



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY

JANUARY 2010

PRESIDENT: MARNIE JOHNSON 257-2948
lwvtompkins.org/

EDITOR: ROBERT SILSBEE 273-1436
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GENERAL MEETING: MONDAY, JANUARY 25, 7:00 PM

LOCAL GOVERNMENT COOPERATION: A HEALTH CARE EXAMPLE

DON BARBER: Chair of the BOD. Tompkins County Health Insurance Consortium

**Women's Community Building (2nd floor), 100 W. Seneca St.
(more information on page 2)**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As I look out my window snow is falling (again) and the hills are mounds of varying shades of white against the sky — a beautiful scene. Some of us love our area especially this time of year, others of us appreciate its beauty more the other three seasons, but in all seasons this is a very special place. It is a culturally rich and varied place as well — and we deeply appreciate that also. We want to preserve what we love here and we want this, our "home" to be the best that it can be. We want to keep what is so good about what we have and, in some cases, improve judiciously and appropriately on what needs to change.

Much of what governs what happens is related to the functions of our local government — county, city, towns and villages, their planning, their regulations, their committees and boards. We tend to think we know how they function — perhaps (or complain they malfunction) — but, do we? What are their responsibilities, their constraints? How do various bodies interrelate, who actually does what? What is really good about our local government on the various levels? Where are the hitches? What are the important issues facing our local government bodies? Who should be doing what?

As we begin another year (the League of Women Voters' 90th anniversary year) we want to take a good look at our local government: to, in effect, look under the hood at the engine and see how it all works. I hope you can attend our general meeting on Jan. 25th. (Didn't you always want to be a mechanic and know how things "ran"?)

Marnie Johnson

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JANUARY AND FEBRUARY MEETINGS

Thanks to the hard work of our new study committee, Consolidation of Local Governmental Units and Shared Services (CLGU-SS) Committee, we will have two interesting and informative general meetings. The goal is to educate ourselves about a complex, sensitive and timely issue and effectively influence the decisions made by our local governments.

The January 25 meeting will be held at the Women's Community Building. The members of the CLGU-SS Committee will provide basic information about the current organization of the towns, cities and villages in Tompkins County. The recent changes in NY State laws, which allow local governments to make changes in outdated and inefficient structures in order to be more cost effective, will be explained.

Don Barber will describe the process the Tompkins County Health Consortium used to develop a plan for localities to share resources and purchase health insurance as a single large group. According to the Ithaca Journal editorial of 7/6/09 the plan is projected to save Tompkins County taxpayers one million dollars annually.

We will discuss how the Consortium's process can be used as a model, for citizens and local government officials to consider how sharing services and consolidating local responsibilities may result in increased efficiencies and cost effectiveness.

The Annual Soup and Bread Informational Luncheon will be held on Saturday, February 20, 2010, at the First Unitarian Church. Members of the Board will host with delicious home made soups, breads and yummy desserts. The program will bring together local governmental officials to talk with us about their experiences in working toward sharing services with other governing entities. We will have time to discuss the barriers to and progress of specific efforts made to consolidate

governmental units and share services in Tompkins County.

I encourage you to come to the January meeting, LOCAL GOVERNMENT COOPERATION: A HEALTH CARE EXAMPLE, on Monday, January 25, 7:00 to 9:00 pm in rooms 2/3, Women's Community Building, 100 West Seneca St., Ithaca. Guests are welcome!

Florence B. Smith, VP-Program, 273-6147

SHARED SERVICES: LWV-NYS

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 statewide 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 January.

SHARED SERVICES: LWV-TC

Your (Tompkins County) Consolidating Local Government study group has been reading the suggested bibliography (see the NYS League web site) while awaiting the release of the consensus questions.

<http://lwvny.org/consolidation/FisherMemo0909.pdf> gives a quick overview of the study and

http://lwvny.org/consolidation/Fisher_FullReport1109.pdf provides additional background.

Read these and then please join us at our next meeting on Tuesday, February 16 at 12:00 at Kendal.

Alene Wyatt, 257-1894

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.

MARCELLUS: LWV-TC

Here it is:

The Natural Resources Committee has been studying the issue of drilling in the Marcellus Shale and the draft SGEIS that was produced by the DEC of New York State. In November we gave an oral statement at the DEC hearing at the State Theater. Since then we have been in contact with the New York State League as they prepared a written response to the DEC report. Our local committee has paid particular attention to the issues affecting the residents of upstate N.Y. and many of these have been included in the State League's response to the DEC.

The statement submitted by the League of Women Voters of New York State can be found via a link at their website www.lwvny.org or at the specific webpage

http://www.lwvny.org/advocacy/legAction/LWVNY_SGEIS123009.pdf

The Natural Resources Committee will meet again on January 14 at 10 a.m. at Marnie Johnson's home, 361 Savage Farm Drive. We are currently investigating what league chapters in other states are doing about drilling and mining issues. In addition, the committee is wondering how some of our concerns fit with previously taken national positions on such things as water, air quality, and land use. We want to see if these positions might naturally cover some of our concerns and whether lobbying on the national level is a possibility.

