



League of Women Voters of Albany County

December 2009

Educate

Participate

Advocate



Holiday Luncheon



John DeRosier, Editorial Cartoonist for the Times Union
Mr. DeRosier has an interactive talk that will engage the audience in a stimulating look at how political cartoons take shape and how we relate to them.



Tuesday, December 15 @ 12 Noon
Normanside Country Club - Delmar
Salisbury Road
(off Delaware Ave., west of Delaware Plaza)



Soup-Entree-Dessert-Beverage - \$20

Choice of Entree:



Parmesan Risotto - fresh grilled vegetable & rice (Hot)
Lemon Sole - rolled and dill dusted with lemon sauce (Hot)
Grilled Shrimp Caesar - marinated jumbo shrimp over caesar salad (Cold)
Asian Teriyaki Chicken, lo mein noodles, vegetables, lime ginger peanut vinaigrette (Cold)

RSVP TO LOIS GRIFFIN WITH CHOICE OF ENTREE, ohgriffin@gmail.com or 765-4733



**RESERVATIONS DUE BY
DECEMBER 10**

*If paying by check, make it out to LWVAC.
Please be aware that a reservation obligates you to pay whether you come or not.*

New Members

June Greagan - Albany

Shirley Anderson - Delmar



Welcome!

League of Women Voters of Albany County

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

Ann Brandon, President

Carol Webster (439-1491) and Martha Kissinger (439-6833), Membership Co-Chairs

Laura Ladd Bierman, Newsletter Editor



From the President

Election day is past and the holidays are fast approaching. We hope to see you at our December luncheon with John DeRosier for a fascinating talk. Please get your reservation(s) in before the deadline so we don't have last minute calls, and invite friends who might be interested.

What a busy election season we had with debates listed in Mary Ann's report. Candidates were wanting more debates when we ran out of time. Overflow crowds in some of the forums showed the interest in these local races. And we couldn't rest when elections were over. Many of you collected election numbers at the polling places on election night for the media. The following week brought the Albany Housing Authority election where you helped in making this a well run election. Many thanks to each of you who helped out in our voter service activities this fall!

Julie Elson arranged a stimulating 11/14 meeting on the landfill and solid waste issues for Albany County. This issue affects each of us, locally and as part of a national issue. What are we going to do with all of our trash when the landfills are full? If you want to make a difference in this area, read the article in this newsletter and call Julie.

The end of the year brings appeals for funds from many organizations. I hope you read carefully the letter we send to you in our annual appeal. Many of us volunteer much time and effort to keep the league strong and relevant to its mission. But every organization needs dollars to carry out that mission, and we are no exception. So please consider a contribution to help make the league even stronger in 2010, the 90th anniversary of the national League of Women Voters.

Yours in league, Ann

Great Issues Group Meetings for the Winter and Spring

The Great Issues group will begin meeting on Monday, February 8, and will continue to meet on alternate Mondays through May 17. We will once again use the Great Decisions workbooks from the Foreign Policy Association as the basis for our discussions. Topics this year include Kenya/East Africa, China, Financial Crisis, Russia, Persian Gulf, Peacebuilding, and Special Envoys. Our discussions tend to be spirited. LWV members who are interested in joining can contact Katie Henrikson at 439-4308 or khenriks@nycap.rr.com.

Membership 2009-2010 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

Mail to:
League of Women Voters of Albany
County PO Box 611
Slingerlands, NY 12159
Or Contact: Carol Webster (439-1491)

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.



League in Profile

Maggie Moehringer

My membership in League was precipitated by the birth of my third son. With a full time job and three children, I needed to carve out time that I could use for activities that had nothing to do with raising kids or managing computer programmers. BUT it had to be purposeful. “Dancercise” wouldn’t do it. So, what would make me feel young and free? I got it – politics.

I was a teenager in the sixties in Washington, DC, where activism was in the air we breathed. Demonstrations, some of historic proportions, and their effects on politicians were the stuff of daily life, local newspaper accounts, and arguments with my parents about using the car to go to them (I took a lot of buses). As a DC native and the daughter of public servants, politics was life. Those were the days when public service was still a noble endeavor; “New Frontiers”, “Great Societies” and “Wars on Poverty” attracted young idealists to government service, believers that government could solve every problem. The war was driving everyone crazy. Implementation of civil rights regulations and the removal of the “whites only” signs in the southern and segregated Maryland/DC/Virginia area kept things interesting on the local front. So, two decades later, political activism looked like renewed youth and passion, and the prospect of rekindling some of that was pretty attractive. So, back to the future.

