

LWW LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®] OF SCHENECTADY COUNTY

BULLETIN

FEBRUARY 2021

President's Letter

Dear LWVSC Friends,

I hope this Bulletin finds everyone well, and hopeful about the coming months. I've begun noticing the extra few minutes of daylight each day, and seeing all the garden catalogs begin flood in. This is a month of holidays and commemorations: Presidents' Day, honoring the lives of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln; and Valentine's Day, bringing a bit of sweetness on a wintry day. It is also Black History Month, the official observance and celebration of the achievements of African Americans and a time to recognize their central role in US history.

"My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together."

Desmond Tutu

This is also a busy month for our League as we meet for consensus on LWVNYS's Healthcare Update on February 4. Later in the month on February 17 at 7:30 pm, we'll meet again for our annual Program Planning to review our current program and make plans for the coming year. We'll also examine the current policy positions of LWVNYS, in preparation for the 2021 New York LWV Convention to be held in Albany in June.

In this issue of the Bulletin, you will find two important documents: our current Proposed Local Program and a current Summary of LWVNYS Policy Positions. These documents will be used for discussion at the Program Planning Meeting. Please read these over carefully and bring them with you to the Zoom all-member meeting on February 17.

Looking forward to seeing you soon....

In League,
Ann Hatke

SAVETHEDATES! – LWVSC Upcoming Virtual Events:

February 17 at 7:30 pm – All-Member Program Planning Meeting

March 23 at 7:00 pm – Webinar: "Voter Turnout in 2021 – How Did it Differ from Earlier Years"

Speakers: Professor Zoe Oxley, Union College, and Pauline Kinsella, LWVSC – GOTV

Spring 2021 (speakers, date and time TBA): A Day in the Life – Managing Covid-19 in Schenectady County

OBSERVER CORPS

The League Board invites the membership to participate in the civic life of our area by observing one or more of the following. Please email comments from these observations to Mariellen Boomhower at lwvschenectady@gmail.com. Future Bulletins will contain information about additional observation opportunities.

Schenectady City Council

Council meetings are held on the 2nd and 4th Mondays at 5:30. **Committee meetings** are held on the 1st and 3rd Mondays at 5:30.

View the meetings on Open Stage Media on You Tube or Public Access broadcasts live on Spectrum channels 1303 or Verizon channel 38.

Schenectady County Legislature

County Legislature Meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7:00. **Committee Meetings** 1st Monday of the month at 7:00. Exceptions in 2021: June, July, September Committee meetings are the 1st Tuesday of the month at 7:30.

Meetings are streamed live on the Schenectady County Facebook page. Recorded meetings are found also on the Schenectady County website.

Town of Glenville

Town Board Meetings are held on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays at 7:00

Meetings are recorded and accessible on the Town of Glenville website. Register on line to get a link to the website to attend the meeting on line. You can sign up for privilege of the floor if you would like to speak at the meeting.

Town of Niskayuna

Town Board Meeting dates are not listed but are available on the Town calendar.

Meetings are live streamed on the Town of Niskayuna website. Instructions are on the website. Recorded Meetings are also available on the website.

Town of Rotterdam Town board Meetings are held on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays at 7:00

Recorded meetings are available on the Town of Rotterdam website. Instructions for dialing in to the meetings are on the website. Meeting calendar is on website.

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”

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC POLICY POSITIONS

LWVNYS

2019-2020

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.

Support the continuation of Fusion Voting in New York State whether or not Wilson-Pakula is repealed.

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 for staggered four year terms for both houses and the limiting of outside income for legislators, preferably on the federal model using a percentage of base income.

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 to 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.

Support for the option of medical aid in dying for the terminally ill.

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.
Support for a 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 and the existing formula 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.

LWVSC Local Program 2020-2021

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.
- improve accessibility to police complaint procedure
- Improved Mental Health Crisis Intervention

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.

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.

Health Services

- * Educate and advocate for national/state/local health care reform that provides quality physical and mental health care for all citizens.
- * Encourage and support countywide comprehensive health care planning and access, equity, and safety in health care.

Diversity and Equity

February is Black History Month, and the history of Africans in the United States is American history. This month the DEI Spotlight is on the following excerpts from "**The Untold Story of Women of Color in the League of Women Voters**", by Carolyn Jefferson Jenkins.

