



League of Women Voters of Albany County

February 2011

Educate

Participate

Advocate

Breakfast with Your State Legislators



Saturday, February 12, 2011, 9-11AM

Normanside Country Club

150 Salisbury Road, Delmar, New York

9:00 AM Hot and cold buffet breakfast \$16.00

9:45 AM Discussion moderated by Barbara Bartoletti, LWVNYS Legislative Director

We have invited all our state elected officials who represent Albany County:

NYS Senate District 46	Neil Breslin
NYS Assembly District 104	John McEneny
NYS Assembly District 106	Ron Canestrari
NYS Assembly District 108	Steven McLaughlin
NYS Assembly District 109	Bob Reilly

We anticipate they will address the League's legislative agenda for 2011:

Redistricting, Campaign Finance Reform, Ethics Reform and Election Reform

Please come to listen, learn and ask questions. A great opportunity to be able to speak with your representatives. Check out their biographies on page 4.

For your reservation, send a check made out to the LWVAC for \$16.00 to Lois Griffin, 1 Sky Terrace, Voorheesville, NY 12186 by February 4, 2011.

Important dates in history in February

- Feb 3 Passage of the 15th amendment 1870: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."
- Feb 4 George Washington became the first President of the US, 1789. He was born on Feb 22, 1732.
- Feb 12 Abraham Lincoln was born 1809
- Feb 15 Susan B. Anthony was born 1820 in Adams, Massachusetts.

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

Happy New Year! As we did not publish an edition of the bulletin in January, this is my first opportunity to wish you well in 2011. Committees have been meeting organizing many wonderful programs for this spring that I would like to tell you about.

First, although as I write this I must confess the program has not yet happened, I am sure our January program on local redistricting was a success. Learning about the process used by our Albany County legislature to redraw the boundary lines of county legislative districts and election districts based on the 2010 census is the basis for our representative government. At section 207, the Albany County Charter calls for the legislature to appoint a reapportionment commission of seven people to evaluate the existing legislative districts for equity and representation in relation to population. In its deliberations to redesign the districts, the commission shall consider the application of the “one person, one vote” concept and the equal protection clauses. Currently there are 39 legislative district in our county. A commission whose work will we be monitoring!

This month we have invited our five elected officials who represent Albany County at the state level to breakfast at the Normanside Country Club. Please come and listen as Barbara Bartoletti, our State League’s legislative director, moderates this panel and take advantage of the opportunity to speak with your representatives directly. Don’t forget to send your check to Lois Griffin to reserve your spot.

A committee chaired by Marian Schwager is very active in organizing this year’s selection of high school students whom we will sponsor at the state league’s residential program, Students Inside Albany, in April. All high schools in Albany County are contacted through their social studies departments and asked to encourage students to apply. A great opportunity for students to experience an in depth look at how our state government functions.

We are starting two new committees and hope you will join in as we study the issue of long term care in Albany County and the issue of local redistricting based on the 2010 census results.

We are also starting to organize for next year! We will be holding our annual dinner meeting where we vote on our slate of officers, our budget, and any by laws changes for 2011-2012 in June this year. The nominating committee and the budget committee will begin meeting to prepare for this event. Please feel free to bring any and all issues to me so that they may be addressed.

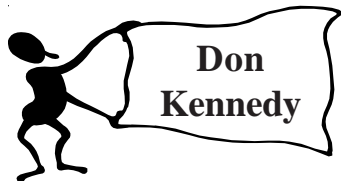
I hope to see you all at our programs this spring. In recognition of women’s history month in March, we will be showing the movie *Iron Jawed Angels*, about the women’s suffrage movement. In recognition of Earth Day in April, we will be presenting a program on the environment, partnering with the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy. The state league is holding the league’s biennial convention in Albany in May this year. Please join us at these events.

Yours in league,
Mary

“League of Women Voters – NOT for women only!”

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.



League in Profile

I first joined the league in 2001. Like many men who are members, I originally joined as a second member in the household. I was for all practical purposes along for the ride. In my case it was probably inevitable that I join, as my wife Martha was the membership chair of the Albany League that year. I was of course supportive of the league and its mission and had learned a lot about the league in those years admittedly mostly over the dinner table.

My active role with the league didn't materialize until I retired from state service in 2004. Again it was Martha who perhaps due to concern about the inevitable idle hands phenomenon which affects many retirees, let me know about the Albany league's need for someone to take over the job of maintaining the local membership database. I took over that role and have filled this administrative function ever since. My state service involved a lot of time working with computers and this was a comfortable slot for me to fill.

