State Board Updates
December 2019

Local League To Do’s (email: lwvny@lwvny.org or call 518-465-4162)
• Complete and return the Legislative Agenda order form by Jan. 1
• Complete and return the Legislative Priorities form by Feb. 1
• Organize meeting to discuss Constitutional Convention position update and return response form by March 1, 2020

President’s Report, Suzanne Stassevitch, smstass@mac.com
2020, already? And so much to do, so many elections! First, I wish you all good health and a Happy New Year. Let’s all take a breath, enjoy family and friends, and recharge for 2020. I look forward to meeting many of you during our Regional Workshops being set up in March 2020 and hearing about your plans to GOTV (get out the vote) in 2020. If you have strategies to share for GOTV, we will happily add them to the GOTV toolbox on the website.

Early voting was a smashing success with your help, educating voters and promoting our survey of the early voting experience. Our Early Voting Survey has been shared around the state with Legislators and BOE’s. The survey reveals what we need to do to make early voting work better for voters and poll workers in 2020.

Please note: the surveys that we ask you to reply to or support are an important tool for the State League. Survey responses help us to allocate our resources and determine our priorities. Your recent response to the Voter Service Survey (by more than 75% of LL’s) is immensely valuable and you will be hearing more about those results from our Voter Service leaders.

It was a great pleasure to share a League Day at the UN with many of you. Our briefings by Climate Action specialists were as straightforward as the recent UN report on Climate Action, concerning the real crisis we are facing. While we were applauding our appreciation of their briefings, I really just wanted to weep. As we learned from our program at Convention 2019 about Food Waste, so too with climate action, there are many actions/changes to behavior, we know how to do as individuals that will have an impact on the climate. Let’s act now.

Executive Director: Laura Ladd Bierman, Laura@lwvny.org
League Day at the United Nations: Climate Change
Almost 100 people attended the Annual League Day at the United Nations on December 4, 2019. After tours of the UN facility and lunch in the Delegates’ Dining Room, the attendees were briefed on climate change issues by two speakers: Omar Hernandez - Office of UN Sustainability Goals, Department of Global Communications, and Satay Tripathni, UN Assistant Secretary General and Head of NY Office at UN Environment. See attached or the state League website for a summary of their presentations (https://www.lwvnyonline.org/programs-studies/un/2019/summary-of-speakers_120419.pdf). Thanks to Zonta International – District 4 and the Women’s Bar Association of New York for co-sponsoring the day with the League’s Education Foundation.
2020 Students Inside Albany Conference
The 2020 Students Inside Albany Conference will be held May 17-20 at the Hampton Inn in downtown Albany. We had had requests for 70 students from the local Leagues and Leagues have been notified how many they can send. We do maintain a waiting list, however, and encourage local Leagues to select alternates to fill spaces as cancellations happen. We always have some cancellations and will take students from the waiting list. The forms to be completed by the selected students and parents will be emailed to youth chairs in early January; those complete forms MUST be returned to the state office by March 1 or the local League will lose their space and someone from the waiting list will be allowed to attend. If you have questions, contact Laura@lwvny.org or Katrina@lwvny.org.

Save the Date: 2020 March Event to Honor Barbara Bartoletti
Planning has begun for an event on March 10, 2020, to be held at the NYS Museum. Barbara Bartoletti will be honored at this event for her almost 40 years as a volunteer lobbyist for the League. A part-time temporary person has been hired to help organized the event, Mari Shopsis. The NYS Archives Partnership Trust is co-sponsoring the event with us. Liz Benjamin, former host of Capitol Tonight, will interview Barbara in an informal conversation about Barbara’s many years of service. Watch for more information!

