



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY

NOVEMBER 2010

PRESIDENT: KAY SHARP 2722-4748
lwvtompkins.org/

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LOCAL LEAGUES: ROUNDTABLE FOR ACTION

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13

10:30-noon

**Borg-Warner Room
Tompkins County Library
101 East Green St., Ithaca**

Snacks, Coffee & Tea

**Bring a Friend!
Bring Ideas!!**

and the importance to our state of keeping this issue under the microscope. We hope to see this as a topic of a workshop or caucus at the State Convention next May. We, as a local League, continue to focus on this issue. Kay Wagner needs your help; please join her committee.

I attended the meeting in Lansing to hear about Pennsylvania's experience with hydrofracking. It is frightening to see the devastation to the habitat that occurs with the drilling and all that goes with the set up of a drilling site. Roads, forests and wildlife are impacted. I hope that this is never what we will need to experience in New York. We must continue our fight to forestall drilling in our state.

Elections are over, but the fight continues. Now that it has been decided who we have to work with, we need to roll up our sleeves and get out there to make our vision known. We want healthcare, we want a clean environment, we want a transparent government. We did a good job of getting voters registered, now it is our job to enlist voters to help make our dreams come

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I'm sorry that many of you were not able to attend Saturday's meeting on "Making a Difference in Albany." Barbara Bartolletti was her effervescent self. Several of us had an opportunity to talk to her about hydrofracking



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true. Talk to your family and friends, contact your senators, contact the new governor. Let people know what they need to do to make things right for New York and the Nation. I just finished a letter to the President. I like to keep in touch with him. I let him know what I want for the country. I encourage you to write him too.

Participation in our November 13 general membership meeting is a step you can take in setting the priorities for our League. We will discuss our action plan for the year. We need all of you to come. Let's come together and decide which direction to take in making our issues known to the State and National League. This is our opportunity to discuss lobbying for our dreams.

I have still have note cards to sell. They are simple note cards without text, six to a package



for \$8.00. Call me if you would like some delivered to you. (272-4748)

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving.

Kay Sharp, President

VOTER SERVICE

Of all the things the LWV does, perhaps the most important are teaching our fellow citizens about the importance of voting, helping them register to vote, and then holding election forums so that they can make educated decisions about how they should vote. This is the job of the Voter Services Committee. We need to see more LWV members participate in these activities and to volunteer for the different programs we run.

The Committee has had a successful and active election season. We held several sessions of voter registration at the Ithaca Farmer's Market and 3 days at the Apple Harvest Festival. While many local residents are registered already, we always get a fair number of change of addresses, mostly from students who have just moved to Ithaca or moved to a new apartment within town. We now have laminated sandwich sheets to wear as we walk around and approach potential voters. That makes it much easier, since it identifies us as League members doing voter registration at first glance. I also noticed that many voters found this a good time to ask questions such as how to get an absentee ballot or how to register their kids. It was a satisfying moment when I handed in the registration forms at the Board of Elections and got a heavy sigh from the people who were tasked to enter all that new data into the database. Thanks to all of you who came out to register voters and give the folks at the BoE so much work! However, we need many more members to step forward to help with this in the future.

We held three candidate forums: one on September 14 for the primary, where the sheriff's race (Meskill/Lansing) was followed with intense interest by a standing room only audience, preceded by a very short period for local representatives of the 5 Democratic Attorney General candidates to make statements and answer a few questions. A second one was on October 7th for the general election for the 125th Assembly (Lifton/Reynolds) and the 53rd Senate (Mackesey/O'Mara) races. Both of these

forums were co-sponsored by the Ithaca Journal and the Tompkins County Public Library and held in the Borg-Warner room of the Library. Attendance for each was over 120. Finally we held a forum in Dryden, co-sponsored by the Dryden Grange, on October 21st. Once more the candidates for the 125th Assembly seat argued their case. A re-match at that forum between the sheriff's candidates where Lansing, the loser of the Democratic primary, was running as an independent had to be canceled because of an urgent Lansing family matter.

