

LWV of Albany County

May 2009

Educate

Participate

Advocate



Annual Dinner Meeting Tuesday, May 26th

Normanside Country Club, Delmar
Salisbury Rd (off Delaware Ave, West of Delaware Plaza)

5:30 Social (Cash Bar)

6:00 Business Meeting

6:30 Dinner

7:30 Speaker

Dinner Cost : \$25 (payable at door)

Please make your reservations with Gael Vecchio at 459-9958 no later than Tuesday, May 19th.

Choice of Entree: Roasted Vegetable Napoleon W/Brown Rice, Pork Chop w/Rosemary & Fennel
or Herb-crusted Salmon

Choice of Dessert: Chocolate Truffle Torte or Vanilla Sundae with Fudge Caramel

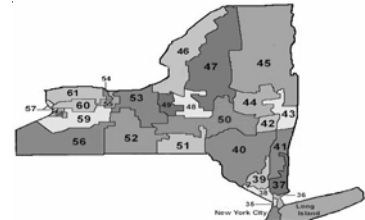
And, Hear about New York State Redistricting

Speakers:

Blair Horner, Legislative Director, NYPIRG

and

Roman Hedges, NYS Assembly



Roman Hedges directed the redistricting process in the Assembly for the past twenty years and is a member of the Legislative Advisory Task Force on Demographic Research and Reapportionment. He has published numerous articles on topics ranging from political participation to the Voting Rights Act and public policy. For more than 15 years he served as the Deputy Secretary of the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means, where he managed the legislative operations of the Committee, supervised the Committee staff, and participated in negotiations on behalf of the Assembly. He currently works on special projects for the Assembly. Mr. Hedges is also a Board Member of the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York. He was an Associate Professor of Political Science and Policy at the Rockefeller College, SUNY at Albany, prior to joining the Assembly staff. He

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League of Women Voters of Albany County

Website: www.lwvalbany.org Email: lwwac@crisny.org

Lori Keegan-Brady and Maggie Moehringer, Co-Presidents

Carol Webster (439-1491) and Martha Kennedy (439-4559), Membership Co-Chairs

Laura Ladd Bierman, Newsletter Editor



From the Co-Presidents

It's hard to believe that our League year is ending and that it's time for our Annual Meeting and Dinner, May 26 at Normanside County Club. It's a wonderful time to catch up with your League friends and make some new ones (sounds like a camp song!). We have a stimulating program

planned. Blair Horner of NYPIRG and Roman Hedges of the NYS Assembly are going to present differing views of the apportionment process to us in preparation for our weighing in on the coming redistricting, following the 2010 census. Read more about this and the League's position in this bulletin. We also will be honoring two of our long-standing members – Joanne Esposito and Marggie Skinner – who have been an inspiration to us all over the years. We hope to see you there!

Well, our time has come to say good-bye and thank you. It has been a privilege - and actually a lot of fun - for us to preside over such a wonderful group. We've sincerely enjoyed working with the wonderful League members on our board and committees, and welcoming many new members. Our involvement has been a great experience for us, and we encourage you to get involved also - join a committee, participate in a study group, work at a candidate debate, write an article for the bulletin, register voters...make soup! Leaguers are intelligent, committed women and men who know how to get things done.

We want to especially thank the Board of Directors, both our on-board members and the off-board members and committee chair persons, who do so much hard work to keep our League functioning and to serve both our members and the public. Your tireless contributions make the Albany County League an active and dynamic organization that benefits the entire League and our community.

Many of our terrific board members are staying on in new roles, and we are welcoming some new faces. We're thrilled that Ann Brandon (not a new face, and not new to the presidency) will be taking the helm. It's shaping up to be a great coming year, with the excitement of local elections and the possibility of a new state study. We wish the new board our best; we know that the League of Women Votes of Albany County is in good hands.

See you at the Annual Meeting!

Yours in League,
Maggie Moehringer and Lori Keegan-Brady
Co-Presidents

New Members
Jean Daniels - Albany
Tim Truscott - Albany
Welcome!

p.s. If you have not paid your dues...it's time!!!

