

*THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF*  
*SCHENECTADY COUNTY*  
**BULLETIN**



**Program**  
**Planning**  
**Potluck**

Join us for a potluck supper on February 7th at 6 PM at 1400 Keyes Avenue, home of Connie Young, followed by a program planning meeting.

We will discuss program ideas and objectives for our local League for the upcoming year and make recommendations for study to the State League of Women Voters. Please bring the January/February bulletin with State and Local positions to the meeting and a salad to share.

We will also discuss recommendations for improving the Schenectady Civilian Police Review Board.

This meeting is a great way to meet other LWW members, see how the League develops its positions and how it focuses its advocacy efforts. Please RSVP to Connie at [cyoung50@nycap.rr.com](mailto:cyoung50@nycap.rr.com) or 393-7061.

**Events in January and February**

**Consensus on the Constitution Convention**

January 18th at Noon  
1st Reformed Church  
Union St. Schenectady

**Health Committee Meeting:**

January 9th at 10 am  
Falls Prevention Workgroup  
Swanker Conference Room  
Schenectady Public Library Main Branch

**Program Planning Potluck**

February 7th at 6pm  
1400 Keyes Ave.

**Health Committee Meeting**

February 14th at 1pm  
Book Review: Being Mortal by Atul Gawande  
Niskayuna Library

**STUDY GROUP**

*Join us and participate in the study group which will determine whether the State League should support or oppose holding a Constitutional Convention. The question will appear on the ballot in November 2017.*

*Schenectady League President Cheryl Nechamen will chair the study group and can be reached at (email: [cnechamen@msn.com](mailto:cnechamen@msn.com) or phone: 346-4820).*

**FACTS:**

*The current constitution dates to 1894*

*It has been amended 225 times*

*The last Convention took place in 1967 and voters rejected the amendments made by the delegates*

*Everything is up for grabs in a Convention:*

*Forever wild protection of the Adirondack Park*

*Reproductive Choice*

*Pensions for public employees*

*The Blaine Amendment which prohibits the use of public dollars for religious schools*

## President's Letter

The State League has asked local Leagues to discuss whether or not to support holding a Constitutional Convention. The Schenectady League will be meeting on January 18th at noon at the 1st Reformed Church to determine our recommendation.

There are two ways to amend the NYS Constitution. The first way, and one which we are quite familiar with, is for an amendment to be proposed by a state legislator. It must be passed by two consecutive legislative sessions and is then submitted for voter approval. This is an incremental process, generally a good thing when considering a change in the basic framework of government.

The second way to amend the State Constitution, through a Constitutional Convention, is a more comprehensive approach. Every twenty years, the question of whether to hold a Constitutional Convention appears on the ballot and is due to appear in November 2017. If the voters say yes, in November 2018, delegates will be elected. When the delegates meet in April 2019, every aspect of the State Constitution is subject to change. The proposed amendments are then submitted to the voters, probably in November 2019, as a single package, as several groups of amendments or as single amendments, as determined by the convention delegates.



Since 1777, NYS has held nine Constitutional Conventions. Currently, we are governed by the Constitution drafted in 1894, which has been amended over 225 times. It is one of the longest state constitutions and is seven times longer than the U.S. Constitution. The last Convention was held in 1967. Amendments were submitted to voters as a single ballot question which was rejected by the voters.

Among the issues we'll discuss on January 18th are the cost of holding a Constitutional Convention and how delegates are selected, i.e. should political insiders be allowed to run as delegates and how do we achieve a representative group of delegates.

Some view a Constitutional Convention as an opportunity to modernize and streamline the Constitution since we live in a very different world than that of 1894. Others are worried that a Convention might undermine protections that are currently in the Constitution, including the forever wild protection of the Adirondack Park, reproductive choice, public employee pensions and the Blaine Amendment which prohibits the use of public dollars for religious schools.

As you can see, we'll be discussing a wide range of interesting topics on January 18th. I hope you'll join us.

Cheryl Nechamen, President

## **Schenectady City Council Observer Corps**

Members of the Schenectady City Council - after much discussion - passed the 2017 Schenectady city budget, which included several new positions and tax deductions for home owners.

Mayor Gary McCarthy thanked the Capital Region Economic Development Council for selecting the city of Schenectady for funding to create jobs and continue the city's redevelopment.

The Schenectady Community "Needs Assessment Survey "was re-leased.

Mayor Gary McCarthy joined Rives Casino and Clancy Real Estate in announcing housing opportunities for Casino employees as part of the Walk-to-Work initiative.