100th Birthday Celebration in Buffalo
The centennial celebration in Buffalo on November 16 was a great success. Approximately 150 people attended in the beautiful venue of The Buffalo History Museum. The food was great and the special exhibit on women’s suffrage in western NY was an interesting display. The honorees were presented their awards by LWVNYS President, Suzanne Stassevitch:

- Carrie Chapman Catt Award for Leadership in Government
  - Kathy and William Hochul
- Narcissa Cox Vanderlip Award for Leadership in Education
  - Katherine Conway-Turner
- Community Leadership Award
  - Alice Jacobs
- Emerging Leader Award
  - Ariel Palitz

Katie Alexander of WE’re 4 Buffalo TV station was the emcee for the evening. The flowers were donated and arranged by Committee member, Margie McIntosh (LWV of Cattaraugus & Allegany Counties MAL Unit) and the music by student musicians was organized by Committee member, Mary Croxton (LWV of Chautauqua). A huge thank you goes to Lori Robinson who helped throughout the planning and the event, and Rebecca Costanzo, Committee member who helped with honorees and Honorary Committee member solicitations. The rest of the Committee, Mary Hussong-Kallen, Joan Bozer, and Janet Zehr also contributed to the evening’s success. Finally, the staff in the office helped with the planning, and Marissa and Jennifer were critical to smooth functioning of the evening. The event netted over $15,000 for the state League. We will be sharing the info on attendees and donors with the local Leagues, as promised, so they can use this information for future development.

Advocacy: Sally Robinson, sally.s.robinson@gmail.com and Jennifer Wilson, jennifer@lwvny.org

Constitutional Convention Position Update
At the State Convention in June, the delegates approved an update to the State League’s position on a Constitutional Convention. The purpose of this update is to determine whether there is member agreement on deleting the first sentence of the League’s 1993 Constitutional Convention position, as revised June 2015.
The first sentence to be deleted is below:
“The League of Women Voters of New York State does not support or oppose the holding of a constitutional convention.”

Attached you will find the materials for consideration by your local League of this update:
- Current Constitutional Convention Position
- Background and Other Information
- Update Form to be Returned to the State League office by March 1, 2020

**Legislative Agenda and Legislative Priorities**
The state League produces a Legislative Agenda each year in which the main issues that will be lobbied or monitored during the upcoming legislative session are described. Given the League’s finances this year, we are asking each local League to order by January 1, 2020 the number of Agendas that they plan to use on the attached form. We will print a limited supply so make sure your order is in by Jan. 1 to receive copies.

The local Leagues are also asked to provide input into the development of priorities for state office resources and staff during the upcoming legislative session. It doesn’t mean we won’t monitor and lobby on other issues, but what do our members and local Leagues think are the most important issues? Please return this completed form by Feb. 1, 2020.

**Redistricting**
The National League has launched a new campaign to bring fair electoral maps to all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In October, National invited League leaders from across the country to attend a two-day workshop on their new People Powered Fair Maps campaign. Jennifer attended on behalf of LWNYS. National has given us grant to launch our own statewide campaign to monitor our first independent redistricting commission and ensure transparency and accountability throughout the process.

In November, the League sent a letter to all legislators reminding them of their constitutional duty to form New York’s first ever independent redistricting commission. The League has called on legislators to fund this commission and appoint commissioners by February 1, 2020. The League has created a one-page factsheet describing the constitutional mandates of the commission and outlining a calendar of legislative and commission actions that need to be taken between 2020 and 2022.

The League is planning to advocate for funding for the commission during the 2020-2021 budget cycle. We will be working with experts to estimate the cost of the commission and make recommendations for the spending of those funds.

**Campaign Finance Reform**
The Public Campaign Financing Commission created after a stalemate in the state legislature last session released their proposal on November 25 to implement public campaign financing in New York State. The proposal will become law unless the legislature returns by December 22 to modify all or part of it. Their full proposal can be found on their website https://campaignfinancereform.ny.gov/. ReInvent Albany has created a summary of the recommendations which can be found on their site https://reinventalbany.org/ or directly here.

