



Utica/Rome Voter



Issue 40; December 2011 – January 2012

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters, Utica/Rome Metro Area

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GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING



- WHEN:** **Saturday, January 21st, 10am**
(Registration begins 9:30am)
- WHERE:** **Dorothy Smith Advocacy Center – RCIL**
1607 Genesee Street, Utica
(corner of Scott St., formerly Temple Beth El)
 (THIS LOCATION IS FULLY ACCESSIBLE)
- TOPIC:** **Getting to Know the League – what you thought you knew and what you need to know!**
- SPEAKER:** **Board Members & League Members (You!)**
- COST:** **\$12 per member, \$15 per non-member**
Phone Trudy for breakfast reservations (733-6244) or e-mail: trewck@roadrunner.com by **Tues., Jan. 17th**

NOTE: Please cancel your reservation within 48 hours of the event, or payment will be billed.

CO-PRESIDENTS' CORNER

This is the time of year to gratefully acknowledge the wonderful work that our members have accomplished during the past year. Take a look at the voter services report to get some idea of the good work that has been done. It is also a time to note that the coming year will undoubtedly be even busier.

We have been learning much from our experienced members and would really like to know so much more. Our board is very receptive to hearing from all our members about what keeps them loyal League members and what else would they like to see from our local League. These questions are critical to our organization if we are to grow and thrive in the coming years. Please come and express yourselves at our January meeting.

We are also going to try to do more in the way of preplanning some of our known events. One way you can contribute to our League work is to sign on early to help at one of the naturalization ceremonies when we register new citizens. The schedule is in the newsletter. Karen McBride would welcome an early commitment and she would then plan on giving you a reminder call if you work one of the ceremonies. They are inspiring, as anyone who has assisted people to register will tell you.

There are so many things we would like to do if we have everybody's support. Students Inside Albany, educational forums, legislative visits and more. We hope your interest is piqued and we see you at the general meeting.

-- Dianne DiMeo and Lorrie Wasielewski

INVITATION TO LWVNYS LOBBY DAY

All members are invited to join us in Albany to learn about the League's positions, tour the capitol, watch the Assembly or Senate in action, and possibly meet some key legislative staffers on January 18th. For more information, see the Issues and Action page on the website. Lorrie Wasielewski is going and if you want a ride please call her at 736-7425.



GET INVOLVED!



- ✓ Shirley Hilts-Adams is interested in organizing a lecture series through SUNY-IT's Mohawk Valley Institute for Learning in Retirement (MVIL-R) on the **History of Voting in the United States**. She is very interested in hearing from league members about helping to plan 4 to 8 sessions, each 70 minutes long. She needs to hear from both curriculum writers and members interested in presenting during the lecture series. She is hoping to have the course agenda complete and ready for submission in May, 2012. If you are interested in being a part of the excellent project, please email Shirley at shadams10@roadrunner.com.
- ✓ **Website and Newsletter**– if you have announcements, articles, ideas or other material of interest to league members, please submit these to Sharen Barboza at sharenb@gmail.com.
- ✓ For our members near and around the Rome area – **Rome Chamber of Commerce** regularly hosts "Business After Hours" which are meet and greet events. For the latest information, and to make reservations, call the Rome Area Chamber of Commerce at 337-1700, Fax 337-1715 or E-mail (info@romechamber.com). All Business After Hours, unless otherwise noted: \$5.00 members, \$10.00 not-yet-members.
- ✓ **Youth programs** need your help. Contact Donna Gillette at donnagillette72@yahoo.com
- ✓ See the following page for upcoming **Naturalization Ceremonies** and call to become involved today!

Naturalization Ceremonies

Participating in voter registration at Naturalization Ceremonies is one of the great joys of being a LWV member. It is a moving experience. If you are interested in being a part of this wonderful process, please contact Karen McBride (724-2359) or Barbara Brookes (853-2723). Dates, times and locations for upcoming ceremonies are:

Oneida County Sponsored –Oneida County Office Building (10th Flr. Legislative Chambers)
800 Park Ave., Utica, NY;

All are Fridays – Ceremony Starts at 10:30 a.m. [Be there by 10:00 a.m.]
February 17th, April 20th, September 21st, November 2nd

Federally Sponsored –Alexander Pirnie Federal Building (Courtroom)
10 Broad St., Utica, NY;

