PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Thank you for your attendance at our September series on challenges to women’s lives, their health and well-being. We had excellent speakers. We had particularly good attendance at the last program – pay equity. This is an issue that we have advocated for many years. We have to work hard this year to get the passage of Cuomo’s Women’s Equality Act.

We were pleased to see students in the audience at all four of our programs. It made us think how we can connect more to young women. I discussed this topic with the Board, and we decided to ask a student from Cornell and one from Ithaca College to serve as Student Liaisons to our League. They will help us with our programs, trying to make them more relevant to young women and men. The Liaisons will also have us co-sponsor some of their programs. We have never had this connection with the colleges, and the possibility is very exciting.

Election time is upon us so there have been voter registration events organized by our Co-Directors of Voter Service. We will have candidates’ forum for the Assembly on October 22. Also, for the first time, we have an electronic voters’ guide VOTE411. Look for a Letter to the Editor in the paper describing the ins and outs of this new website. Thank you to Amy Panek and Lucia Sciore for their endeavors to reach out to the community and generate an increase in our citizens’ involvement in the democratic process.

There are three proposals on the ballot this year. Proposal One deals with redistricting, a topic that we have focused on for several years. The State League is in support of this proposal. Some Leagues, however, are saying that it does not accomplish what we need to solve the problem of gerrymandering. While there would be an amendment to the Constitution calling for the organization of a redistricting commission that is composed of some members other than legislature, and requiring public hearings to be held throughout the state, the power of the

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legislature to amend the commission’s plan remains. Opponents of this proposal contend that the impact of the legislators to form their own districts is not diminished sufficiently. See later in the Newsletter the State League’s statement of support of Proposition One.

It is time for our suggestions for the 2015 Legislative Agenda. At the Board meeting, several suggestions were made. They are the hazard waste bill (natural resources), pay equity (Cuomo’s 10-Point Women’s Equality Agenda), single payer health insurance (healthcare), election reform, and a living wage. Please call me before October 30 with your suggestions (272-4748).

The State League’s process of establishing the final three-item Legislative Agenda is as follows: each local League sends in their suggestions with a brief rationale. These are then reviewed by a committee of State League members and Barbara Bartolleti, our State Legislative Director, and the three most frequently suggested items are selected for the Agenda. An important consideration to keep in mind is what are the most likely items to be addressed by the State Legislature in 2015. We obviously would like all of our suggestions to result in law, but we have to be realistic.

Fall is always an exciting time of year. Leaves may be falling and winter is coming, but we, as a League, are coming back to life in full force. Elections are held. Our programs focus on essential topics. It’s a time for sharing of ideas.

Kay Sharp

STUDENTS INSIDE ALBANY

Nominations of Tompkins County high school students are sought for the 15th annual Students Inside Albany conference, which will be held May 17-20, 2015 in Albany, New York. The conference, sponsored by the League of Women Voters of New York State Education Foundation, Inc., is designed to increase students’ awareness of their responsibility in a representative government and provide the tools necessary for meeting that responsibility. This interactive conference will bring together high school students from across the state to learn about New York State government and the process by which citizens can participate in the policy-making arena. As part of this program, students will also tour the Capitol and observe both the Senate and Assembly in action by spending an afternoon shadowing their legislators.

Students are sponsored by one of the 50 local Leagues throughout New York State and all their expenses are covered, including travel and three nights at a hotel in downtown Albany. The participants will also receive a student membership in the League of Women Voters of Tompkins County, which includes an e-mail newsletter and invitations to meetings on government-related topics.

Kathleen Yen
257-8199.

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PROGRAM REPORT

The September series of 4 programs; Challenges for Women’s Health and Well Being was a huge success. The series was conceived as a way to educate the community about Andrew Cuomo’s 10 point legislative Women’s Equality Agenda. The Health Care Committee, chaired by Sarah Jane Blake and Debbie Levin with Kay Sharp, planned the programs in concert with the speakers and Co-sponsoring community agencies. The programs were presented on four consecutive Monday evenings in September at the Tompkins County Library. The topics of focus for the four sessions were: Reproductive Rights, Domestic Violence Against Women, Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, and Pay Equity. More details may be found in the September bulletin. We thank our co-sponsors: Planned Parenthood of the Southern Finger Lakes, National Organization for Women, Tompkins County Human Rights Commission, New York State Wide Senior Action Council, and American Association of University Women.