But little demonstrators grow up, live through Watergate, and have to be grown up activists who know how to accomplish things in the real world. I had worked in State government in Albany enough to know that to get things done you have to know the process, you have to know your issue, you have to know how to lead, and you have to know how to change hearts and minds. I needed mentoring, and the League looked like a great organization for that. And, by golly, it is.

So Sally Webb took me to my first annual dinner, and Ann Brandon signed me up for the “Alternatives to Incarceration” study group, and Laura Bierman gave me my first Board Orientation, and off I went.

So, maybe youth + passion = League? Strange but, for me, true.



What the Heck is PMP?

Ann Brandon

No, it’s not related to PMS. It is Per Member Payment - the method used for local leagues to support the state and national leagues in the work they do. The league is a grassroots national organization, and the state and national offices look to their local counterparts to help support them. Their only other income is from grants and direct mail requests. Without these two legs of our tripartite organization, we would not be the viable organization that we are. We have advocates at every level to work for the issues we’ve studied and take action on, including climate change, health care reform, immigration reform, and gun control at the national level; ethics reform, redistricting, campaign finance and election reform at the state level; and our new state study on government consolidation and sharing of services on the local level as well as other issues such as solid waste management.

After paying state and national league assessments, we have only \$3 per member to fund our work. We are a completely volunteer organization, and continuation of our programs depends on your generous support. So we hope that when you get a request in the mail for an annual fund contribution, you will consider the work of the league in the civic life of our county, state, and country. If you haven’t heard from us and want to contribute, please send your donation to: League of Women Voters of Albany County, Box 611, Slingerlands, NY 12159. Make the check out to LWVAC or LWVEF (tax deductible education fund). Thanks in advance for your help!



Update on Local Government Consolidation and Shared Services Study

It's not too late to join this committee. The next meeting is Thursday, December 3, at 3:00 pm, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Elsmere Ave., Delmar. To get materials and past minutes, call Judy Thomson at 439-0370 or Loretta Simon at 478-0051.

This study, passed at the state league convention in May, is now getting underway. The consensus questions and materials are designed to provide guidance for local leagues as they determine how to respond to local consolidation proposals that may arise. Meetings to determine consensus will be held the evening of March 15 and at another daytime meeting during that week.

The issue of increasing local government efficiency through consolidation is quite complex. Consolidation is not limited to a simple merger of two local governmental units or the merger of school districts but also contemplates the consolidation of special districts such as fire, library, water, sewer etc.; the consolidation of local public authorities; the consolidation of a municipal service without the loss of the underlying governmental units, for example, civil service hiring, assessing, IT, purchasing etc., all with the intent of reducing costs.

There is a great deal of material available on the Internet, more than can be absorbed in a short period of time. The State League recommends that all League members visit the following websites to begin to get up to speed on the topic:

- www.nyslocalgov.com (a good overall explanation of the State initiatives)
- www.nytowns.org/core/contentmanager/uploads/Government.Efficiency.The.Case.For.Local.Control.pdf, (a publication of the Association of Towns)
- www.dos.state.ny.us/lgss/publications.htm#SharedServices (a good site with several additional reports).

Additional information is available on the State League's web site: http://www.lwvny.org/consolidation_sss.html

The following points are excerpts from the presentation by John Clarkson, the former Executive Director of the Lundine Commission at our September 22nd potluck dinner meeting:

1. Trends have created change in the locus of governmental units and services. In the 1900's in Albany County, the population was limited to the city of Albany, which far dominated the county's population centers, followed by Cohoes and Watervliet. Now the county's population is largely represented not by the three cities but by the towns of Colonie, Bethlehem and Guilderland. The shift has created shifts in wealth and services.
2. While most of the effective government services are still available to people through their townships, there's increasing confusion resulting from the creation of separate districts for schools, fire, water, etc. These districts exist for taxing purposes but are often overseen by their respective townships. It's not clear how either town or village consolidation can alter or affect these types of service-providing entities. State law has sanctioned a proliferation of these special service districts, further confounding the consolidation issue.
3. The issue shouldn't be framed around the number of various governmental units in the state—cities, towns, villages, districts—but rather around the areas in which sharing of services and/or functional consolidation is possible. There are already examples of areas where towns share highway equipment or water supplies. The main focus of consolidation reforms has been to overhaul outdated rules, and create more transparency and accountability for local governments.
4. Some of the most obvious areas for regionalization would be 911 emergency call centers, municipal assessors' functions and tax collecting. There could also be some efficiencies achieved by determining which officials might be appointed versus elected—which governing structures work the best?

