



THE LEAGUE
OF WOMEN
VOTERS

of
Schenectady County
New York

BULLETIN

NOVEMBER 2011

www.lwvschenectady.org

**Friendly Lunch
On Healthcare**

Tuesday,
November 29th at 12 noon

**First Reformed Church of
Schenectady,
8 North Church Street.**

Kevin Jobin-Davis , Executive Director of The
Healthy Capital District Initiative,

Save the Date!

*for the
Holiday Party
Wednesday, December 14
Noon to 2 pm
Schenectady County
Community College*

Education Study



at 6:00 PM, Tuesday, November 15,
in the **Fellowship Room**
of the **First United Methodist Church**
State & Lafayette Sts.
Schenectady.

(Parking and entrance are on
Chapel St behind the church.)

Sandwiches and beverages
will be available at 6:00 pm.

(Donations accepted,)

The Meeting begins at 6:30 pm.

All Schenectady LWV members are invited
to attend and to "weigh-in" on this very
timely topic.

Please bring the Consensus Questions to
the meeting. They appear in your October &
November Newsletters.

Background on these education issues
are at lwvschenectady.org.

Information includes:

- * The History of the Role of the Federal
Government in Public Education,
- * The Common Core Standards and
Assessments
- * Equity and Funding.

President's Column

November traditionally marks the end of the League's most active voter services season. Current management theory emphasizes collaboration and I think the League's effort has shown the strength of collaboration and teamwork. Many league members became involved in the four candidates' forums that were presented in Niskayuna, Glenville, Rotterdam and Schenectady. In addition, many agreed to report polling place results on Election night. I want to thank all the League members who contributed and particularly commend Pat MacKinnon for her leadership efforts related to the forums. Linda Muralidharan did a great job in telephoning for the polling reporting project.

I want to thank the American Association of University Women (AAUW) for its partnership with the League on the voter services activities.

The League embodies the best in volunteerism and commitment to the community. One of the League's late members, Phyllis Bornt, was recently featured in a news story about her philanthropy to the Schenectady County Library as well as to her church and college. I first "got my feet wet" in doing voter services when Phyllis chaired voter services for the League. She continued to help me when I was a neophyte chair. Phyllis exemplified the quiet but effective member that is a bulwark of an organization such as the League.

The League is fortunate to have a legacy of dedicated members and current ones who take their involvement seriously.

Joan Elliott
President

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Candidate Forums and Online Voters Guide

submitted by Pat MacKinnon, Vice President

As of this writing, the candidate forums have been successfully completed. Most of the invited candidates were able to attend. Local issues such as budgets, damage from Hurricane Irene, hiring practices, and the encouragement of business development were the "hot" topics.

All of the candidates expressed gratitude to the American Association of University Women and the Schenectady League of Women Voters for providing the opportunity for them to speak to the public. Each forum was taped by Open Stage Media, was broadcast four times on Channels 16 and 18, and will be available for viewing at "video on demand" at www.openstagemedia.org.


The coordinators for these forums were Jenny Overeynder, Connie Young, Inge-Lise Pangburn, Liz Cooke, and Sue Keats. We thank them for their excellent and thorough preparation which allowed the forums to operate so smoothly. We also would like to express much appreciation to the moderators Maxine Borom, Cheryl Nechaman, Nancy Snyder, and Roberta Steiner, and to all the other volunteers from the League and AAUW for their invaluable assistance. Thanks also to Gwynne DeLong for her expertise in submitting press releases to the newspapers.

Candidate information is available at www.Vote411.org. This website allows you to locate the races you will be voting on, the candidates who are running, and information about candidates who have chosen to participate. It is very easy to use. You just have to put in your address. You also have the capability of comparing candidates, selecting the ones you like the best, and printing out a ballot to take with you to the polls.

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Please save the consensus questions and bring them to the Consensus Meeting on Tuesday, November 15.

Strongly agree Agree
No consensus Disagree
Strongly disagree

Please share any comments your League has concerning the topics covered in the General Consensus Questions. (250 word maximum)

PUBLIC EDUCATION STUDY CONSENSUS QUESTION

This copy of the consensus questions is intended as a working copy.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. The current role of the federal government in public education is

Much too small too small about right
too large much too large

2. What should be the role of the federal government in public education? (Rank)
- a. To ensure that all students preK-12 receive a quality education.
 - b. To develop accountability measures that will study the progress of all students so that they achieve adequate yearly progress.
 - c. To mandate Common Core Standards for all students K-12.
 - d. To monitor state efforts for funding
 - e. To measure teacher effectiveness through test data.
3. A quality public education is important to perpetuate a strong and viable democracy.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

