



League of Women Voters of Albany County

Summer 2009

Educate

Participate

Advocate

TOUR THE GOVERNOR'S MANSION



Discover the changes Michelle Paterson has made toward
"Greening the Mansion"

And enjoy an Optional Lunch after the Tour

WHEN: Tour begins at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, September 10

WHERE: Meet at the Governor's Mansion.

Parking Available at the State Museum Lot or the Cathedral Lot, both on Madison.

Drop-Off only at Mansion

COST: The Tour is Free.

Lunch will Cost in the \$10 to \$15 Range

R.S.V.P.: Call Betsey Swan at 426-3711 or E-Mail betsey@lwvny.org

BY AUGUST 27th (no one will be allowed after this date)

Please Indicate whether you Wish to have Lunch after the Tour.

Space is Limited and will be Filled on a First-Come First-Served Basis.

Dues are now OVERDUE!

If there is a red dot on your mailing label, you have not paid your dues
and this is YOUR LAST BULLETIN!!!

Send your dues payment NOW to:

LWV of Albany County

PO Box 611

Slingerlands, NY 12159

League of Women Voters of Albany County

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

Ann Brandon, President

Carol Webster (439-1491) and Martha Kissinger (439-6833), Membership Co-Chairs

Laura Ladd Bierman, Newsletter Editor



From the President

Welcome to a new League year for LWV of Albany County. Your board already has been working to put together some amazing programs for the coming year. With so many issues in this complex world of ours, and so many League priorities, it is difficult to focus on the most important. But I think Leaguers are interested in making a better world at all levels - local, state, and national. And that is what you will find with our programs.

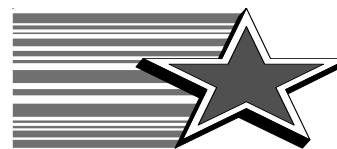
Voter Service continues to be a major focus of League work, and we need many of you to help out with the ambitious program that Mary Ann Lettau is planning for the fall. There is something for everyone - helping with a candidates debate (a one-night commitment), monitoring materials in a League box at your local library (a weekly or bi-weekly commitment), registering voters at a local event, or taking a shift in supervising the Albany Housing Authority election on October 13th. Please read Mary Ann's article and contact her about how you can help. Training will be provided for anything you don't understand. Voter Service is what the League is known for, and is a wonderful way to spread the word about our organization.

Please note the opportunity for touring the Governor's Mansion that Betsey Swan has planned. This should be a fascinating day with optional lunch. Make your reservation now, as we are inviting all area Leagues and there is limited space. What a great way to kick off the new year!

Here is the "downer" in my letter. Some of our members have not renewed their membership (boo-hoo) and if you are one, there is a red dot on your address label. That means this will be YOUR LAST NEWSLETTER! We hate to lose a single member. Please renew now to help us keep the great work of the League moving forward. (Dues are \$50; \$15 for students. Mail to LWV of Albany County, P.O. Box 611, Slingerlands, NY 12159. If you have a question about whether you paid, check with Don Kennedy, 439-4559, or dkennedy2@nycap.rr.com.)

I am excited and honored to once again have the opportunity to be president of the Albany County League, and look forward to seeing many of you at our coming events. We will have much more information about upcoming programs in the early September newsletter.

Ann Brandon, President



National Popular Vote Study

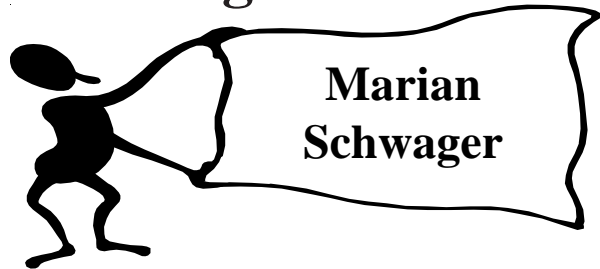
*What happened with the National Popular
Vote Study?*

On page 5 are the national results of our NPV study this past year. The bottom line is that there was no consensus. There were many criticisms of the consensus questions and suggestions of ways to improve the process. Watch in next month's Bulletin for a description of the League's consensus process by the national president, Mary Wilson. This process is often confusing and gives all of us a chance to review it.