While my primary function has been administrative in nature, I've also taken the opportunity to get involved in other league activities. I've attended candidate forums, done poll reporting, listened to speakers and panel discussions on a host of subjects from solid waste management to charter schools. I've also made a lot of friends in the league and met a lot of interesting people. I'm pleased that my role of being along for the ride has evolved and I look forward to many more years of league involvement.



Local Study on Long Term Care

In May 2010, the League adopted a resolution to support a local study on issues involving long term care in Albany County. We are inviting all those interested to participate in this new committee to study these issues. The goal of the committee will be to analyze the county's plan, research various aspects of building the new nursing home, research options for long term care available in Albany County, consider costs, consider staffing, consider governmental regulations, consider actions taken in other communities, and any other topics the committee decides to consider. The activities may include fact finding, face to face interviews with key players, on site visits to programs, and/or discussions with other leagues who have studied long term care issues. The ultimate goal could be to present the findings to the County Legislature. It is envisioned that this committee would meet twice a month for 6 months. The committee will set their own parameters. **If interested, please contact Mary Berry at 439-5679 or maryb424@aol.com and include your preference for meeting on days of the week and times of day.** Albany County's comprehensive plan, "The Future of Long term Care in Albany County" is available on the county website, www.albanycounty.com. Once on the website, go to the box "USER FAVORITES" on the bottom right, then click "Long Term Care In Albany County" where you'll see a red lined box to click in to view "The Future of Long Term Care in Albany County".

Help Wanted Ads

The nominating committee is looking for officers and board members for next year. Self nominations are very welcome. Call Julie Elson at 482-0981 or email Jelson510@earthlink.net with any suggestions.

We are in need of assistance with our website. We are looking for volunteers to help with web design and to train league members in maintaining our web site. Call Mary Berry at 439-5679 or email maryb424@aol.com.

Legislators' Biographies

Neil D. Breslin

Neil David Breslin, Democrat, is currently serving his eighth term as New York State Senator. He represents the 46th District, which consists entirely of Albany County. Born as one of six children on June 9, 1942, Neil is a lifelong resident of Albany. On academic scholarship, Neil attended Fordham College from which he graduated in 1964 with a BS degree in Political Science. While in law school at the University of Toledo, he was named the editor-in-chief of the Law Review and was also selected as outstanding student in his class. Upon graduation from law school, Neil became an associate in the firm of Garry Cahill & Edmunds and two years later became a partner in a new firm entitled Garry, Cahill, Edmunds & Breslin. In 1981, Neil formed a partnership with his two brothers, Michael (currently Albany County Executive) and Thomas (currently Albany County Court Judge). Currently, Neil practices law as "of counsel" to the firm of Hiscock & Barclay.

John J. McEneny

Assemblymember McEneny holds a B.A. in history from Siena College and certificates in Community Development and Public Administration from New Mexico State University School of Agriculture and the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. He served as a Peace Corps volunteer in rural Colombia, South America. McEneny entered public service in 1965 as a social services caseworker. He directed the 1980 U.S. Census for the Capital District and has been a recognized authority on redistricting legislative bodies for 35 years. McEneny entered state service in 1984, and, in 1985, became the first full-time director of the State Urban Cultural Parks Program (now known as Heritage Areas) administered by the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. From April 1989 through 1991, he was Assistant Albany County Executive to the Hon. James. J. Coyne. In January 1992, McEneny was appointed Chief of Staff to his long-time friend and mentor, Assemblyman Richard J. Conners, D-Albany. Following Conners' decision not to run again, he won both the primary and general elections.

Ron Canestrari

Assemblyman Canestrari attended the Cohoes public school system, and graduated from Christian Brothers Academy in Albany. He is a graduate of Fordham College, Fordham University School of Law, and is the recipient of an Honorary Doctorate of Laws from Manhattan College. An attorney by profession, Ron is a member of the New York State Bar Association and was an attorney with the Federal Government in Washington D.C. He is a U.S. Army Vietnam-Era Veteran. He was appointed to the position of Majority Leader on January 3, 2007 by Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver. As Majority Leader, he is responsible for the day-to-day management of the legislative session on the floor of the Assembly.

Steven F. McLaughlin

Steve McLaughlin was elected to represent the people of the 108th Assembly District on November 2nd, 2010. Steve is a trained commercial pilot with over 12,000 hours of flight time, attending Florida Institute of Technology and majoring in Flight Technology. He flew for USAirways until he was laid off following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. He also studied finance at Arizona State and earned his MBA. Today, Steve works for a Capital Region bank assisting small businesses that are looking to expand and grow.

