



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF SCHENECTADY COUNTY

BULLETIN

APRIL 2020

Dealing With Serious Illness

What You Need to Know

The League of Women Voters of Schenectady has had to cancel this panel discussion scheduled for April 6

The Panel: Dr George Giokas, *Palliative Care Partners*,
Gwen Bondi, *President and CEO of Advance Care Planning Consulting Services*
Cathryn Bern-Smith, *Manager of Schenectady County Senior and Long Term Care Services*
Del B. Salmon, *Attorney*

The panel has indicated that they are willing to reschedule at a later time.

Citizenship Mentoring Group

Like everyone else, the Citizenship Mentoring Group has been greatly affected by COVID-19. Since Friday, March 13, we have had to cancel our Tutor Training class, our Spring citizenship classes, and even our one-on-one tutoring with students. At the same time, the local US Citizenship and Immigration Services field office in Latham has closed, and the March naturalization ceremony cancelled. Two of our students passed their interview but no date can be scheduled for their naturalization yet. Right now, it's hard to know how soon we'll be able to reinstate our program, but we're a very optimistic group and hope that it will be sooner rather than later.

As always, if you have any questions about CMG, or are interested in becoming a tutor or helping out at one of the naturalization ceremonies, please contact me at lwvschenectady@gmail.com.

President's Letter

As I write this month's letter, I am struck by how many things have changed in our lives in just a matter of days. Only a few weeks ago, our calendars were full, activities were planned for months ahead, and we wouldn't have thought twice about making plans to see friends and families. The business of the League of Women Voters goes on, though. The national LWV has had guidelines in place for weeks with health information, COVID-19 prevention guidelines, and recommendations for the upcoming voting season during the pandemic. Please see: <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/coronavirus-prevention-guidance-leagues>

Members of the LWVSC Budget Committee had a "virtual" meeting recently using the ZOOM program. I'm hoping to set up this free program, too, so that our members can all attend their committee and board meetings or get-togethers from their own homes. Necessity is certainly the mother of invention these days, and work does go on!

It might seem that our lives have been reduced as we "hunker down" in our homes. At the same time, we are part of a much larger picture, as we share this period in time with our community, state, country, and the rest of the world. Our busy lives may have slowed, but now we have the time to reflect on all the things that make our world so precious to us.

In the future, we will have memories of this time, but I feel sure they won't only be about fear and worry, keeping our distance, being on line at the grocery stores, or having to miss a much-looked-forward-to event. I believe we will feel closer to our friends and families, perhaps will have discovered a new interest, spent a lot more time outdoors, and deepened our respect for all the people who have continued to work so that we can be safe, and understood better what makes us joyful and content.

Let's all keep in touch (by phone or email, of course!) and we will make it through this incredible spring of 2020 together.

In league,
Ann Hatke

Voter Services Report

We've had to cancel a few voter registration events scheduled in March and April due to the rapidly changing situation with coronavirus. Fortunately, the big push for voter registration drives doesn't come until September. Hopefully, things will have settled down by then.

Once we've scheduled voter registration events, we'll send out an email to everyone who's expressed an interest in volunteering to sign up. If you don't think you're on my list, please send me an email at lwvschenectady@gmail.com.

Cheryl Nechamen
Voter Services Chair

FREE TIME FIXES

Since we all find ourselves with more time than usual, here are a number of free websites that offer a wide range of activities:

Free Yoga classes (including yoga for seniors):

<https://www.youtube.com/user/yogawithadriene>

Free virtual “field trips” to the British Museum, the Louvre, the Metropolitan Opera, the National Gallery, the San Diego Zoo, the Anne Frank House, and many more:

<https://virtualschoolactivities.com/>

Free performances, interviews, and more from the Berlin Philharmonic:

<https://www.digitalconcerthall.com/en/news>

(Redeem voucher by March 31)

Free virtual tours, mini courses, visits to museums and much more:

<https://artsandculture.google.com/>

Free online courses from top universities and colleges (Harvard, Oxford, Sorbonne, etc.):

<https://www.edx.org>

The New York Public Library has over 300,000 books online. It’s very easy to get a NYPL card or just download their SimplyE app. You can also check out videos, audio books, and music.

<https://www.nypl.org/books-music-movies>

Our own Schenectady County Library system (free language courses, magazines, videos, newspapers, eBooks, and more):

<https://www.scpl.org>

On the library’s main page, look for the eContent sidebar on the left

Free way to keep in touch with family, friends, and even hold meetings online:

<https://zoom.us/docs/en-us/covid19.html>

President	Ann Hatke
Vice-President	Jude Rabig
Secretary	Heide Westergaard
Bulletin Editor	Helen MacDonald

Proposed Leaders of LWV of Schenectady County 2020/2021

President	Ann Hatke	2021
Vice President	Judith Rabig	2021
Treasurer	Judy Middelkoop	2021
Secretary	Heide Westergard	2021
Inside Albany	Maxine Brisport	2021
Letters to the Editor/ Press Releases	Eleanor Aronstein	2021
	Eleanor Aronstein	2021
Lobbying	Eleanor Aronstein	2022
	Carol Furman	2021
	Yvette Gebell	2021
Voter Services	Cheryl Nechamen	2021
Forums	Cindy Weissend	2022
Poll Reporting	Dick Shave	2021
	Vicki Hoshko	2022
Voter Registration	Connie Young/Mary Jane Shave	2022
Get Out the Vote	Pauline Kinsella	2022
Bulletin	Helen MacDonald	2021
Nominating Committee	Sally Knutson	2022
	Johanna Petersen/Mary Pritchard	2022
	Connie Young	2022
	Carmel Patrick	2022
Membership	Connie Young/Johanna Petersen	2022
	Betsy Chase	2022
Community Outreach		
Fliers	Gwynneth DeLong	2021
Committee Events	Committee Members	2022
Membership Mtngs	Connie Young / Carol Furman	2021
Sept. Dec. June		
Mail Chimp	Judy Middelkoop	2022
Facebook	Cindy Weissend	2021
Observer Corps	Cindy Weissend	2021

