



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF SCHENECTADY COUNTY
BULLETIN

Health Committee

The Health Committee will be studying a proposed concurrence on Death With Dignity legislation modeled after a position taken by the League of Women Voters of Utah.

The League will hold a **Concurrence meeting on January 10th** to present information and to take a vote to either accept or reject the position.
Time and location TBD.

The committee will meet next on **November 7th** at 10:30 am at Proctors Arcade. Call Carol Furman at 518 346-2746 if you would like to be involved with this study.

More information about the concurrence pp 5,6 &7.

November Events

The Scoop on Fake News

**Rex Smith, Editor of the Times Union and
Judy Patrick, Editor of the Gazette
will help us understand what is going on in the world of
news both fake and real.**

**Without reliable information it is difficult to make good
decisions, how does the public know what to believe?**

**Come and learn about the challenges news reporters face.
Rex Smith and Judy Patrick will talk about the issues and
answer all your questions.**

**Come join your League and get a better understanding of
the information explosion and how it affects everyone.**

**The McChesney Room of the Main Library
6:30pm on Wednesday, November 15.**

Holiday Luncheon and Speaker Will Rivas of Save Our Streets

December 6. 11:45, Schenectady County Community College

Lunch includes soup and a choice of entrees (honey glazed salmon, BBQ beef brisket or rigatoni with vegetables), fall fruit crumble for dessert and coffee

The cost is \$25 paid at the door or prepaid by mail. (Contact info on page 2)

President's Letter

In addition to local races this year, there will be three proposals on the ballot.

The first proposal concerns whether to hold a Constitutional Convention. Specifically, the proposal is "Shall there be a convention to revise the Constitution and amend the same?"

The State Constitution requires that this question be brought before the voters every 20 years. The last Convention that was actually held was in 1967. Much of the State Constitution is based on the Convention of 1894 with numerous amendments made through the legislative process in the meantime. Not only has this resulted in the most verbose constitution in the nation, but things have changed quite a bit in 123 years. Clearly, there's a need for a convention to streamline and update the Constitution.

The optimists in the state also view the convention as an opportunity to enact ethics reform. Updating the Constitution and the possibility of ethics reform were the primary reasons why the State League decided to support holding a Constitutional Convention.

It was not a unanimous decision. Those opposing a convention are concerned about the delegate selection process, the cost and the possibility of losing certain provisions currently in the Constitution.

The second ballot proposal is in response to New Yorkers' frustration with corrupt politicians, convicted of serious crimes, collecting a state pension. The wording of the proposal is "Allowing the Complete or Partial Forfeiture of a Public Officer's Pension if He or She is Convicted of a Certain Type of Felony. The proposed amendment to section 7 of Article 2 of the State Constitution would allow a court to reduce or revoke the pension of a public officer who is convicted of a felony that has a direct and actual relationship to the performance of the public officer's duties." This proposal is self-explanatory.

Proposal number three would authorize the use of forest preserve land for specified purposes. Essentially, this proposal would allow local governments in the Adirondack Park to use land in the forest preserve to do repairs on highways and bridges and to build bicycle paths, broadband internet and water wells as long as additional land is added to the forest preserve in exchange.

Don't forget to vote on the ballot proposals- they're on the back side of the ballot.

Cheryl Nechamen

Health Committee Meeting

The Health Committee will meet in Proctors Arcade on November 7 at 10am. We will be discussing plans for this upcoming year as well as the concurrence planned for this winter on a position on "Death With Dignity". If you are interested in joining the committee call Carol Furman, 346-2746.

Holiday Luncheon

The Cost of the luncheon is \$25 and can be paid at the door or mailed with a check to Carol Furman, 1269 Ruffner Road, Niskayuna 12309. Please make reservations by November 29th by e-mail cfurman@earthlink.net or by phone 518 346-2746. We are unable to cancel a reservation after November 29th but can add on a small number after that date.

Voter Services October 2017

Thank You's to:

* Peg Foley and Connie Young for organizing the Voter Registration efforts and the 38 people (many who did multiple assignments) who helped us register 138 (24 donor/transplant enrolled) voters on 15 occasions this past summer and fall. Not as many registered as last year which was a presidential election year but still a respectable achievement.

* The coordinators of this year's local Candidate Forums:

Connie Young and Pauline Kinsella (Schenectady);

Maxine Borom and Roberta Richardson (Niskayuna);

IngeLise Pangburn (Glenville);

Marsha Mortimore (Rotterdam) and the many volunteers who assisted in conducting the forums.

* Pat Lambert and MaryJane Shave for coordinating our Vote411 on line Voters Guide for all local elections throughout Schenectady County. This was a very labor intensive assignment because the many candidates running needed to be contacted, and in most cases re-contacted to remind them to respond.

* Dick Shave and Maxine Borom and the volunteers they recruited to collect election results to report to local media at as many election districts as we can cover. For this we receive a payment for each polling place we give a report and the proceeds are used to help pay the cost of taping the candidate forums.