The state League testified at the hearing in New York City in December and in October and November the League worked with local Leagues in Long Island and Buffalo to empower League members to testify at the final two public hearings in those areas. The League worked with the Fair Elections NY coalition to track the process of the commission and participate in a joint letter to commissioners urging them to release their recommendations early so that the public could add their input.
The League released a statement criticizing the commission for becoming distracted by peripheral issues, not reducing contribution limits sufficiently and proposing a system that could work out to favor incumbent candidates. In addition to the proposal for a public campaign financing system, the Commission significantly raised the threshold of votes for a party to gain a ballot line and required the threshold to be met every two years. They also raised the number of petition signatures required for a statewide candidate to get on the ballot. Following the release of the package the League issued a statement. READ MORE.

**Court Reform**
The League has joined the Statewide Coalition for Court Simplification to advocate for court reform in New York State. In November, the League testified before the Joint Legislative Judiciary Committee. The League advocated for consolidating the current 11 separate trial courts into a three-tier model, and establishing an integrated, statewide court system consisting of a minimum number of trial courts of broad jurisdiction.

**PowHer – Women’s Issues**
PowHer is a coalition dedicated to women’s issues focusing mainly on pay equity. Their prime bill was a bill to bar employers from asking potential employees about their previous salary history. Now that most of their issues have been accomplished they are looking to pick up on some new issue areas. At the meeting they did not decide on any particular issues but did mention ERA and some fixes to the paid family leave bill.

**New York Counts - Census**
In November we attended the New York Counts 2020 coalition meeting about outreach and education around the census. The coalition will be providing materials for partner groups and will be creating a “pop up PR Firm” to help groups use their social media, press, and other outreach tools to empower individuals to complete their census forms. They are hiring consultants to help these groups and will be releasing their official marketing materials in late December. They have invested a significant amount of money into their campaign and would like all partner groups to use their materials. This meeting was very NYC specific but was extremely well attended and very informative. They will be holding another forum in Syracuse in January or February.

The National League has also created outreach materials for local Leagues which can be found on their website. We are encouraging local Leagues to work with their local complete count committees and census offices to help with outreach in hard to reach areas.

**Early Voting**
Following the early voting period, the League created a report on the results of our early voting satisfaction survey (report is attached and posted on the state League website). The report was presented at the Joint Legislative Election Law Committee hearing. We also shared the report with press and were reported about in several outlets. The report will be used for early voting reform advocacy in 2020.

The League was also invited to a roundtable on early voting by the State Board of Elections. The roundtable was rescheduled to Monday Dec 9th because of the snow storm READ MORE.

**Financing of Healthcare Update Committee**
The Financing of Healthcare Position Update Committee (Valerie King and Barb Thomas, co-chairs, and committee members Anne Burton, Judy Esterquest, Estelle Gellman, Larry Kilian, Madeline Zevon) have been meeting since October to zero in on the way we’d like to update the position and provide criteria we would like to see in any single payer system. We are simultaneously working to develop pro/con materials for Leagues to consider on these points. Our current timeline calls for us to finalize a proposed updated position and complete our materials for approval by the July 2020 LWVNY Board meeting. That way local Leagues and individual members can expect to receive the materials in time to use after the 2020 election. We would anticipate receiving replies in time for the LWVNY March 2021 Board Meeting to finalize a new position.
Voter Services: Judie Gorenstein, judieL728@aol.com

Voter Service Report

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, AND KUDOS TO OUR LOCAL LEAGUES, MALs, AND ILOs!!!

A record number of you – 41 responded to our 2019 Voter Service Survey with impressive numbers and great recommendations that we will respond to.

2019 Voter Registration: in a word, our registration activities are booming:

All leagues did voter registration drives
17 did more than in past years (about 1/3 of you held more drives than last year”)
27 held training workshops for either league volunteers or other groups and organizations
24 held drives in venues different from the past
22 held drives in underserved communities (This is really important and will continue to be focus for leagues to do)

You said/We heard:
*The Voter Registration Toolkit was helpful,
* More information is not necessary.