4. Currently the governors and state education officers have developed Common Core Standards that are national but not federal. Should the standards be mandated of the states in order to obtain federal funding? (Choose one)
- a. Special grant programs such as Race to the Top
 - b. All programs under Elementary and Secondary Education Act where the needs qualify for funding.
 - c. All programs receiving federal funding from any source
 - d. All of the above
 - e. None of the above
5. Should there be a **national assessment aligned** with the common core standards?
- Yes
No
- If Yes, Should implementation be voluntary or federally mandated? (choose one)
- a. Voluntary
 - b. Mandated
 - c. Mandated, if fully funded
- If No, what other accountability measures might you suggest? (choose one)
- a. Continue to allow the states to develop their own assessments.
 - b. Suggest that the local education districts use their own assessments or adopt one that is a

- nationally norm-referenced assessment such as the *Stanford Achievement Test* or *Iowa Test of Basic Skills*.
- c. Suggest that districts use a portfolio type of assessment where student projects and activities would be scored holistically
6. National standards should lead to: (choose one)
 - a. A nationally mandated curriculum to be aligned to the national standards and assessments.
 - b. A national curriculum that is only suggested but not mandated.
 - c. A suggested structure for states and local education agencies to develop their own curriculum.
 - d. No national curriculum.
 7. What role should the national assessment consortia play in student evaluation? (Rank order)
 - a. Provide an assessment system that is aligned to the Common Core Standards.
 - b. Provide comparison data showing progress toward reaching Common Core Standards.
 - c. Provide criteria for determining readiness for college and careers.
 - d. Provide information to students, parents, teachers and school districts about student achievement.
 - e. Provide diagnostic information on each child.
 8. Data from the national assessments are often difficult for parents, teachers and others to understand. If we have a national assessment, what information is most important to be reported to parents, teachers, students and the community? (choose one)
 - a. Data should be “norm referenced” (where students are ranked) for district comparison only.
 - b. Data should be “criterion referenced” and clearly informative so that teachers, parents, and students know how individual students have mastered criteria established at a national level.
 - c. Data should be used to determine “cut” scores knowing if students have mastered requirements for special grade levels.
 9. Information from nationally required assessment data should be used to (Choose one):
 - a. Sanction schools not measuring up to the specific levels
 - b. Reward schools that achieve high scores
 - c. Rank teachers based on student test score data
 - d. Reward teachers who have exemplary scores
 - e. Inform districts how their population compares to others similar to theirs.
-

FUNDING AND EQUITY

10. In the past most of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funding has been non-competitive based on need. All/Any Schools that prove they fall under the federal guidelines for funding receive those funds. However, competitive grants are now being proposed to states/districts who meet certain federal requirements, such as Race to the Top. Which would be appropriate: (choose one)

- Non-competitive funding for all applicants meeting requirements
- A combination of non-competitive and competitive grants
- Competitive grants only
- No federal funding

11. If the federal government's role is the concern of the "common good" then: (choose one)

- Mandates only should be sanctioned.
- Mandates and funding should both be provided.
- Funding should be provided through grants only.
- A combination of funded mandates and grants should apply.
- No mandates should be required and limited grants for innovation available.

12. Equity in public education means equitable access to: (Rank order)

- high quality teaching/learning
- adequate and current learning materials
- clean and well maintained physical facilities
- food and health care
- safe and secure neighborhoods
- secure housing

13. Currently Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) funding is considered "categorical" rather than for general use. This means that it can only be used with special populations for special purposes. ESEA should remain targeted toward poverty and special needs.

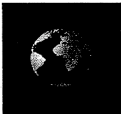
Strongly agree Agree
No consensus Disagree
Strongly disagree

14. The federal government has a role in supporting early childhood education, birth to 5, for all children?

Strongly agree Agree
No consensus Disagree
Strongly disagree

15. Federal support for early childhood education programs (e.g. Head Start, Title I, Special Education, Early Start) should include funding for parent education and support regarding child development, child health and nutrition, and access to other supportive services, such as mental health as needed.

a. Strongly Agree Agree
No consensus Disagree
Strongly Disagree
b. This funding should be extended to :
All children only those with
special needs special needs first

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Friendly Lunch Background
Submitted by Carol Furman, Health Chair

Kevin Jobin-Davis , Executive Director of The Healthy Capital District Initiative, will speak at the Friendly Lunch on Tuesday, November 29 at noon at the the First Reformed Church on Church & Union Streets about the barriers to health care and health insurance in our community, and how the state and federal health reform efforts have been stalled. The Healthy Capital District Initiative publishes a community health profile comparing health indicators in three capital region communities including Schenectady. The profile is utilized in comprehensive health planning efforts to focus on health priorities and to encourage the use of primary care providers for prevention services. They have worked to improve access to health insurance by assisting in the enrollment process for Child Health Plus, Family Health Plus, and Medicaid. They help residents find affordable prescription medications, medical services, and also help with insurance disputes. Please put this important program on your calendar!

