



League of Women Voters of Albany County

May 2010

Educate

Participate

Advocate

Celebration of 90th Anniversary of the League of Women Voters Annual Meeting and Dinner



Tuesday, May 18, 5:30 pm
Century House, 997 New Loudon Rd. (Rte. 9),
Latham, NY (0.9 miles north of Rte. 7)



Special Guest: Susan B. Anthony

Honorees: Our Nine Lifetime Members (see page 3)

- 5:30 Meet and greet with cash bar
- 6:00 Annual Meeting
- 6:30 Honoring our Lifetime Members and guests
- 6:45 Dinner
- 7:45 Champagne Toast
- 8:00-8:30 A visit from Susan B. Anthony

Dinner - \$29.00

Field Greens Salad

Entree choices: Choose one listed below
Dessert: Century House Chocolate Mousse
served with Godiva-Scented Chantilly Cream
Coffee, Tea & Decaf

For each guest, the Century House will provide a meal in our honor for the regional food bank.

Reservations by May 10!

Mail the reservation below to Lois Griffin with your entree choice.

If you need a ride, call Lois (765-4733) or email her at ohgriffin@gmail.com.

Tear Off and mail with a check (\$29) payable to LWVAC
Mail to: Lois Griffin, 1 Sky Terrace, Voorheesville, NY 12186

Name(s) _____ Phone _____

Entree Choice	First Person	Second Person
Chicken Basilico: Pan-Seared breast of chicken topped with sundried tomato basil cream sauce	_____	_____
Salmon Filet: Char Grilled served with Three Citrus Buerre Blanc	_____	_____
Sirloin Steak: Topped with roasted garlic and Cabernet demi-glace	_____	_____
Optional Vegetarian	_____	_____

Check Enclosed for \$29 per person, made out to LWVAC _____

I need a ride _____ I can offer a ride _____

League of Women Voters of Albany County

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

Ann Brandon, President

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

Laura Ladd Bierman, Newsletter Editor



From the President

It's hard to believe but we are coming to the end of this League year and my presidency. Though I took it on reluctantly, it has been a very enjoyable year, in good part because of our excellent board. Each of them have been unceasing in their help with voters service, programs, membership, and all of the other activities that are needed to keep an organization viable. And with the support of each of you, it was indeed a very good year. But we have one more month left, which is the most important one yet. Let me count the ways -

1) Reform Now! Join us on May 5 at the Empire State Plaza, 11:00-4:00 to join the other "good government" groups in again reminding our state legislators that we want action on ethics, campaign finance, and adequate transparency in state government.

2) Our Annual Dinner and Meeting on May 18th. This is the 90th anniversary of the League and we want to celebrate! We will be honoring our 9 lifetime members who joined 50+ years ago. We will also have a visit from Susan B. Anthony, the foremother who fought for years for women's right to vote and unfortunately didn't live to see that day. But on the 18th she will come back to life for us. AND we will hold our annual meeting, installing our new officers, and adopting a budget and local program for the coming year. So please join us! If you need a ride, tell Lois Griffin when you make your reservation.

Thanks to each of you who have supported us by renewing your membership for the coming year. If that notice is still sitting on your desk, please send it in ASAP. We do offer financial help if needed - call Carol Webster (439-1491) for details.

I look forward to seeing you on May 18th at Century House.

Yours in League,
Ann

Voter Services

Mary Ann Lettau

Spring has sprung. So too—Voter Services has awakened from hibernation!

To set the frame for 2010: this is the year for state-wide offices, including Governor and one U.S. Senate seat. All members of the U.S. House of Representatives are to be elected, as well as State Representatives and State Senators, and County officials. Primary Day is September 14; Election Day November 2.

We have already a request for a forum—the Bethlehem School Board candidates will square off at the Middle School, sometime in the week before the election on May 18. Time and date TBA when the list of candidates is finalized.

