



# League of Women Voters of Albany County Bulletin Midsummer 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

## BREAKING NEWS: LWVAC CANCELS SUMMER TO PLAN FOR THE FUTURE AND REVISIT THE PAST

While many of us were easing into summer leisure activities, LWVAC members Mary Beilby, Patricia Sibilia, Regina Tillman, Cindy Schultz and Britt Westergard were hard at work representing our League at the State League's 57th Biennial convention in Liverpool, NY on June 9 -11, 2017.

They kicked off the conference with a pre-convention tour of the National Women's Rights Park, the National Women's Hall of Fame and other memorable historic sites in Seneca Falls and dinner at the historic Gould Hotel in Seneca Falls (see Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/LWVACNY/>)

Historical re-enactor, Melinda Grube, as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, skillfully described her fight for women's rights and suffrage in the Wesleyan Chapel, the site of the 1848 Women's Rights Convention. Sad fact - Because of Donald Trump's hiring freeze, the National Historic Park in Seneca Falls was down to being open 3 days a week!

Continuing in the vein of enlarging knowledge of women's history, luncheon speaker, Dr. Sally Roesch Wagner, founding Director of the Matilda Joslyn Gage Center for Social Justice Dialogue, spoke on "The Rest of the Story of the Suffrage Movement." Dr. Wagner opened her keynoter with the following introduction, *"Full disclosure: I am a dangerous woman. No, seriously. I'm officially designated by the U.S. government as a dangerous woman. This is my FBI file, obtained through the Freedom of Information Act in the 1980's, which documents my activism in the anti-war and women's rights movement. I had never broken the law. I had simply been a patriotic citizen, following in the footsteps of my social justice ancestors opposing the government when it was wrong. Patriotism is not "my*

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.

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A complete list of committee chairs is available on the LWVAC website, [www.lwvalbany.org](http://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](mailto:85aimee@nycap.rr.com).

*country right or wrong" it is "my country, right NOT wrong." This file contains a form signed by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover with the box marked potentially dangerous person checked. I have spent my life trying to live up to J. Edgar Hoover's expectations of me."*

The full text of her speech is found at [www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org). Dr. Wagner concluded the brief tour through NYS women's suffrage history with the following message, "Our foremothers worked to get constitutional protection for the vote for 72 years. We picked up their issue and have worked for equal rights to be guaranteed to women in the constitution for 93 years and we still don't have an equal rights amendment! And to add insult to injury, the U.S. is the only democracy that has not ratified CEDAW, the International Bill of Rights for Women. Will we enter 2020 an embarrassment in the eyes of the world because the U.S. arrogantly demands human rights from other countries while refusing to recognizing equal rights for women in our own country?"

Great inspirations for the League's own convention as we reviewed our recent progress and decide how we go forward! Please put up your feet, grab a lemonade, and join us in this summer bulletin as we explore present and future plans evolving from the conference, our June annual meeting and July planning session for the upcoming year.

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](mailto:mdanes@nycap.rr.com).  
Bulletin editors, Aimee Allaud, [85aimee@nycap.rr.com](mailto:85aimee@nycap.rr.com)., and Marian Schwager, welcome comments and suggestions

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## President's Message

### Summer Reflections

It's a wonderful summer tradition every year in Saratoga. Shakespeare in the park! Congress Park to be specific. This year's production included "A Midsummer Night's Dream" done wonderfully by our local Saratoga Shakespeare Company. However, sweet dreams and good humor have not been the substance of our media news this summer. Reading or viewing the daily news is more often than not disturbing, distressing, and sometimes requiring a suspension of disbelief. Because of this onslaught of negativity, there are those who avoid the news entirely.

And, therein, lies the rub. For without knowledge and information, we are not well-prepared or energized to participate in current events. At the Albany Women's March in January, there were several thousand women, men, and children who were energized in demonstrating their concerns on issues of great importance especially health care and women's rights. At the speaker's platform, a black minister from Saratoga made a profound observation looking out at the massive group of people. "And where were you on election day?" This, of course, was in reference to the very low turnout of eligible voters last November.

