



League of Women Voters of Albany County Bulletin February-March 2017

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Mission

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Policy on Inclusiveness

The League of Women Voters in both its values and practice is committed to inclusion and diversity. This means:

We recognize that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision making;

We believe inclusiveness enhances our organization's ability to respond effectively to changing conditions and needs;

We affirm our commitment to reflecting the diversity of Albany County; and

There shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the League on the basis of economic position, gender, race, ability, age, sexual orientation, creed or national origin.

League of Women Voters of Albany County Meeting

When: **Sunday, Feb. 26, 2PM -4PM**

Where: St. Sophia Church
440 Whitehall Road, Albany

What: **"A Community Conversation
on Immigration in the Capital District"**

Upholding the Promise

"Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

In keeping with the promise found at the base of the Statue of Liberty, the LWVAC will present an in-depth look at the issues and concerns of the immigrant/refugee community in the Capital District as part of a panel discussion on Sunday, February 26, 2017. Although there have always been obstacles for immigrants and refugees, recent controversial restrictions from the White House have become subject to intense scrutiny and debate as well as public protests. It follows that these concerns have and will affect the local community as well.

The panel will feature guest speakers from the Capital Region Refugee Roundtable, the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, the Refugee and Immigrant Support Services at Emmaus, the Center for Women in Government and Civil Society and the New Sanctuary for Immigrants. The panelists will share some "human interest stories" and then discuss the services they offer as well as ways that people can be involved and supportive of their mission.

The community is invited to attend this meeting. All League meetings are open to the public. Contact Aimee Allaud, 85aimee@nycap.rr.com., or 482-2617.

Board and Committees

President, Margaret Danes, stsophia@nycap.rr.com

1st Vice-President, Paula Philo paula.philo@gmail.com

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A complete list of committee chairs is available on the LWVAC website, www.lwvalbany.org, under Contact Us

Electronic Bulletin

MEMBERS can receive our Bulletin electronically or by US mail. If you wish to receive our Bulletin electronically, please send an email to bulletin editor, Aimee Allaud, 482-2617, or 85aimee@nycap.rr.com.

Dues are Due!

Help Make Democracy Work! The LWVAC needs you!

Dues renewal time is here and you can renew on the League's website, www.lwvalbany.org or by check (mail to LWVAC, PO Box 611, Slingerlands, NY 12159).

LWVAC Board meetings are held monthly (see calendar) at St. Sophia's church, 440 Whitehall Road, Albany, call Margaret Danes, president, 489-4442, mdanes@nycap.rr.com.

Bulletin editors, Aimee Allaud, 85aimee@nycap.rr.com., and Marian Schwager, welcome comments and suggestions

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Chris Carson, President

President's Message

"Alice Through the Looking Glass"

These days, reading or viewing the news for me is disorienting. I wonder and question. Is this really my country? The land where human rights and civil rights are guaranteed? Where truth and freedom of press are honored and respected? Where a statue in a harbor welcomes "poor and huddled masses"?

To many it seems that the events of the past few weeks threaten to dismantle the basic tenets of our country, our democracy. There have been attempts to be selective on immigration with bans that appear to be based on religion and country of origin rather than on equitable and/or humanitarian designations. It seems unreasonable to build "walls" to ward off illegal immigrants at incredibly high costs yet continue efforts to discard and dismantle affordable health programs precisely because of their high costs. Intelligence reports of Russian intervention in the election process have been dismissed as "fake" while unfounded reports of illegal or fraudulent voting that might have affected the "popular vote" could warrant pricy investigation. (And we should note-this "voting fraud" investigation could lead to more stringent voter registration laws, efforts which most likely would continue to disenfranchise minority groups and the poor.)

In addition, there are serious concerns about freedom of the press. In the WashingtonPost.com, Greg Sargent comments, "Trump is trying to discredit not only the press' critical role in our democracy but also the idea of 'factual reality itself'." As such there are frequent statements criticizing the media for "fake news" including an admonishment that, "The media should be embarrassed and humiliated and keep its mouth shut and just listen for a while." There is even the newly-minted offering of "alternative facts".