2010 offers the League a great opportunity to focus on voter registration, a primary purpose of our organization. To begin, a core group of Bethlehem and New Scotland members are meeting on April 27 to brainstorm. Registration can take place at scheduled community events, on a regular basis, such as the Farmers' Markets, and on a one-time basis, perhaps at a parade or fair. By focusing initially on one part of the county, we hope to have an impact and provide an example of what can be done throughout our area. Eventually, it is our hope to develop core groups in each locality. If you are interested in such a team effort where you live—step right up! I'd be happy to set up a meeting and work with you to share ideas about voter registration efforts in your community.

The Library Project proved quite successful. It requires a little effort to initiate and very little to maintain. Also, if there are any computer gurus out there, please contact me. I have some ideas about on-line information about candidates, local reps and local government for voter use.

So, as you can see, there is plenty to do at different levels of commitment to engage voters and would-be voters. Your assistance is key. But—numero uno—be sure you are registered, and everyone in your family. And don't forget to vote on May 18, for school budget and Boards in some districts.

For more info, contact Mary Ann Lettau at 489-0212 or mlettau1@yahoo.com

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

Marian Schwager

This month we are honoring our lifetime members (50+ years) as part of our celebration of the 90th Anniversary of the League of Women Voters. These nine women have been members for over half of that time. To hear some of their stories we got them together to share their experiences with the league.

Some of their observations had to do with what the League has accomplished over time and some had to do with their own perceptions of its value to their lives. It was clear that for many, their involvement in League activities had spanned not just many years but many states and cities. Some shared stories of their childhoods in other states or locally where they watched their mothers as role models being active in league events. Others shared stories of how, as young housewives moving to new cities as their husband's careers dictated, they turned to the League for intellectual stimulation and the company of like minded women. Many noted that people whom they met through the league became lifelong friends.

We also heard stories of how the league itself had evolved in Albany county, from an initial response to the anti-suffragette sentiments being expressed within the City Club of Albany to a powerful political force spearheading efforts at county redistricting, county charter development and an elected school board for the city of Albany. The members told stories of motorcades and megaphones in protest and advocacy for these and other issues. Members shared interesting tales of closed door sessions with those in highest office. It was evident that the league's well-understood efforts at voter education and registration have been fostered within an equally vibrant advocacy and social justice framework, seeking both improvements in civic participation as well as needed political reforms.

All commented on how their participation in the League had contributed to their leadership skill development and how its model of consensus building and careful policy development had helped them in other aspects of their personal and professional lives. Stories ranged from how one League member of more than 50 years had met the National League's founder at the age of 6 in her parents home to another who'd counted her involvement with the League to over 62 years!

Please join us in honoring these women at our Annual Dinner & Meeting on May 18th.



First row: Bea Herman, Esther Lewis, Stevie Swire. Second row: Addie Muhlfelder, Bunny deBeer, Tina Lord, Edith Allen, Shirley Gordon. Missing: Lee Cameron. Photo by Amy Hedges (www.ahedgesphotography.com)

Students Inside Albany Conference

April 11-14, 2010

Thirty students from around the state met in Albany to hear speakers on their role and responsibility in influencing public policy. Albany County representatives are pictured with their Assemblymembers during their afternoon of "shadowing" the Assembly.



On left: Students from Bishop Maginn HS and Berne-Knox-Westerlo CSD with Assemblymember McEneny



Student from Bethlehem Central HS with Assemblymember Tim Gordon

Bits & Pieces

National Convention The National League Board is recommending retention of all LWVUS positions, a concurrence to amend and update the Arms Control position on the floor of Convention, and a study of the "Federal Role in Public Education." These issues will be voted on by the delegates at the national League convention in Atlanta in June. We are entitled to three delegates; they will be Carol Webster, Jan Messina, and Mary Ann Lettau.

Come to the rally for **Albany on the Record at the Empire State Plaza on May 5th**, 11:00-4:00, to let our political leaders know that we want reform in our state government! Go to www.lwvny.org to sign up.