That's where the League of Women Voters comes in. Our mission is to provide facts and information, to encourage participation in our government-never as proponents of any political candidate or party-but rather as "reporters" of facts, not fiction or hearsay. Unfortunately, hearsay and fake news have become major factors in creating confusion and negative perceptions via social media and start-up news sources. And so the League and other "good citizen" groups have a major role to play in providing opportunities for all of us to become informed-a "smart and savvy" electorate. "Educate, advocate, impact." Our goals. And the Albany League is looking forward to meeting these goals in the coming year with new programs and events. Keep updated and informed by checking our website. (Just google "League of Women Albany County" ) In addition to the current calendar, you will find newsletters, local programs, "Voter's Guide", and how to contact us. Don't tune out; tune in!

Margaret Danes, President

## STATE CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

Many Info Sessions and Caucuses on substantive topics such as League Program, How-To's, Management/Bylaws, the League's Future, a possible change of tax status from 501C4 into a 501C3 (tax deductible), and supporting the 2017 Constitutional Convention ballot proposal brought the delegates up to date on the current issues facing the organization.

Honors were bestowed on two State League Board Members for exemplary and extended service as each retires from their State Board positions. Our own Aimee Allaud, Communications Director for LWVAC and long standing State Elections Specialist received recognition along with Barbara Bartoletti, retiring director of legislative affairs. Both leave an important legacy of dedication and accomplishment.



At the State Convention, delegates approved two program items for local league members to discuss and vote upon during the coming League year:

1. An update on the Charter School position adopted in 2006 to 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 100 charter school cap has been exceeded over the years and is no longer a relevant number.
2. A concurrence with a LWV of Utah's position on Death with Dignity. (Death with Dignity legislation has been introduced in the last few years in New York but it is not covered under the League's current Health Care positions.)

Probably the most controversial item under discussion at the convention was about the League board's decision to support the 2017 NYS Constitutional Convention ballot proposal. Delegates requested the State Board revisit this decision at their next meeting in July.

At the March 2017 board meeting, the state League board voted to support the November ballot to call for a Constitutional Convention to be convened in 2019 to consider changes to the New York State Constitution. The state Constitution requires that this question be asked of the voters every 20 years, Any proposed changes recommended by the Convention would be subject to voter approval.

At caucuses during Convention and during the Directions to the Board time, a number of members raised concerns about the underlying rationale for the decision and the board interpretation of the League's Constitutional Convention position. Several asked that the 2017-2019 newly elected board reconsider the decision to support and also update the League' Constitutional Convention position adopted in 1993 and updated in 2015.

All materials that had been distributed to the previous board, including all input from local Leagues, were sent to new Board members for their review before the July board meeting. After discussion and review of the process under which the state board applies League positions to specific action and advocacy, and the precedent of how the League board applied the Constitutional Convention position to the 1997 ballot question, the new board agreed that it was the appropriate responsibility of the board to decide whether to support, oppose or stay neutral on the ballot question. Under the position, the League does not have a standing position on whether or not a Constitutional Convention should be held. Instead, the determination is made by the state board every 20 years given current policy circumstances. As part of the March 2017 decision-making process, the state League sought input from local Leagues who were informed that this input would be used as part of the decision-making process.

The new board also affirmed the state League decision to support the ballot measure as a means of giving New York voters to opportunity to consider critical reforms that state government has refused to undertake, such as voting reforms, anti-corruption measures, completely independent redistricting, modernizing the court system, and further guaranteeing personal freedom and meeting basic human needs.

The new board will consider an update to the Constitutional Convention position if submitted by any local League as part of the state program planning process. If recommended by the board, an update requires a majority of delegate support. A non-recommended item requires two-thirds support.

## **Volunteer Opportunities Abound in Voter Services for Members and Non-Members Alike**

### **What can you do with the League as part of our Voter Services Committee?**

We have all types of ways you can help with our major functions- voter information, voter activities to help turn out the vote, voter registration, candidate forums and co-sponsored civic events. Training is provided.