All three forums were well attended and gave voters a good insight into the positions of the various candidates. Organizational and publicity help from our co-sponsors was very valuable. We, as the League, need to make sure we have enough members who are well trained and willing to be moderators. A League moderator training session is planned for January, which will hopefully provide us with a pool of

moderators for school board forums this coming May and for other forums in future elections. Please consider attending such a moderator training session. To find out more about how you can, with little effort, support this essential part of our program, call or e-mail Sally (257-6017 or sally.grubb@gmail.com) or Susanne (387-9308 or sel3@cornell.edu).

Sally Grubb, Susanne Lipari
Voter Service Co-Chairs



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY: BOARD 2010-11

LWV NYS website

LWV US website

LWV-Tompkins County leave message at 272-4748

www.lwvny.org

www.lwv.org

lwvtc@twcny.rr.com

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Natural Resources—Chair	Kay Wagner	539-3322	cwm18@cornell.edu
NYS Consolidation —Chair	Alene Wyatt	257-1894	alene@lightlink.com

PROGRAM

The October 30 meeting, *Making a Difference in Albany*, with Barbara Bartoletti was a great success. The 35 in the audience, including members of the Cortland County League, enjoyed her energetic, informative and entertaining talk. We received a wealth of information about the people and politics in Albany and how she works to effect change.

The ‘take-away message’ was both a challenge and a ‘call to arms.’ In spite of all the entrenched problems in Albany, Barbara successfully promotes votes consistent with the policies and positions of the League. The work of local Leagues around the state is critical to her success. Politicians pay attention and respect her in Albany because they know that she represents large grassroots networks of informed and politically active VOTERS. Barbara thanked us for the work we do and encouraged us to more actively promote our programs. She drew particular attention to the issue of redistricting as the most important issue for the immediate future.

The November 13 program will be a follow-up of our session with Barbara. We will brainstorm to elicit ideas to enhance and improve outreach efforts, increase membership and publicize programs and events. We will use some of the most feasible ideas to develop an action plan for the next year. This *Local Leagues Roundtable Discussion* will be at 10:30 to noon in the Borg-Warner Room of the Tompkins County Public Library. All League members and friends are invited to share their ideas and enthusiasm. Breakfast snack, coffee and tea will be provided.

Mark your calendars as well for the following programs:

Who Decides: the Case for Redistricting Reform in New York State with Barbara Bartoletti, Legislative Director, and Laura Ladd Bierman, Executive Director, of the LWV-NYS, on Wednesday, January 26;
Health Care Forum on Wednesday, February 16; and

A Recognition of Eleanor Roosevelt’s Influence in Tompkins County on Saturday, March 26.

Florence Smith
Program

NYS REDISTRICTING PROCESS: A CASE FOR REFORM

Executive Summary

Reformers have long argued that the method the state uses to draw legislative and congressional district boundary lines is undemocratic and in need of reform. These sentiments are echoed by the public, which overwhelmingly supports redistricting reform. This report examines the negative consequences that result from New York’s redistricting practices and proposes reforms.



It is well known that an important factor in maintaining New York State’s political culture is *Gerrymandering*,¹ the practice of allowing the majorities in both houses to draw the district lines every ten years. In effect, this practice allows legislators to choose their voters, rather than the voters choosing their legislators. Historically, governors, who must ultimately approve the legislation containing the proposed new district lines each decade, have done little to change to the *status quo*.

(continued)

Politically motivated mapmakers exploit weaknesses in state law to further their efforts to rig district lines in favor of the majority parties in each house and the re-election prospects of incumbents. As lawmakers begin to consider how to reform the state's previous redistricting approach, it is important to examine the effects of the most highly partisan redistricting techniques, which taken together, reduce competition and ultimately, diminish government accountability.