At Large Board Members	Cathy Lewis	2021
	Anita Sanchez	2021
	Vicki Hoshko	2021
MHA Elections	Kay Ackerman	2022
	Pat Lambert	2022
Citizen’s Police Review Board Rep	Dick Shave	2022

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, 2019 – June 30, 2020** (half-year dues reduction is available. Contact Connie Young lwvschenectady@gmail.com)

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.)

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

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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.

Judicial____ Health ____ Membership ____ Fundraising ____ Environment ____ Observer Corps ____ Education ____ Voter Services: Register Voters____ Candidate Forums ____ Voter Information ____ Computer Skills Graphics/Layout ____ Databases ____ Citizenship Mentoring____ Website Work ____ Facebook ____ Electronic Publicity ____ Other Technical Skill? (Describe) _____ Other areas of interest_____

COVID-19 Impact on Legislative Session

With the outbreak of COVID-19 growing in New York State, the legislature is considering postponing or limiting access to the legislature for the foreseeable future. This week the Governor said that the Capitol may restrict access to only legislators and their staff until the virus is under control. Some advocates have also heard that the legislature may postpone session or hold a remote session to prevent the spread of the virus.

The legislature must pass our state budget by April 1st in order to avoid the temporary shutdown of agencies and state programs. We're unsure whether the legislature will choose to return to Albany to introduce their one house budgets and pass these bills or if they will temporarily suspend session until later in the month. Stay tuned for updates on the budget process as it related to the COVID-19 outbreak.

COVID-19 Impact on Voting

There has been significant concern over how the COVID-19 outbreak may impact upcoming elections including the April 18th presidential primary in New York. The State League has had a conversation with the State Board of Elections and at this point they aren't issuing any recommendations for the primary. We've heard the board is talking with the Governor about extending the deadline for absentee voting, similar to what was done when following Hurricane Sandy, or postpone the election, as was done for 9/11.

Individual counties already technically have the authority to interpret absentee ballot "excuses" as being more or less broad and often do so. State law allows county boards of elections to cite a public health emergency as one reason for someone to request an absentee ballot. Erie county has announced they will be considering any absentee request made to fall under this category.

Although the state has not recommended counties accept all absentee ballots, the state still has ample time to make adjustments ahead of the April primary. Some hesitation around recommending all absentee voting may be because vote by mail is very onerous for counties and makes the overall voting process a lot more expensive, time consuming, and in some cases less accurate. The state can still extend the absentee voting deadline but will likely only push for all voters to vote by mail as a last resort.

Reprinted from the NYS League Weekly Update

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.

“Empowering Voters, Defending Democracy”

Public Campaign Financing Commission Ruled Unconstitutional

On Thursday a state judge struck down a New York law establishing a publicly-financed election system, ruling the Legislature was wrong to enlist an outside commission to craft the rules.

The 2019 Public Finance and Elections Commission recommended stricter contribution limits for statewide and legislative campaigns and a new matching funds program for candidates, but also lifted requirements making it more difficult for minor parties to maintain ballot status - from 50,000 votes to 130,000.

The League believed that the commission should not have made recommendations on minor party qualifications or fusion voting and signed onto a joint letter in August of 2019 urging the commission to focus on campaign finance. This ruling will eliminate the commission's plan and allow the legislature to revisit the issue during the legislative session.

Reprinted from the NYS League Weekly Update

New Members

Deborah Noyes

Deborah is a retired librarian. She has worked in the Glenville, Niskayuna and Schenectady County libraries. She has always been very supportive of the LWV initiatives and plans to be involved in LWV activities as her time permits.

Stephen and Stephanie Schechter

Stephanie is a retired teacher of US History and Government. She is currently a Board Member of RISSE (Refugee and Immigrant Support Services of the Emmaus Church in Albany). This organization is open to all individuals who qualify for assistance. Stephanie, also, started Citizenship and Civics classes at RISE.

Stephen is a Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Russell Sage College. He was Executive Director of the NY State Bicentennial Commission in the late 1980's. Stephen has authored many books and was Editor in Chief of the five volume Encyclopedia of American Governance. He has also done work in civic education in Eurasia, the Middle East and in the US.

Stephanie and Stephen are interested in LWV initiatives involving citizenship mentoring and voter services.

Barbara Bartoletti Honored

On March 10, 2020, a large number of League Members, League officers, legislators, various media people and officers and members of other organizations gathered at the State Museum in Albany to honor Barbara Bartoletti, who served gratis for over 40 years as a lobbyist for League positions at the State Legislature. She and Newscaster Liz Benjamin spoke informally about Barbara's many years of service. Proceeds from the event will be used to support the advocacy and education initiatives of the League's Education Foundation.

Suffragette or Suffragist



"Although you will often see suffragist and suffragette used interchangeably, their meanings are quite different.

The word "suffragette" was coined by the British press to disparage those fighting for women's right to vote. Some women in Britain co-opted the word to reclaim it from its derogatory use. However, in the U.S., "suffragette" was seen as an insult and not used. Instead, in this country "suffragette" was used by anti-suffragists in their fight to keep women from getting the vote. So, Susan B. Anthony and her colleagues are suffragists, not suffragettes!"

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