All are Thursdays – Ceremony Starts at 11 a.m. [Be there by 10:30 a.m.]
March 23rd, May 10th, June 21st, July 26th, December 6th

Additional ceremony at Fort Stanwix in Rome – Starts at 11 a.m. [Be there by 10:30 a.m.]
September 13th

ANOTHER VIEW ON REDISTRICTING

Arizona's independent Redistricting Commission, created in 2000, is not without controversy. The Commission, made up of two Republican members, two Democratic members, and an independent chairwoman, found itself under attack at recent public hearings. Even before the lines were redrawn, conservative politicians, as well as the Arizona Attorney General, questioned whether the commission was proceeding in an unbiased manner. Because of past discrimination against Latinos, Arizona is one of 16 states required to submit its redrawn lines to the Justice Department. Its last three redistricting plans have been rejected by the federal government for failing to protect the voting rights of ethnic minorities. (NY Times, Sept.4, 2011)

Republican lawmakers called for a special election to restore the legislature's right to draw political lines and urged the governor to remove the chair of the commission. In November 2011, Governor Jan Brewer did just that, removing Commission Chair, Colleen Mathis, from office. Her impeachment came just days before a 30 day comment period was set to expire, and before the new maps could be adopted. (USA Today, Nov. 4, 2011)

Unlike Arizona, which will add a seat, New York State will be losing two congressional seats due to population changes in the 2010 census. The New York State Legislature is still divided on the issue of an independent redistricting commission. "Reshape New York: The Campaign for Fair and Independent Redistricting," in September 2011, called for a special legislative session on redistricting reform. Common Cause has pulled away from this group, stating that LATFOR, the legislative task force on redistricting, has been holding hearings since the summer, and the best way to proceed now is to monitor that task force. (Albany Times-Union, Sept. 21, 2011, online)

-- Elizabeth Patengill

VOTER SERVICES – SUMMARY FROM OUR ANNUAL SURVEY

Each year, we are asked to submit a survey to the state league describing our voter services events over the course of the year. Below are highlights from that report.

Our League conducted two candidate forums/debates: a pre-special election/pre-primary candidate forum (9/8/11) for the 116th Assembly District seat and a debate for the City of Utica Mayor's seat (10/27/11). We partnered with Mohawk Valley Community College (MVCC), the Resource Center for Independent Living (RCIL), and the American Association of University Women (AAUW) for the pre-special election debate. We partnered with AAUW and RCIL when staging the Mayor of Utica debate. The moderator for the 9/7/11 debate was a Professor at MVCC, who was a former League member.

The moderator for the 10/27/11 debate was our League's past Co-President and long-time moderator Carole Torok-Huxtable. [RCIL provided interpreters for the deaf at these events.] It was estimated that over 200 people attended these events.

The event on September 8th was announced via articles in The Daily Sentinel of Rome, NY, The Clinton Courier, and The Observer-Dispatch. Also an article, along with photos about the 9/8/11, debate appeared the day after in The Observer-Dispatch and in The Daily Sentinel. The October 27th debate was covered by the print, radio, and TV media. Our League was interviewed on Radio station WUTQ (95.5 FM) the day of the debate, to promote attendance that evening and to relate what the League is all about. That radio station also taped the debate for airing (in its entirety) the next morning on its station. Radio Station WIBX (950 AM) announced the debate several times in its news breaks the day of the event, and simulcast it on their station that evening.

Our League conducted a total of eight voter registration drives. These drives were held at the Chancellor Park in downtown Utica on "Utica Monday Night" July 11th; on March 23rd with Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency in a public forum; on May 14th with the Neighborhood Investment Association at their barbeque; for a Women's Group meeting in Vernon on the ERA and other issues in August; at the Oneida County Public Market one Saturday in August; at the "Great American Irish Festival" in late August; and in September at both Mohawk Valley Community College and Utica College. All told, we registered approximately **70** voters.

Since January 20011, our League has been present at nine naturalization ceremonies (both federal and county sponsored), and registered a total of approximately **101** new citizens to vote. We have an invitation from Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees to take part in some of the classes they conduct which help one prepare for U.S. citizenship.

-- Karen McBride & Barbara Brookes for Voter Services Committee



In Memory...