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



The path to my joining the Albany County League of Women Voters followed a well-known route— I was recruited by Ann Brandon!!! I had known about the League for many years because I periodically received information from the League's Education Foundation and was a regular contributor. And, at work (I'd been in state government for more than 30 years) I was very impressed by a young, bright co-worker who'd joined the League in order to participate in its successful advocacy efforts to remove legal sanction for the state's death penalty provision.

Movement toward actually joining the League and becoming an active member was, however, a plan that I'd thought about but I never had the "oomph" to put thought into action until Ann invited me a few years ago to a morning "coffee" for new members.

When I arrived I was pleasantly surprised to see some faces of folks whom I'd either known or had heard of. And, I wasn't the only newcomer. Over coffee and pastries I was able to hear from these existing members what role the League played in their lives. I saw these women as intelligent, thoughtful, kind and welcoming and all deeply committed to a purpose I'd been taught to value, civic participation. Although Ann is a person with considerable powers of persuasion, none was needed. I joined the League that morning and since then have found it to be a very well run, inclusive and thought-provoking organization. My sole regret is that I didn't join sooner.

Save the Date

Fall Potluck Dinner
Tuesday, Sept. 22, 5:30 pm
St. Sophia's Church

Voter Service - Get Ready for the Fall Elections



Mary Ann Lettau

VOTER SERVICE is out of the gate, heading for the fall election season. This year's races may be "just local" in scope but they are of great importance and interest, on the primary and general election levels. Some great opportunities have come our way. Maggie and I met with the Spotlight News staff to discuss how we might collaborate on some candidate events in the communities they serve: Guilderland, Colonie, New Scotland and Bethlehem. Three or four events are being considered. The politics of the city of Albany are very lively, as usual. We are working on debates for Mayoral, City Council and Council President races, right now for the primary on September 15 and possibly in the general.. We are cosponsoring a debate in October with the Colonie Chamber of Commerce for the Town Supervisor's race. Look for an article about the League in the July issue of Our Town magazine.

We have agreed to supervise the Albany Housing Authority elections for the tenant commissioners on October 13th. We've already met with Authority staff to start our planning. Thanks to Carol Webster and Marion Schwager for joining me as managers of our effort. We will also do voter registration at community events and through the library project.

Now, where do YOU come in? For candidate debates, we'll need volunteers as moderators, time keepers and assistants for audience questions. If there's a town or race that's interesting to you, let me know. For the Albany Housing Authority we'll need 30 or 40 volunteers for 3 or 6 hour shifts—if you can help, let me know. For voter registration activities, we can do as few or as many as there are volunteers. There are several summer festivals and farmers' markets that might be productive. Or an event in your location—just let me know. Can you maintain a simple display of voter information in your library, checking about once a week to keep materials supplied?

WE NEED YOU, LEAGUERS!! Email Mary Ann at mlettau1@yahoo.com or call her at 489-0212 to help out.

League Sponsors Packed House on Albany County Long Term Care Issues

Marian Schwager

On Wednesday evening, June 10, a capacity crowd packed the College of St. Rose's St. Joseph Hall Auditorium to attend the LWVAC's community forum titled "The Future of Long Term Care in Albany County." Planning for the community forum had emphasized the need to present a balanced public response to both the controversy surrounding the existing nursing home run by the county and the trends, interests and innovations being promoted by interested stakeholders.

The League's interest in this topic proved timely because two days before the forum (on June 8) following a heated discussion of the Albany County Legislature, a resolution was passed directing County Executive Michael G. Breslin to develop plans for a new direction for long term care for the elderly in Albany County. Subsequent press coverage of this controversial event made reference to our forum, which likely contributed to the very substantial community turnout. In addition to League members, community activists and AAARP "red shirts," 10 county legislators also attended. Also in the audience were county and state officials from long term care, management and finance, and aging departments.

After League President Ann Brandon welcomed the audience, College of Saint Rose President R. Mark Sullivan explained that his interest in hosting the event extended beyond a commitment to integrate the college within its community to the work of its Institute for Community Research and Training is doing to evaluate the Neighborhood Naturally Occurring Retirement Community (NNORC) in the New Scotland Ave/Whitehall Road corridor. Dr. Sullivan praised the League's efforts to open public discourse on how, as we age, we can continue to be both supported by and involved in our home communities.

