



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®] OF SCHENECTADY COUNTY

BULLETIN

MARCH 2020

Dealing With

Serious Illness:

What You Need To Know !

The League of Women Voters of Schenectady will present a panel discussion of information you would wish to have, should you or a loved one face a serious illness.

When: April 6 at 6-7:30pm

**Where: McChesney Room of the Karen B. Johnson
Public Library, 99 Clinton Street, Schenectady**

**Speakers: 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 discussion will cover:

How to speak with your doctor to best understand treatment options and prognosis

How to communicate what is important to you.

How to make sure your wishes are understood and followed by medical caregivers and family

Differences between traditional illness care, Palliative, and Hospice Care

Resources available in the community, what gaps exist, what insurance typically covers

Legal steps you can take when healthy, to assure that your wishes are known and how to name a designated person who can act for you, if you are not able.

Join us for this important discussion.

President's Letter

Our annual Program Planning Meeting was held on February 12. This was a multi-purpose evening; not only did we review our own League positions and those of the national LWV, but we also had a chance to meet new members, and to talk about possible projects to pursue in the coming months. After studying and discussing all of the positions, we realized that we had no changes or updates to make in any of the positions – a possible first! Soon after our meeting, though, we were contacted by the LWV of Massachusetts, asking if our League would support their position on adding “Climate Emergency” to the national LWV proposed program of “Making Democracy Work.” After a unanimous email vote by our board members, we enthusiastically agreed to support their proposal.

As stated by LWV Massachusetts:

It is essential that the League take strong and visible action on the Climate Emergency. We must stand with the young people who understand this crucial issue—or lose our relevance to them. Our emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion demands we address an issue that disproportionately affects people of color and people who are poor.

It is only by making democracy work that we can bring the power of the voters to the people who must make the necessary decisions to address the Climate Emergency. Climate disruption will have devastating effects on the US economy, individuals and all levels of government, posing a serious threat to our civil liberties and freedoms.

“Making Democracy Work” means solutions to the climate crisis that are responsive to equity and justice. Tragically, those least responsible for climate change suffer the greatest consequences of environmental degradation and pollution. Democracy works when all have a voice and are assured of a safe, sustainable, and healthy environment.

I hope that all of our members support taking action on this serious crisis personally, and in our community, state, and nation.

In League,
Ann Hatke

Citizenship Mentoring Group Report – March 2020

We have much good news to share! Four of our students have passed their Citizenship Interviews in the last few weeks. Three are women from Afghanistan, all who are young mothers, enrolled in ESL classes full-time, who also found time for our class or tutoring. Our fourth student, from Viet Nam, was in our very first class in 2017, and began working with her tutor again as her interview date approached. We're so proud of these students and their hard-working tutors!

The CMG got news this month that it had received a New Citizens Voter Registration Grant from national LWV – this will be the third grant we've received for our project. We plan to put it to many good uses!

We attended the February Naturalization Ceremony, and look forward to the next on March 11. We love company, so if you'd like to help, please contact Ann Hatke at lwvschenectady@gmail.com.

2019 VOTER TURNOUT TAKEAWAYS

The LWVSC has historically committed itself to registering voters in the County, and to encouraging well-informed voting by conducting candidate forums. After reviewing data provided by the Schenectady County Board of Elections, however, the League determined that increasing voter turnout should be added to its efforts. We have analyzed data for the last four election years, and have identified several takeaways. First, the data:

Schenectady County Turnout (% of actual voters v. registered voters*)

2016: 70% 2017: 37% 2018: 59% 2019: 35%

[*Note: Data is not available to determine the number of persons eligible to vote versus the number of persons registered to vote. We assume that much more can be done to register eligible voters as well as improve actual voter turnout]

In addition to the County-wide turnout, we reviewed the turnout by city/town within the County, and determined that our get out the vote (GOTV) efforts should be focused on the areas of lowest turnout and greatest population concentrations. The City of Schenectady has approximately one third of the County population, but in each election year, has had a voter turnout among registered voters at least 10% lower than the County average. In addition, within the City, wide variation has existed among voting districts, with some in the 2019 election as low as 10% turnout, and some as high as 36%. This data is useful in determining where our efforts would produce the most significant improvement in turnout, within neighborhoods and across the entire County.

Much of the difference in turnout by year is attributable, of course, to the offices for which elections are conducted. Thus in 2016, a presidential election year, the turnout was highest among all years reviewed. 2018 was a statewide/congressional election year, and had the next highest turnout, while 2017 and 2019 were local only election years with the lowest turnout (37% and 35% respectively).

Since 2019 was the first year in which New York conducted extended voting, we also looked at whether the data for comparable election years (2017 and 2019, both local only election years) showed any change in voter turnout. Unfortunately, extended voting does not appear to have improved turnout in 2019 compared to 2017—in fact, the 2019 County-wide turnout was 6% lower than in 2017. More data will need to be reviewed in coming years to determine whether extended voting dates make an appreciable difference in turnout, compared to other factors such as number of offices/candidates in contention.