For a complete summary of that meeting, contact Judy or Loretta.

Future of Waste Management in the Capital District

On Saturday morning, November 14, a sizable crowd filled the auditorium of the Pine Bush Discovery Center to attend the LWVAC's monthly program, a presentation on the Future of Waste Management in the Capital Region by Willard A. Bruce, Chairman of the Solid Waste Management Partnership (SWMP) Planning committee and former Commissioner, City of Albany, Department of General Services. The meeting was held in the right place, the Pine Bush Preserve – quite close to the Albany landfill and at the right time, soon after the Department of Environmental Conservation's controversial approval of expansion of the otherwise soon to be full, landfill.

Mr. Bruce began his presentation with visuals of the Pine Bush, maps of the landfill, the expansion area and the mediation which will be done in accordance with the expansion approval. He described the methane to energy program currently in place, but pointed out that methane, the product of bio-waste, still escapes and that as far as carbon footprint goes, methane is worse than carbon dioxide. Mr. Bruce made it clear that the expansion will only buy eight more years during which time we have the opportunity to begin to develop and implement robust recycling, diversion and waste treatment programs. There are currently two landfills in the region: Albany's Pine Bush and the Colonie landfill. The Colonie landfill could handle an additional 200 tons per day. One thousand tons of garbage is generated daily, alternative space would have to be found for 800 tons per day. The alternative will be long distance shipping of our garbage to commercial landfills out of state or in central New York. The communities immediately affected by the fate of the Albany land fill are those in the SWMP which is comprised of the cities of Albany, Cohoes, Rensselaer and Watervliet, the towns of Berne, Bethlehem, Guilderland, Knox, New Scotland (Voorheesville) and Westerlo and the villages of Green Island and Altamont.

Countries in Europe and some cities in the United States are working towards the goal of Zero Waste (to landfill or, zero waste to landfill and to incinerator). Mr. Bruce described some of the "state of the art" waste management being done in Europe, specifically a composting plant which combined yard and food waste and a comprehensive recycling facility he observed in Dresden, Germany where zero waste to landfills is a 2020 national goal. In Dresden, an old mushroom factory has been converted into a bio-mechanical composting facility. The 30-40% of moisture in the yard waste/food waste is removed and the final product is fuel pellets. 80% of the waste is recycled, 20% goes to the landfill. In the US, the best municipalities are doing 60-65% of waste going to recycling and remainder going to landfill. Our area is currently doing 30% recycling and 70% to the landfill.

He also discussed the concept of product stewardship. Most European countries have adopted in their laws the requirement that the manufacturers pay for disposal of the goods, the "end of life" management of the product. This is accomplished, for example, by requiring that manufacturers add on the cost of disposal to the price of the goods. This extra amount is paid to a non-profit company which is made responsible for the collection and recycling of the particular item. Nineteen states have laws governing disposal of certain electronic products. New York has a bottle bill, which still does not cover all bottles.

Mr. Bruce described the program elements of successful municipal diversion and waste management, some of which are flow control, collection control, pay as you throw (the more waste the household/business disposes, the more they pay, food-waste collection (not just yard waste) and processing, control of construction and demolition waste, possible bans on certain items, for example styrofoam and convenient drop off stations for recyclables, and extensive public education and public relations.

He identified as a major impediment to the SWMP making progress the lack of governmental control over waste flow. Currently, waste disposal is open to market forces. The major commercial haulers which currently account for 70% of the waste going into the landfill can, if the price of tipping were to increase, choose instead to ship raw garbage to distant landfills relatively cheaply. If our region is to develop high tech treatment, recycling facilities and programs, we need to finance them and to do so, we need to be able to control the amount of waste products. In order to move forward, State legislation is needed, such as that passed to enable Onondaga and Oneida-Herkimer to create regional waste authorities.

Although eight years seems a long time out, public discussion needs to begin now. A dialogue between state legislators, county governments and their executives should start as soon as possible. Siting a new treatment facility could take as much as 5 years.

Thanks to Joe Cunniff, a videotape of the presentation is available on www.Albanycommunitytelevision.com. The next SWMP meeting is scheduled to be held December 10 at 4pm, 200 Henry Johnson Boulevard. Additional information about the SWMP is available at www.capitalregionlandfill.com. All League members are encouraged to attend. If you are interested in pursuing this issue contact Julie Elson at 482-0981.