The Voter Services Committee will present a Candidate Forum with Barbara Lifton and Herb Masser, Candidates for New York State Assembly. The forum will be moderated by our president, Kay Sharp, and will be held on Wednesday, October 22, 7:00 to 8:30 PM at the First Unitarian Church Annex, 208 East Buffalo St., Ithaca. (Take the elevator or stairs to the 2nd floor).

The Natural Resource Committee is planning a program to be held at the Tompkins County Public Library, Borg Warner Room on Monday November 17th: Responding to Climate Change Can’t Wait: Two Examples. Watch for more information and plan to attend.

Florence B. Smith, VP Programs

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TOMPKINS COUNTY: BOARD 2012-13

LWV NYS website  www.lwvny.org
LWV US website  www.lwv.org
LWV-Tompkins County  lwvtc@twcny.rr.com
contact  lwvtc@twcny.rr.com
website  lwvtomkins.org

Board Members

6/15 President  Kay Sharp  272-4748  phylliskaysharp@gmail.com
6/15 Vice. Pres.  Program  Florence Smith  273-6147  FioSmith42@aol.com
6/16 Vice Pres.  Membership  Kathleen Yen  257-8199  kyen@twcny.rr.com
6/15 Secretary  Health Care  Sarah Jane Blake  277-1312  sjblake@twcny.rr.com
6/16 Treasurer  Maria Eisner  277-4404  mle3@cornell.edu
6/15 Director  Communications  Kathy Burlitch  539-7316  klburlitch@frontiernet.net
6/16 Director  Co-Voter Services  Lucia Sciore  351-0221  luciasciore@gmail.com
6/16 Director  Co-Voter Services  Amy Panek  617-448-6841  amy.panek@gmail.com
6/15 Director  Diane Kelleher  257-5551  dkelleher@twcny.rr.com

Off-Board Chairs:

Off-Board Chairs:
Natural Resources  Debbie Levin  273-7746  dlevin01@twcny.rr.com
Co-Webmaster; Action  Kay Wagner  539-3322  cmw18@cornell.edu
Co-Webmaster  Linda Dutweiler  277-0006  ldutt@twcny.rr.com
Bulletin  Michael Dutweiler  277-0006  mdutweiler@twcny.rr.com
Bulletin  Robert Silsbee  273-1436  rhs1@cornell.edu
NATURAL RESOURCES

The Natural Resources Committee is busy planning two programs. The first will be held on Monday, November 17, 7:00-8:30 p.m. in the Borg Warner Room of the library. The title for this program will be Responding to Climate Change Can’t Wait: Two Examples.

The first example will focus on the problems affecting agriculture as the climate changes. Both the warmer climate and the patterns of climate disruption will have significant impacts on our farmers and our agricultural products, so we need to ask how our farmers can adapt to these changes. Will it be possible for them to develop the necessary resilience? How quickly will they need to respond?

The second example to be discussed is that of storm water run-off. Scientists predict a likely increase in the frequency and severity of both flooding and droughts. What will happen to the water when there are severe storms, especially when the soil may be too dry to absorb the moister quickly? What will the sources of heavy run-off be and will it be contaminated? How can we mitigate the effects of large volumes of water, particularly when heavy rains occur over a short period of time? Our towns and counties are already grappling with this issue and need to develop the best strategies for dealing with it.

In addition to our November program, we are beginning to plan a program to be held jointly by the Natural Resources and the Health Care Committees in March. Stay tuned for news about that program.

As always, we welcome new members to our committee. If you are interested, contact Kay Wagner at 539-3322, cmw18@cornell.edu.

Kay Wagner

VOTER SERVICES

The past few months have been very busy for Voter Services. We completed several tabling events in the community including: TC3, Ithaca College (twice), Ellis Hollow Apartments, Farmers Market, Apple Festival and the League of Women Rollers Roller Derby. At many of these events, people ask questions about eligibility to vote, who the candidates are, and thank us for doing the work that we do. While tabling, we had the opportunity to educate interested parties on using the new website, VOTE411.org as an on-line option for Voter Guide Part II. We also encouraged new membership in the League.

We scheduled two forums this year: Ithaca City Court Judge Primary (held on September 3rd) and the up-coming forum for 125th New York State Assembly District (to be held on October 22nd @Unitarian Church, 7 p.m.). We hope you all can attend.