The League’s GOTV efforts in the coming years will be expanded as much as possible, particularly in lowest turnout communities. We have in the past distributed posters and lawn signs directly and at neighborhood association meetings (at which we have also provided neighborhood-specific data); asked school districts throughout the County to place voting reminders on their electronic billboards outside their schools as well as announce reminders at home sports events; written letters to the editor, and shared data for newspaper articles in the Gazette; placed lawn signs and posters at public libraries and colleges in the County and other venues. More work needs to be done, and new ideas for improving turnout are needed too!

If you are interested in getting involved with the League’s GOTV efforts, please email Pauline Kinsella, GOTV coordinator, at lwvschenectady@gmail.com. We will be scheduling a brainstorming meeting in the near future, and your participation would be most welcome!

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

Voter Services Report

Presidential election years are always exciting. Voters are enthusiastic and tuned in. If you'd like to help with voter registration, please contact Cheryl Nechamen at lwvschenectady@gmail.com

Presidential primary: April 28, 2020

Early voting from April 18-26

Primary for other federal and all state offices: June 23, 2020

Early voting from June 13-21

General Election: November 3, 2020

Early voting from October 24- November 1

Early voting sites and hours for 2020 should be the same as in 2019: Glenville Senior Center, Hon. Karen B. Johnson Library, Niskayuna Town Hall and VIA Port Rotterdam. Early voting sites will be open on Saturday and Sunday from 9 AM- 2 PM; Monday and Wednesday from noon- 8 PM; Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 9 AM- 5 PM. All Schenectady County voters may vote at any of these early voting sites.

The deadline for updating voter registration, e.g. change of address, is 25 days before an election. The deadline to update your registration for the April primary is April 3. The deadline to change party enrollment for 2020 was February 14.

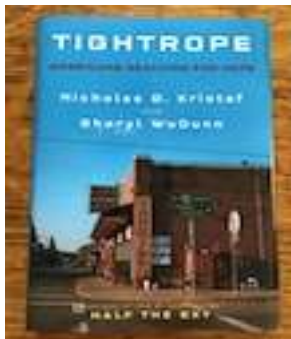
To find out if you are properly registered to vote, contact the Schenectady County Board of Elections at 518-377-2469. You can also check your registration on the Board of Elections' website at www.schenectadycounty.com/BOE- click on the "Are You Registered to Vote?" button.

Applications for absentee ballot must be postmarked by the 7th day before an election, which would be April 21 for the presidential primary.

The actual absentee ballot must be postmarked by the day before the election, which would be April 27 for the presidential primary.

Cheryl Nechamen,
Voter Services Chair

Book Recommendation Corner:



Tightrope – Americans Reaching for Hope Authors: Nicholas D. Kristof & Sheryl WuDunn

Publisher: Knopf

3 copies available in Schenectady County libraries

An essential book for 2020 – Ann Hatke

Municipal Housing Authority

The League of Women Voters of Schenectady County (LWVSC) congratulates Joan Johnson of Ten Eyck Apartments and Pauline Kent of Yates Village on becoming Tenant Commissioners on the Schenectady Municipal Authority (SMHA) Board in February.

Ms. Johnson is a 2019 recipient of the League's Susan B. Anthony award for civic engagement.

Dick Shave and Joan Elliott of the LWVSC reviewed signatures on petitions that are required for candidates seeking a seat on the Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority Board as Tenant Commissioners who represent residents of SMHA housing units and Section 8 housing, on the board. Mr. Shave and Ms. Elliott verified that there were a minimum of 50 valid signatures on each of the petitions. Ann Hatke, president of the League, sent the two commissioners notification that they were successful in gaining seats on the SMHA board. No election was required since there was not a contest for the seats. Richard Homineck, executive director of SMHA, was notified of the outcome.

The League is paid a fee for providing oversight of petition review and any election if needed. Any election requires league members at three polling sites during the voting, counting of ballots, and verifying the successful candidates.

The League, with its members volunteering, has been carrying on this responsibility for over 20 years.

Submitted by Joan Elliot

The Census

Every 10 years the U.S. Census takes on the enormous task of counting every single person living in the United States. For the first time this year, the Census will be encouraging people to respond online. The Census is mailing letters to every household between March 12th and 20th with a code for the online questionnaire. Getting an accurate count is vitally important. The Census count determines how many Congressional seats our state will have, affects the distribution of federal and state dollars in our community, and influences business and community planning decisions, such as where to locate new businesses. We need an accurate count to ensure that New York and our local communities get their fair share of the billions of dollars in federal funding that go to hospitals, fire departments, schools, roads and other resources based on census data.

New York is one of eight states expected to lose at least one congressional seat after the 2020 Census count, and possible more, as our population has grown at a slower pace than other. An accurate count will give New York the best chance of keeping as many of our Representatives as possible. Census results also determine how many votes New York gets in the Electoral College, which selects the President.

Excerpt from the Saratoga LWV Newsletter

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 at 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 _____

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”