**These opportunities are for members only:**

- Help with an On-line voter guide called VOTE411--- this gives voters rosters of candidates and allows them to compare where they stand on the issues. Volunteers reach out to candidates, help design local guides, enter data, publicize guides and answer questions.
- Plan voter information events/ activities- Work as part of a team to decide which neighborhoods, schools, events or groups the League should target information campaigns for. We use every possible "tool in the book" to reach voters including social media, voter information tables at events and locations , engaging high school and college groups and also educators. Meet with Albany County Board of Elections to identify effective strategies. Analyze Albany County voting data.
- Plan Candidate Events for local elections, including targeting of races to cover, all logistics, structure, co-sponsors, and staffing.

**These opportunities are for anyone who is interested:**

- Volunteer at a voter information event. Get a taste of League business. Hand out literature, answer questions and learn more about voting in New York from a League volunteer.
- Hold a voter information event for your organization. Many of you are already involved in another organization, church groups, social organizations , etc . The League is happy to provide voter information training to your members. We can provide practical information when, where and how to vote.
- Volunteer at a Candidate event - See local democracy in action in the city of Albany, or towns of Bethlehem, Colonie Guilderland etc. Help run event by welcoming public, explaining event rules, and answering questions .
- Volunteer at Naturalization Ceremonies. Attend naturalization ceremonies and help new citizens register to vote.

Contact Barbara Frankel at Barbara Frankel, [barbarameg@me.com](mailto:barbarameg@me.com) to help out in any of these tasks!

## **County Legislature Observer Corps Update July 29, 2017**

**Redistricting:** The discussion continues between Peter Crouse (R-24th) and Joanne Cunningham (D-34th) to see if they can come to consensus on their competing proposals to address redistricting. They have not been able to meet the timelines required to have a voter ballot proposition for this coming election day, but this is critical legislation and should not be rushed. Albany County has been sued 3 times over their last three decades of redistricting efforts and lost all three times, with the last one costing the County \$1.7 million dollars.

Of note in the July Legislative session:

- Local Law B passed - Limited exemption from real property taxes for qualified conservation easement exemption agreements within the Town of Bethlehem
- Resolution 297 passed unanimously - Joining the lawsuit on drug manufacturers to recover current and future damages to county taxpayers from abuse of opioid pharmaceuticals.



Items in progress to keep an eye on:

- Resolution 266 and 267 - competing resolutions on how legislative Public Forums are held. Currently with the Law Committee after much discussion in July legislative session.
- Resolution 210 - passed in May session requiring County Executive to update comprehensive recycling and solid waste management plan by January 1.
- County shared services initiative as mandated by the Governor aimed at reducing property taxes - 3 public information sessions are being held in late July/early August.

For a summary of bills introduced in County Legislature in 2016 and 2017, [click here](#) or email Patricia Sibilia ([psbranch@verizon.net](mailto:psbranch@verizon.net)) and request a copy.

## **2017 Students Inside Albany Conference Sarah Bracken**

Hello. My name is Sarah Bracken and I am from Voorheesville HS. I am here to speak to you tonight about Students Inside Albany as I was this year's Albany County League of Women Voters representative. I would like to thank the Albany County League of Women Voters for allowing me this unique opportunity.

For those of you who do not know, Students Inside Albany is a four-day residential program at the State's capitol to educate students on how the New York State government works and how we can influence and, potentially change, public policy. Through this program I was able to gain a better understanding of the working of the New York State government, such as how the IDC impacts the majority in the Senate and the effects of the differing majorities in the legislative branches, as well as meet all kinds of people.

My favorite part of the program was shadowing my districts Assemblymember and Senator. Assemblymember Pat Fahy was awesome, she explained to me how the floor of the Assembly worked and what she had to do in the day to day, including what committees she was on. I was also able to sit in on a lobbying session between Independent Living and her head staffer, this session showed me what a good lobbying session should look like. My shadowing of the Senator George Amedore was slightly different. We, me and the other students who were assigned to shadow Senator Amedore, were mostly with one of his staffers, Vin Nicosia, we were able to ask him questions about what he did and what it was like working in the Senate.