This was followed by remarks from County Executive Breslin who transitioned from Dr. Sullivan's comments to his childhood recollections of the College of Saint Rose as, in fact, his own hometown and that the concept of allowing people the option of "aging in place" was behind the formation of the NNORC and integral to the county's commitment to a comprehensive range of long term care services. His expectation, he further explained, was to listen and take notes on all of the perspectives and recommendations put forth during the course of the evening, and, true to his word, he stayed for the full 90 minutes of the forum.

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NY Connects

Virginia Hammer

Mike Breslin spoke to our neighborhood association about Albany County community alternatives to nursing home care. He gave us a brochure with the following information:

NY Connects: Choices for Long Term Care

<http://www.albanycounty.com/nyconnects>

NY Connects is a trusted place where you can get the information and assistance you need to make informed decisions about long term care. It is for anyone who needs long term care information and services. Albany County — NY Connects provides information and assistance on many services including:

Consumer and Caregiver Supports

Children Specific Supports

Facility Based Services

Home Based Services

Insurance/Benefit Information and Counseling

Nutrition and Wellness Programs

Protective/Preventative Services

Residential Housing Options and Supports

Support Groups and Counseling

Transportation

Other information and assistance

(legal services, mental health and/or substance abuse programs, home modification programs, property tax exemptions, etc.)

NY Connects is free resource endorsed and supported by the New York State Office for the Aging in collaboration with the New York State Department of Health.

LWV of Albany County

Officers and Board of Directors, 2009-2010

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Recommendations to LWVUS Board about the NPV Compact Consensus

Two criteria were established for a successful consensus study. The requirement for participation by 1/3 of local Leagues was met with participation by 390 of 766 Leagues (51% of local Leagues). While the second criterion, requiring 2/3 of participating Leagues to achieve consensus on the use of the National Popular Vote NPV) Compact, was not achieved, the consensus elicited very strong support for the NPV Compact (about 50% of responding Leagues in favor). However the remaining 50% were split almost equally between not favoring the NPV Compact or not being able to reach consensus. Comments from many Leagues reflected: (1) concerns about bias in the questions (about half the Leagues complained about the questions or bias, primarily bias against the NPV Compact), (2) the misunderstanding that a choice had to be made between advocating for abolition of the electoral college OR supporting the NPV Compact, and (3) statements which seemed to contradict a given League's responses to the questions.

Based on an analysis of the responses to the questions and the comments offered, the NPV Compact Committee and Program Planning Committee recommend that the LWVUS continue to examine opportunities to achieve the goal of direct election of the president in addition to the unlikely opportunity of abolishing the Electoral College by constitutional amendment. Options could include examination of other plans similar to the NPV Compact, proposing a concurrence at Convention 2010 on the NPV Compact, or continued examination of the NPV Compact itself. The committees also discussed an option for an extension to the study to take a direct online survey of members who attended consensus meetings with a question up or down on the NPV Compact.

In considering the experience of this "quick" study, the committees recommend that:

1. If we do a "quick" study again, then we should carefully reconsider the process to achieve maximum member understanding of the issue(s).
2. Any consensus questions for any study be tested, before approval by the Board, for understandability, suitability and non-bias by League members who are not part of the study committee, the staff, or the Board.
3. A task force be formed to examine the study and consensus process.

In conclusion, the committees recommend a statement of our position based on the consensus reports from local Leagues: "The LWVUS affirms its support for the direct election of the president and abolition of the Electoral College, but the LWVUS has no position on the National Popular Vote Compact as currently proposed."



Two League Members Honored at Annual Meeting

Following are the citations on the plaques that will be in the State League office for our two members honored at the Annual Dinner, plus comments made by Ann Brandon.

Marggie Skinner

For her exemplary career as a selfless volunteer and activist on behalf of the citizens of Albany County, and for her many years of action and service with the Albany County LWV.

Marggie has been one of those gems we love to find in League members. Since she joined in the '70's, she was always ready to get into action on anything we were taking on, and willing to do whatever was asked of her including serving twice as president.