Members of the city council announced the "Breathing Lights" project which illuminated numerous empty homes in the Capital Region. By raising awareness about the issue, and putting people back in these homes, it could help stabilize the communities plagued by blighted properties.

Richard Homenick, chair of the Civilian Police Review Bd., presented the quarterly CPRB report before the city council committee. Dick Shave (member of LWV) was nominated to the CPRB committee to replace Flora Ramonowski, who stepped down from the position.  
Submitted by Flora Ramonowski

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## **IT'S ALL ABOUT THE VOLUNTEERS**

As we concluded the 2016 election season, I completed an Election Activities Survey for LWV USA. I was so pleasantly surprised to discover that a total of 95 individual volunteers were involved in delivering voter services this year---registering voters, assisting at candidate forums, delivering "Take Me to Vote" packets to the elementary schools in Schenectady County and taking election returns at nearly 90 County polling places. (Including our partnering again with AAUW in the "Take Me To Vote" project and collecting election returns.) Many League members did double and triple duty----with involvement in all activities. What a team we have! Thank you so much to everyone who volunteered. It is what allows Voters Services make a difference.

Submitted by Kay Ackerman, Voter Services Chair

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## **New Member: Mary Anderson**

Mary has worked for the Cornell Cooperative Extension and also the Schenectady City School District, both as a middle school teacher and as a central school administrator. Following retirement from the school district, she worked at the Schenectady Chamber of Commerce, where she facilitated a business education partnership with the seven Schenectady county schools and county businesses.

She is a strong advocate for empowering young women and building a strong community.

Happy Holidays, Betsy Chase

## Local Program 2017-2018

### Justice and the Law

Support improvements to the local criminal justice system by:

- \* monitoring and strengthening the Probation and Parole procedures, with an emphasis on rehabilitation and supportive services with programs such as the Ex-Offender Re-Entry Program in Schenectady County.
- \* facilitating the implementation of alternative courts (problem solving courts) in Schenectady County and promoting collaborations to support them.
- \* monitoring the juvenile justice system including Family Court and promoting community-based rehabilitation.
- \* supporting restorative justice programs such as the Community Accountability Board.

### Local Government

- \* Monitor activities of county governmental units, including town boards, the Schenectady City Council and the Schenectady County Legislature, monitor activities of other quasi-governmental units, public authorities and agencies such as Metroplex, IDAs and Planning Boards, monitor activities of elected public Boards of Education.
- \* Support standards of high professional qualifications and political nonpartisanship in manager form of government.
- \* Evaluate opportunities for inter-municipal cooperation and examine options for the consolidation of governmental services in Schenectady County.

### Children at Risk

- \* Collaborate with other organizations to identify the needs of children in Schenectady County, facilitate programs on their behalf and educate the community about their needs and challenges.

- \* Study early childhood education and caregiving needs in Schenectady County from a policy and financing perspective.

### Local Education

- \* Monitor local initiatives related to schools and promote and advocate adequate and equitable funding for all school districts so the students can reach their potential.

### Health Services

- \* Educate and advocate for national/state/local health care reform that provides quality physical and mental health care for all citizens.
- \* Educate our membership and others about long term care and develop recommendations for local options.
- \* Encourage and support countywide comprehensive health care planning and access, equity, and safety in health care.

### Environmental Issues

Support the protection of environmental resources, land, water and air in Schenectady County:

- \* Advocate for the protection of water resources in the County.
- \* Promote understanding of global climate change and support efforts to mitigate its effects.
- \* Support energy conservation and development of renewable energy alternatives.
- \* Support solid waste management programs that increase reuse and recycling in the County and City.

## LWV New York State Public Policy Positions

### **Election Law**

Under LWVUS Positions

Support of measures to protect extend and encourage the use of the franchise, including paperless and Election Day registration, no-excuse absentee and in-person early voting. Restore integrity to the election process—specifically support for uniformity in election laws and procedures in their implementation and enforcement, promote measures that ensure the integrity of all ballots; support ballot access and fair campaign practices.

Support comprehensive campaign finance reform, including public financing of campaigns.

Opposition to term limits for members of the NYS Legislature.

Opposition to term limits for NYS statewide elected officials.

### **Ballot Access Consensus Results**

New position: The LWV of NYState supports the continuation of Fusion Voting in New York State whether or Wilson-Pakula is repealed.