Lee Kreinheder died on Nov. 8, 2011 at the age of 102. She was the first 50 year member of our League Chapter and she was very active in the League. I first met her when she did a candidates' meeting for the Clinton School Board in the late 60's. I was very impressed with her presence as she fairly acknowledged each candidate and made sure that each had a turn to air his views but would not let him monopolize the discussion. How non-partisan she could be. I learned much. Lee was always gracious but always let you know what she thought. She was always active both politically and with her own interests. I know she played Whist and Croquet with the same fairness and intensity which she used to promote political fairness. She was a great lady.

-- Iby Chiquoine

MEMBERSHIP MINUTE

We're happy to welcome new member, Elaine Altamuro. Elaine comes from a family who has been involved in Utica politics for many years and has held various positions in local government. She has been interested in politics and local government as long as she can remember and looks forward to her involvement with our league. She has interests that match up with many league areas of interest but especially mentioned the environment and candidate nights.

-- Meg Pfeiffer, Membership Chair

BREAKFAST MEETING SUMMARY – NOVEMBER 19, 2011

Amanda Drake was the speaker for the breakfast. (A summary of her talk can be found later in this newsletter.)

Other Business: Lorrie and Dianne discussed the need for a Youth Services Committee to help with recruiting for Students Inside Albany, as well as helping to attract students to voting and government issues. Donna Gillette has offered to serve as "point person" for this committee, but other volunteers are needed.

501c3 Status: Lucille made a motion for our league to proceed with an application for 501c3 status as a non-profit organization. This would allow access to state grants for education programs, but might limit our action on lobbying on other issues. Dianne stated that there are costs involved for this application: \$75 plus attorney fees. Discussion followed, with members questioning whether there was a quorum present, and whether members had been given enough notice. A vote was taken and the decision was almost unanimous: to table this motion until our next meeting, and give advance notice in our newsletter.

Voter Services: Our candidates' forum for Utica Mayor on October 27 was well attended. Karen called for volunteers to sign up for the next naturalization ceremony on December 1 at the federal building. Dates for 2012 ceremonies will appear in next issue of the "Voter."

Hydrofracking: Lorrie announced that the NYS-LWV would like to hear comments from our league on hydrofracking.

Future meetings: Dianne announced that RoAnn Destito was been approved by the state as speaker for a future LWV meeting (either January or March 2012).

Other issues: Lorrie mentioned an upcoming "webinar" meeting on voting issues, to include absentee ballots and voter participation. Sharen needs help with technology for the web page. Mary Anthony plans to give an update on sewer issues in a future LWV newsletter or meeting.

--E. Pattengill for B. Brookes, Secretary

UPDATE 4: Permit Compliance and Abatement Project

In November Oneida County and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation announced that the request for extension of time for making repairs in the Sauquoit Creek area as agreed to in the Consent Decree had been granted. The new deadline for completion of the repairs is December 31, 2021. The deadline in the original agreement was October 31, 2014.

Application for the time extension was submitted last year. The extension was requested after studies and examination of the sewer system revealed the extent of the repairs needed to correct the overflow of raw sewerage into the Mohawk River. In granting the extension, DEC commended the County for its diligence and hard work in meeting its obligations under the Consent Decree. A major problem right from the beginning was identifying the causes of the overflow and locating the problem areas. The necessary inspections and investigations to determine trouble spots are largely completed. Almost all manholes have been inspected and 50 miles of sanitary sewer lines televised and viewed. An up to date map of the system is largely completed. The county has worked carefully with all the municipalities and is developing a system whereby it will have more complete information on the condition and operation of each locality's operation.

Now that the extent of the problem is largely known it has been possible to estimate the total cost. The current estimate is \$183 million dollars. This is a huge amount – especially for this area. The County has received a \$25.8 million dollar NYSEFC (New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation) funding package. It is being administered by the county's Department of Water Quality and Pollution Control headed by Steve Devan. USDA Rural Development funds can also be applied for by the individual municipalities. However, at present this program is underfunded so that applications will have a 2-3 year wait. A \$1.05 "sewer rehabilitation surcharge " has been placed on water users account in the Sauquoit Creek Pumping Station area – i.e. those localities included in the terms of the Consent Decree. The charge is based on per 1,000 gallons of water used per account. Work is moving ahead on establishing a Capacity, Management, Operation, and Maintenance (CMOM) program which will include all districts in the County. Once established these procedures and standards will enable Oneida county to standardize each municipalities sewer operations and

procedure. It is seen as preventative in that such procedures and programs should ensure that such a massive rehab effort will never be necessary again.