Please join us if you are interested and if you have any questions about the committee please call at 539-3322.

Kay Wagner

MEMBERSHIP

We have some new members:

Mr. Ronald Applegate 60 Genung Circle,
Ithaca
Ms. Margorie (Janie) Carasik 338 Savage
Farm Drive 266-7660
Ms. Nancy Ellner 170 East Lexington Road,
Ithaca 257-2036
Ms. Susanne Lipari 3991 Route 228 Alpine,
NY 14805 387-9308
Ms. Susan Wolf 217 Rachel Carson Way,
Ithaca 272-1618

A warm welcome to all!!

Maria Eisner

THE BYLAWS

The bylaws of the LWV-TC were reviewed and the Board has concluded that no revision is required at this time. You can access them on our website.

Maria Eisner

JOIN THE AGE OF THE INTERNET

The US, NYS and Tompkins County Leagues are now sending their newsletters via e-mail. Paper versions are still available from LWV-TC and, at a substantial cost, from LWV-NYS. Here is how to assure you can continue to be informed of League activities.

LWV-US: League E-Voice Newsletter

Be sure your information at the US website is up-to-date and includes your e-mail address. If the national site does not have your e-mail address, or you're uncertain, send me a note at RHS1@cornell.edu

For a lot more LWV-US information by e-mail, go to For Members/Update Your Information on their website: click on "League Sponsored E-mail lists" in the sidebar.

LWV-NYS: State Voter

If your e-mail address is on record with the LWV-US you should be receiving the quarterly "State Voter" via e-mail. If you would like to

receive a paper copy (\$20 for a year), call Stephanie at 518-465-4162 or send your request to: Stephanie Lopez, Program Coordinator League of Women Voters of New York State, 62 Grand St., Albany, New York 12207.

LWV-TC: Bulletin

Many of you are already receiving the bulletin by e-mail. If you are still receiving a paper copy and would like to save the League \$7.00 a year, send me RHS1@jcornell.edu your e-mail address and indicate whether you would prefer to receive the bulletin as a .pdf (Adobe Acrobat) (preferred) or .doc (Microsoft Word) file.

Bob Silsbee

Action Alerts

I am updating the list of people that want to receive action alerts from state and national and request that if you would like to be added to the list, please email me at ldutt@twcnny.rr.com Advocacy is an important part of our role as league members.

Linda Duttweiler

LWV-TC CALENDAR—2009-2010

tentative dates and programs in italics

7:00	Mon	Jan 25	LOCAL GOVERNMENT COOPERATION	Women's Comm. Bldg.
			DON BARBER: TC Health Insurance Coalition	
7:00	Mon	Feb 8	Board Meeting	Old Jail
noon	Sat	Feb 20	<i>DISCUSSION, WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL OFFICIALS, OF RESOURCE SHARING</i>	Unitarian Church
7:00	Mon	Mar 8	Board Meeting	Old Jail
7:00	Mon	Mar 22	<i>League's 90th Anniversary</i>	
7:00	Mon	Apr 5	Board Meeting	Bob Silsbee
7:00	Mon	Apr 26	<i>Consensus meeting on Consolidation & Shared Services</i>	
7:00	Mon	May 3	Board Meeting	
	Mon	May 10	<i>Annual Meeting</i>	
7:00	Mon	June 7	Board Meeting	Kathy Burlitch

WEBSITES**LWV-Tompkins**

Need to find polling places, league positions, calendar of events, action alerts, elected officials, state and national information quickly? Are you looking for information that was in a past bulletin or want to read *State* or *National Voters*? Do you have a question for the league? Check out our redesigned website at <http://www.lwvtompkins.org>

This fall, Clarity Connect generously agreed to host our website. Mark Anbinder at 14850.com was our original host for many years and we are grateful for his services as well.

Michael and Linda Duttweiler

State and National Publications

State and National no longer send out publications so I don't have any to hand out at meetings. There is a lot of information available from their web sites.

On the State Website (linked from our local website) there is a wealth of information at "Advocacy Areas," both at "Overview" and at "Impact on Issues"; or go to "Local League Resources." Under "Resource Links" you can find all our representatives.

On the National Website go to "Issues." Under "National Resources," for example, you can find all our positions that would relate to our positions on the gas drilling issue. Also under "Issues" you can find all our other positions. Hope this helps you to keep in touch with State and National.

Kathy Burlitch, Publications Chair

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY: BOARD 2009-10

LWV NYS website

LWV US website

LWV-Tompkins County

leave message at 273-1436

www.lwvny.org

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NYS Consolidation/Shared Services —Chair	Alene Wyatt	257-1894	alene@lightlink.com

**2010 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA:
FIX ALBANY NOW!**

**NOVEMBER MEETING:
GAS DRILLING**

The combined efforts of the Program and Natural Resources Committees generated an stimulating general meeting on the topic of the hydrofracture gas drilling in the Marcellus shale formation. Kay Wagner opened the meeting with a brief presentation of the context and introduced the speaker, William Kapell, hydrologist with the USGS.