### **Constitutional Convention Update Results**

**New Position**: The League supports the following in deciding on support for a constitutional convention. Delegates should be elected by a fair nonpartisan process that complies with federal voting rights provisions and eases ballot access to encourage participation by racial and other minorities. Public financing should be provided for candidates and their positions on issues and convention goals should be widely publicized to enable voters to cast informed votes at their election. Statewide office holder, state or federal legislators and state judges should not serve as delegates

### **Government**

**Under LWVUS Positions** Support of citizen rights, including reproductive rights. Support of effective regulation of lobbying and ethics. Support of standards to ensure equitable representation in the State legislature and Congress.

Support of improved measures to provide representation for legislative districts in case of a vacancy. Support of responsive and responsible legislative processes which increase the role of the individual member and the committee system.

Support of procedural reforms in the constitutional convention process to promote openness and nonpartisanship. Support of the consolidation of government/shared services when it promotes effective and efficient operation of government.

### **Health care**

Support of measures to assure a basic level of quality physical and mental health care, including regulatory incentives to encourage development of cost-effective alternative methods of delivery, funding for health promotion and disease prevention programs; provisions for effective citizen participation in health policy decisions.

Support of measures that enable individuals to assume responsibility for their own health and participate in decisions, including extraordinary life-extending procedures.

Support for uniform eligibility and coverage of basic health care costs through public financing with single payer concept as an acceptable approach to implementing League positions on equitable access and cost containment.

### **Judicial**

Support of a unified state court system with improved provisions for judicial selection.

Support of statewide guidelines for law enforcement at all levels to prevent racial and economic profiling.

Support of measures to improve pretrial procedures in the criminal courts.

Support of measures to promote a fair and efficient jury system.

Support the rights of indigent defendants to representation at public expense.

Support of alternatives to incarceration.

Opposition to the death penalty with life without parole as the primary alternative.

## **Natural Resources**

### **Under LWVUS positions:**

Support for protection and management of New York's natural resources in the public interest, including energy conservation and energy options from renewable sources.

Support for measures to achieve watershed protection including limiting pesticide use and applying Best Management Practices.

Support for a state established, intergovernmental system for land resource management for land resource management.

Support for proactive role for New York State in regional land use planning, containing, urban sprawl and protecting sensitive areas.

Support of reconditioning of the New York State Erie/Barge Canal System and its development for recreational uses.

Support for preserving and enhancing the environmental integrity and quality of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Ecosystem.

### **Social Policy**

**Under LWVUS Positions:** Support for equality of opportunity, meeting basic human needs, childcare, energy-efficient and environmentally sound public transit and gun control.

Support measures to meet the needs for affordable and accessible housing through use of state funds and incentives to localities.

Support of a livable wage for all localities in New York State.

### **State Finances**

Support reforms for greater equity in education financing (K-12) for both pupils and taxpayers.

Support raising funds to provide New York's children with a sound basic education through

increases in the New York State personal income tax, implemented in a progressive fashion.

Support for the replacement of the existing local residential property tax relief programs in which relief goes to all with programs based on need, with annual cost of living adjustment.

Oppose in principle the use of public funds to support non-public schools (K-12).

Oppose any increase in the maximum number of charter schools without improvements to the Charter School Act.

Support the funding of public higher education the existing form for financing the community system, 1/3 tuition, 1/3 state aid and 1/3 county support.

Support a uniform equitable assessment and property tax system.

Support of measures to provide for openness and accountability in the operation of the New York State public authority system.

Support of a timely and responsive state budget.

### **Women's Issues**

Support of measures that hold marriage to be an economic partnership with a presumption of equality between the spouses.

Opposition to measures that contain a presumption of joint custody of the children.

Support for equity in employment laws and practices and equal pay for jobs of comparable worth.

Support of measures to reduce the incidence and effects of domestic violence.

## **HEALTH COMMITTEE**

The Health committee will meet on January 9th in the Swanker Conference Room at the Schenectady Public library main branch at 10am with the Falls Prevention Workgroup. This meeting of community agencies will focus on finalizing a resource list to be made available to the community agencies who serve seniors in Schenectady.

On February 14th the committee will meet at the Niskayuna Library at 1pm for a book review of Atul Gawande's book Being Mortal, Medicine and What Matters in the End. All members of the League are welcome to attend. Patricia Spreitzer from The Capital District Hospice will participate in the discussion of the book. Current proposed legislation to increase options at the end of life will also be discussed.

Submitted by Carol Furman

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Martin Luther King Day

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