



**The**  
**LOCAL VOTER**  
**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS**  
**SYRACUSE METROPOLITAN AREA**

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2009

Syracuse Metro LWV  
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 Syracuse NY 13218  
 (507 Plum St -2nd Fl. Syr. 13204)  
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**Web Sites:**

**Local:** www.lwvsyr.org  
**State:** www.lwvny.org  
**National:** www.lwv.org

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

- Tuesday, January 6th**  
Program Committee Meeting
- Tuesday, January 13th**  
LWVSYR Board Meeting
- Thursday, January 15th**  
Government Modernization Meeting

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**STAYING INFORMED ON THE ISSUES AND EVENTS**

Local: [www.lwvsyr.org](http://www.lwvsyr.org)  
 State: [www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org)  
 National: [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)



**JOIN THE NPV STUDY COMMITTEE**

Three times in the history of the United States a president has been elected who did not capture the majority of the popular vote but did receive the majority of electoral votes. - Hayes/Tilden in 1876; Harrison/Cleveland in 1888; and Bush/Gore in 2000. Is it time to change the way we elect our presidents? See page 6 for details.

**A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION ON  
 GOVERNMENT MODERNIZATION**

THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2009 - NOON - 2:00 PM  
 SARGENT CONFERENCE ROOM - LIVERPOOL LIBRARY  
 310 TULIP STREET, LIVERPOOL NY

JOIN US FOR A PRESENTATION AND CONVERSATION ON  
 MODERNIZING GOVERNMENT IN ONONDAGA COUNTY

**PRESENTERS:**

- Clyde Ohl - Syracuse 20/20 Committee on Government Modernization
- Vito Sciscioli - Chair of the Onondaga County Government Modernization Task Force

Our annual Local Issues Program Planning meeting will follow.  
 A light lunch will be provided.

Reservations by Monday, January 12th so we can plan for lunch.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

You can mail, phone or email your reservation to:

Syracuse LWV  
 PO Box 1186  
 Syracuse NY 13218

Phone: 448-7199  
 Email: info@lwvsyr.org

*More information on the program in the pages to follow.  
 The meeting is open to the public.*

# BOARD NOTES

## MEMBERSHIP

### QUICK TIPS FOR GROWING OUR LWV

1. **Connect your story with** what the League means to you. Research shows people learn why we value being an LWV member to motivate them to join.
2. **Invite** those with whom you're sharing your story to join. An implied invitation isn't enough to close the deal.
3. **Make joining easy** by giving people a membership brochure or referring them to our web site at [www.lwvsyr.org](http://www.lwvsyr.org).
4. **Avoid League speak.** Share your enthusiasm but avoid using LWV insider lingo.

## NATURALIZATION CEREMONIES

The 2009 schedule for Naturalization Ceremonies will soon be available. Registering new voters has been a part of our voter service activities for many years. Please join us in welcoming new citizens to our area.

Contact Susan Bush at [sjbusywca@cnyemail.com](mailto:sjbusywca@cnyemail.com) or call at 448-7199.

## LWVNY CONVENTION 2009

The next LWVNY Convention will be held in Syracuse May 15-17 at the Double Tree Inn. The Convention theme will be "Fair, Vibrant and Strong". This is an exceptional opportunity for our League. As the host League we will need volunteers to help with the activities. Please call 448-7199 to volunteer. See page 5 for details on how you can become a part of the action.



## FINANCE / FUNDRAISING

Thank you to our members and supporters who have responded to our

recent fundraising appeal. If you have not already done so, we hope to hear from you soon. If you have misplaced your letter, please use the last page of this newsletter to make your contribution. Dues alone do not support our advocacy and voter service activities. We need your financial support. Please respond generously. Thank you.

