



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY

JUNE/JULY 2010

PRESIDENT: KAY SHARP  
[lwvtompkins.org/](http://lwvtompkins.org/)

EDITOR: ROBERT SILSBEE 273-1436  
MEMBERSHIP: DEBBIE LEVIN 273-7746

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello. I know you weren't expecting a message from me so let me explain. On June 20th Bo Lipari, our newly elected president, resigned for personal reasons. The Board followed the League Bylaws to fill the vacancy. The vice presidents were approached in order of their rank to determine who would be willing to fill the vacancy. The 1st Vice President, Florence Smith, and the 2nd Vice President, Deborah Levin, declined to serve. I, as 3rd Vice President, accepted the President's position. The Nominating Committee will meet to select a new nominee for 3rd Vice President for Finances.

June, for me, is a time to look backward at our accomplishments and forward to our future goals. We have had a very active year: great programs, many voter service activities and national convention success as advocates for change.

You read in the April Newsletter a report by our Vice President for Programs. We had record attendance at several of our general meetings. I think this demonstrates that we are raising issues meaningful to the community. We want to keep doing this next year.

July 12th we are holding a Program Planning Meeting, which you are all invited to attend. We look forward to continuing our focus on health care and natural resources, but will consider expanding our range of topics. We might want to examine the issue of privatization, which was one raised by National League at the convention. Above all, we want programs that focus on timely issues,

ones that are meaningful to the community, state and nation.

In April the Directors for Voter Services indicated the growing call for the League to moderate candidate's meetings. I myself moderated Lansing Board of Education candidates' meeting. Lansing School District was pleased to have the League's presence. Our voter services are appreciated by our community. I hope you will all volunteer this summer for voter registration activities.

An activity that needs to be re-vitalized is our observer role at local government meetings. We want to increase the visibility of the League in local governance. The membership letter that you recently received solicited your willingness to be an observer at Board of Education, City Council and Board of Representatives meetings: I hope you will volunteer. Often there are local issues about which the Board wants to make a formal statement. We've done this in the past, but have been lax in the recent years. Let's get back on track.

We had amazing success at the National

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Convention. Kay Wagner and her NaturalResources Committee were able to get our resolution on Safe Drilling and Mining for Energy Resources passed. Rebecca Elgie and her Health Care Committee were successful in getting our resolution on Medicare for All passed. These two Committees and their chairs are commended for their time and energy examining these issues and advocating for our League's resolutions.

There are a few endeavors that we pursued in the past but have let go unattended. We want to increase our co-sponsoring of meetings and public forums with other organizations. We need to expand our membership. One way is to broaden our alliances with other interest groups. Another is fund-raising. We haven't done any since we stopped selling cards for UNICEF. We need more funding in order to meet our desires to expand our Students Inside Albany program and increase the number of League members able to attend State and National Conventions. I hope you will share with me and the Board ideas you may have for fundraising so we can start with a plan this Fall.

Well, I could go on, but I'm sure you've heard enough for now. Most importantly, we need to continue our efforts to make the League vital in Tompkins County. We need your time and energy this Fall for continuing current activities and initiating some new ones.

Have a great summer!

Kay Sharp, President

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### MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Dues renewal letters were mailed to all current League members on June 17. Our fiscal year begins on July 1, 2010, and we must report our membership figures to the national League (LWVUS) in a few months. It is very important that we receive your dues renewals as soon as possible.

As you can see from other committee reports in this Bulletin, our members have been very active on a number of fronts. Congratulations to Kay Wagner and Rebecca Elgie, our two delegates to the LWVUS Convention, for their success in helping to pass important resolutions on Safe Drilling and Mining and on Health Care. We cannot accomplish what we do without you, our members.

When you receive your renewal letter, please be sure to fill in the questionnaire on the back. If you can, I urge you to become an active member of a committee, or indicate your interest in helping in some other way.

As we gradually move to 21st Century communication, e-mail connection becomes essential, so do please give us your e-mail address. And to avoid the new \$10 charge for mail delivery of a hard-copy bulletin, you should opt for the e-mail delivery and give your preference for Word (.doc) or Acrobat (.pdf) versions of the electronic delivery.

Debbie Levin

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### MEETINGS

You have two opportunities to influence women's programs for the coming year: programs

The LWV-TC will have a program planning meeting at 7:00 PM on Monday, July 12 at the home of Flo Smith, 423 S. Geneva St., Ithaca. (273-6147, FloSmtih42@aol.com). All members are encouraged to come and contribute ideas for the coming year.