"My dream for this organization that has such promise is that in its next one hundred years, it will recognize the value of all people in reality and not just in rhetoric, in value not just voice (using visuals and symbols), in beliefs not just benefits, with no quotas, no stereotypes, no double standards and without the residue of race! My hope is that it will be an organization that is true to its principles and ideals"

"The League of Women Voters of the United States is at a crossroads. At a time when the fundamental tenets of a democratic nation are being challenged, there is no time for the organization to retreat. Leaguers can be the architects of a vision that moves the organization forward, truly becoming an inclusive "everywomans" organization by honoring all of its members and moving the accomplishments of women of color past, present, and future out of the footnotes and into the main narrative. The actions the league takes must not be crisis but by design. This is our opportunity to get it right!"

I believe the LWNYS DEI Task Force is striving to get it right!

Victoria Cooper, LWVSC Diversity Chair

LWNYS DEI Task Force: recent discussions included the following:

- Ways in which a "DEI lens" had been applied by local Leagues to their GOTV activities. (i.e., partnerships with Operation PUSH and NAACP, lawn signs, bus signage.
- Beginning to identify how to include Organizational Equity as part of our LWNYS Strategic Plan. To do that, we have to understand the differences between the standard objectives of Equality versus today's goals as relate to Equity.
- Confirmation that local Leagues that have not yet started to adopt the LWVUS DEI Policy, and placed it in visible locations, do need to begin.
- **DEI Assessment Survey:** As of January, the State League has joined the ranks of the local Leagues represented on the Task Force who have completed a DEI Assessment Survey. The results will be aggregated shortly for the Task Force to disseminate.

Resources available: A handout referencing how to apply a "DEI Lens" to LWV events is now made available through an upcoming LWVUS DEI webinar scheduled for February 18, entitled, "Event Planning Through a DEI Lens and How to Apply it for The Day of Action" : Register here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIVf-uurj4uGNOONLV9Iisf28SzeQdMnuHe> All League members are invited to attend.

Each local League must adopt/adapt the LWVUS DEI Policy Statement into your League's local policy and bylaws;

Excerpt from an article by Regina Tillman LWNYS



League Testifies at Education Finance Meeting

This week, the League's Education Financing Specialist, Marian Bott, testified before the Joint Budget Committees on Elementary Education. Marian recommended that the state seek to adjust factors in Title I funding to allow schools greater access to receive these funds. Title I provides federal funds to schools with high percentages of low-income students. These funds pay for extra educational services to help at-risk students achieve and succeed regardless of any disadvantages through no fault of their own. How much funding a school gets is determined by a formula used to measure poverty.

The testimony also discussed education of homeless children, school tax relief, local district funding adjustments, NYC fiscal stabilization grant, elimination of NYC charter facilities aid, and the Smart Schools Bond Act.

You can read Marian's full testimony at <https://files.constantcontact.com/37d635eb001/22b1e9a4-4e31-43a7-9b73-cf06cef1aaac.pdf>.

Redistricting Commission Meets to Discuss Funding

This week the Independent Redistricting Commission met to discuss their ongoing funding needs and newly released timeline for the release of census data. The Co-Executive Directors reported that the negotiation of contracts between the Department of State and SUNY Research Foundation was ongoing. The Commission has not been involved in the drafting of the contract and SUNY research will get 10% of this appropriation and \$250,000 will be set aside for legal fees meaning the Commission will only be eligible for \$750,000. The Co-Executive Directors said that SUNY will be involved in any contracting of vendors and that all employees would be employees of SUNY Research rather than employees of the state.

The continued delay in funding has halted the Commission from having access to the U.S. Census Bureau's Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing (TIGER) data, the backbone of the map-making process, because it has no funds for computers or staff.

The Commissioners discussed issuing a letter to Governor Cuomo urging him to release the funding immediately. Several Commissioners had drafted a letter to the Governor's office before the meeting. The remaining Commissioners requested the opportunity to propose edits before sending it to the Governor's office. The Commission made edits during the live webcast and agreed to have the Co-Executive Directors send the letter to the Governor, Budget Director, State Attorney General, US Attorney General, and legislative leaders.

The next meeting was scheduled for Feb 19th at 10:00 am.

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. Membership makes working on our goals possible.

MEMBERSHIP FOR JANUARY 1, 2021 – JUNE 30, 2021

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 HS 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 questions about dues or payments. 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 if for just a short task. Please check any areas that interest you. We appreciate your help.

Judicial _____ **Health** _____ **Observer Corps** _____ **Fund Raising** _____

Citizenship Mentoring Group _____ **Environment** _____ **Education** _____

Voter Services: **Register Voters** _____ **Candidate Forums** _____ **Voter Information** _____

Computer Skills: **Graphics/Layout** _____ **Data Bases** _____ **Website Work** _____

Facebook _____ **Electronic Publicity** _____ **Other Technical Skill(Describe)** _____

Other areas of interest _____

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