## Officers

Co-President....	Joan Johnson
Co-President...	Rae Rohfeld
Vice-President...	Joe Sammarco
Secretary...	Karen Smith
Treasurer....	J. Arthur Johnson

## Directors

Advocacy & Issues....	Lenore Rapalski
Fund-Raising...	Elizabeth Nicoletti
Membership...	Mary Lou Green
Program....	Don MacLaughlin
Public Relations...	Sherly Day-Bernthal
Voter Service...	Susan Bush

## Off-Board Positions

Budget Director....	Rhonda Hungerford
Nominating Committee.....	Roberta Millert, Chair
	Eleanor Feitler
	Joan Durant
Lake Partnership....	Reginald Durant
Optical Scan Liaison....	Lenore Rapalski
Technical Support...	Roberta Millert

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. For more information please call the League office at (315) 448-7199 or e-mail to [info@lwvsyr.org](mailto:info@lwvsyr.org)

## Diversity Statement

The Syracuse Metropolitan League of Women Voters is committed to diversity and pluralism, which means there shall be no barriers to participation in any League activity on the basis of age, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, economic status, or national origin.

We look forward to reader participation and invite your questions regarding issues and columns. Kindly mail your queries to the office or e-mail to [info@lwvsyr.org](mailto:info@lwvsyr.org)

Please let us know your email address.

- It is the most efficient way to communicate
  - You will be notified of upcoming local events
  - LWV National & State Action Alerts
- Your e-mail address will not be shared or sold. Please respond to [info@lwvsyr.org](mailto:info@lwvsyr.org)

# MESSAGE FROM THE CO-PRESIDENT

We hope you will join us on Thursday, January 15<sup>th</sup> for our Local Issues/Program Meeting. This is an annual event where we review the issues we will focus on in the coming year. Our present Local Issues Program is found on Page 7 of this newsletter.

This year we are doing things a little differently with a program followed by the yearly discussion on changes we wish to consider to our agenda. Clyde Ohl, a member of the Syracuse LWV, the Onondaga Citizens League, a former county legislator and a representative of Syracuse 20/20 and Vito Scicssoli, Executive Director of Syracuse 20/20 and chair of the Government Modernization Task Force established by County Executive Joanie Mahoney, will show a Power Point presentation entitled "A Community Conversation on Government Modernization."

Syracuse 20/20 has spent the past several years examining issues surrounding government modernization. Its mission has been to start a community-wide conversation about whether our current way of organizing local government, a system that was invented around 1800, is still working for us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Government modernization has been a part of the League agenda for many years. Many local civic groups have also advocated for a new approach on how we govern locally. Is now the time to act? With the state economic woes, is the time right to move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Governor Paterson, Attorney General Cuomo and reform groups across the state believe the time is now. Join us on Thursday, January 15<sup>th</sup> and become a part of the conversation.

***Joan Johnson, Co-president***

## CALENDAR

Tuesday, January 6, 2009 - 1:00 PM Liverpool Library	Program Committee Meeting
Tuesday, January 13, 2009 - 4:45 PM League Office	LWVSYR Board Meeting (our meetings are open to all members)
Thursday, January 15, 2009, - Noon - 2 PM Sargent Room, Liverpool Public Library Light Lunch Served	A Community Conversation on Government Modernization Power Point Presentation followed by Local Issues/Program Discussion
Monday, January 19, 2009	Martin Luther King Day
Tuesday, January 20, 2009	Inauguration of the 44th President of the United States
Monday, February 16, 2009	Presidents' Day
May 15 - 17, 2009 Doubletree Inn, East Syracuse NY	LWVNY Convention



## *Annual Legislative Breakfast*

On December 5th League members and guests attended a hearty breakfast with our State Legislative Delegation. We wish to thank Senator Valesky and Assemblymembers Kolb, Magnarelli and Stirpe for taking the time from their busy schedules to address the many issues New York State faces in the coming months.



*Left to right - Senator Valesky, Assemblymembers, Magnarelli, Stirpe & Kolb*



*Left to right Gwen Grant, Susan Bush, Debbie Merryweather, Jan Markarian*

Some of the issues that were addressed include the current economic slow down and how it will affect the budget process; cuts to vital services including school aid and healthcare; and property tax reform.

Mayor Driscoll also attended and addressed several city issues.

*Left to right - Joe Feitler, Mayor Driscoll & Eleanor Feitler →*



*Roberta Millert & Joe Sammarco conducted a successful raffle. Thanks to Roberta & Dan Millert for donating the prizes.*

Our annual legislative breakfast has been a well attended event. We are in the process of reviewing the best time of the year to hold it and are surveying our legislators for what works best for their schedules.