2019 Voter information: Voter’s Guide and Early Voting

37 leagues distributed VG Part 1
39 leagues distributed Early Voting brochures
18 leagues had changes they would recommend for brochures:

You said/We heard:
* Use cards or flyers instead of brochures
* Use large print and make it at a middle school reading level
* Get the information out earlier (Our goal is to get it out as early as possible)
* Simplify the text about Early Voting and make it less wordy
* Increase publicity, more advertising about Early Voting

2019 Candidate Events

34 leagues held successful candidate events. Majority held from 1-5 events.
13 events were cancelled with 11 leagues canceling events due to Empty Chair Policy
23 leagues had candidates sign and return ground rules/written policy
25 leagues had their events videoed and 3 leagues had their events live streamed
30 leagues have a videotaping policy that they send to candidates
24 Tool kits and templates were helpful in organizing events

You said/We heard:
*The Empty Chair policy is still an issue for some leagues where one party refuses to attend. (We appreciate your adhering to the policy and will continue to work with you, offer support and look for possible solutions)
*Signed Video/taping policy is effective establishing control and ownership of recording – cell phone taping by audience members remains a problem at times
*More guidance is required for dealing with taping in event venues that are public
*Policy is required for controlling and managing ownership of livestreamed events. Most important is that candidates and parties sign our recording policy and agree not to use segments.

2019 GOTV

14 leagues (or “1/3 of you”) collected contact info for follow up
20 leagues found the Get Out The Vote Toolkit helpful
14 leagues have done GOTV in past
4 leagues said they were able to measure success
21 leagues said they would make changes to GOTV efforts next year. 5 said no, others deliberating

You said/We heard:
* We need to help you follow up to remind people to vote and to plan activities to GOTV on election days such as partnering with car services to get voters to polls.
* We need to explore and suggest the best app or system for texting reminders to vote.
* We need to suggest other ways to GOTV that don’t require a large number of volunteer
* Toolkit should be organized with two sections: one for those who have done it in past and one for those just starting to GOTV.

In General – How Can the State League Help You??

You said/We heard:
* Create more templates of materials that leagues can print out and post
* Publicize successes of other leagues
* Organize better access to best practices
* Work on revitalizing the League image and publicizing league with the newer image.

Youth and Civics Education: Crystal Joseph, campus@lwvnyc.org

Through the concepts of action civics, policy and advocacy young people across New York City are finding meaningful ways to passionately discuss matters that are of interest to them. With the support of Generation Civics, the League was invited to participate in a science-fair styled presentation of high school youth civic projects. As a community advisor, I was briefed on policy issues like why ‘stop and frisk’ and curbing gun violence matters. Students also led discussions to help the community understand why youth need support for sustainable employment and I even learned why there is a growing problem of homelessness in the borough of the Bronx. Each student presenter had to convince their audience on why their social justice issue was important. The students then guided visitors through a process of root causes to the problem, who is targeted, why the cause matters to them and then presented possible ways to come to a solution. The policy project taught students to be advocates, work as a team and listen to their peers for ways to mediate and come to reasonable solutions. For example, in one group’s presentation on reducing gun violence, the Bronx students polled their high school grade and asked how ‘stop and frisk’ impacts their lives. While about forty-five percent of the students agreed that ‘stop and frisk’ keeps people safe over sixty percent of those students also agreed that the policy is a form a racial injustice. As the students looked to come to a resolution they made it clear that students want to feel safe in their communities but they also don’t want to live in fear. Similarly, as a Bronx native, I learned about the growing rate of homelessness in the borough. The student presenter shared the following perspective: “Homelessness has many faces and many definitions…each person has a unique story.” The problem of homelessness impacts public school students as well. In fact, in a testimony to the Senate Standing Committee on Education and Budget and Revenue, Mary Jenkins, Chair of the Education Committee for the LWVNYC, confirms that “…one tenth of school children in New York City are homeless.” Please read Mary’s full testimony: https://www.lwvnyonline.org/advocacy/education/2019/Testimony-to-Senate-Standing-Comm-on-Education-M.Jenkins-LWVNYC-Dec-2019.pdf (also posted on state League website). Many thanks to the Suffolk County area leagues for sharing the Generation Civics event with me and to the Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties for teaching me about their efforts for First Vote.