant electoral threats that challengers posed to incumbent legislators.

* **Finding #5:** During the period 1980 through 2008, nearly 3,000 state legislative general elections were held, yet in only a tiny fraction of those races (39) were challengers successful in knocking out incumbents. This staggeringly high re-election rate is a direct consequence of New York's system of legislative redistricting.

* **Finding #6:** As seen above, New York's redistricting practices make it incredibly difficult for challengers to succeed. As a result of mapmakers' efforts to limit electoral competition, incumbents win – and win big. From the general elections in 2002 through 2008, over 65 percent of Senate winners won by more than 2 to 1 or greater. Nearly 75 percent of Assembly winners won by that margin or greater. Roughly 5 percent of races were close.

Recommendation: *An independent redistricting commission is needed to create fair legislative districts in New York State and to ensure that the state's districts adhere to the principle of "one person, one vote" and that the primary goal of mapmakers is to reflect the interests of the general public – not the political parties and legislative incumbents.*

¹ The term "Gerrymandering" was coined to refer to the efforts of Massachusetts Governor Elbridge Gerry to redraw the legislative district lines to benefit his party. The public outcry over his self-serving district line drawing led to his defeat at the polls the following year in 1812. See [www.mass.gov/?pageID=mg2terminal&L=7&L0=Home&L1=State+Government&L2=About+Massachusetts&L3=Interactive+State+House&L4=History+Resources&L5=Governors+of+Massachusetts&L6=Commonwealth+of+Massachusetts+\(1780-1850\)&sid=massgov2&b=terminalcontent&f=interactive_statehouse_govs_gerry&csid=massgov2](http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=mg2terminal&L=7&L0=Home&L1=State+Government&L2=About+Massachusetts&L3=Interactive+State+House&L4=History+Resources&L5=Governors+of+Massachusetts&L6=Commonwealth+of+Massachusetts+(1780-1850)&sid=massgov2&b=terminalcontent&f=interactive_statehouse_govs_gerry&csid=massgov2).

It's Shoe Time!

Come wearing your poshest pumps, funkiest flats, beatup boots, silver sneakers or magic mules and join a Whole Lotta Soles

Tuesday, November 16, 2010

6 pm - 9 pm

join the League of Women Voters of Albany County
at the Albany Institute of History and Art
125 Washington Ave., Albany, New York

Featuring

THE PERFECT FIT: SHOES TELL STORIES

And OLD SOLES

THE PERFECT FIT is a remarkable exhibition that includes more than 120 imaginative and provocative shoes made by American contemporary artists between 2004 and 2008. Materials range from clay, metal, fabric, wood, glass and paper. It is coupled with OLD SOLES, three Centuries of Shoes from the Albany Institute of History & Art's Collection worn by people from all walks of life throughout the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries.

event notes: 6:30 speaker, 7-8 pm exhibit open
light refreshments of special coffees, teas and desserts

Open to League Members and Guests

Send this form by November 6, 2010 to

Lois Griffin, 1 Sky Terrace, Voorheesville, NY 12186

with a check for \$15.00 per person made out to LWVAC with "AIHA"
listed on the memo line.

Names of attendees:

_____ email _____

_____ email _____

_____ email _____



Voter Services

Mary Ann Lettau (mlettau1@yahoo.com)

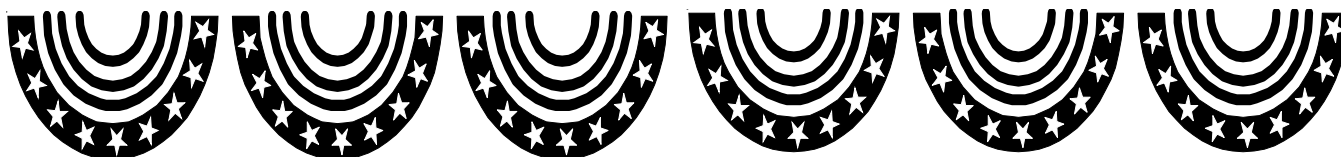
The weather is cooler but we are just heating up! Next week, and before you get this newsletter, 5 candidate forums will take place: 3 next week (10/19, 10/20, 10/21) and 2 the following week (10/27, 10/28). All but the final one were described in October's newsletter. The new forum is with the candidates for Albany School Board on 10/28. You'll be getting an email about the details when they are settled.

Then comes Election Day. We hope that our voter education efforts contribute to a big turnout. Voters Guide Part 2 are being distributed to Albany County libraries and at our League events. Mary Berry presented a workshop at three Senior Citizen Housing Programs in Watervliet and Cohoes to tell the residents how to request an absentee ballot, how to use the new voting machines, and "everything you wanted to know about voting".