- **Finding #1:** Only 29 of 212 state legislative districts (14 percent) have been drawn within one percent of the ideal size. The ideal size is the size of a district if each legislator represented the same amount of people as other legislators in their house. In a representative democracy, ensuring districts of similar size ensures fair representation.
- **Finding #2:** Only 25 of the 212 state legislative districts (12 percent) were drawn to have a similar number of major party enrollments. The enrollments in the rest favor one party or another by a wide margin. This small number drastically limits the number of competitive elections in New York. This lack of competition helps insulate lawmakers from the wishes of their constituents.
- **Finding #3:** Mapmaking practices have allowed for the creation of district shapes that ignore the state's constitutional requirement that districts be compact.
- **Finding #4:** Mapmaking practices have been used to remove significant electoral threats that challengers posed to incumbent legislators.
- **Finding #5:** During the period 1980 through 2008, nearly 3,000 state legislative general elections were held, yet in only a tiny fraction of those races (39) were challengers successful in knocking out incumbents. This staggeringly high re-election rate is a direct consequence of New York's system of legislative redistricting.
- **Finding #6:** As seen above, New York's redistricting practices make it incredibly

difficult for challengers to succeed. As a result of mapmakers' efforts to limit electoral competition, incumbents win – and win big. From the general elections in 2002 through 2008, over 65 percent of Senate winners won by more than 2 to 1 or greater. Nearly 75 percent of Assembly winners won by that margin or greater. Roughly 5 percent of races were close.

Recommendation: An independent redistricting commission is needed to create fair legislative districts in New York State and to ensure that the state's districts adhere to the principle of one person, one vote and that the primary goal of mapmakers is to reflect the interests of the general public – not the political parties and legislative incumbents.

¹ The term Gerrymandering was coined to refer to the efforts of Massachusetts Governor Elbridge Gerry to redraw the legislative district lines to benefit his party. The public outcry over his self-serving district line drawing led to his defeat at the polls the following year in 1812. See: [www.mass.gov/?pageID=mg2terminal&L=7&L0=Home&L1=State+Government&L2>About+Massachusetts&L3=Interactive+State+House&L4=History+Resources&L5=Governors+of+Massachusetts&L6=Commonwealth+of+Massachusetts+\(1780-1850\)&sid=massgov2&b=terminalcontent&f=interactive_statehouse_govs_gerry&csid=massgov2](http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=mg2terminal&L=7&L0=Home&L1=State+Government&L2>About+Massachusetts&L3=Interactive+State+House&L4=History+Resources&L5=Governors+of+Massachusetts&L6=Commonwealth+of+Massachusetts+(1780-1850)&sid=massgov2&b=terminalcontent&f=interactive_statehouse_govs_gerry&csid=massgov2)

The full report may be found at http://www.lwvny.org/advocacy/education/RedistrictingReform%20Paper_1010.pdf

(Written by Blair Horner and Bill Mahoney of the N.Y. Public Interest Research Group; Endorsed by: Citizens Union of the City of New York, Common Cause/NY, League of Women Voters/NYS, New York Public Interest Research Group, October, 2010)

NATURAL RESOURCES

In October the TCLWV was a co-sponsor of a forum organized by the group ROUSE on the Pennsylvania experience with regard to Slick-water Horizontal Hydraulic Fracturing for gas in shale. The forum focused on its effect on sports and recreation, in particular on the impact that has been experienced with regard to the forests and streams. A series of aerial pictures of the Allegheny Forest was particularly striking. It was clear from these pictures that even if air and water pollution can be eliminated, the serious degradation of the forests from the roads, pipelines and well pads is unavoidable. We are grateful to the speakers who shared their experiences and knowledge with us.

Our committee continues to meet regularly and would love to have more of you join us. If you are interested please contact Kay Wagner (539-3322, CMW18@cornell.edu).

Kay Wagner
Natural Resources

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Membership renewals have been coming in slowly, but there are still a number of people who have not renewed for this year. I would like to hear from you. If you have decided not to renew your membership, we would like to know why. The League is very active in Tompkins County and needs an active and committed membership to continue to do what we do. We need you, our members, to help us with our candidate forums, voter registration, and public meetings with interesting and informative speakers. All of these activities require an active, supportive membership.

To those of you who have renewed your membership for the year, a huge thank you. We would really like to expand our membership, so I am urging everyone to bring in a new member.

Talk to your friends, family, co-workers and let's see if we can increase the number of members in LWVTC by half – or, even better, let's double it.