On June 30, 2010, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., the City Federation of Women's Organizations (CFWO) will hold its Annual Meeting (meeting open to the membership; delegates will vote on a proposal regarding the future structure and bylaws of the CFWO) at the Women's Community Building, 100 West Seneca Street, Ithaca, NY. For information – contact Sarah Johnson, 272-1247 or womens@lightlink.com.

## LWVUS 90TH ANNIVERSARY And We Were There !

There was a celebratory tone to the convention this year starting with a welcoming speech by Congressman John Lewis who suggested that the LWV needs to "keep getting in trouble" and needs to "keep its eyes on the prize." He described the struggles of the civil rights movement and the progress since then.

A key event at the convention was a panel of all the former living presidents of the LWVUS. They told wonderful, often amusing, stories and talked about the highlights of their presidencies. We were reminded of all the hard work the League had done on issues such as the Motor Voter Act, environmental legislation, ERA, Bottle Bill, etc., and the strong influence the League has had over the years and the respect it receives from people on all sides of the issues. Truly a group of very bright and impressive women.

Our Tompkins County League delegates were there as very active participants. A constant stream of visitors to both our gas drilling table and health care table (these were beside each other) occupied us and our helpers throughout the 5 days. Leaguers gathered much information from those at the tables and a lot of enthusiasm was generated for the caucuses. Unfortunately our caucuses were held at the same time on Saturday morning, but nonetheless each one drew over 120 participants and more went away because they could not find seats.

Kay did a superb job of representing our league, pulling her group together and organizing the table and caucus. The response to the subject was overwhelming. Their caucus Safe Drilling and Mining for Energy Resources was very well received. The speakers were excellent and their talks were followed by many comments and questions. The caucus began with a 15 minute segment of the movie Split Estate. This was followed by a discussion of Slick-Water Horizontal Hydraulic Fracturing (fracking) for

gas, given by Joyce Hale from Arkansas. Stephanie Huss from Colorado then spoke about mountain top removal mining for coal and showed pictures, including one of her grandmother's house in West Virginia. Next Linda Phillips from Santa Barbara spoke about onshore and offshore drilling for oil. Last but not least, Roberta Winters from Pennsylvania spoke about her League's experience with fracking and the one year study plus consensus that they did.

Rebecca and her group ran two excellent health care caucuses and were an enthusiastic presence throughout the convention — all of them in red or black "Improved Medicare for All" T-shirts. In the first caucus Dr. Robert Stone, an ER doctor and league member from Indiana spoke of Improved Medicare for All — We're Not There Yet. He outlined the problems with our current system, described the new health care bill and pointed out both its positive points and where it falls short. He suggested how an Improved Medicare for All bill would solve so many of our current problems and provide universal health care.

In a second caucus Sunday morning, entitled Spreading the Health Care Message, Rebecca spoke as part of a panel about the brochure prepared by the health care committee and the work they have done locally, as well as some of the state and national activities they have been involved with. A doctor from California spoke about the continuing work being done there on getting a Single Payer state bill passed. A third member and League health care specialist, who has been working with the state plan in Pennsylvania for Single Payer, spoke about the movement of their Single Payer bill through the senate and assembly. It was a sharing of ideas of what Leagues can do in their communities.

Throughout convention we worked on navigating the resolution process. It is fairly new and it became clear that the convention organizers were still working out the details of the process. We attended two meetings about

making resolutions, conferred with each other throughout, and in the end it worked out well. Kay did an outstanding job of presenting the resolution and answering questions on the resolution for Safe Drilling and Mining for Energy Resources (to lobby for the strengthening of regulation, oversight, inspection and penalties for these activities). Rebecca and her group did another superb job for the resolution Improved Medicare for All. In the end both resolutions passed – the gas drilling passed by unanimous consent, with very little discussion.

Many important decisions were made in defining the future program of the LWV-US including:

**Studies:**

Delegates adopted a very ambitious program for the coming two years. The first is a study of the Federal Role in Public Education, focusing on the policymaking, and issues of funding, common standards and governance among all levels of government. A second study concerns Privatization, the policy agenda to transfer government function, services and assets to the private sector.

**Concurrences:**

The convention adopted a Concurrence on Marriage Equality to be added to the Equality of Opportunity position as well as a modification of the national position on selection of the president to include support of the use of the National Popular Vote Compact.