*LWV members Ann Jamison (left) & Jan Markarian*

### **Too Many Local Government Entities?**

Attorney General Andrew Cuomo believes that New York State has too many local government bodies. According to his statistics there are 10,521, including 6,927 special districts. Onondaga County is second only to Erie County with the most government entities in the state - 941.

The 19 towns and 15 villages that make up Onondaga County include 18 school districts, 18 police departments and 45 fire departments. In addition there are 220 sewer districts, 177 drainage districts, 188 lighting districts and numerous legislative, planning and zoning boards each with their own planning and zoning regulations.

New York State ranks third in the nation for highest taxes. The local tax burden puts us at number 1 – statistics we are not proud of.

### **WHAT OUR STATE AND LOCAL LEADERS CAN DO**

The New York State Commission on Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness was established to offer grants to local governments to consider and implement a variety of consolidated and shared services as well as municipal mergers. Despite the necessity for austerity this year, the LGE grant program was preserved in Governor Paterson's 2009-2010 Executive Budget. Urge your local senator and assembly-member to support the governor's proposal to preserve these grants.

To learn more about recommendations for streamlining local government and encourage efficiencies that benefit local taxpayers visit their web site at [www.nyslocalgov.org](http://www.nyslocalgov.org).

### ***Better Ways To Vote*** (from [www.Parade.com/intel](http://www.Parade.com/intel))

Another way in which the 2008 election made history: Americans had an easier time casting ballots thanks to expanded use of methods like early voting and same day voter registration. Preliminary figures show that more than 130 million people – or 61.2% of eligible voters – took part in choosing a President, the greatest turnout in 40 years. Experts believe that election officials will continue efforts to facilitate voting.

"Governments are realizing that they haven't spent enough time making voting an easier process, says Wendy Weiser of NYU's Brennan Center for Justice. But to truly boost turnout, adds Weiser, "We must modernize the overall voter-registration system. It's the biggest obstacle to voters and the biggest source of errors."

#### **Here is what some states tried:**

**EARLY VOTING:** People voted before Election Day in person or by mail in 34 states.

**SAME-DAY VOTER REGISTRATION:** People were able to register and vote on the same day in 10 states as opposed to being required to register at least three to four weeks before Election Day.

**ONLINE VOTING:** Voters submitted their ballots by scanning and uploading them in Arizona for military and overseas voters.

## **2009 BIENNIAL CONVENTION NEW YORK STATE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS**

### ***“Fair Vibrant & Strong”***

We are pleased to be chosen as the host city for the LWVNY Convention scheduled for May 15 – 17 at the Doubletree Inn in East Syracuse. Leagues from around the state will gather here to set the course for the next two years. It is a great opportunity for our members to meet other "leaguers" and to participate in the convention process. With this opportunity also comes a commitment from our local league to provide volunteers for the many activities. We will need volunteers at the registration desk; in the hospitality room; in the Publications/Silent Auction Room; and during Plenary Sessions

If you have never attended a League Convention, it is an interesting experience. Delegates to the Convention consider and authorize a program for action; elect officers and directors along with a chair and two members of the Nominating Committee; adopt a budget and address other business that comes before the Convention.

Floor pages, ushers and timekeepers are essential to see that everything runs smoothly and according to Robert's Rules of Order during Plenary Sessions. These duties may seem overwhelming but there will be training sessions for all volunteers.

As a convention volunteer you are welcome and encouraged to attend any of the fun convention activities and to observe any of the plenary sessions during which you are not working.

Please give us a call at 448-7199 or email us at [info@lwvsyr.org](mailto:info@lwvsyr.org) to be a part of the Convention.



## **The League's Study of the National Popular Vote Compact**

Since 1970, the LWVUS has held the position that the President and Vice President of the U.S. should be elected by direct-popular vote in order to assure representative government. Members expected that a constitutional amendment to abolish the electoral college would be introduced and go through the adoption process. Once the amendment was adopted, only the direct popular vote would be counted in the states, and a new method for certifying its total would be established.