Support LWVNYS Silent Auction and Big League Raffle

A weekend in Martha's Vineyard, a week in Oxford, England, tickets to a Yankees game, wine, beautiful art items, and more - are all included in this year's Silent Auction at Convention. These items will also be offered on-line and long-distance bids will be taken. Go to the state League website, www.lwvny.org, for descriptions of all the items and instructions on how to bid! You don't need to be present to bid or win - so join along!

And, of course, what would convention be without The Big League Raffle? This is a major state League fundraiser and the last one before the end of the fiscal year. You all should have received raffle tickets in the mail. Additional tickets are available by calling the state League office at 465-4162. Both the state League and the local League benefit from this fundraiser, so please sell those tickets!

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan citizen organization that promotes the informed and active participation of citizens in government, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Any person of voting age, male or female, may become a League member.

This newsletter is published by the League of Women Voters of Albany County, 12 Coventry Road, Glenmont, New York 12077 and mailed to League members. The frequency of publication is as follows: one mid-summer issue followed by nine monthly issues from September to May.

League in Profile

Joanne Esposito

Where has the time gone? I joined the Guilderland Unit of the LWV thirty five years ago in 1974 / 75. There were 4 units then, three met one morning a month, in Guilderland, Colonie & Bethlehem; the fourth was a Unit in Albany, which met in the evening. Those were the days when many women were at home with their children and the daytime units conveniently provided sitters. I had been searching for a way to volunteer and found that I could be intellectually challenged also. It was a terrific way to learn something new about our world: local, national & international.

Each month we had speakers on a topic or, more likely, it was our own league members reporting from a study committee in which they had researched, discussed and teased out all pertinent information on that topic to educate themselves, first, and then the rest of our league. I loved learning all about the various topics & problems and so admired the women who wrestled with these important issues and actually did something about changing the world in which we live.

Fellow leaguers were bright, interested, interesting, well read and versed in so many areas from the environment, education, poverty, water, government at all levels and the politics around it all. They were supportive, engaging and energizing. I was impressed & inspired by them.

I quickly got involved by being a unit leader, a study committee member, a presenter and then, the natural progression onto the LVWAC Board. Over the years, I worked in many positions on that Board: Membership, Program VP, President, Development. In each position, I developed many new skill sets. Opportunities to challenge yourself to try new things and then, actually accomplish them, provided incredible confidence building. You learned you could do almost anything and do it extremely well.

Besides being involved in issues for our local league, I lobbied the state legislature for judicial reform for a number of years. I did fundraising for the state league. I headed a national League project for NYS to promote Fair Campaigning. I wrote a Curriculum for high school Participation in Government Classes on Hunger & Poverty in the US that was picked up and distributed by Newsweek Magazine's Education Program. I hosted 4 groups of foreign women through national LWV projects to help them develop skills to change policies in their countries for themselves and their families.

There is so much to recall, more than I can list. The League gave me an outlet, a means to put my talents to good use for our community and the skills League helped me develop & perfect have allowed me to be an asset to other organizations and Boards. What I can say simply is that my life was a very interesting, very full life because of all the league activities and because of all the dear friends I have made through the League.

I am proud of all the accomplishments of our League. I truly felt a part of a continuum of wonderful women working to change policies for the better in our country. But mostly, as I look back, I am grateful for the gift League has been in my life.

Marggie Skinner

It all began in the early 70's when I found myself at home with three preschoolers and the need for some adult conversation. Newcomers' Club social gatherings and bridge parties weren't satisfying my need to do something relevant. In addition, Albany's neanderthal political scene presented an interesting challenge. Somehow I spotted a notice about a League of Women Voters meeting and, luckily for me, I was available. As I recall, they even offered daytime meetings with day care, and I was hooked.

I found myself surrounded by women who were not willing to accept the status quo because "It's always been done this way." They were also willing and able to take action to change things whether it was the mysterious school board in Albany that consisted of three men who had been appointed by the mayor-for-life and who didn't even live in Albany, or the County government that was run by a county attorney who answered to no one. The League of Women Voters of Albany County studied both of these situations and decided that there had to be significant changes in the law to make things better. We formed coalitions with other organizations, led petition drives, lobbied and even went to court, and things were changed.