Upcoming 2010 Meetings Mark your calendar now!

We encourage you to bring friends and colleagues to any and all meetings.

January - No meeting

February 6, 9:00 a.m. - Breakfast meeting with our state legislators. Lakeview Restaurant, Beltrone Living Center, 6 Winners Circle off Wolf Road, Colonie. We are inviting Sen. Breslin, and Assemblymen Canestrari, Gordon, McEneny, and Reilly to this informal breakfast to discuss our league issues before the state legislature.

March 15, 5:30 - Souper Supper at Bethlehem Library -Consensus meeting on Local Government Consolidation and shared services. A morning meeting will also be scheduled.

April 15, 5:30 - Souper Supper at Slingerlands Community United Methodist Church. Environmental topic.

May 18, 5:30 - Annual Dinner, Place TBA. Join us for a 90th Anniversary League Celebration **with a visit from Susan B. Anthony**



Voter Services

Mary Ann Lettau

Election season has come to an end. There will be no more pleading for help, at least not in 2009! But there is plenty of reporting and planning to do.

The biggest news is that over 1000 people attended League election events, from late August until late October. Since last newsletter, this is what took place: October 22—two candidates for Town Supervisor and four for Town Council in New Scotland debated at Voorheesville High School. Bill Devoe of Spotlight News was moderator. Thanks to Ann Brandon who took over for me that week. October 28—Paula Mahan and Mike Hoblock, competing for Colonie Town Supervisor, faced off at the Holiday Inn. Mary Berry was an excellent moderator; the 90-minutes of questions from the audience were very topical. Chairs for 300 were set up; more were added and there was a large group standing at the back. This was an extremely successful event, thanks to our co-sponsor, the Colonie Chamber of Commerce. October 29—at Bethlehem Town Hall, a long and interesting evening of political discourse! We started with brief statements from the two women running for Town Clerk. Then, the four running for Town Council debated for an hour. To finish off, Jack Cunningham and Sam Messina, who had debated in September as Independence Party primary contenders, debated again as

opponents in the general election. Bill Devoe was the moderator, as Spotlight News again worked with us to produce a lively event. The chairs were taken early, more were added and some folks stood. It was a very gratifying experience to see how many voters in Albany county really care about these local elections.

The Albany Housing Authority tenant commissioner election topped off the season. First, there was a debate on November 5 among four candidates for the two open positions. The well-attended event was moderated by Marggie Skinner. It was really informative with a lot of give-and-take among the audience and candidates. Then—election day, November 10. The Election Managers got an early start, giving out the home-delivered ballots. The polling places—10 of them—were open from 2 to 8 pm. THIRTY-THREE League volunteers, working from 3 to 6 hours, stepped up to the plate, to help out. The ballot count started at 8:30, with a large, eager crowd of observers, awaiting the results. Again, I wish to acknowledge the creativity, hard work and flexibility of my co-managers, MARIAN SCHWAGER and CAROL WEBSTER. Give them a hand. And give a hand to the rest of you who traveled to unfamiliar locations, gave up your time, sorted questions and gave out and gathered audience questions, who sat for hours helping people vote and saying—”Vote for just one” a hundred times——THANK YOU ON BEHALF OF THE LEAGUE!

Now I am looking for ideas for Voter Services projects and re-structuring for our activities in the county. Please, call/email or call Mary Ann at 489-0212 or Mlettau1@aol.com with your ideas.



State News

The League of Women Voters of New York State

November 2009

Save the Dates

February 9, 2010

Forum on redistricting & celebration of League's 90th birthday; Albany.

April 20, 2010

Equal Pay Day 2010 - annual event to advocate for pay equity; Albany.

April 30-May 2, 2010

Spring Fling weekend in New York City including theater, tours and party.

June 11-June 15, 2010

LWVUS Convention; Atlanta, GA.

May 19-21, 2011

LWVNY State Convention; Albany.

Fair Campaign Practices Committee(s)

These Committees provide opportunities for voters to know who the candidates are and their positions on issues by asking candidates to sign a Pledge to conduct their campaigns fairly and openly. This year the Capital Region organization sent 550 letters to candidates enclosing the pledge. The response rate has increased over the years; this year we had over 200 candidates sign the pledge. Six complaints were filed by candidates; hearings were held on those complaints.