The length and difficulty of the amendment process encouraged reformers to find a way to achieve the goals of direct popular election without the need to change the constitution. The National Popular Vote Compact (NPV) offers a means to do this through an interstate compact or contract, which courts have found constitutional in other situations. The proposal is that states that join would agree to instruct their electors to vote for the candidate who received the highest number of popular votes in the country, even if that candidate did not win the most votes in the state the electors represent. Obviously, the compact could not go into effect until enough states had joined to provide for 270 electoral votes, the number needed to win in the electoral college. If no candidate received that many votes, the selection process would revert back to the existing methods using the electoral college and the congress.

The national league has developed consensus questions for local leagues to consider and report on by May 1. Many observers and experts have very strong opinions, pro and con. The Syracuse Metro League is planning an informative program in the spring on the topic for members and non-members as well as a consensus-developing session. In any case, the League will maintain its existing position favoring direct popular election; the new questions will relate to whether the NPV compact is a viable means of achieving this goal.

We encourage you to read about NPV, ask questions, and come to the meetings. You will find several informative and interesting papers on the LWVUS web site. To locate this material, go to [www.lwvus.org](http://www.lwvus.org) . When you reach the home page, click on "FOR MEMBERS" on the headings near the top. There you will find links to the National Popular Vote Compact to click on. That will bring up a list of background papers, the text of the NPV Compact (888 words), the consensus questions, and a list of suggested resources that you can bring up on line. If you do not use a computer, contact me, and I will send you print materials. You can choose what and how much to read. If you would like to be involved in the planning you are welcome – just contact me.

## **LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS SYRACUSE METROPOLITAN AREA 2008-2009 LOCAL POSITIONS**

### **MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK**

- Promote greater citizen participation in the political process by encouraging citizens to become knowledgeable about the issues and to actively lobby elected officials.
- Encourage individuals to exercise their right to vote.
- Continue the project to increase voter participation in low-turnout neighborhoods within the city of Syracuse.
- Continue the project to increase voter participation among youth.
- Establish action projects for members to accompany themes at meetings.

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

- Study and support where appropriate legislation, which promotes proposals to modernize local government by sharing services among villages, towns, public schools, the city of Syracuse, Onondaga County.
- Support efforts to contain sprawl with planned growth throughout Onondaga County

### **SOCIAL POLICY**

- Monitor the state school aid formula and its implications for upstate school districts and the Big 5 districts.
- Promote educational efforts dealing with domestic violence and the Integrated Domestic Violence Court in Onondaga County.
- Promote opposition to the Death Penalty in support of the new LWVNY position.

### **NATURAL RESOURCES**

- Support efforts of the Onondaga Partnership to facilitate improvement projects for the lake and its watershed.

### **LOCAL SUPPORT FOR STATEWIDE ISSUES/STUDIES**

- Promote improved reforms for HAVA; including elimination of the full face ballot, improved training for poll workers, advocacy for optical scan machines, and citizen education and training for replacement machines.
- Promote meaningful lobby reform.
- Promote and encourage further NYS budget process reform.
- Promote and encourage meaningful campaign finance reform.
- Promote the creation of an independent redistricting commission.
- Promote the creation of an independent ethics commission.
- Promote meaningful reform of public authorities.
- Promote additional legislative rules reform.
- Promote and encourage meaningful property tax reform.



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If you are unable to attend the meeting, please send any changes you would like to propose.

Email: info@lwvsyr.org; Fax: 448-7299; Mail: Po Box 11866, Syracuse NY 13218

Additions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Deletions: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

New Items: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**League of Women Voters  
Membership Application**

8

*Democracy is not a spectator sport  
It's efficient activism  
It is a way to make your voice count  
It is a way to make politics a process for the people*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ *Individual Level....\$55*

\_\_\_\_ *Household Level\*....\$80*

\_\_\_\_ *Student Level \*\*....\$25*

**Please make check payable to:  
Syracuse Metro Area League of Women Voters  
P O Box 11866  
Syracuse, NY 13218**

\* *Two members in the same household*

\*\* *Full time student under 25*

\_\_\_\_ ***I would like to support the League with a donation.***

**For more information call us at (315) 448-7199 or visit us at [www.lwvsyr.org](http://www.lwvsyr.org)**



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**Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE  
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Syracuse, NY  
Permit no. 372**