State and federal issues also intrigued me, especially public assistance and the welfare system in the 1970's. On both the state and national level, the League supported changes in the laws to increase grants for welfare recipients, to increase food stamp and rent allotments, and to improve the process for applying and qualifying for this assistance. Unfortunately, we were not always successful at the legislative level, but a few of us with time and energy formed a local group of advocates who worked with the Legal Aid Society to help folks find their way through the maze of rules and regulations until they qualified for benefits, even representing them at "fair hearings" when all else failed.

As time went on, I decided that I needed a shorter answer to the question, "What do you do?" Explaining all of this League and advocacy activity took just too long, so I returned to school for a degree in Accounting and entered the work force full time for a few years. Then I picked up a tennis racket during a long weekend and added tennis to my resume. A few years later, I walked into a book store and stretched the resume a little further. But through all the years, I have maintained my league membership and a strong interest in working on the issues on the league's agenda. A couple of years ago it was my privilege to increase my level of commitment again and serve as copresident with Audrey Kibrick and a wonderful board of directors. Of course, handing the torch over to Maggie Moehringer and Lori Keegan-Brady last year felt pretty good too.

My adult life, my life in Albany, has coincided with my life in the League of Women Voters and I wouldn't trade a minute of it. Most rewarding of all has been meeting and becoming friends with the fantastic people with whom I have worked from the very beginning. My best and most interesting friends in Albany are people that I have met through the League of Women Voters and I am thrilled each time I attend a League meeting and see familiar faces as well as meet someone new whose League experience is just beginning.

Redistricting: Study Up!

In preparation for our annual meeting topic – apportionment and redistricting – we would encourage all League members to become familiar with the League’s position on apportionment.

FROM IMPACT ON ISSUES IN NEW YORK STATE APPORTIONMENT

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that congressional districts and government legislative bodies should be apportioned substantially on population. The League is convinced that this standard, established by the Supreme Court, should be maintained and that the U.S. Constitution should not be amended to allow for consideration of factors other than population in apportionment. Statement of Position on Apportionment, as announced by the National Board, January 1966 and Revised March 1982.

(LWVUS *Impact on Issues, 2006-2008, p. 14*)

The apportionment of election districts was a state issue until the 1962 and 1964 Supreme Court rulings, requiring that both houses of state legislatures must be apportioned substantially on population transferred the issue to the national arena. These rulings, which spelled out the basic constitutional right to equal representation, prompted introduction in Congress of constitutional amendments and laws to subvert the Supreme Court’s 1954 one-person, one-vote decision. Leagues in 33 states already had positions on the issue when, in 1965, the LWVUS council adopted a study on apportionment. By January 1966, the League had reached national member agreement on a position that both houses of state legislatures must be apportioned substantially on population. The 1972 convention extended the position to cover all voting districts.

In New York, provisions of the state constitution for allocating representation to the people and areas of the state were already being challenged in the federal courts when delegates to the 1963 LWVNYS convention added Apportionment to the program. By January 1965 the League Membership had agreed on standards for establishing legislative districts and announced the following position:

APPORTIONMENT

Statement of Position

As announced by the State Board, January 1965

The League of Women Voters of New York State supports the following standards for establishing legislative districts that conform to federal constitutional requirements for equality:

- 1) Districts should follow existing political subdivisional boundaries, especially county lines, as far as practicable. Counties are recognizable political units that define some communities of interest. As a unit of party organization, they also affect representation through their function in nominating candidates.*
- 2) Districts should be of contiguous territory with the smallest perimeter possible. Compactness limits opportunities for gerrymandering within political subdivisions, particularly cities.*
- 3) The constitution should prescribe the limits within which the size of the legislature can vary at each redistricting. The size should be flexible enough to allow the other standards to be used in conjunction with population equity.*
- 4) Each Senate and Assembly district should be represented by one legislator with a single vote. Single member districts improve the quality of representation by fixing responsibility. Weighted voting is opposed because it distorts representation.*
- 5) Districts should be based on current census statistics.*
- 6) Districting standards should be established in the state constitution.*

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Redistricting

An extra year of study found Leagues unable to agree on what governmental institution should draw the lines; i.e., the legislature, a commission, the governor, etc. Consensus was reached, however, in two additional areas regarding the procedures for redistricting:

APPORTIONMENT

Statement of Position

As announced by the State Board, 1966

The constitution should provide for an alternative districting procedure if the responsible agency fails to draw the lines within the limits specified. Whoever is responsible for districting should utilize an impartial commission for drawing the lines.