Voter Services is only effective if our members step up and volunteer.
Thank you, thank you, thank you, all who did.

Kay Ackerman, Voter Services Chair

Update of LWVNYS Charter School Position

The State League has asked local Leagues to consider updating our position on charter schools. The update, approved by delegates to the 2017 State League Convention, would delete the following sentence: "In lieu of amendment of the Charter School Act to increase the total number of charters that could be granted, it supports retention of the current total (100) with amendment of the Charter School Act so that a charter could be reissued if a charter school ceased to function for any reason."

The State League wants to delete this sentence because it is no longer relevant. It advocates to keep a cap of 100 charter schools when, in fact, the current cap is 460. Deletion of this sentence does not change the intent of the State League's position on charter schools, namely that the number of charter schools should be limited. Charter schools should also show evidence of effectiveness and be mindful of students with special needs.

The Schenectady League will consider the update at the next Board meeting, open to all members, on December 13th at 3 PM at Cheryl Nechamen's house, 1060 Parkwood Blvd., Schenectady.

NEW MEMBERS

Carrie Mattis is a Community Events Specialist at the Schenectady YMCA. She has been involved with the LWV Voter Registration and Information Program for one and a half years. Her other LWV interests are Social Media, Facebook and Healthcare. She is an artist specializing in landscapes, she writes research based articles and is an avid hockey fan.


Nancy Tudor is an Environmental Engineer with the Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory. She attended the Women's March in Washington DC this year after severe disappointment with the presidential election results. Nancy joined the LWV to become more active in getting people registered and out to vote. Her other interests include bike riding and reading.

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MEMBERSHIP

Our League goals are to educate citizens about government and public policy, encourage citizen participation in elections, and influence public policy relating to issues we've studied. Dues money makes working on our goals possible. **DUES for July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018** (half-year dues reduction is available. Contact Connie Young at 393-7061)

Return to: LWV of Schenectady County, P.O. Box 9135, Schenectady, NY 12309

New or Renewing Members Please Confirm this Contact Information

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

_____ \$60 Individual _____ \$85 Household _____ \$20 Full-time student

_____ Additional support for the League, dues plus \$10 contribution (\$70 or \$95 – circle one)

(Confidential arrangements for special payment or partial assistance can be made. Contact Connie Young at 393-7061 with any questions. Dues and contributions are not tax deductible.)

.....
_____ *I am sending my membership dues payment, but please consider me an **INACTIVE** member.*
.....

ACTIVE MEMBERS: The League depends upon the work of its members, even for a short task. Please check any activities that interest you. We appreciate your help.

Committees: Judicial _____ Health _____ Membership _____ Fundraising _____ Environment
_____ Observer Corps _____ Education _____ Voter Services Voter Registration _____ Candidate
Forums _____ Voter Information _____ Computer Skills Graphics/Layout _____ Databases _____
Website Work _____ Facebook _____ Electronic Publicity _____ Other Technical Skill? (Describe)

Death with Dignity: Background Materials

What is Death with Dignity/Assisted Suicide/Aid in Dying?:

Although the practice has many names, in general most policies have the same basic guidelines in place to safeguard both patients seeking to receive the medication and doctors prescribing the medication.

States with death with dignity laws all include qualifying criteria:

- a competent adult over the age of 18 can request a prescription to end his or her life only if diagnosed as terminally ill and likely to die within six months,
- the request for a prescription from licensed physicians must be made both in writing and orally,
- the individual must be able to self-administer the medication,
- the individual must be of sound mind and capable of clear communication,
- the laws often require a series of requests and waiting periods to guard against abuse. Patients diagnosed with mental illness and people with disabilities are ineligible.

Background in New York State:

The New York State legislature is considering legislation to allow for death with dignity in New York State. The legislation is modeled after laws in Oregon and other states. Currently 6 states and Washington DC have authorized the procedure either through court rulings, referendum, or state legislation.

- Oregon in 1994 by ballot initiative
- Washington in 2008 by ballot initiative
- Montana in 2008 by court ruling
- Vermont in 2013 through legislation
- California in 2015 through legislation
- Colorado in 2016 through ballot initiative
- Washington, DC's Death with Dignity law went into effect on February 18, 2017.

Over the years, our state legislature has considered several different bills that would legalize death with dignity in New York State. The most updated proposal, **A.2383 (Paulin)/S.3151 (Savino)**.

The New York legislation includes the following provisions:

- Only a qualified terminally ill, mentally capable adult may obtain a prescription from their physician for medication that they can self-administer.
- Terminal illness and six month or fewer prognoses must be confirmed by two doctors.
- If either doctor has concerns about the patient's capacity to make an informed decision, they must make a referral to a mental health professional and medication can't be prescribed until capacity is determined.
- The person requesting medical aid in dying must be advised of all their end-of-life options, including the right to rescind the request.
- Two people must witness the written request, one of whom can't be someone who stands to benefit from the estate; neither the doctor nor the professional who may provide competency determination can witness.
- Prescribing doctors must comply with extensive medical record documentation requirements & make records available to Department of Health.

