PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I’m writing my message to you on New Year’s Day. It’s a day when I always reflect on accomplishments of the previous year. 2013 was a good year for our League. We registered over 500 voters in several efforts: at the Farmer’s Market, the Apple Harvest Festival, Ithaca College and National Voter’s Registration Day. We are fortunate to have an energetic Director of Voter’s Service, Lucia Sciore, and members like you who volunteer to help with voter registration.

We were asked by the community to sponsor four candidates’ forums. We are recognized as an organization that is political but nonpartisan. Our forums provide information in an open and nonbiased manner. Tompkins County appreciates this service.

We offered six programs on various current issues. We started the year with a program on simplifying our court system and ended with a well-attended program on New York’s healthcare exchange program. In between we held two programs on multiple sources of energy. We are fortunate to have two active committees and energetic chairpersons: Rebecca Elgie and Sarah Jane Blake for Healthcare and Kay Wagner for Natural Resources. Thank you to all of you who participate in these committees. In 2014 you
will see continued focus on these two areas of interest. Much work still needs to be done.

Mid-year we held our first-of-a-kind press conference on Governor Cuomo’s 10-point Women’s Equality Agenda. We publicly announced our endorsement of the Agenda and Lucia Sciore and I had an opportunity to visit with Barbara Lifton in Albany to talk about this issue. I traveled to Seneca Falls to hear Governor Cuomo speak about his Agenda there. Unfortunately his Agenda has not passed as of yet. The 10 points have been divided into 10 separate bills. This is a topic that continues to require our work in 2014.

As a member of the State League Board and as a Regional Director, I have an opportunity to hear about what other Leagues are doing throughout the year. I hear them talk about what they do in the area of voter services and the programs they offer. I’m proud to be the President of our League. Others are amazed about how much we offer our community. I enjoy doing a little bragging. One of the many strengths that our League has is a healthy Board; many Leagues struggle to find good leadership. I believe that our Board works well for its membership.

2014 promises to be another good year. As your President I am committed to serving you well. I encourage you to bring new ideas to my attention. Our League is always open to new challenges. Maybe we can do even more, with your time, energy and commitment. It will give me some more to brag about.

Kay Sharp

### PROGRAMS

**The Health Care Committee** presented a program at the Tompkins County Public Library on Monday, November 18th, entitled New York State of Health: Health Insurance Marketplace Basics for Individuals in Tompkins County. More than 50 people attended to learn about how the Affordable Health Care Act is implemented in New York State. Bev Chin, Health Access Coordinator and Cassandra Aikman, Health Access Navigator, explained and described the complicated law with the help of a Power Point presentation and detailed handouts. The audience seemed overwhelmed as they tried to grasp the complex and confusing law, and many expressed frustration with computer problems or navigating the federal website. The speakers were helpful in answering individual questions, providing information about local outreach programs, suggesting where to get information or assistance by phone and how to locate personal counselors.

**The Natural Resources Committee** will provide a public program on Monday, January 27, in the Borg Warner Room of the Tompkins County Public Library, 7:00 to 8:30 pm: The Adirondack Park and Our Regional Forests: Our Treasures to Enjoy and Protect. Our Speakers will be, Dick Booth, member of the New York State Governing Board for the Adirondack park, and Andy Zepp, Executive Director of the Finger Lakes Land Trust. They will talk about the issues/problems facing the management of both the Adirondack Park and our regional forests and what we can do to keep them healthy. Their talks will include; the

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different histories and governance, their management based on their location and size, the presence of residents within the Adirondack Park, the desire to accommodate recreational and other uses, the increasing presence of invasive species and many other factors including climate change that impact the health of the land. They will emphasize the actions that we can take to maintain and improve our wonderful forest resources for ourselves and the following generations.

The program will be co-sponsored by The Ithaca Journal and the Cayuga Trails Club. Light refreshments will be provided.

**Human Trafficking:** Our program for February is *Human Slavery Still Exists: Human Trafficking Locally, Statewide, Nationally And Internationally*. The League will be hosting two speakers: David Bugg, State University of New York (SUNY) Potsdam, and Sabel Bong, EOP Counselor, and Advisor of the International Student Activist Organization (ISAO), State University of New York (SUNY) Canton, NY.

The two speakers participated in a major event held at SUNY Canton in April 1 to 4, 2013 to protest the injustice of human trafficking. The student group brought Gabriel Bol Deng, the former child soldier and “Lost Boy of Sudan,” to campus to give a public presentation of his life experiences. Their presentations will contain a brief introduction to human trafficking on the state and national level, our government’s response to the problem, and what we can do as individuals and an organization. There will be time for questions and answers, and discussion with the audience.

The program, co-sponsored by the American Association of University Women, will take place Monday, February 24th, at the Tompkins County Public Library, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. Light refreshments will be provided.

Florence B. Smith-VP Programs
NATURAL RESOURCES

The Natural Resources Committee has been working on plans for two programs to be held in January and March. The program in January will focus on the beauties and needs of Adirondack Park and of the state and local forests. See the Program report on page 2 for details of this program entitled *The Adirondack Park and Our Forests: Treasures to Enjoy and Protect.* The March program, *Cayuga Lake: Our Gift and Responsibility,* will address the wonders of, and stresses on, Cayuga Lake.