The big problem of private I/I (inflow and infiltration of storm water into the sanitary sewer system by private home owners) is a big problem and yet to be tackled. Largely, it has been determined that this storm water is from down spouts of roof runoff and illegal sump pumps dumping the water into the sewer system. It is going to be expensive for many individual home owners to finance changes in how they handle their storm water problem. The committee has been looking at a variety of concerns: home inspection, financial help for homeowners, provision of rain barrels, etc. The time extension gives the County and the affected municipalities needed time to make all the repairs and changes needed as well as seek other sources of funding.

The League should continue to monitor these Steering Committee meetings. At present they are only being held periodically as opposed to monthly for the first 2 years. The Paige Group, the County and the Steering Committee have been very helpful and welcoming to the League delegate. I have copies of most of the reports each Steering Committee member gets as well as the official summaries of each meeting.

If you are interested in seeing and reading them please call me at 797-7508. The County's water Quality and Pollution Control department maintains a great web site. It's: www.ocgov.net/oneida/wpc

-- Mary Anthony, Metro LWV

STUDENTS INSIDE ALBANY

At the November 19th Breakfast Meeting, Amanda Drake spoke about her experience at the 2010, LWV sponsored, Students Inside Albany program. Some of the highlights included "shadowing" of her representatives, Assemblyman Mark Butler and Senator James Seward; attending sessions on politics and the media, voting and lobbying; and meeting Barbara Bartoletti and other NYS-LWV members. Amanda answered questions from the audience about her lobbying role (on hydrofracking) and future plans for college. She was also asked for advice on how to get students more involved in government affairs.



Amanda was accompanied by her mother and her teacher, Janet Garza, of the Mount Markham schools. Janet Garza teaches classes in American government, where students are required to attend local government meetings and participate in community service projects.

Following this event, Ms. Garza sent the following email to the Board:

"I want to thank the League of Women Voters for inviting me to your brunch today. I felt so welcome, and I'm sure Amanda and Mrs. Drake felt the same. We appreciate so much what you

do to educate our high school students about the wonderful opportunities we have in the United States to take part in choosing our leaders, and how we need to take advantage of these opportunities. Thank you so much!

-- Janet Garza"

FOR MEMBERS THOUGHT AND INPUT

In recent months, the Board of the Utica/Rome Metro LWV has been discussing the possibility of forming a 501c-3 corporation. We are very interested in hearing from our members any thoughts or questions they may have about this process. Lucille Argenzia, Board Member, has created the following list to help us make informed decisions about this process:

- 1) This corporation will be a tax-deductible fund-raising entity for the Utica-Rome Metro league
- 2) The will allow the League to provide information brochures for voting purposes
- 3) Educational material for naturalization events
- 4) Instructional/educational type programs for membership
- 5) The program must have bylaws, which will define the duties of the Board of Directors, officers and various committees
- 6) A 501c-3 allows access to state and federal grants for materials such as the educational brochures need to voter education and events such as Student Inside Albany
- 7) This entity will allow approaching large and small businesses and other tax exempt corporations, foundations and/or endowments for funding
- 8) This entity will have its own set of officers, however, it is suggested that the bylaws contain verbiage to determine how many League officers will be the 501c-3 Corporation's officers, etc. That part of the document must be created with the help of the Research Committee and the LWV Board, as it is part of the documentation to be forwarded to the Secretary of State
- 9) This Corporation can provide many different avenues of soliciting funds for any event the League sponsors, except for those that our prohibited by law.
- 10) This corporation in and of its name, may not and shall not:
 - a. Lobby for the passage of laws (i.e., local, county, state, or national)
 - b. Endorse a candidate running for any public office regardless of location
 - c. Participate in any type of public demonstration which strives to affect and/or effect the method of doing business of any public issue/venue
 - d. Give a corporation opinion on legal or political matters

We hope to discuss this issue at upcoming membership meetings. In the meantime, if you have questions for Lucille or the board about this, or any, issue, please send an email with your questions to boardofdirectors@lwvuticarome.org. Thank you!