**Resolutions:**

Resolutions were approved to lift travel restrictions for Americans going to Cuba, to lobby for safe drilling and mining for energy resources, to urge a change in the rules in the Senate to limit its use of the filibuster, to add Transparency to the principles Security, Accuracy, Recountability, and Accessibility contained in the resolution of 2009 on voting, to lobby for legislation for improved Medicare for All, and an emergency resolution to hold

accountable those responsible for the recent oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

After MUCH discussion the delegates voted to adopt a PMP of \$29.70 for 2010-2011 and \$30.00 for 2011-2012 despite serious opposition and suggestions that we need to study how the organization is financed. The main argument for the increased PMP centered around the fact that we adopted two studies, which would leave a shortfall in funds even though a collection from the delegates of about \$3,000 to support the second study raised roughly 1/3 of the needed money.

There were many excellent workshops sponsored by individual Leagues and the national League. They are listed on line, with many of the handouts available to download. There were too many to begin to cover them all. Unfortunately both Kay and Rebecca were pretty busy tabling and attending meetings necessary for our resolution work and were not able to attend very many of them. We did manage to have some meals out and a chance to meet with members of other leagues and network.

Robert Cooney was the banquet speaker on Monday evening. He presented a very interesting history of the Suffrage movement and the role of the League in winning the vote for women. This was based on his new book Winning The Vote, The Triumph of the American Woman Suffrage Movement.

Kathleen Sebelius, US Secretary of Health and Human Services, addressed the convention on Tuesday morning. She stressed the need for non-partisan reasoned debate in a time of uncivil and misinformed debate. She talked about the health care bill and the importance of the provisions for women and seniors. She said that it was a “giant step” toward health care for all, but that it is a work in progress, with still a lot of work to do to transform the health care delivery system and reduce the disparities. She

also thanked the League for its strong support during the past year.

Elizabeth MacNamara, incoming president, presented the closing remarks. Although there is a busy job ahead, delegates left feeling that the League of Women Voters was trying to respond to the issues of our time and saw this as our hope for the future as we move into the next decade. Rebecca and Kay want to thank you, members of the TC League, for your support in sending them and for your input and help in preparing for this convention.

Rebecca Elgie, Kay Wagner

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## ANNUAL MEETING

Our local League formal activities for 2009-2010 concluded on Monday, May 10 with the annual dinner meeting attended by over 40 members.

Highlighting the business meeting was a report from high school student Andrew Dunn of his visit to Albany under the auspices of the Students Inside Albany program, sponsored jointly by the State and local Leagues. If you were not at the meeting, the interview appearing

below will serve to give a taste of Andrew's personal description of his experience as given at the meeting. Hearing directly from Andrew, both through his presentation and the discussion afterwards, increased our appreciation of the value of this program supported by the League.

We quickly completed essential League business: election of new officers (see the Board Membership box for the list of the new Board), approval of the budget and of the program for 2010-2011; and turned to the main event of the evening, a panel discussion under the title Two Views of the Future: Energy Alternatives for Tompkins County. Facing the issues of future energy demands but desirous of maintaining the special character of this area, should we accept the inevitability of exploitation of gas reserves in the safest way possible or deny that inevitability and put our energies into developing alternative energy strategies and new perspectives on the relative importance of competing values. Brief presentations by each of our panelists, Katy Payne, a conservation biologist at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Dr. Francis Vanek, a civil engineer at Cornell specializing in alternative energy; Dr. Jason Hamilton, an Ithaca College and New Roots School leader in sustainability; and Martha Robertson, Chair of the Tompkins County Legislature, were followed by an extended open discussion which had to be called to a halt for lack of time, not for lack of interest.

Bob Silsbee

### LWV-TC CALENDAR—2010-2011

<b>5:30</b>	<b>Wed</b>	<b>June 30</b>	<b>CITY FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS: ANNUAL MEETING — FUTURE STRUCTURE</b>	<b>Women's Community Bldg.</b>
<b>7:00</b>	<b>Mon</b>	<b>July 12</b>	<b>PROGRAM PLANNING MEETING</b>	<b>Flo Smith</b>
<b>7:00</b>	<b>Mon</b>	<b>Aug 23</b>	<b>Board Meeting</b>	<b>Kay Sharp</b>

**STUDENTS INSIDE ALBANY**  
**A Tompkins County Teen's Inside**  
**View of the Capital**

Andrew Dunn, a senior at Charles O. Dickerson High School in Trumansburg, recently returned from *Students Inside Albany*, a four day conference at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Albany. Dunn was chosen to represent Tompkins County in the statewide forum, hosted each spring by the New York State League of Women Voters and funded by local Leagues. In his application essay Dunn wrote that he was interested in attending SIA to get a more indepth look at politics. Read on to see if he was able to achieve this!