Since 1966 the League has worked for adoption of a constitutional amendment to set specified, permanent guidelines for the redistricting process. In 1979, the League as a leading member of the Committee for Fair Representation developed an expanded list of guidelines for redistricting. These guidelines are as follows:

Guidelines for Redistricting 1979

The League's redistricting guidelines are based on four principles - equal population, contiguity, integrity of existing political sub-divisions (to the extent possible) and, finally, geographic compactness. Adherence to the guidelines in their prescribed order would inhibit the temptation to indulge in the practice of equal population gerrymandering.

1. Population Equality - In compliance with the U.S. Supreme court's "one man-one-vote" requirement, population must be apportioned equally among districts. Deviations from this ideal were sharply limited by the Supreme Court in the case of congressional districts; however, the court found deviations of 10% or less in the "overall range" to be acceptable for legislative districts if based on legitimate state policy. The Court found maintaining the integrity of political subdivisions such a policy.
2. Contiguity - Districts should be of contiguous territory with the smallest perimeter possible. They should consist of land parcels adjacent to one another. Areas divided by water should not be included in the same district unless connected by means of a bridge or tunnel with both termini in the district. This provision assures that the land parcels in a district have some physical relationship to each other. No city block shall be sub-divided, since a city block is the smallest parcel for which census data are available.
3. Integrity of political subdivisions - The guidelines are designed to minimize the fractionalization of political subdivisions where fragmentation is necessary to comply with the equal population requirement. Maintaining counties, towns, cities and villages intact, is an important element of redistricting because these subdivisions have reasonably permanent boundaries which are more unlikely to be tampered with for political advantage i.e. gerrymandering, and their populations often have commonality of interests that merit representation by the same member of congress or legislator. Political party machinery is structured along county, town and city lines and its functioning is impaired when these units are periodically divided and recombined. The following guidelines delineate which counties, cities and towns should be divided first when choices must be made and in what manner. These particular provisions limit discretion and the opportunity for manipulation. The most heavily populated units are divided more easily to obtain population equality and can be expected to retain significant political power even when apportioned to two or more districts:
 - a. The number of counties, towns, and cities divided among more than one district shall be as small as possible. If these subdivisions must be divided, they shall be divided among as few districts as possible.
 - b. Counties that are more populous shall be subdivided in preference to less populous counties. Within counties that are divided among districts, more populous cities and towns shall be divided in preference to less populous cities and towns.

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Redistricting

c. In dividing a county, city or town, as populous as possible a portion of such county, city or town shall be placed in a district or districts wholly within that subdivision and only as small as possible a portion of the subdivision's population shall be separated from the rest.

d. Within towns that are divided among districts, no village shall be divided unless necessary to meet equal population requirements.

e. Within cities that are divided into wards or similar subdivisions, whose boundaries have remained substantially unaltered for 15 years, the number of such wards or subdivisions divided into more than one district shall be as small as possible.

4. Compactness - Compactness is achieved by comparing the aggregate length of all the district lines in the plan with those of any other proposed plan, which complies as well with the other guidelines. Districts will not be exactly regular in shape because of the requirements for population equality, for preserving counties, etc. But the compactness rule will prevent the arbitrary pushing of a particular boundary line a few blocks in one direction or another to achieve political advantage.

In 2001, the legislature was charged with redistricting state legislative and Congressional districts. The League testified at all The Task Force on Demographic research and reapportionment hearings statewide. In all testimony we stressed the need for ensuring a process that better allows for citizen input and for legislative districts that give all voters a fair and equal voice in our representative democracy. We also lobbied in the legislature for a nonpartisan commission to draw the lines based on the League's criteria; however, because this is the most partisan process undertaken by the legislature and determines the districts in which the legislators will run for the next decade, this was indeed a heavy lift. In the end not even members of the Task Force had input into the process, as it was done entirely by the majority leadership in each house.