Lucia Sciore

MEMBERSHIP

A membership booklet, Welcome to the League of Women Voters of Tompkins County, providing information about the League of Women Voters (LWV) was mailed to all new members along with a Voters Guide – Part I, and information on how to contact your elected representatives and what offices and proposals you will be voting on in the 2014 election.

The membership booklet contains the principles, purpose, history, organization, finances, contact information, and a summary of Public Policy Positions (national and state) taken from Impact on Issues, the official statements of League public policy positions. If you did not receive a copy and would like one sent to you, please call me and let me know. The booklet is also available on our local website, www.lwvtompkins.org. Impact on Issues is available to view, print, or order by going to the national website, www.lwv.org, and state website, www.lwvny.org.

If you know anyone interested in learning more about the League, please let me know and I will send them some information and a membership form. The membership form is also available on our local website, http://lwvtompkins.org.

Kathleen Yen, 257-819
**NOVEMBER 4 ELECTION DAY**

Here are several items provided by the New York State League; go to the State League website, [http://www.lwvny.org/](http://www.lwvny.org/) for much more information about election issues, including part II of the LWVs Voters Guide. Also, a great source for information about both candidates’ positions and general election information is:

**VOTE 411**

The League of Women Voters of New York State is pleased to announce the launch of Vote411.org, an electronic voter guide, for Statewide and Congressional, Assembly and Senate races in the General Election.

Candidate information is available for candidates in the races for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General and Comptroller, as well as select NYS Senate, Assembly and Congressional seats. Additional Congressional, NYS Senate and Assembly races will be “live” in the next few weeks. The information includes biographical information and responses to questions posed by the League, as well as links to candidates’ social media and campaign websites. Candidates who have not yet submitted their information are listed with “Candidate Has Not Responded;” their responses will be posted as soon as the candidates provide the information. Citizens can also find information about this year’s 3 ballot proposals, including the pros and cons of each proposal.

All of this can be accessed online at [http://www.vote411.org/](http://www.vote411.org/) in an easy-to-use electronic format. Citizens can enter their addresses, compare candidate information and print a customized sample ballot. Other election information, including registration, absentee ballots, etc, is also available on the Vote 411 website. In the upcoming weeks, citizens will be able to find information about upcoming candidate forums taking place in their area and/or across the state.

**BALLOT PROPOSALS**

**NYS, Proposal Number 1: An Amendment, Revising State’s Redistricting Procedure**

The proposed amendment to sections 4 and 5 and addition of new section 5-b to Article 3 of the State Constitution revises the redistricting procedure for state legislative and congressional districts. The proposed amendment establishes a redistricting commission every 10 years beginning in 2020, with two members appointed by each of the four legislative leaders and two members selected by the eight legislative appointees; prohibits legislators and other elected officials from serving as commissioners; establishes principles to be used in creating districts; requires the commission to hold public hearings on proposed redistricting plans; subjects the commission’s redistricting plan to legislative enactment; provides that the legislature may only amend the redistricting plan according to the established principles if the commission’s plan is rejected twice by the legislature; provides for expedited court review of a challenged redistricting plan; and provides for funding and bipartisan staff to work for the commission. Shall the proposed amendment be approved?

**Proponents** of the amendment argue that this will create a fairer redistricting process that bans political gerrymandering, has a clear timeline and creates new opportunities for public participation. Proponents further argue that composition of the proposed commission is a significant improvement because it prohibits those with conflicts of interest, including legislators, from serving on the commission. They also argue that since the proposed commission will include representation from majority and minority parties in each house, in addition to appointees who are neither Republicans nor Democrats, it will allow for meaningful participation in the process by minority parties and third parties.

**Opponents** of the amendment argue that it does not go far enough in adequately reforming the redistricting process. They object to the fact that eight of the ten commissioners are appointed by
legislative leaders and are critical of the legislature’s power to amend the plans if they fail to achieve legislative approval after two votes. They argue that this is the equivalent of the legislature drawing its own lines since the Commission’s plans are ultimately approved by the legislature. In addition, opponents object to the proposal’s requirement that future mapmakers must consider the core of existing districts when drafting new ones. Opponents also argue that the structure of the commission will result in partisan gridlock and that voting rules for both the commission and legislative approval are overly complex.