**Q. Albany has been in somewhat of a turmoil recently. Was this evident to you students during your time in the Capital District?**

A. Yes and no. With the budget it was definitely a busy time of year. When we sat in on the Assembly I noticed that the Republicans were trying to gain more influence and the Democrats were definitely not receptive to this because right now they have the majority vote. Also the Republicans were saying that the Democrats were making the budget behind closed doors and not including the Republicans in their decisions and that they should remember that bipartisanship means inclusion.

The day we visited the Senate was a Tuesday which I guess is usually a pretty quiet day. They do what's called a "Resolution Calendar"; for example one resolution was to make April 15th a "Safe Stop" day. They also commended a high school basketball team for their success and thanked a Common Council for hosting a benefit.

**Q. As part of the SIA program you attended some lectures related to government and politics. What were your favorites?**

A. I really liked the talk by Robert Freeman who is the Executive Director of the NYS Committee on Open Government. He was an interesting speaker and really knowledgeable. He advises

people about how to use the Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) which deals with citizen's rights to access to government records and the Open Meetings Law to their advantage to keep Boards (Town, School etc...) from holding meetings that should be public behind closed doors. He explained that "closed door" meetings can only legally occur at very specific times, which is not something everyone knows.

The Media Panel lecture was really good too. There were panel members from the Times Union newspaper, Newsday, a public access TV program, and a blogger. They talked about the effect of media on politics and the role of a journalist in the political scene. They also told us about breaking stories, confidential sources, and the power that journalism still has.

The other thing that was interesting was when they talked about the influence that the Internet has and how it often doesn't have the journalistic integrity of newspapers because newspapers and reporters still check their sources and try to be as accurate as possible while blogs are often just someone's opinion.

**Q. You also took a tour of the Capital. What did you see?**

A. Our tour guide focused mostly on the history and the architecture of the Capital Building. We did see the Senate and Assembly Chambers and the "Million Dollar Staircase". It goes up multiple levels in the middle building and is made of this expensive red Scottish sandstone and has all of these intricate carvings on it.

**Q. The League of Women Voters sponsors this conference each year. Did you know anything about the League beforehand and did your impressions change after the conference?**

A. I didn't really know anything about the League except for what I heard from Ray (the student who went last year). What I learned about them at the conference was that they're non-partisan; they don't support any political parties. They do in-depth studies to decide what they stand for and then they lobby for lots of

different causes. I think their positions seem to be sound ones.

The League was founded to help women get education and to have the right to vote. Today one of the things they're working on that I agree with is extending elected officials political terms so that politicians can focus on issues while they're in office not just on getting reelected.

**Q. You also shadowed your county representatives-Senator George Winner (R) and Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton (D). What did you learn from them?**

A. I liked both of them and thought they both knew a lot about their jobs and what was going on in the areas they cover. They each have staff members who help them read the local news to find things that might be of interest to them and I saw Lifton reading an article on hydrofracking which is a big deal in Tompkins County. I got to watch Senator Winner record a clip about some of his views for a local new station and Assemblywoman Lifton showed me around the "back rooms" of the chambers. They're both smart and good at their jobs. I think I would vote for both of them (Dunn recently turned 18).

**Q. Were their jobs what you had expected?**

A. The Senate was, Things were more formal there and they seemed more businesslike. The other students and I were all surprised about how laid back the Assembly members were. They were doing all sorts of other things like eating and talking about movies they were going to see while there was a debate going on down on the floor.

**Q. How do you think your generation can change things in Albany?**

A. Well, the most important thing I learned was that politicians are real people. Before the conference I had the idea in my head that they weren't approachable and that things like writing letters wouldn't make a difference to them one way or another. But now I see that politicians do meet with people and they do read the letters and emails they get and listen to

phone calls. Politicians pay attention to local news and they seem to care about what people in their districts want. So we need to be willing to approach politicians so they can hear what we have to say.