This legislation has received support from the organizations that support legalizing death with dignity in New York State. They feel this legislation is comprehensive and has adequate safeguards in place to ensure both patients and doctors are not pressured or deterred in utilizing the program. They feel that this law will allow for peaceful and humane death for those seeking to use end of life drugs.

Many professional associations support aid in dying including the American Public Health Association, American Medical Women's Association, National Association of Social Workers, the Statewide Senior Action Council of NY, and the New York State Academy of Family Physicians.




**Suzanne Hartz
Stephen Hartz**

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Death with Dignity: Background Material (cont.)

There has been some turbulent debate surrounding the policy in New York. Several disability organizations and religious groups have come out in opposition to the legislation. These groups argue that handicapped individuals could be pressured or tricked into taking the end of life drugs. Some disability groups feel that individuals with mental disabilities may not understand what they are volunteering for.

Groups who are opposed to death with dignity include the Archdiocese, the Catholic Conference, the Center for Disability Rights, and the New York Association on Independent Living.

New York State Court Case: Myers v. Schneiderman:

In 2015, three terminally ill patients filed a suit against New York State to allow their doctors to administer life ending medication. "The complaint asserted that the physician plaintiffs have been deterred by the relevant provisions of the Penal Law from providing aid-in-dying to terminally ill and mentally competent persons who have no chance of recovery and for whom medicine cannot offer any hope other than some degree of symptomatic relief. They asserted that the authorities wrongly consider aid-in dying to be "assisted suicide," but that in fact it is starkly distinct from it."

The Attorney General made a motion to dismiss the case stating that the complaints were not justiciable and that the plaintiffs did not have a standing to sue. The judge dismissed the case because he rejected the plaintiff's assertion that the penal code should not apply to aid in dying.

The plaintiffs appealed the case to the New York Court of Appeals. At the beginning of September the Appeals Court dismissed the case.

Arguments in Favor of Death with Dignity:

The argument for autonomy in en-of-life decision-making advocates for a person being able to determine how she/he lives and dies. Many individuals what to be involved in as many aspects of their end-of-life decisions as possible, including having the option of determining when he/she will die. Advocates for autonomy see no reason why they shouldn't have the right to die "on their own terms," a phrase made famous by Bill Moyers in his 2000 PBS television mini-series "On Our Own Terms: Moyers on Dying."

Relief from pain and suffering is the other primary argument for the legalization of Death with Dignity. One's quality of life is diminished by pain and suffering in various forms, including mental anguish, loss of physical capabilities and dignity. This argument is often advanced by people who, having personally witnessed the agonizing death of a friend or family member, do not want themselves or anyone else to suffer in a similar situation. Palliative care and hospice can be very effective in managing pain and other symptoms at the end of life, but these efforts are not effective in all cases, and common methods of pain control can have unwanted side effects like reduced cognition.

Death with Dignity:Background Material (cont.)

These two arguments, autonomy and relief from pain and suffering can be viewed as the necessary criteria to safeguard against abuse. The patient must view accelerating death as the only acceptable way to alleviate his or her intolerable pain and suffering.

Arguments in Opposition of Aid in Dying:

Most people have a strong conviction about the wrongness of killing. If this conviction were extended to every life and death situation, regardless of circumstance, it would prohibit support of any assistance in dying, even when death is desired by a competent, terminally ill adult to alleviate pain and suffering. Furthermore, it would also prohibit capital punishment and killing in self-defense, in defense of innocent others, and in war.

Results of other states:

California began implementing their law in June of 2016. The California law requires that two doctors agree that the patient has an incurable illness with no more than six months to live and has the mental capacity to make such a decision. California’s Dept. of Public Health analyzed their program after 6 months. In those 6 months, a total of 191 patients had requested the life ending drugs, but only 111 patients used them. Of this 191, 21 died due to their illness and 59 had undetermined outcomes. The Los Angeles Times compared California and Oregon during that time frame to analyze how similar or different their demographics appeared.

Comparing California’s experience to Oregon’s

California, June 2016 —December 2016

59% of those who died using a lethal prescription had cancer.

46% of those who died were male.

90% who died were white, 3%Latin and 5% Asian

57% had Medicare, Medicaid or some other govt. insurance.; 31% had private insurance; 4% were uninsured.

The rate of lethal prescription deaths was 6 per 10,000 total deaths in the state.

Oregon, January 2016 to December 2016

79%of those who died using a lethal prescription had cancer

54% were male.

96% were white, 1.5% Latino and 1.5% Asian

96% had a bachelors degree or higher

70% had Medicare, Medicaid or other type of government insurance

30% had private insurance: fewer that 1% were uninsured.

The rate of lethal prescription deaths was 37 per 10,000 total deaths in the state.

Mission Statement: The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan organization. We encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government. We work to increase the understanding of major public policy issues and influence public policy through education and advocacy.

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