Are these issues of major concern? Most assuredly. So where do we go from here? We have had huge turnouts for the Women's March in D.C., in New York, here in Albany and even in other parts

of the world. The League participated in this historical event. But as David Axelrod, a close Obama advisor, stated after observing the D.C. March, "This is an impressive display today. But if it isn't channeled into organizing in a focused way, then it is cathartic but not in the long run meaningful. That's the challenge for the progressive community."

That is our challenge - to continue to turn our concerns into meaningful efforts. The LWVUS offers one option. Go to <http://lww.org/blog/thanks-marching-here's-what's-next>. It also means writing to our government representatives with our concerns and encouraging them in their efforts. It means joining in rallies to demonstrate for support of human rights. It means supporting local efforts to becoming sanctuary cities, even with the threat of federal funding shut-downs. It means standing up for our principles in every which way we can even in the face of daunting odds. And let us not forget, as former Speaker of the House of Representatives Tip O'Neill said, "All politics is local." That means attending to local issues of importance at meetings for the county legislature, town or city boards, and even school board meetings. From national to state to local, let's really work to make our individual and collective efforts meaningful.

Margaret Danes, President

News Briefs

State League Streamlines Advocacy Using Two New Google Groups to Mobilize Action

The NYS League has set up two advocacy -based Google groups. Members of the groups can share their ideas, articles, statewide bills of interest, and whatever else they feel is appropriate. The most exciting part of these groups is it will be an excellent opportunity for the League to use its membership to lobby on pertinent legislation. We will send out action alerts on specific bills in real time so that those interested in calling their legislators can do so exactly when the time is right.

We have already formed 2 groups - the first is a General Advocacy Group that will be headed by Jennifer and Barbara. We will use this group to keep you all up to date on the general happenings at the Capitol. The second group will focus on Education issues. This group will be headed by our Education Finance Specialist, Marian Bott. If you are interested in joining either of these groups please email Jennifer@lwny.org. She will add you to whichever group you would like to join - feel free to sign up for both!

AND don't forget to check in to the LWVNY Blog: <http://lwny-capitolbeat.blogspot.com/>

It Is With Pleasure

The Board of LWVAC acknowledges the recent appointment of Mary Beilby to serve as an at large member. She joins us from having previously served on the board of the Cortland county league. She has been an active member of that board and has worked on a number of environmental issues.

League Looking for Board Members for 2017-2018

It's that time of year again. Our nominating committee is beginning its annual task of identifying members willing to serve on our board for the following year(s). We need help for planning and running our public programs, voter services and advocacy efforts. You will find board service to be an energizing and rewarding experience. If interested, contact committee chair Ann Brandon at 269-4381 or ambrandon2@gmail.com. Other committee members can also be contacted. They are Aimee Allaud, Paula Philo, Tina Raggio and Loretta Simon.

Legislative Procedures Position Formed by State League

Thanks to input provided this fall by local leagues, including ours, the state League adopted in January 2017 a series of recommended actions to amend/improve a wide range of legislative procedures. This new position statement, available for review on the state League's website lvvny.org, will be a big help for our lobbying efforts aimed at securing higher standards of transparency and ethics. The set of recommendations includes a longer (4 year) term for legislators, coupled with reforms in outside income limits, income disclosure, non-partisan, full time staff and more efficient and equitable access to legislative initiatives for all representatives.

Update on Albany County Legislative Redistricting

Discussions are continuing to take place on the two proposed Local Laws on redistricting. The main sponsors of each proposal have scheduled time with each other to determine if a single proposal can be agreed upon between them. The Law Committee is expected to get Legislative approval in their February monthly session to hold a Public Hearing on redistricting on February 21st (third Tuesday of the month). It remains to be seen if at that time there will be two proposed Local Laws, or a new combined one. The League has not supported one proposal over the other, but working with the sponsors toward a combined one that takes the best of both.