I presented a program about the history and importance of voting to Belvidere clients. This is a program for persons with brain injuries. Ten people in the audience registered to vote.

Monica Sharp and I set up a table at the Bethlehem Farmer's Market on 9/26. Several individuals registered and several expressed an interest in joining the League. Monica is very enthusiastic and persuasive about League membership! Contacts in the community continue to develop, as we reach out more extensively, especially through Arleen Urell's great work with the media and as the web site is developed.

I hope by now you have all checked out the information on local races and politicians available at www.lwvalbany.org through the link to Vote411.org Please look at the site often to stay up with the League news, programs and events. And come to our candidate forums—bring a neighbor! These are the best opportunities to see the candidates as they respond to audience questions; and a chance to see the League in action. If you have questions or comments, contact me at: mlettau1@yahoo.com.



Candidate Guide

Build your ballot with the League's Vote411.org online Candidate Guide. Go to the LWV Albany County website at www.lwvalbany.org and then click on the link for Vote411. Type in your address to see just the races that will be on your ballot, or check out all of them if you prefer. Candidates' positions can be compared side-by-side, and you may print out a "ballot" indicating your candidate preferences as a reminder. The guide includes statewide races, as well as races for legislative candidates whose districts include all or part of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady and Warren Counties



Happy Birthday Elizabeth Cady Stanton

1815-1902

Birthdate: November 12

Widely credited as one of the founding geniuses of the women's rights movement, Elizabeth Cady Stanton used her brilliance, insightfulness, and eloquence to advocate for many important issues. In addition to being one of the first women's rights activists, she was also a dedicated abolitionist, and advocated in favor of temperance.

Unlike many of her contemporaries, Stanton enjoyed a formal education at Johnstown Academy, where she worked hard to excel in Greek, Latin, and mathematics. The child of a judge, she went on to obtain the finest education then available to women at Troy Female Seminary. A visit to her cousin, abolitionist Gerrit Smith, in Peterboro, New York, helped foster her strong anti-slavery sentiments.

At her insistence, when she married abolitionist Henry Stanton, the word 'obey' was omitted from the ceremony. Their honeymoon journey was to the great World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840. After the women delegates were denied seats at that convention, Stanton became convinced that women should hold a convention demanding their own rights. This decision was delayed until her move to Seneca Falls, where she was isolated and increasingly exhausted by a growing family. Finally in July, 1848, she met with Lucretia Mott and three other Quaker women in nearby Waterloo, New York. Together they issued the call for the first woman's rights convention.

Stanton drafted the Seneca Falls Convention's Declaration of Sentiments, including the historic words '*We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal...*' She continued to argue forcefully for the ballot, a radical demand opposed by her husband and even Mrs. Mott. Soon thereafter, she met Susan B. Anthony and they formed what would be a lifelong partnership devoted to the cause. Among their earliest targets were laws that discriminated against married women, denying them the right to hold property, or wages, or guardianship of their children.

A prolific author whose works included *Solitude of Self* and *The Woman's Bible*, Stanton once wrote that "The prolonged slavery of woman is the darkest page in human history."



"Only the Message Mattered" Written and Performed by Bob Warren

Bob Warren performed "Only the Message Mattered," a musical exploration of the life of Susan B. Anthony at the LWV of Albany County's September Potluck Dinner and Program. CDs of the musical presentation are available for purchase at <http://www.onlythemessagemattered.com/>.

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

Nonprofit Org. U.S. Postage PAID Permit #247 Albany, NY

League Calendar

<u>WHEN</u>	<u>WHAT</u>	<u>WHERE</u>	<u>MORE INFO</u>
Nov 1	Last day to mail absentee ballot		www.lwvny.org
Nov 2 6 AM-9PM	GENERAL ELECTION	PLEASE VOTE	
Nov 2, 7 PM	Board Meeting	St. Stephen's Church	
Nov 2, 8:45 PM	Volunteers collect poll results	all election districts	
November 9	LWVNYS Day at the United Nations	NYC	www.lwvny.org
Nov.13, 2:30 pm	Educational Forum on Redistricting	Howe Branch, Albany Library	see p. 1, 3, 4
Nov 16, 5:00pm	"The Perfect Fit: Shoes Tell Stories"	Albany Institute of History & Art	see p. 1, 5
Dec. 16	Holiday Luncheon Speaker: Bruce Miroff, SUNY, on post election wrap-up	Normanside Country Club	