Bob Reilly

Reilly is a 1961 graduate of the University of Notre Dame, where he received his Bachelor of Arts degree and received his Masters from the College of Saint Rose. He completed all coursework for a Ph.D. at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Reilly was a high school teacher for ten years, including two years in Uganda, East Africa. He is the retired director of the New York State Education Department's Office of Public Broadcasting. In 2006, he sold his small business of 30 years, the Partridge Pub.

New Members

Ronita Heller	Albany	Marilyn Kaltenborn	Delmar
Pietra Baio	Green Island	Barbara Meg Frankel	Albany
William Sharp	Delmar	Martha Teumim	Delmar

Welcome!



FIX NEW YORK STATE NOW!

2011 Legislative Agenda

Steps To a New and Better State Government

Redistricting

Create an independent redistricting commission to draft the New York State legislative and Congressional political boundaries for the 2012 elections.

Campaign Finance Reform

Support lower contribution limits and increased disclosure. In particular, support stronger and effective campaign finance enforcement with increased civil and criminal penalties for violations.

Ethics Reform

Put in place a new independent ethics oversight agency and tougher enforcement. Make the legislature more open and accountable through continued rules reform.

Election Reform

Improve election processes to extend, encourage and protect voting, including Election Day registration, better ballot design, improved polling place management/ poll worker training, and measures to ensure the integrity of all ballots.

Other League Positions

The League also has positions on Health Care, the Judiciary, Natural Resources, State Finances, and Social Policy including Women's Issues under which we can and do take action

That You, Senator?



League members enjoy several of the exhibits at our recent fun night at the Albany Institute of History & Art's *The Perfect Fit & Old Soles*. "That You, Senator?", 2007 (left) is by Silas Kopf (b. 1949, Warren, PA) is painted wood, marquetry. *Georgette's Pump*, 2008, (right) is a cloth painting by Ali Cann-Clift (b. 1949, Nova Scotia) [The Perfect Fit exhibition was curated by the Fuller Craft Museum of Brockton, MA.] It includes more than 100 imaginative and provocative shoes made by American contemporary artists between 2004 and 2008. *Old Soles* is the Institute's collection of 60 pairs of shoes worn by residents of the Hudson Valley from the 18th to 20th Centuries.



"For 90 years, the League has worked to facilitate the civil exchange of different points of view, to bridge the gap between the voters and the elected, and to help improve the functioning of government. We hope that moving forward our nation will come together to foster and strengthen the very essence of our representative democracy: 'government of the people, by the people, for the people.'"

A quote from a statement made by Elisabeth MacNamara, President of the League of Women Voters of the United States, in response to the tragic shootings in Tucson, Arizona.

LWVNYS

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release:

Thursday, December 16, 2010

2010 Election Survey: Machines Perform But Privacy Suffers

The League of Women Voters of New York State (League) today released the results of an online survey of voters' experiences using the new paper ballot optical scanning system that was implemented statewide for the 2010 election cycle.

The online survey of 1,072 respondents, from 47 counties including all 5 counties of NYC, showed that the voting machines indeed did perform well; however, the respondents did make note of several inadequacies that the League feels must be addressed to ensure that voters are guaranteed a secure and private franchise. The League's recommendations for immediate action are listed below; the state Board of Elections should move to implement these recommendations before the next election cycle.

*** Increased Voter Education on the Voting Process**

The State Board of Elections must provide standard template materials which county boards of elections can tailor for their specific needs. Remaining HAVA funds should be used for this purpose.

*** Increased Training for All Elections Personnel**

The survey showed an immediate need for better trained election personnel. Legislation has passed permitting split shifts for election inspectors and recruitment of younger poll workers. These new laws need to be implemented.

*** Revision of the Paper Ballot for Maximum Usability by Voters**

There is an immediate need for improving the design of the ballot. Legislation to address the full-face ballot should be a legislative priority and should be introduced early in the 2011 Legislative Session.

*** Privacy Issues**

Over 20 percent said they did not have sufficient privacy in marking the ballot, scanning the ballot, or were not given a privacy sleeve or instructed how to use it. Poll workers need to be trained that any viewing of the markings on a completed ballot is a violation of the voter's privacy.

As noted by League Elections Specialist, Aimee Allaud, "Improving ballot design, providing better trained poll workers and ensuring privacy in voting are fundamental to our voter electoral system. We must take immediate steps to resolve these problems."