Notes On The Events of January 21, 2017 Our Leaguers reflect on their participation in Washington, NYC, and Albany

In New York City:

Like sardines swimming in friendly waters, Shirl and I were packed together with thousands, possibly tens of thousands in Dag Hammarskold Plaza on Second Avenue and 47th Street in NYC. No sharks in these waters, just friendly like-minded women and men, young and old, all sizes, shapes and colors prepared to march in defense of causes both common and diverse but all deserving of protection in our unique American democracy. We were all part of the Women's March.

Because the crowd was so congested up and down Second Avenue, we were unable to march along the planned route. We did, however, manage to make our way to Third Avenue where we joined others marching in and about traffic on their way to Trump Towers. The block around the Towers was completely barricaded and a recording ignored by both marchers and law enforcement warned us that congregating on the street was unlawful and make us subject to arrest. We stayed long enough to make way for the younger and sturdier legs that continued to arrive from all directions. The Mayor's Office estimated that 400,000-500,000 marched in NYC that day. (Herb Gordon reporting)

In Albany:

The Albany march, which reportedly brought out about 7000, was broader in scope than the Washington Women's March. Organizers encouraged people to express their concerns about any number of issues that they felt were threatened-the environment, women's rights, reproductive rights, LGBTQ rights, education, voters' rights. Creative signs, pink knitted hats, costumes, mobile voter registration stations appeared on all of these topics and more. The highlight, for me personally, was the opportunity to share this action with my 8 year old grandson, my son and my husband. Usually, it's just me. The 8 year old, a budding artist, created two impressive posters on his concerns for the event. (Mary Beilby, reporting)

In Washington:

It starts early but remains constant throughout the day. The throngs of mostly women with a strong smattering of men and children. The high energy and the frequent exchange of smiles with strangers who don't feel like strangers. The stopping and admiring of beautiful, creative homemade signs. The spontaneous chants that emerge small, but grow quickly within the crowd. We walk to the already crowded Metro at 8 am where one woman has her back covered in buttons with a note to ask for one, and I pick one to adorn my pink pussy hat from Britt who couldn't be there but asked I bring forward her want of equal pay. The speakers are diverse, the topics varied, but all bring the energy level higher. We leave our coveted spot between two large monitors on a grassy knoll to search for



bathrooms and half a block later we're caught shoulder to shoulder in a crowd that includes a large contingent of Pro Life women. We talk amicably and agree to disagree on that topic but find bonding on other things. Finally we "march" and we get to see the largeness of the crowd, the variation of it, more signs, more energy, bathrooms!. When we grow tired we head to the Metro again, so happy to find a bench so we can get off our feet for the first time in 9 hours and to wait and see if the crush of people will thin. It doesn't and we are squeezed in, the Metro worker apologizing for the crowding but thanking us for being there to speak for those like her who had to work. Again the crowd erupts in cheers and I think, this will be the last wave of this for the day, savor it. But then we sit in a restaurant in Silver Springs, the big TV on with no sound, and when pictures of the rally come on the screen, the whole restaurant hoots and hollers, the energy as strong as when it began so many hours earlier. (Patricia Sibilia, reporting)

A NOTE ON NEXT STEPS FROM THESE MARCHES

The Women's March was the culmination of two months of organizing - it was intended to be a beginning, not an end point - it was the kick-off for future action. Whether or not you went on a march is beside the point, the point is now - what do you do? Much of the organizing of activities is being done through social media. I have prepared a list of websites and facebook pages which provide information on what you can do from your home, what, where and when demonstrations, marches, activities and meetings are occurring - locally and at a distance.

These marches were attended by local league and non-league members. Several expressed interest in being active as a local group to organize use of letter writing, phone calls and demonstrations as issues necessitate. The group includes Cindy Schultz, Regina Tillman, Karen Wagner and Julie Elson. There was an initial meeting February 9 with plans to gather on a bi-monthly basis. If you are interested in joining this coordinating committee or want more information on how to access a wide range of links and resources related to issues featured in the marches, please contact Julie Elson at Jelson510@earthlink.net.