The League continues to advocate for the following to insure that all voters have a fair and equal voice in our representative democracy:

1. A "Transparent" Process - Allow the public to participate in the redistricting process.
2. A non-partisan redistricting system for drawing lines - The League believes that lines should be drawn by a non-partisan advisory commission and then submitted to the legislature for their vote. We believe that the NYS Constitution would permit such a body to be appointed to oversee the process. The League looked to other states for examples and found that Iowa has utilized such a plan since 1980 and Arizona has recently adopted this method. Lines should be drawn by utilizing the criteria previously outlined. The use of incumbent's home addresses or the party affiliation of voters should not be factors in this process.

Competitive elections are the lifeblood of democracy. Only through the clash of ideas can voters intelligently understand complex public policies and think through the implications of policy alternatives. Competitive elections stimulate voter interest in elections and increase voter turnout. Historically, New York's redistricting process has been extremely partisan, done to maintain incumbency protection. The Democrats in the State Assembly and the Republicans in the State Senate each control the district lines in their respective houses. Both houses agree to the other's plans and the legislation is then sent to the Governor for his signature. By using techniques like "packing," whereby lines are drawn to concentrate many supporters of political opponents into a few districts, and "cracking," whereby opponents' supporters are split among several districts, they dramatically increase their party's chances of incumbency for the next decade. These "designer districts" literally allow for legislators to choose the voters before the voters have a chance to choose them.

In all of its 80+ years of history, the League has stood for fair and equitable representation for the people of our state. We believe that the overriding concern in drawing new districts is to assure that all New York resident are assured of fair representation in Congress and the Legislature. The League believes it imperative that our guidelines and process be applied so that people, not parties, are protected.

Fair Campaign Practices Committee for the Capital District

The Fair Campaign Practices Committee of the Capital District is looking for a “few, good people” who would be willing to serve on a hearing panel to investigate charges of unfair campaign practices made by candidates during the election cycle in the fall of 2009.

The FCPC is a joint project of the Leagues of the Capital District and the Interfaith Alliance and has been in existence for the last eight years. Each year declared candidates are invited to sign a pledge to abide by certain codes of conduct during their campaigns. If candidates do not abide by these principles, they can be charged by their opponent with a violation of the code. Only candidates can bring a complaint for a hearing. A hearing is convened with representatives of the two sponsoring organizations as the Hearing Panel and both sides present their claims. Following the hearing, the panel deliberates and renders its decision within 24 hours to the press and candidates.

A 2 hr. training in the spring or fall is all that is required. The training schedule will be announced soon, but individual training can also be arranged.

Based on the concept of a jury by one's peers, this is a short term contribution you can make to achieving better quality campaigns for the Capital District. In 2007 eleven hearings were held in the region, and in 2008, seven hearings on thirteen filed complaints were held. Each hearing panel is selected from volunteers in the communities who reside outside of the district/county from which the complaint originates. A location is selected for the hearing which is central for the four counties.

In mid-summer a schedule for hearings (usually Saturdays) is prepared so that if a complaint is made, a panel is available. At that time panel members are given the options of signing up for hearings on a specific date leading up to the election (if complaints are made). We need a significant pool of people available at the ready if a case comes up suddenly. There is no requirement for League membership to participate. In fact, it would be desirable to have broader representation from the community on the hearing panels, so if you have suggestions for possible members, please let me know. Personally, I have sat on several of the hearings and found it to be a very rewarding experience. Please consider and give me a call for more information. Aimee Allaud, board of directors, Fair Campaign Practices Committee 482-2617, 85aimee@nycap.rr.com

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Redistricting Speakers Roman Hedges and Blair Horner

taught graduate and undergraduate courses in public policy, research methodology, and New York state and American government and politics. He has served as an expert witness in litigation in both state and federal courts. He received his PhD in political science from the University of Rochester.