The person who recruits the most new members will receive a package of our new, beautiful Acorn cards, currently being sold by our local League.

Deborah Levin
Membership

KNOW YOUR SCHOOLS

For several decades the League of Women Voters of Tompkins County (LWV-TC), in cooperation with local schools and community agencies, has published a *Know Your Schools: A Guide to Education in Tompkins County* booklet as a community service.

The purpose of the booklet is to provide an overview of education and a general description of the range of educational services, resources, and facilities available in Tompkins County. Although the focus is on K-12 education, some information on early childhood, special needs services, child care, parent groups, and community services have been added. Websites and a directory are also included to facilitate access to information.

The 2009-10 booklet is available to view or print at the LWVTC website (www.lwvtompkins.org) and will be updated at regular intervals. A special thank you to everyone who contributed information, to the board, and to Bob Silsbee, Linda Duttweiler, Florence Smith, Kathy Burlitch, Deborah O'Connor, Kay Sharp, Sally Grubb, and Deborah Levin for input on reviewing and editing. Special thanks to Michael Duttweiler, our webmaster.

Kathleen Yen
Secretary

HEALTH CARE REFORM LEGISLATION

Several members of the LWV-TC Health Care Committee attended the November 8th Health Planning Council Board meeting panel presentation, “*Health Care Reform Legislation: Impact in Tompkins County.*”

Dr. Rob Mackenzie, President and CEO of Cayuga Medical Center, provided a general overview of the new health care legislation and the timetable for implementation of key provisions. Mackenzie discussed the impact on hospitals and providers. Bev Chin, Access Coordinator for the Health Planning Council, talked about the impact of the new legislation on those currently uninsured and highlighted changes in dependent coverage, Medicare, and Medicaid, and new programs such as the NYS Bridge Plan. Lisa Holmes, Director of the Tompkins County Office for the Aging, talked about how the new legislation would impact

seniors (e.g. the Elder Justice Act, the CLASS program, Medicare Part D and “the donut hole”).

Some useful websites given at the end of the presentation included:

<http://www.healthcare.gov/>

<http://www.commonwealthfund.org/Health-Reform.aspx>

<http://www.healthcarereform.ny.gov/>

<http://healthreform.kff.org>

The Human Services Coalition of Tompkins County has posted the power point presentations and a list of useful websites on their site, www.hsctc.org

Next health care committee meeting:

Monday, Nov. 29, 2010, noon, at Kendal:
contact Rebecca Elgie (272-0621) for more information.

Kathleen Yen
Health Care Committee Member

LWV-TC CALENDAR — 2010-2011

(tentative programs in italics)

Nov 13 Sat	10:30 am	ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSIONS AND ACTION PLANS: State And Local Issues	Borg-Warner Room, TC Public Library
Dec 11 Sat	9:30 am	Board Meeting	Lipari
Jan 3 Mon	7:00 pm	Board Meeting	Old Jail
Jan 26 Wed	TBA	WHO DECIDES? THE CASE FOR REDISTRICTING REFORM: Barbara Bartoletti and Laura Bierman, NYS League	TC Public Library
Feb 7 Mon	7:00 pm	Board Meeting	Old Jail
<i>Feb 16 Wed</i>	<i>7:00 pm</i>	<i>WHAT DOES THE HEALTHCARE BILL MEAN FOR YOU?</i>	<i>TBA</i>
Mar 7 Mon	7:00 pm	Board Meeting	Old Jail
Mar 26 Sat	TBA	ELEANOR ROOSEVELT’S INFLUENCE ON TOMPKINS COUNTY	History Center
<i>Mar 26 Sat</i>	<i>12:00 pm</i>	<i>ANNUAL SOUP & BREAD MEETING: TBA</i>	<i>TBA</i>
Apr 4 Mon	7:00 pm	Board Meeting	Silsbee
May 2 Mon	7:00 pm	ANNUAL DINNER MEETING: NATURAL RESOURCES — THE ECONOMICS OF FRACKING	TBA

YOUR REPRESENTATIVES IN CONGRESS

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