Through the Media Panel, I realized that the Internet is more important than ever because this generation is more comfortable using technology. With media technology we can keep up with current news easily and be more informed from a variety of sources in a very short time. We just need to make sure that the information we get is accurate. And, we really need to think about things critically and not just accept them as true.

**Q. You'll be heading off to college next fall. Will your intended major mesh with your interest in politics?**

A. I think so. I never wanted to be a politician and I still don't! I would like to have a research job studying the effects that the citizens have on politics through things like voter trends and the decision making process that people use when they're deciding who to vote for. So I'd be on the outside evaluating and then I'd convey my results to the general public.

**Q. How about your personal life and politics?**

A. From this conference and from the AP Government classes that I've taken, I always knew that I'd be active in politics on a local level by voting and making sure my voice gets heard at meetings if there's something happening that I really care about.

**Q. Would you encourage other students to apply for the *Students Inside Albany* program next year?**

A. I would. Some of it was a slight review of the AP Government class that I'm in but the extra lectures and the shadowing made a big difference. The other people I met were excellent. My roommate was from Long Island and he's going to Cornell so I may see him again. There were lots of kids from the cities (NYC, Albany, and Rochester) and their view of Albany is really different from mine because of

the wealth, the location, and the population density of their communities. And-everyone there liked to talk about politics which was great!

This article originally appeared in Ithaca Parent and Teen-Summer 2010.

Sue Henninger

We believe that creation of an independent redistricting commission must be a top priority for those interested in reform. We expect to take a leading role in educating the public about this critical issue. The process began on February 9, when over 60 people from 9 local Leagues and other organizations attended the Forum on Redistricting held at the Rockefeller Institute. Videos from the Forum are now available on the Rockefeller Institute website at [www.rockinst.org/forumsandevents/](http://www.rockinst.org/forumsandevents/). You can also get a DVD of the event by e-mailing or calling the League office. Expect to hear from us soon about more collaborative educational efforts with our good government partners, including easy to use educational materials that will be available to local leagues. We would like local leagues to schedule an educational meeting

## UPDATE ON REDISTRICTING REFORM

Currently in New York, the political parties in the majority draw the lines for their respective houses. In other words, legislators chose their voters not the other way around. The only check on this system is the possibility that the Governor could use his veto power to force changes.

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

LWV NYS website

LWV US website

LWV-Tompkins County

leave message at

273-1436

[www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org)

[www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)

[lwvtc@twcny.rr.com](mailto:lwvtc@twcny.rr.com)

[lwvtompkins.org/](http://lwvtompkins.org/)

#### Officers

President

Kay Sharp

272-4748

[kshepherdqueen@yahoo.com](mailto:kshepherdqueen@yahoo.com)

V.P. — Program

Florence Smith

273-6147

[FloSmith42@aol.com](mailto:FloSmith42@aol.com)

V.P. — Membership

Debbie Levin

273-7746

[dlevin01@twcny.rr.com](mailto:dlevin01@twcny.rr.com)

Secretary

Kathleen Yen

257-8199

[kyen@twcny.rr.com](mailto:kyen@twcny.rr.com)

Treasurer

Susanne Lipari

387-9308

[sel3@cornell.edu](mailto:sel3@cornell.edu)

#### Directors:

Bulletin

Robert Silsbee

273-1436

[rhs1@cornell.edu](mailto:rhs1@cornell.edu)

Director-at-large

Libby deProse

257-6678

[deprose@lightlink.com](mailto:deprose@lightlink.com)

Publications/Public Relations

Kathy Burlitch

539-7316

[klburlitch@frontiernet.net](mailto:klburlitch@frontiernet.net)

Web

Linda Duttweiler

277-0006

[ldutt@twcny.rr.com](mailto:ldutt@twcny.rr.com)

Co-Voter Services

Susanne Lipari

387-9308

[sel3@cornell.edu](mailto:sel3@cornell.edu)

Co-Voter Services

Sally Grubb

257-6017

[sally.grubb@gmail.com](mailto:sally.grubb@gmail.com)

Immediate Past President

Marnie Johnson

257-2948

#### Off-Board Members:

Webmaster

Michael Duttweiler

277-0006

[mduttweiler@twcny.rr.com](mailto:mduttweiler@twcny.rr.com)

Health Care—Chair

Rebecca Elgie

272-0621

[healthylink@earthlink.net](mailto:healthylink@earthlink.net)

Natural Resources—Chair

Kay Wagner

539-3322

[cwm18@cornell.edu](mailto:cwm18@cornell.edu)

NYS Consolidation —Chair

Alene Wyatt

257-1894

[alene@lightlink.com](mailto:alene@lightlink.com)

on redistricting as early as possible in the fall to utilize the forthcoming materials.