Dr. Kapell gave a quick review of the relevant geology and then a detailed description of the drilling and hydrofracturing (fracking) procedures required for the extraction of gas from the Marcellus formation. His focus, in this presentation, was on the issue of water quality, including the depletion of natural water sources by the demand for large quantities of water needed for the fracking process, the contamination of wells and aquifers by leakage from improperly sealed casings, and contamination from inadequately handled wastewater, which contains unsafe levels of both chemical contaminants and radioactive nuclides.

Despite competition from another meeting focused on the gas drilling issue, the League meeting drew a crowd of over 60, mixed between League members and the general public. The audience did not wait for the end of the talk before asking questions. The result was a lively and stimulating 1 1/2 hour give-and-take between audience and speaker, which could easily have continued longer but for our desire to conclude the program with a half hour DVD depicting problems in Colorado with the fracking technique, emphasizing the dangerous chemical cocktail used in the fracking process.

Bob Silsbee

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 that extend and encourage voting, including no-excuse absentee balloting and Election Day registration.

Additional League Positions

Information

To get information on additional League positions or read about the history of a League position, please visit our website: www.lwvny.org click on Advocacy Areas to view the document, "Impact on Issues."

Take Action! It's Easy!

To take action on the issues listed in this brochure or any other issues, log onto the League's website at: www.lwvny.org and click "Take Action" at the top right column. The League has created an easy-to-use resource on its website called the Citizen Action ToolkiT or CATT for short. Sign-up for the Action E-list to automatically receive League action alerts – because your involvement can make a critical difference! Make your voice heard!!!

CIVIC GROUPS FIND SCORES OF VIOLATIONS OF LIMIT ON CORPORATE CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS FOR 2008

A review of campaign filings with the state revealed scores of potential violations of the \$5,000 limit on corporate donations for the calendar year 2008 and failures to complete campaign finance filings, civic groups charged today. Citizens Union, Common Cause/NY, the League of Women Voters/N.Y.S. and NYPIRG compiled a list of corporations that apparently exceeded the legal donation limit. They called for the creation of a new enforcement unit within the Board of Elections.

In addition to the list of nearly 350 apparent violators of the corporate contribution limits for last year, the groups also identified 5,316 contributions of over \$100 whose donors' addresses were not disclosed in the state's campaign finance database, 473 "24 hour notices" that were not reported in the state's database, and 576 committees with over \$1,000 in the bank who have yet to file July 2009 disclosure reports as disclosed in the state's database.

This is the third year these groups have examined possible corporate contribution violators. The groups cautioned that the apparent violations may be the result of bookkeeping entry errors by campaign staff. Moreover, the groups cautioned that under current Election Law, contributing over the legal limits is only a criminal violation if it was done "knowingly and willfully." Nevertheless, the groups strongly urge the Board of Elections to investigate these possible violations.

The civic groups are pressing for passage of legislation to strengthen campaign finance enforcement. Legislation to achieve those changes is under consideration in the State Senate (S.6157, Sampson). The bill or similar legislation would, among other ethics changes, create an independent enforcement unit at the State Board of Elections and broaden disclosure requirements by requiring more information of contributors and "bundlers."

MAYBE I'LL WRITE MY SENATOR

A member of the LWV for over three years, I had yet to write a letter to my representatives on either the state or national level. That's not to say I never thought about it. In fact there must be a corner of my brain cluttered with many half-composed such letters. Having been considerably stirred up by the Marcellus controversy the clutter has extended to my computer files where I have collected a number of drafts of letters to elected officials as well as beginnings of comments to the DEC concerning the dSGEIS.

This morning I tried an experiment, collecting as bookmarks on my web browser the "contact page" for each of my representatives. The chores I'd been avoiding for three years all were now 3/4 done. A quick note to one; copy and paste, with maybe some revision, to the next; well, the governor needed something a little different; and so on down the list. The combination of a simple procedure, along with the realization that the effectiveness of any letter does NOT depend critically upon the care with which it is worded, seems to have conquered, at least for today, my inherent laziness.

Bob Silsbee

Paterson — —

<http://161.11.121.121/govemail>

Lifton — —

<http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/?ad=125&sh=con>

Winner — —

<http://www.nysenate.gov/senator/george-h-winner-jr/contact>

Seward — —

<http://www.nysenate.gov/senator/james-l-seward/contact>

Schumer: — —

http://schumer.senate.gov/new_website/contact.cfm

Gillibrand — —

<http://gillibrand.senate.gov/contact/>

Hinchey: — —

<http://www.house.gov/hinchey/zipauth.shtml>

Arcuri: — —

http://forms.house.gov/arcuri/webforms/issue_subscribe.htm

YOUR REPRESENTATIVES IN CONGRESS

SENATORS:

Kirsten E. Gillibrand US Senate, 531 Dirksen Senate Building, Washington, DC 20510
202-224-4451 web-site: gillibrand.senate.gov

Charles E. Schumer US Senate, 313 Hart Senate Building, Washington, DC 20510
202-224-6542; Binghamton Office: 607-772-6792
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