Our committee is also pleased to announce that the Tompkins County LWV is the recipient of the Sign of Sustainability Award from Sustainable Tompkins. Our League is honored to receive the award and congratulates Sustainable Tompkins on all of the wonderful work they have been doing. We hope that some of you will want to go to the closing reception for these awards or see the exhibit of the awardees at the Sustainability Center. If you are interested, Sustainable Tompkins tells us that “All of the 2013 Signs of Sustainability awardees will be featured in a multi-screen exhibit on display at the Sustainability Center at 111 N. Albany Street in Ithaca. This exhibit can be viewed during gallery hours on Thursdays and Saturdays from 2:00pm to 6:00pm, from December 7, 2013 to January 23, 2014. There will be a closing reception on January 23 (details forthcoming). Award recipients and community members are welcome to visit any time to see the display and browse the Sustainability Center Gallery.” If you want to know more about these awards or the activities of that group their website is [www.sustainabletompkins.org](http://www.sustainabletompkins.org)

Kay Wagner

MAKING NEW YORK STATE WORK

2014 Legislative Agenda

Campaign Finance Reform

Support lower contribution limits, increased disclosure and a system of small donor matching funds. In particular, support stronger and effective campaign finance enforcement with increased penalties for violations.

Election Reform

Improve election processes to extend, encourage and protect voting, including paperless and Election Day registration, early voting, better ballot design, improved polling place management/poll worker training, a single June primary, and measures to ensure the integrity of all ballots.

Natural Resources

Support protection and management of New York's natural resources in the public interest, including energy conservation and energy options from renewable sources.

Women's Equality Agenda

Support equality for women and their families through preserving access to reproductive health care, ensuring fair treatment at work, and helping survivors of violence.

Other League Positions

The League also has positions on other Government Issues including Ethics, Transparency, and Individual Liberties, as well as Health Care, the Judiciary, State Finances, and Social Policy, including Transportation Policy, under which we can and do take action.

The 2014 League Legislative Agenda brochure will be available in early January. Contact your local League to receive a copy. It will also be posted on the state League website.
EXCERPTS: MORELAND COMMISSION REPORT

INCREASE THE REQUIRED DISCLOSURE FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS: Our investigation reveals that corruption and the appearance of corruption thrive when actual and potential conflicts of interest are shrouded in darkness. The Commission strongly urges greater transparency from our legislators, and within the legislative process.

- Broader Disclosure of Outside Income and Lobbyist Relationships: Many legislators earn substantial outside income, but disclose only a general description of what they do. ... We recommend broader disclosure of large clients, both by legislators and their firms, when those clients have business before the State. We also recommend disclosure of all direct referrals of business to legislators or their firms from lobbyists and those they represent.

- More Transparency in Legislative Sponsorship of Discretionary Funding: So-called “member items” – legislative grants of discretionary funding that are not lined out in the State budget – have been used in some of the most egregious corruption schemes by corrupt officials who funnel state money to those who line the officials’ pockets. ... We recommend greater transparency so that the public will know which legislators are sponsoring what public projects.

REFORM OUR CAMPAIGN FINANCE SYSTEM WITH PUBLIC FINANCING, ROBUST DISCLOSURE, AND TIGHTER RULES: Albany’s pay-to-play political culture is greased by a campaign finance system in which large donors set the legislative agenda. Wide-open loopholes allow virtually unlimited contributions through vehicles like limited liability companies and party “housekeeping” accounts. ... Our investigation – including testimony taken at public hearings – also reveals that public financing systems, like the one in place in New York City, make a real difference, empowering regular citizens, reducing the power of massive checks and special interests, and increasing the accountability of officials to those they serve.

New York needs comprehensive campaign finance reform. ...

- Lower Contribution Limits, and Fix Loopholes: ... We recommend substantially lowering the contribution limits to political campaigns and political parties. We recommend closing the so-called “LLC loophole” that allows certain, easily-formed companies to make contributions of up to $150,000, ... also recommend new limits for transfers from political parties to campaigns.

- Institute Public Financing of Campaigns for New York: The Commission believes that public financing of campaigns, in the form of small donor matching funds, frees elected officials from reliance on massive donations from wealthy and powerful interests and invigorates citizens’ democratic participation, increasing public accountability and renewing the public trust. ...

- Limit Use of Campaign Accounts: We recommend tougher and more specific standards for restricting the personal use of campaign funds and for better disclosure of campaign expenditures.

- Disclose and Monitor Outside Spending: We recommend changing our laws to ensure that New Yorkers can know who is spending to influence our elections. ...

CREATE AN INDEPENDENT ELECTION LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY: Our investigation reveals that the State Board of Elections lacks the structural independence, the resources, and the will to enforce election and campaign finance laws. The Board’s “bipartisan” structure has effectively led to a tacit, bipartisan agreement to do nothing...

The Commission recommends creating an entirely new, structurally independent election and campaign finance law enforcement agency, ...

PROVIDE POWERFUL NEW TOOLS FOR PROSECUTORS: Our criminal laws are not strong enough to allow New York prosecutors to aggressively fight corruption and self-dealing. Our State’s bribery statute is singularly weak; ... We recommend tough new laws, and penalties that fit the crime.

- Reform the Bribery Statute: Bribery is the most blatant form of public corruption, yet our laws make public servant bribery incredibly hard to prosecute. ...

- Prohibit Undisclosed Self-Dealing by Public Officials: Our laws do not do enough to discourage self-dealing behavior by elected officials – ...

- Tough New Consequences for Corruption: The recent corruption scandals in New York strongly suggest that corrupt officials are not being deterred from abusing their offices. The Commission recommends:
  o Tough new penalties for violating the public trust, ...
  o Strong collateral consequences that permanently bar those convicted of public corruption crimes from serving in a public office, ...

- Reforms New York’s Immunity Rules: ...We recommend offering a less expansive form of immunity in public corruption cases.

Reforming New York’s Corroboration Rules: ... The Commission recommends allowing accomplice testimony to support a conviction for public corruption.

CONCLUSION: The Commission will proceed with our ongoing investigations as we continue to follow the money. We will also continue to consider new policy areas where reform can bring greater transparency, accountability, and integrity to our governing bodies.
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