On the immediate horizon, the League supports a legislative solution that would immediately create an independent redistricting commission in time for the drawing of Congressional and legislative lines in 2011. The leading bill to do this is sponsored by Senator Valesky in the Senate, S1614-A and Assemblyman Gianaris in the Assembly, A5279-A.

The bill calls for a nominations committee to select 15 Democrats, 15 Republicans and 10 people who are registered with neither party. An 8 person reapportionment commission would be chosen from this pool and those 8 people would support 3 more members, one of whom would be the chair. The 8 members of the nominations committee would be appointed by the presiding judge of the Court of Appeals, the attorney general, the state comptroller, the governor, the temporary president of the senate, the speaker of the assembly, the minority leader of the senate, and the minority leader of the assembly.

from LWV-NYS

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## FALL 2010 DEBATES

We are very happy to inform the local Leagues that LWVNYS has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the NYS Association of Public Broadcasting Stations to partner in broadcasting debates for the elections for statewide office this fall. The stations, at a minimum, intend to provide live, statewide coverage of the debates for the office of NYS Governor and our two Senate races. If we can bring the candidates to the table for the other offices, or for interesting primaries, the stations have stated their intention to carry them, live or re-broadcast. This is tremendous news! Now we have to get the candidates to agree. Stay tuned!

from LWV-NYS

## ALBANY ON THE RECORD Report to the LWVTC Board

Marnie Johnson, Deborah Levin, Dorothy Rinaldo, and Kathleen Yen attended the May 5, 2010 “Albany on the Record” event that was held in Albany, New York.

The “Albany on the Record” event, the first project of Reinvent Albany, was co-sponsored with the LWV-NYS Education Fund and other open government advocates, the Foundation, the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law, NYPIRG, Common Cause/New York, and Citizens Union of the City of New York.

John Kaehny (Reinvent Albany) gave the introductory remarks and introduced the speakers: Assembly Member Sheldon Silver (Speaker, NYS Assembly), Senator John Sampson (Leader of the Democratic Conference), Assembly Member Brian Kolb (Minority Leader), Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli (Teleconference from NYC), Senator Dean Skelos (Minority Leader), and Governor David A. Paterson. Jay Gallagher, former bureau chief of Gannett News Services was the moderator for the Q & A session that followed each speakers’ presentation. Issues addressed included ethics, campaign finance reform, public financing of campaigns, rules reform, lobbying, special interest spending, redistricting, transparency and accountability.

The following representatives from open government groups also made short presentations on various issues.

Barbara Bartoletti (LWVNYS, [www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org)) – Member items

Susan Lerner (Common Cause, [www.commoncause.org](http://www.commoncause.org)) – Campaign Finance Reform

Larry Norden (Brennan Center for Justice, [www.brennancenter.org](http://www.brennancenter.org)) – Ethics

Dick Dadey (Citizen Union, [www.citizenunion.org](http://www.citizenunion.org)) – Redistricting

Blair Horner (NYPIRG) – Lobbying

Kathleen Yen

## 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](http://gillibrand.senate.gov)

Charles E. Schumer US Senate, 313 Hart Senate Building, Washington, DC 20510  
202-224-6542; Binghamton Office: 607-772-6792  
e-mail: [senator@schumer.senate.gov](mailto:senator@schumer.senate.gov) web-site: [schumer.senate.gov](http://schumer.senate.gov)

## REPRESENTATIVES;

Michael Arcuri 327 Cannon House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515-3224  
202-225-3665; Cortland Office: 607-756-2470  
e-mail: send from web-site web-site: [arcuri.house.gov](http://arcuri.house.gov)

Maurice Hinchey 2431 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515  
202-225-6335; Ithaca Office: 607-273-1388; 123 S. Cayuga St. #201  
e-mail: [mhinchey@mail.house.gov](mailto:mhinchey@mail.house.gov) web-site: [www.house.gov/hinchey](http://www.house.gov/hinchey)

League of Women Voters of Tompkins County  
410 Savage Farm Drive  
Ithaca, NY 14850