Big League Raffle It's not too late to send in those raffle tickets to benefit both state and our local league. Last year one of our members won! Francine Frank got over \$3,000 and our league got over \$600. Let's do it again!

Dues are due now. If you sent them in, thank you! If not, please do it now.

League of Women Voters of Albany County NOMINATIONS SLATE 2010-11

Officers

President	Mary Berry	2010-12
Co-President		
VP Program	Marian Schwager	2009-11
VP Action	Jan Messina	2009-11
VP Administration	Lois Griffin	2009-11
Secretary	Paula Philo	2010-12
Treasurer	Margaret Sawyer	2010-12

Directors (On Board)

Voter Service	Mary Ann Lettau	2009-11
Membership	Monica Sharp	2010-12
Co-Membership	Margaret Danes	2010-12
State & Local Gov't	Judi Campbell	2009-11
Public Relations	Arlene Urell	2010-12
Social Policy	Judy Thomson	2009-11
State Study	Loretta Simon	2009-11
Local Programs	Julie Elson	2009-11
At-Large	Tina Raggio	2009-11

Directors (Off Board)

National Gov't	Edith Allen	2010-12
Website admin	Jessica McMullan	2009-11
Information Specialist	Don Kennedy	2009-11
Bulletin Editor	Laura Bierman	2009-11
Bulletin Distribution	Carol Webster	2010-12
Voter Services	Carol Webster	2010-12
Voter Services	Judy Wing	2010-12
Budget Director	Maggie Moehringer	2009-11
Nominations Comm	Marggie Skinner, Chair	2010-12
	Marian Schwager	2009-11
	Tina Lord	2009-11
Poll Reporting	Marggie Skinner	2010-12
Development	Betsey Swan	2009-11
Internat'l Relation	Katie Henrikson	2009-11

Board Recommended Local Program 2010-11 To be voted on at the Annual Meeting

1) Monitor the long term care options for Albany County residents.

Last June our League sponsored with the College of St. Rose a forum on long term care options for Albany County residents. Since then the County Legislature has been promoting a new county nursing home, while the County Executive is advocating expansion of other options for residents who need long term care. With state league positions on health care, we can provide needed information to the public by sponsoring more forums, writing letters to the editor, etc.

State league positions: Support of measures to assure a basic level of care; provisions for effective citizen participation in health policy decisions; measures that enable individuals to assume responsibility for their own health.

2) Monitor the proposals for the Albany City Landfill, based on our solid waste position, with recognition of responsible and sustainable use of natural resources by municipalities and local governments.

This program item is a combination of the "greening of Albany County" study and the solid waste issue adopted last year.

3) Continued support of public access cable TV for city of Albany.

4) Continued support of civilian police review board for the city of Albany.

Sisters on the Planet Conference

Betsey Swan

In early March I was honored to join League leaders from around the country to participate as a Sister on the Planet Ambassador at a two-day conference, held in Washington, D.C. and sponsored by Oxfam, America. Oxfam's Sisters on the Planet initiative brings together American women to raise awareness about women and climate change, and to influence U.S. policy for the purpose of enabling vulnerable communities to adapt to the crisis. To that end, it supports cap and trade legislation, along with funds to enable developing countries, and especially women in developing countries, to adapt to the effects of climate change. It takes a page from the microfinance playbook in that it believes that women, as the primary breadwinners in third world countries, are best able to come up with solutions that enable them to adapt to the climatic variations and catastrophes of global warming.



Although adaptation will take many forms, there is agreement that it will be essential in the following key areas:

- Addressing water scarcity that jeopardizes safe drinking water and agriculture;
- Coping with excessive water, including from floods and sea-level rise;
- Reducing disaster risks from severe weather events;
- Improving agricultural practices and diversifying agricultural livelihoods;
- Improving health systems to address climate-related diseases and other health impacts;
- And addressing social impacts that stem from climate challenges, including migration and conflicts over natural resources.