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 - domestic violence hotline: 518.374.3386
 - advocacy
 - counseling
 - community-based support groups
 - women's housing

- Youth & Family Services
 - Early Childhood Education & UPK Centers
 - Washington Ave site
 - Schenectady County Community College site
 - Encore - Take Charge of Your Health
 - Parents Anonymous
 - Wellness Center

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Membership Report
Lynda Nichols, Membership Report

If you have not already done so, please mail your 2011/2012 Membership dues check ASAP to

Schenectady LWV
PO Box 9135
Schenectady, 12309.

(Individual = \$55 and Family = \$75)
To date, 66% of the group has paid this year's dues. Contact Lynda Nichols with questions or concerns.
nicholsL@nycap.rr.com or 374-1643

January 31 is the annual Potential New Member Meeting. The Membership Committee needs your suggestions about people to invite. Who do you know that might be interested in joining the Schenectady LWV? Send names and contact information to Lynda Nichols at nicholsL@nycap.rr.com or 374-1643.

LEAGUE MEMBERSHIP FORM

July 1, 2011 through June 30, 2012

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

_____ \$55 Individual _____ \$75 Household

_____ \$20 Full time student

Additional contribution to the League.....

Amount? _____

(Dues cover July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011. Confidential arrangements for special payment or partial assistance can be made.

Contact Lynda Nichols, 374-1643 with questions.

(Dues and contributions are not tax deductible.)

_____ I am supporting the League with my membership dues payment, but please consider me an INACTIVE member.

Return to: LWV of Schenectady County,

P.O. Box 9135, Schenectady, NY 12309

Excerpted Letter on Voting Rights

By Elizabeth MacNamara, President, LWVUS

This week I was a guest on the National Public Radio call-in show, "On Point," featuring an hour-long program on voter suppression, "A War on Voting." A number of callers pointed out the disproportionate impact these laws will have on underserved communities. An election official in rural Tennessee noted that she would be required to turn away voters with whom she is personally acquainted, if they lacked the requisite government issued ID.

The U.S. Postal Service is proposing to close offices all across the country, including the reservation in South Dakota where Wounded Knee is located. That post office is a lifeline to the community, including vital voter services such as voter registration and requesting and returning absentee ballots. No one can accuse the USPS of deliberately impinging on voting rights, but regardless of the intent, the result is the same.

..... the League was founded to remove the "remaining legal discriminations ...in the codes and constitutions of the several states" that offered stumbling blocks to the "feet of coming women" voters. We owe the nation our best effort to make democracy safe for every eligible voter!



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Court Restructuring Revisited

Helga A. Schroeter, Judicial & Alternative Treatment Chair

The NYS League of Women Voters has had a long-standing advocacy position on court restructuring. The current system of nine separate trial courts is confusing to those who appear in court and costly to everyone involved in the courts: the litigants, the court system itself, and the taxpayers.

The Fund for Modern Courts has put together a working coalition to advocate for first passage of a constitutional amendment to streamline the trial courts. The task force has been meeting bi-monthly to strategize, and different members of the group have begun to meet with the governor's counsel, the Office of Court Administration (OCA), the Bar Associations and various advocacy groups. I represent the League of Women Voters of New York State on this task force.

One of the selling points in this stressed state government budget is the anticipated savings in a more streamlined system. But most importantly, the litigants stand to gain in a court system that allows them to deal with one judge and one court for their individual cases. Elevating more judges to the Supreme Court level would also create a fairer distribution of resources and a more diverse pool of justices eligible for the appellate division of the courts. We are hoping for strong support from the League because of its long-standing commitment to this issue.



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SPEAKER ON HYDROENERGY AT THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING on Monday, **OCTOBER 31, Noon** (not on our usual first Monday) at **the Moon and River Cafe**. Gordon Boyd of Energynext will talk with us about the potential for Hydroenergy on the NYS Canal system. Members and friends interested in finding out more about this proposal are invited to attend.

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: Joan Elliott 346-4414
Vice-President: Patricia McKinnon 399-8271
Newsletter Editor: Helen MacDonald 346-7006

www.lwvschenectady.org

NOVEMBER CALENDAR of Events

- Mon. Oct 31, Environment Committee, Moon & River Café, Noon.
- Tues, Nov 1, Board, 1400 Keyes Ave., 4 pm.
- Mon. Nov 7 , Working Group on Girls Planned Parenthood Mohawk Hudson, 1040 State St. 3:30 pm
- Tues, Nov. 15, Consensus, 1st United Methodist Church, 7pm.
- Mon, Nov 29 Friendly Lunch, Health Committee, 1st Reformed Church, Noon