New Voting Machines Pilots

New York State voters tried out the new optical scanners in 47 counties, either county-wide or in some election districts. The NYS BOE pilot project of scanners was also used in the 11 counties comprising the 23rd Congressional District and reports, while unofficial as of this date, seem to indicate that they performed well. The State League will be summarizing the results from our member survey of polling places where voters used the new equipment.

Smart Growth Celebrates

Smart Growth advocates are celebrating the passage of the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit—S6056 (Valenski) A9023 (Hoyt)—which was signed into law on July 28th. It is seen as an important breakthrough for revitalizing New York's cities. The bill establishes a rehabilitation and preservation program that will benefit property owners and communities who seek to renovate properties that are run down and dilapidated.

Fix Albany Now!

The LWVNY State Board adopted *Fix Albany Now!* as the slogan for this year's legislative priorities. The 2010 priorities are steps to a new and better State government:

- Redistricting
- Campaign Finance Reform
- Ethics Reform
- Election Reform

Watch for information on ordering the 2010 Legislative Priorities brochure.

A new format for the Issues and Advocacy portion of the website is being developed. We have a new home page for the *Advocacy Areas* section, which explains the League advocacy process, highlights current action, and guides the reader into specific advocacy areas, where more detail is provided. Issue areas are being added as information is compiled - watch the website!

State Welcomes/Seeks Members to Work on Statewide Issues

Roberta Wiernik, Environmental Issue Specialist welcomes Pat Rush of the Schenectady County League and Kay Wagner and Katie Payne of the Tompkins County Leagues to the statewide committee on hydraulic fracturing of the Marcellus Shale. The issue areas of Judiciary and Court Restructuring have recently been consolidated and Albany County League member Janet Aram will join Helga Schroeder and Lenore Banks as an issue specialist in this area.

We invite any local League members with interest in a particular advocacy area to volunteer for a statewide committee. This is a wonderful way to receive training to advocate at the state level, to hone your advocacy skills, and to meet interested and engaged individuals with expertise in the same area. Much work is done electronically.

Welcome New MAL Units!

The LWVNY State Board welcomed two new MAL (Member at Large) units at the November board meeting. They are the LWVNY MAL St Lawrence County and the LWVNY MAL Hamilton County. The most significant thing that each group had in common was the realization that their communities needed a non-partisan, grassroots voice and the League fit the bill.

State Study on Local Consolidation/ Shared Services

New York State continues to be faced with serious structural problems. Anemic economic growth, population losses and some of the highest taxes in the nation have been of serious concern for many years. Although the cost of New York State government threatens its effectiveness, the League has never studied, at a state-wide level, whether it should encourage government consolidations/dissolutions or shared services in the interest of increasing efficiencies, and, if so, what criteria should be applied in evaluating various proposals.

Extensive information and bibliography are now available on the website (under Programs and Studies) for local committees and members. Consensus questions will be available in Jan.

Youth Programs

The **2010 Students Inside Albany Conference** will be held April 11-14, 2010 in Albany. It's not too early to get ready to choose your student for the Conference. This year's goal is to have a student representative from every local League in New York State.

We are also excited to announce that the Capital Region will serve as a pilot for the implementation of **Vote 18** programs statewide. Training for League members and presentations in two Capital Region high schools will occur in early Dec. The goal is to create a cadre of Vote 18 presenters who can then train other League members and hopefully spread the program across NYS.

Contact Stephanie Lopez at 518-465-4162 or Stephanie@lwny.org for brochures and more information.

New State Voter On Its Way - Don't Miss It!

Don't miss the League's news! The state *Voter* goes electronic this month because the cost of the printed *Voter* became prohibitive in light of current League funding realities. You will receive the electronic *Voter* automatically free of charge if we have an e-mail address for you. If not, you may order a printed version for \$20.00 for the rest of this fiscal year (4 issues @ \$5 each) or send us your e-mail address to get on our free electronic list.

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

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League Calendar

<u>WHEN</u>	<u>WHAT</u>	<u>WHERE</u>	<u>MORE INFO</u>
Dec. 3, 3:00 pm	Local Gov't Study Group	St. Stephen's Church, Delmar	
Dec. 8, 5:30 pm	Bd. Meeing/Potluck Dinner	Home of J. Messina	
Dec. 15, 12 noon	Holiday Luncheon Speaker: John DeRosier, TU Editorial Cartoonist	Normanside CC, Delmar	see page 1
No January Bulletin			
Jan. 16	Deadline for February Bulletin	Lbierman@nycap.rr.com	