The following projects represent a few of the ways in which developing countries are meeting the challenge of adaptation. In Bangladesh, villagers are already creating floating vegetable gardens to protect their livelihoods from ruin by floods. In Vietnam, communities are planting dense mangroves along the coast to diffuse the waves caused by tropical storms. In Peru, people have revived an ancient canalization technique designed to provide moisture to farms during drought and drainage during heavy rains. In Uganda, communities are using the radio and Internet to share early warning and climate information at the local level.

Oxfam argues that it is in the interest of the United States to take a leadership role in adaptation initiatives for the following reasons:

- It would demonstrate global leadership and improve its standing in the world community;
- It would help safeguard global security;
- It is about seven times less expensive to fund adaptation than to respond to disasters after they have happened;
- A strong response to global warming and adaptation will help to mitigate the spread of hunger and disease

For more information see <http://www.oxfamamerica.org/campaigns/climate-change/sisters-on-the-planet/>.

New Member

Phillip Steck - Loudonville

Welcome!



Spring Fling Weekend in NYC - May 14-16

There's still time to join us on May 14 in New York City for the state League Cocktail Party Fundraiser. Join your fellow League members for an enjoyable evening in New York City.

Check out details on the state League website, www.lwvny.org and call the state League Office at 465-4162 to make a reservation.



Notes from Wrongful Convictions Symposium: Understanding and Addressing Criminal Injustice

March 4, 2010, Albany Law School

Ann Brandon

Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman, NYS Court of Appeals: What leads to wrongful convictions?

There have been 251 DNA exonerations - 25 in NYS.

Video taping interrogations was begun in NYC on a pilot trial period.

Prof. James Acker, SUNYA: The main problem is misidentification by witnesses.

- 1) We need to implement recommendations previously made.
- 2) There is much we still don't know - it needs more research.

Even with a 1% error rate, there are 2,000 in prison who are innocent.

Cyrus Vance, Jr., new District Attorney for Manhattan

They have 100,000 cases a year and 10,000 indictments.

He is starting a Conviction Integrity Program.

Amy Bach, wrote "Ordinary Injustice: How America Holds Court"

She observed a court in Greensboro, GA. There was a huddle of the judge, prosecutor, and defense attorney. People couldn't hear - the accused was not in the picture. "It's hard to rock the boat when you're in the boat." 9/10 of prosecutory decisions are not reviewed.

Prof. Saul Kassin, John Jay College: 14%-25% of exonerations are based on false confessions. They are very difficult to reverse.

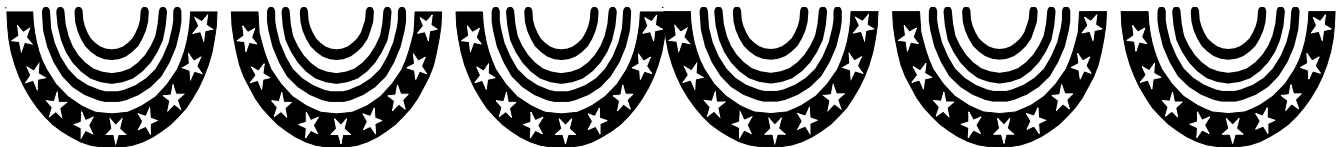
Stephen Saloom, Esq., Innocence Project: In NY, there is a crisis in indigent defense. All parts of the system are overwhelmed, and there is influence of the political system. If you plead guilty, you can get DNA testing. We need statutory reform of the lineup process, and NOT use live lineups. Prof. Acker sees this as the #1 problem and we need to work with the police on it.

D.A. Vance: Prosecutors need to screen info they get from police. We need a systemic review with checks and balances. There is a problem of tunnel vision. Replace quantity with quality. Problems occur even when DNA is present. Youth, 16-17 years old, can be questioned with no parent present. Discussion of "Central Park Five" - young men who confessed to raping a jogger but were later exonerated.