And don't forget LWVUS has also prepared a list of resources. Go to <http://lww.org/blog/thanks-marching-here's-what's-next>. (Julie Elson, Washington, reporting)

Calendar

- Feb. 13, 27, 9:30-11:30 Great Decisions Discussion Group, Community Room, Berkshire Bank, Vista Blvd., Slingerlands, contact Martha Kennedy, 439-4559, dkennedy2@nycap.rr.com
- Feb. 14 Happy Birthday LWVUS! 97 Years Young!
Tell us why you love the League!
- Feb. 17, 7:45 am Naturalization ceremony, Federal District Courthouse, Broadway, Albany, assist new citizens in registering to vote
contact Julie Elson, Jelson510@earthlink.net,
- Feb. 26, 2:-4 pm "A Community Conversation on Immigration in the Capital District,"
St. Sophia Church, 440 Whitehall Road, Albany,
contact Aimee Allaud, 85aimee@nycap.rr.com
- Mar. 2, 5:30 pm "Petticoats of Steel" Theatrical Performance, Huxley Theater,
Cultural Education Center (NYS Museum), 222 Madison Ave, Albany
- Mar 6, 1:30-3:30 LWVAC Board Meeting, St. Sophia's Church, 440 Whitehall Road, Albany,
Public is welcome. Contact Aimee Allaud, 85aimee@nycap.rr.com
- Mar 12-18 Sunshine Week, 2017, "How Transparent Is Your Local Town Website?"
Nationwide celebration of access to public information and what it means
for you and your community. See <http://sunshineweek.rcfp.org/events/>
- Mar 13, 27, 9:30-11:30 Great Decisions Discussion Group. See above for contact information.
- Mar 13, 7:00 pm Albany County Legislature, Albany County Courthouse, 2nd floor,
contact Patricia Sibilia at psbranch@verizon.net.
- Mar 23,31, 7:45 am Naturalization ceremony. Federal District Courthouse, Broadway, Albany,
assist new citizens in registering to vote
contact Julie Elson, Jelson510@earthlink.net

League's State Convention Is Coming!

The 57th State League Convention is scheduled for June 10-11, 2017, at the Holiday Inn Express in Liverpool, NY (just off the Thruway near Syracuse). We will be sending out the registration kits in late February.

Field Trip!

To celebrate women achieving the right to vote in 1917 in NYS, the state League is organizing a field trip from Liverpool to Seneca Falls on Friday, June 9 (day before Convention actually begins). This will involve a separate charge and everyone is welcome (not just convention attendees); tours of the Elizabeth Cady Stanton home, Women's Hall of Fame and the Women's Rights National History Park (and Wesleyan Chapel), as well as dinner and a speaker at an historic restaurant in Seneca Falls, will be included. You will need to be in Liverpool by noon on Friday to join this trip. Watch for more information in the registration kit (end of February) or call Laura at LWVNYS office, 465-4162.



Also, be sure to check the 100th Anniversary Blog weekly for updates as to significant women in history, historic sites to visit, and events to continue our celebration of women's right to vote in NYS. Click on <http://lwvnys100thanniversary.blogspot.com/> each week for the new posting!

Finally, the calendar posted on the state website provides information on events celebrating both centennials – women's achieving the right to vote in 1917 and the state League's founding in 1919. Watch for events in this area. https://calendar.google.com/calendar/embed?src=74k4b1rr7brh3vgk53a9nn7fik%40group.calendar.google.com&ctz=America/New_York



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

Membership 2017-18 - Join & Make a Difference

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- Individual Membership \$60/year Send me newsletters by mail
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 Student Membership \$25/year Contribution in support of my local League
 I'd like to join; this is the best I can do Please send me more information
 tax deductible contribution to LWVNYS Education Fund

Mail to: League of Women Voters of Albany County, PO Box 611, Slingerlands, NY 12159

Or join online at <http://www.lwvalbany.org/join-renew.html>

League of Women Voters of Albany County
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