Blair Horner is legislative director for the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), a non-partisan, research and advocacy organization. In his nearly 30 years of work with NYPIRG, he has overseen community organizing activities and directed statewide issue campaigns. He has lobbied on a wide range of issues, including energy policy, political reform, government openness and accountability, tobacco control, health care and financial services. He has written scores of reports examining issues including campaign financing practices, political ethics, bank fees, auto insurance, health care, tobacco use, lead poisoning and higher education funding.

From 2007 through early 2008, Horner was a Special Advisor on Policy and Public Integrity to the New York State Attorney General. Among his responsibilities was the creation of the “Project Sunlight” website (www.sunlightny.com), which allows New Yorkers to simultaneously search governmental databases – campaign contributions, lobbying, contracts, legislation, among others.

Horner's comments have been widely reported by the media. He has been interviewed on the Today show, World News Tonight, on A&E's Investigative Reports, and profiled in the New York Times. His opinion pieces have been published in the Buffalo News, New York Daily News, Newsday and other New York dailies. He is a regularly commentator on WAMC public radio and its affiliates.

Horner's received numerous awards, including awards from AARP, Common Cause, the League of Women Voters and the New York City Asthma Partnership. In Fall of 1999, Empire State Reports magazine named Horner as one of the 25 most influential New Yorkers in the previous 25 years.

Update on the City of Albany Gun Violence Task Force

Aimee Allaud

In the summer of 2007, the Albany County League supported the creation of a city Task Force to research the causes of gun violence which had dramatically increased in the City in recent years and to recommend solutions. League support for this approach was based on our LWVUS position of 1994 which called for *....the public and private development and coordination of programs that emphasize the primary prevention of violence, the active role of government and social institutions in preventing violent behavior, and the allocation of public monies in Government programs to prevent violence.* (Impact on Issues, A guide to Public Policy Positions)

A Task Force of thirteen individuals with various expertise and interest was appointed by the Albany Common Council (seven) and the Mayor (six) and met bi-weekly in the fall 2007 and in 2008 until December 2008. Meetings were held in public locations and throughout the city. Several public forums were held. An interim report was issued in April 2008 and the Task Force issued a list of sixteen recommendations in November (see list in this bulletin) which was followed by its full documented report of its research in January 2009.

What Happens Next with the Recommendations? The Report called for an implementation committee. Who will serve on the Committee has been under discussion by the Mayor and Common Council members. A recent result of negotiations calls for three mayoral appointees, three Council appointees, one school district representative, one DA representative, one Albany Police Department representative.

It is expected that there will be some funding for some of the recommended programs through the NYS budget and through federal stimulus funding. A Community Coalition to Prevent Violence is also working on grassroots initiatives to reduce gun violence. This coalition organized after the fatal shooting of 15 year old Shaheed Oliver in Arbor Hill in September 2007. Their efforts and membership have extended also to Albany's South End. Councilperson Barbara Smith, 4th Ward, is one of the founders and has led efforts to obtain state and federal funding for a hospital-based violence prevention program, and direct intervention programs. A parallel effort, the Inner City Youth and Family Coalition, is looking at what programs exist for youth in the city by inventorying their scope, availability, content, and relating that to census tract data. They meet bi-weekly, as does the Violence Prevention Coalition and their meetings are public. Some facts for you to ponder: 41% of Albany students live in poverty, 28% of Albany families live in poverty, and less than 50% of Albany students who enter high school graduate.

City of Albany Gun Violence Task Force Recommendations

1. The City should form an Implementation Coalition that is charged with the further development of the Gun Violence Task Force recommendations.
2. The City should actively support community violence prevention by publishing a resource directory, coordinating efforts of existing community leaders (including neighborhood associations), and hiring a community-wide anti-violence coordinator.
3. The City should take the lead in applying to violence prevention the same multi-agency collaborative model used for New York State's Operation Impact.
4. The City should establish a working relationship with the Albany County Health Department.
5. The Common Council should pass two resolutions: Bill of Rights for Children and Resolutions on Parental Responsibilities.
6. The City should establish an advisory council that would serve purposes of public education and community liaison. The council should include representatives of the community, Common Council, Albany Police Department and District Attorney's Office.
7. The City should work with the Albany City School District on the implementation of classroom curricula that are designed to reduce violence and which are delivered to all the students in a school or grade.
8. The City should work with the Albany County Department of Health and other service providers to maximize the reach of the public health nursing program.
9. The City should form a Crisis Team that is formally organized and trained, ready to be deployed in the community.
10. The City should continue to work with Albany Medical Center to establish a hospital-based violence-prevention program.
11. The City should adapt and implement a Cease Fire-Chicago program model.
12. The City should explore the implementation of a focused deterrence initiative.
13. The City should expand gang prevention programming.
14. The City, in conjunction with the Albany City School District, should explore the development of additional forms of alternative education.
15. The City should develop and implement parent training programs.
16. The City should take creative steps to put currently unused physical resources into service for community purposes.