Wish list of the panelists:

- 1) Research and legal communities working collaboratively.
- 2) More support for 26,000 ex-offenders
- 3) Monitoring of state criminal courts
- 4) Greater transparency, including video taping of interviews.
- 5) Creation of a federal commission on this issue.

The event followed Chief Judge Lippman's recent appointment of a permanent New York State task force on wrongful convictions.



Absentee Ballot Application Reform is Here (Finally)

Aimee Allaud, LWVAC/LWVNYS Elections Specialist

After 17 yrs. (yes, that’s right – the LWVNYS testified at NYS Board of Elections Hearings in 1993 on the need for reform of the absentee ballot application process), we can finally claim victory for the voters of NYS. On Tuesday, April 13, the NYS Senate approved S2868B/Addabbo, legislation first introduced and passed earlier this session in the NYS Assembly by Assemblywoman Sandy Galef. Assemblywoman Galef’s press release is quoted here:

“ New York State Assemblywoman Sandy Galef, Member of the Assembly Election Law Committee, and Senator Joseph P. Addabbo Jr., Chair of the Senate Elections Committee, announced today that their historic legislation, S.2868/A5276, passed both houses of the New York State Legislature and will be delivered to the governor for his approval. This bill simplifies the absentee ballot process for all New Yorkers, no longer requiring a complicated and intimidating explanation from someone who requests an absentee ballot.

This legislation would change the process by which a voter requests an absentee ballot. It allows an absentee ballot to be provided as long as the voter affirms, in good faith, that he or she will be out of the county or unable to appear at their designated polling site on Election Day due to illness or disability. The new absentee ballot application will simply require a sworn statement signed by the voter stating that the voter does not anticipate being able to access their polling site on Election Day for one of those reasons.

Currently voters are asked a series of lengthy questions that provides information of little value to the Board of Elections. These questions not only burden the voters with the complex task of explaining why they cannot appear at the poll site, but invade their privacy and jeopardize their safety by requiring such minute details. These details include the dates that voters will be away from their residences, where they are going, and who they will be with. If voters will be unable to go to the polls due to illness or disability, they must specify their physician’s name and address; and if they will be in a hospital, they must disclose where it is located.”

Many thanks to all League members who have persevered in keeping this reform a priority. The legislation will go into effect immediately after the Governor signs the bill and revisions to the form can be made administratively and in conformance to NYS Election Law. We expect that it will take effect for 2010 elections.

Membership 2009-2010 - Join & Make a Difference

Name: _____ **Telephone:** _____

Address, City, Zip: _____

Email: _____

Individual Membership \$50/year

Household Membership \$75/year

Student Membership \$15/year

Contribution in support of my local League

Please send me more information

For financial aid information, contact Carol Webster, 439-1491.

Mail to:

League of Women Voters of Albany County PO Box 611, Slingerlands, NY 12159

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ALBANY COUNTY
PO Box 611
Slingerlands, NY 12159

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
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Albany, NY

DUES ARE NOW DUE!
Mail your dues NOW to: LWVAC, PO Box 611, Slingerlands, NY 12159

League Calendar

<u>WHEN</u>	<u>WHAT</u>	<u>WHERE</u>	<u>MORE INFO</u>
May 3, 9:30 am	Great Decisions	Home of J. Wing, Feura Bush	
May 4, 7:00 pm	Board Meeting	St. Stephen's Church, Delmar	
May 5, 11:00-4:00	"Albany on the Record"	Empire Plaza, Conf. Room 6, Albany	page 4
May 14-16	Spring Fling Weekend	New York City	page 5
May 17, 9:30 am	Great Decisions	TBA	
May 18	School Board Elections	VOTE	
May 18, 5:30 pm	Annual Dinner & Mtg.	Century House, Latham	page 1
	90th Anniversary League Celebration with Visit from Susan B. Anthony		