"The League's Voter Survey shows that we need to do much, much more if we're to take full advantage of the State's new voting systems. In particular, the design of New York's ballot must be completely overhauled in order to be fully usable by voters." said Bo Lipari, the League's Technology Director.

SEE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF 2010 ELECTION SURVEY REPORT ON PAGE 7

SEE FULL REPORT ON LEAGUE WEBSITE, WWW.LWVNY.ORG

Thanks to our own Aimee Allaud, Maggie Moehringer and Betsey Swan for their hard work on this survey and report.

2010 ELECTION SURVEY REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(FULL REPORT AT WWW.LWVNY.ORG)

BACKGROUND

For the November 2010 general election the League of Women Voters of New York State conducted an online survey of voters' experiences using the new paper ballot optical scanning system that was implemented statewide for the 2010 election cycle.

Responses

- A total of one thousand and seventy-two (1072) responses were received.
- Respondents reported from 47 counties in the state including five counties in New York City. A list of respondents by county can be found in Attachment 2. Responses on this attachment do not equal total responses received for the survey due to some respondents who did not identify their county of residence (e.g., anonymous).
- Comments from respondents in New York City were reviewed and compiled by the League of Women Voters of New York City in a separate report, appended to the survey report in Attachment 3.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Increase Voter Education on the Voting Process

A significant percentage of respondents said that they did not receive adequate instructions on various aspects of the voting process. The State Board of Elections can provide standard template materials which county boards of elections can tailor for their specific needs. Media (electronic media, cable television, county boards of elections websites, print materials) should be utilized more fully. Remaining HAVA funds should be used for this purpose. More signage and provision of written instructions in the polling place (at the ballot distribution point, in the privacy booth, and near the scanner) about the process would decrease voter confusion and erroneously completed ballots. For example, a one page brief instruction sheet could be handed to the voter at ballot distribution, reminding them to check the back of the ballot, informing them of what an over/under vote is and how the scanner will react, and how to protect their privacy. Signage about the availability of assistive devices should be considered with the advice of advocates for persons with disabilities.

Revision of the Paper Ballot for Maximum Usability by Voters

The survey indicated that about 10-20 percent of voters had problems with completing the paper ballot part of the voting process indicating a need for improving the design of the ballot. Such a study should be an immediate priority so that if legislation is needed to change existing provisions in NYS Election Law, it can be introduced early in the 2011 legislative session.

Privacy Issues

Privacy issues in the polling place and with the paper ballot scored the highest percentage of negative responses from survey respondents. Over 20 percent said they did not have sufficient privacy in marking the ballot, scanning the ballot, or were not given a privacy sleeve or instructed how to use it. Poll workers need to understand that any viewing of the markings on a completed ballot is a violation of the voter's privacy. The State Board of Elections, working with the county boards of elections, should offer additional education and training in procedures which counties can use to maximize voter privacy. The future process should strive to eliminate any need for poll worker involvement once the ballot is marked, make sure that the marks are not visible through the ballot, and improve voter awareness of the utility of the privacy sleeve.

Increased Training for All Elections Personnel

Survey respondents were asked to comment generally or specifically on the voting process. Many spoke of the need for better trained elections personnel, citing age, inexperience as negative factors in the overall voting process. Recruitment of younger people and developing procedures for a split shift process will improve the voting process.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ALBANY COUNTY
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<p>“Remember - democracy is not a spectator sport!”</p>
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League Calendar

<u>WHEN</u>	<u>WHAT</u>	<u>WHERE</u>	<u>MORE INFO</u>
Tues., Feb 1, 7PM	Board Meeting	St Stephens Church, Delmar	
Sat., Feb 12, 9 AM	Breakfast With Your State Legislators “Meet Our Local NYS Legislators”	Normanside Country Club	see page 1
Mon, Feb. 14 Mon, Feb. 28	Great Issues Meeting Great Issues Meeting	K. Henrikson (439-4308) or khenriks@nycap.rr.com	
Tues., Mar 1, 7PM	Board Meeting	St Stephens Church, Delmar	
Wed., Mar 16, 5:30PM	Souper Supper Movie “Iron Jawed Angels” with discussion	Bethlehem Public Library	
Tues., Apr 5, 7PM	Board Meeting	St Stephens Church, Delmar	
Mon., Apr 11, 5:30 PM	Supper Salads Program on the environment with Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy	Bethlehem Public Library	
Tues., May 3, 7PM	Board Meeting	St. Stephens Church, Delmar	
May 20-22	LWVNYS Biennial Convention	Desmond Hotel Albany	
June	Annual dinner		