November 7, 2008

For full report and further information:

<http://www.albanyny.org/Government/CityOfficials/CommonCouncil/GunViolenceTaskForce.aspx>



The United States Must Take Aggressive Action To Cut Its Greenhouse Gas Emissions To Stabilize Earth's Climate

Reprinted from LWVUS (http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Global_Climate_Change)

The evidence is clear that human-induced climate change is underway.

The emission of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gases—primarily by the burning of fossil fuels—has increased the blanket of heat-trapping gases in Earth's atmosphere. Global temperatures have risen approximately 0.8°C (1.4°F) above pre-industrial levels, and this small increase is already causing significant adverse effects. These effects—documented by the world's leading climate scientists and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)—include rising sea levels, intensified storms, higher global temperatures, and severe droughts and floods that are already having adverse impacts on human health, food supplies, and ecosystems, as well as national economies.

The United States has made a commitment to stabilize the climate.

The United States Senate ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992, joining over 180 nations in a commitment to “stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.”

Prompt action is required to slow the build-up of greenhouse gases.

According to the IPCC, global emissions must peak and begin declining *before 2015*. There is strong scientific consensus that warming of more than 2°C (3.6°F) above pre-industrial levels will lead to irreversible damage to our planet. The pre-industrial concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere, expressed as CO₂-eq (CO₂ and other greenhouse gases and aerosols), was 280 parts per million (ppm). It was 375 ppm in 2005 and is increasing each year. We must start now to limit CO₂-eq below 450 ppm, adjusting the target periodically as necessary, to reflect our understanding of the rapidly evolving science of climate change. Eventual stabilization at even lower concentrations of CO₂-eq may be necessary.

The United States must adopt an aggressive trajectory for reducing its emissions.

The United States must stop the “Business as Usual” emissions of greenhouse gases and impose aggressive emission reductions starting in 2010. We support adoption by the U.S. of a firm, verifiable cap that reduces emissions at least 25% below 1990 levels by 2020 and 80-95% below 1990 levels by 2050. Even with these aggressive reductions in the U.S., the global decrease in emissions may lag, as shown in the graphic, resulting in dangerous warming. Furthermore, part of the emitted CO₂ remains and accumulates in the atmosphere; thus, the atmospheric concentration will continue to increase until the global rate of removal exceeds the rate of release.

We have the capacity, responsibility and economic imperative to lead this effort internationally.

The U.S. has met great challenges before—such as World War II and space exploration. Since we are responsible for much of the increase in atmospheric greenhouse gases, we need to accept responsibility for being the leader in solving the global climate challenge. Our efforts will transform our way of life by creating a new clean-energy economy and will allow the U.S. to maintain its technological leadership.

Join & Make a Difference -- Membership 2008-2009

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____ Individual Membership \$50/year
 Household Membership \$75/year

City: _____ Zip: _____ Student Membership \$15/year
 Contribution in support of my

Email: _____ local League
 Please send me more information

Mail to:

League of Women Voters of Albany County PO Box 611 Slingerlands, NY 12159
 Or Contact: Carol Webster (439-1491)

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League Calendar

<u>WHEN</u>	<u>WHAT</u>	<u>WHERE</u>	<u>MORE INFO</u>
May 5, 6:00 pm	Board Meeting	Presbyterian Church, Delmar	
May 15-17	LWVNYS Convention	Syracuse	
May 26	Annual Meeting	Normanside Country Club	see page 1
	Redistricting: B. Horner and R. Hedges	Delmar	