Shadowing was not the only thing Students Inside Albany did, we also were taught how to lobby, we even had Assemblymember John McDonald to practice on. I was able successfully lobby him on the topic of the Physician Aid in Dying. Different lobbying groups, for example Environmental Advocates and the constituency group Alliance for Equality Education, came to speak with us on their differing lobbying tactics and how they successfully lobby.

I also met other students from throughout the state and all of them were amazing, together we went on a tour of the capital and were allowed on both Assembly and Senate floors, a cruise on the Dutch Apple on the Hudson, and bowling. We were also able to have a tour of the NYS Court of Appeals and even stand behind the judges seats. Overall, Students Inside Albany was an amazing experience that I would suggest to any student interested in politics. Once again I would like to thank you for allowing me the opportunity at attend Students Inside Albany.

## Looking Ahead to the fall with LWVAC Programs.....

**September:** we are in the process of planning programs for the year. In the later half of September, we plan to offer a program on the prospects for healthcare in New York. Does NY need to "go it alone" to provide health care if federal funds are cut off or severely reduced? We hope to have legislators, health care providers, insurers discuss possible scenarios including creating a state health insurance plan based on ACA, statewide single-payer plan, or other. The state league's position on health care is found on the [lwny.org](http://lwny.org) website.

**October** will bring a discussion of the pros and cons of the ballot proposal to hold a NY Constitutional Convention. Even though the NYS league is recommending a YES vote, our program will present both pros and cons as well as clarifying the fact that the public will vote again to approve any proposed revisions to the constitution.

Watch as plans develop and feel free to offer topic, speaker or venue suggestions or volunteer participation in one or more of our public programs. We are hoping to expand our reach through several strategies such as co-sponsorship with other organizations and change of venues and program times and format.

### Calendar

- Aug 14, 6:30 PM LWVAC Board Meeting, St. Sophia's, 440 Whitehall Road, Albany.  
All are welcome, contact Paula Philo, paula.philo@gmail.com, 475-9213.
- Aug 26- Sept. 8 Women's Equality Day Displays at local libraries with voting information  
see local Albany County libraries for times, contact Aimee Allaud,  
482-2617, or [85aimee@nycap.rr.com](mailto:85aimee@nycap.rr.com)
- Aug 31, 6-8 PM Albany Mayoral Primary Candidates Forum, with WCAA-LP 107.3FM..  
68 Grand Street, Albany, live studio audience, contact Barbara  
Frankel, barbarameg@mac.com, 810-4180
- Sept 5, 6-8 PM Albany Mayoral Primary Candidates Forum, co-sponsor NAACP,  
105 Second Street, contact Barbara Frankel, barbarameg@mac.com,  
810-4180
- Sept 6, 6:30 PM LWVAC Board Meeting, St. Sophia's, 440 Whitehall Road, Albany.  
All are welcome, contact Paula Philo, paula.philo@gmail.com, 475-9213.
- Sept 7. 6:30-8 PM Albany Mayoral Primary Candidates Forum - Environmental Health and  
Protection, co-sponsored with Environmental Advocates, First Unitarian  
Universalist Society of Albany, 405 Washington Ave., contact Barbara  
Frankel, barbarameg@mac.com., 810-4180
- Sept 12, 12-9 PM NYS Primary Election for candidates to run at General Election in  
municipal elections
- Sept 28 Women's Press Club of NYS Annual Awards and Scholarship Dinner,  
honoring Barbara Bartoletti and 4 other women,  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/annual-awards-scholarship-dinner-tickets-36517940142>



LEAGUE OF  
WOMEN VOTERS®

## Membership 2017-18 - Join & Make a Difference

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Address, City, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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Individual Membership \$60/year

Send me newsletters by mail

Household Membership \$90/year

Just use my email for newsletters

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>

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