She has always been interested in bettering the lives of people through help with the process of public assistance and increasing grants for welfare recipients, and for a time, advocating with the Legal Aid Society. During her time as president, we were part of a Coalition for Effective Code Enforcement, when the city appointed a Director of Code Enforcement among other things.

And in between she was active in her neighborhood association, and served as president of CANA - Council of Neighborhood Associations in Albany. Now she does it all while she lives in Seattle part time helping out her kids and grandkids!



Joanne Esposito

For teaching us all what service through League really means, and for demanding of herself and others the selfless commitment that makes life better for those around us.

Joanne is another Leaguer who was involved in many issues for many years. I can remember attending meetings with her about pretrial procedures or jury duty or alternatives to incarceration, many years ago. Joanne was always interested in getting young people involved in their government.

When president in the early '90's, she headed a committee that wrote a curriculum on Hunger and Poverty in the United States, that was distributed through State Ed. to all social studies teachers across the state. It was also picked up by Newweek magazine's Education Program. That and our Household Hazards book, also done on her watch, both received the Publication Award from the League.



2009 NYS League Convention Notes



The LWVNY 2009 Convention was held in May in Syracuse. A highlight was adoption of a new state study of up to two years on the consolidation of governmental units and the sharing of governmental services. You will be hearing more of that in the near future.

Our own Martha Kennedy chaired the sessions as president, and Betsey Swan from our League was welcomed as the incoming president. Laura Bierman (our Newsletter Editor), state Executive Director and another Albany Leaguer, was kept busy answering questions. We had several attendees from our league, and following are impressions of two of our members who attended for the first time:

Lois Griffin

“Fair, Vibrant and Strong” is how the League described itself. Indeed it is. It has been many years since I was actively involved in the League, and I was delighted to find the same qualities and spirit now as I had then.

In two days we heard many issues debated reasonably and articulately. I am looking forward to the new, timely study on the consolidation of local governmental units. We were also informed about many other issues and given practical help to be more efficient advocates of good government.

But aside from business, it was an opportunity to meet other like minded women and men from all over the state and to get better acquainted with our own Albany members.

Jan Messina

I joined the League of Women Voters in 2008, and was asked recently to be the Action VP, which I accepted. I attended the LWV Convention in Syracuse in May 2009, and was very impressed by the whole experience. I had attended union conventions when I was an active state employee, and the LWV Convention had many similarities, so the format was not totally unfamiliar to me. I was impressed by the networking that was afforded to me, and I enjoyed the caucuses, breakout sessions and the magnitude of the information provided to all. There is so much going on that needs citizen attention and input!

The featured speakers were especially interesting, considering their messages. I found it particularly informative to compare Senator Valesky’s presentation with the views of Jay Gallagher. They seemed to be at a 180 degree difference, which made for very thought provoking conversation.

Caucus sessions provided very good information, particularly the ones on government consolidation, gas drilling, and Vote 18. I enjoyed the entire time at the Convention, and look forward to participating in the League as an active, informed member.

(continued from page 4)

Long Term Care Forum

The panel was both moderated and “kicked off” by Courtney Burke, a former LWVAC president and current director of the Health Policy Research Center at the Rockefeller Institute of Government. Ms. Burke’s presentation contained an overview of terms associated with long term care services, a comparison of current national and state trends towards shifting services and costs toward more home and community based care, and preliminary estimates of the full range of long term care costs in Albany County. This included the current \$20 million county subsidy to cover losses due to operating costs

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ALBANY COUNTY
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Slingerlands, NY 12159

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IF SO, SEE PAGE 1.

League Calendar

<u>WHEN</u>	<u>WHAT</u>	<u>WHERE</u>	<u>MORE INFO</u>
Aug. 12	Deadline for Sept. Bulletin	LBierman@nycap.rr.com	
Aug. 27	Deadline for RSVP to Mansion Tour	Betsey@lwwny.org	see page 1
Sept. 1, 7:00 pm	Board Meeting		
Sept. 10, 11:00 am	Mansion Tour	Governor's Mansion	see page 1
Sept. 22, 5:30 pm	Fall Potluck Dinner	St. Sophia's Church	see page 3