BOARD MEETING SUMMARY – NOVEMBER 5, 2011

Present: D. DiMeo, L. Wasielewski, K. McBride, M. Pfeiffer, C. Torok-Huxtable, S. VanMarter, N. Agen, L. Argenzia; Excused: A. Sotendahl, B. Brooks, S. Barboza, L. Pattengill, S. Hilts-Adams

Meeting called to order at 10:20.

Minutes: Oct. 1, 2011 Due to lack of quorum, minutes were not adopted. They will be held for the next board meeting. It was recommended, however, that the minutes reflect members who are excused from attending.

Treasurer's Report - Financial report distributed, in Audrey's absence.

- Special Accounts/Other - status of LWVNYSEF grant. There is \$177.50 to be

expensed. Once this is done, the remaining is ours to use. It was decided to continue to keep these funds displayed separately and to be used for educational purposes.

- Outstanding Dues – per the membership roster, there are still several members with dues outstanding. Those members will be followed up with, explaining that their dues have already been paid to national and state.

Membership Report – Meg Pfeiffer

- Update on membership initiative – Maggie Moehringer scheduled to attend next board meeting.

- Currently have 57 names on roster. Several members' dues have not yet been paid. Will need to follow-up with them.

Voter Services Report -- Karen McBride

- Candidates Forum - Utica Mayoral was covered by WTQR & WIBX radio. Discussion on those attendees who had signed the attendance sheet. Karen will keep it for now. We need to come up with a database to keep people who give us their e-mails informed of our activities.
- Rome Forum 10/19 - Lucille made sure that the league had a presence at the Rome Mayoral forum, sponsored by BPW & Rome Chamber. Discussion on putting together a brochure to have for such events.
- Voter Registration - Discussion on students' who are from out of state and/or wish to vote in their home community. A laptop may be useful for the next Utica College registration so 911 can be accessed for out of state registrants.
- Naturalization Ceremonies - held at MVCC on 11/4. Next one is 12/1. Karen will get volunteers to help out at the Nov. 19 general membership meeting. For future sessions, a calendar will be distributed for members to sign-up for, to avoid last minute "scrambling" for volunteers.
- Board of Elections request - Dianne to contact Board of Election Commissioners after the election to invite to attend a meeting.

Old Business

- Bylaws - posting on website/provide to historian. Lorrie to contact Donna Rubin to make sure she has hard copy of by-laws.
- Information on establishing 501 (c) 3, tax exempt status update - Lucille distributed a memo outlining the status of this effort. A

vote will need to be made and recorded at the general membership meeting to proceed with exploration of a 501(c)3. Discussion about the overall purpose of the foundation, along with specific projects that funding will be used for.

- Board orientation - to be rescheduled
- Hydrofracking - comment period on GEIS. Comments due to Sharen Barboza by
- Connections with Refugee Center - Carole had spoken to Azira from the refugee center regarding incorporating LWV members into the citizenship classes they provide. Carole to provide contact information for follow-up.

New Business

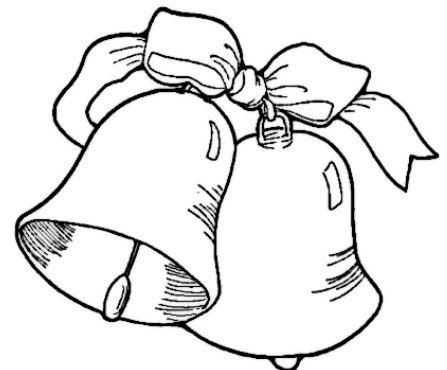
- Programs: Nov. Student Inside Albany from last year. Focus to be on youth initiatives for our league.
- Jan or March: Commissioner Destito to speak (waiting to hear which month fits her schedule)
- Invite Board of Elections Commissioners
- Youth Committee - need to establish committee, chairperson. Students Inside Albany recruitment to be complete by Feb. 1.
- National LWV Update - Lorrie distributed information on proposed termination of Federal Election Assistance Commission, which LWVUS opposes. Discussion also occurred regarding consensus studies and how we decide which ones to engage in.
- Policies for local league - Lorrie to put together a list of policies that we should develop.

Next Board Meeting: December 3, 2011 Corasanti Room


--E. Pattengill for B. Brookes, Secretary



Happy Holidays



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OUR SPONSORS!**

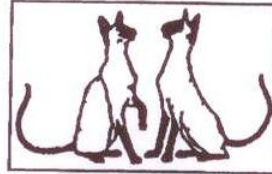


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