**NYS, Proposal Number 2: An Amendment, Permitting Electronic Distribution of State Legislative Bills**

The proposed amendment to section 14 of Article 3 of the State Constitution would allow electronic distribution of a state legislative bill to satisfy the constitutional requirement that a bill be printed and on the desks of state legislators at least three days before the Legislature votes on it. It would establish the following requirements for electronic distribution: first, legislators must be able to review the electronically-sent bill at their desks; second, legislators must be able to print the bill if they choose; and third, the bill cannot be changed electronically without leaving a record of the changes. Shall the proposed amendment be approved?

**Proponents** of the amendment argue that allowing bills to be distributed to the desks of members in electronic form will save taxpayer dollars and reduce paper waste. Proponents suggest that this amendment offers an environmentally friendly alternative to paper bills and will help modernize the way state government operates.

The League of Women Voters of New York State could not identify any organizations or expressed opinions in opposition to this amendment.

**NYS, Proposal Number 3: An Amendment: The Smart School Bond Act of 2014**

The *Smart Schools Bond Act of 2014*, as set forth in section one of part B of chapter 56 of the laws of 2014, authorizes the sale of state bonds of up to two billion dollars ($2,000,000,000) to provide access to classroom technology and high-speed internet connectivity to equalize opportunities for children to learn, to add classroom space to expand high-quality pre-kindergarten programs, to replace classroom trailers with permanent instructional space, and to install high-tech smart security features in schools. Shall the *Smart Schools Bond Act of 2014* be approved?

**Proponents** of the amendment argue that disparities of classroom technologies exist across school districts and the Act will increase students’ access to classrooms that are equipped with advanced technologies, enabling them to gain the skills necessary to succeed in the 21st century.

**Opponents** of the amendment have argued that the technologies will be obsolete by the time the state is finished paying for them. Others have expressed concern that equipping classrooms with advanced technologies without ensuring the availability of personnel that know how to use and train others on the technology could result in underutilization. Also, opponents feel that public dollars should only be allocated to public schools, rather than parochial or private schools.

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**PROPOSITION 1: VOTE YES FOR PROGRESS**

**A Rare Opportunity to Fix an Entrenched, Broken Redistricting System**

For more than 50 years, New York elected officials have controlled the redistricting process, drawing district lines that protect them from challengers and eliminate fair, competitive elections. New Yorkers now have the opportunity to fix this problem of a rigged system by voting Yes for Proposition 1 this November 4th. This state constitutional amendment will ban partisan gerrymandering by
outlawing legislative maps drawn for political advantage and give New Yorkers new power to hold legislators accountable.

*If we don’t act, we may never have a chance to take power back.*

Proposition 1 puts power back in the hands of New Yorkers by creating an open and fair redistricting process that will hold legislators accountable to the people and ensure they cannot draw lines to favor incumbents or political parties. It:

**Curbs the power of state legislators to draw their own lines:** Proposition 1 strips legislators of their unchecked power to draw their own district lines by establishing a politically balanced commission. The commission consists of 10 members with significant bans on who can serve to eliminate conflicts of interest:

— equal representation from each of the 4 legislative leaders, with 2 additional members not affiliated with either major party appointed by the commission members; and

— no legislators, lobbyists or other political figures serving as commissioners.

If the legislature TWICE fails to approve the commission’s plan, it can’t just start over. It must then work from the commission’s plan to develop a plan that must comply with the new rules and standards established in the state constitution and no one district’s population can be changed by more than 2%.

**Establishes new rules that remove partisan scheming & ensure impartiality:** Current redistricting rules are weak and vague, requiring only that districts be contiguous and compact. Proposition 1 will strengthen the process with powerful guidelines and clear standards to protect voters, including:

— ending “partisan gerrymandering” by requiring that districts not be drawn to favor or disfavor any incumbents, candidates or parties or to discourage competition;

— drawing maps to preserve communities of interest and protect minority groups by codifying national Voting Rights Act language in the state constitution; and

— preventing drastic and arbitrary changes to districts. If the proposed legislative districts are not nearly equal in population, a written explanation from the Commission must accompany the plan.

**Creates a fair and public process:** Any plan approved by the commission must have a supermajority of 7 out of 10 members vote in favor, ensuring balance and cooperation. Additional controls are in place to require a higher threshold for approval in the legislature should one party control both houses, a further check against lines drawn for political advantage. The amendment also requires that the commission release data, maps and information to the public to allow it to develop alternative proposals, and requires 12 public hearings be held throughout the state.

*We urge all New Yorkers to vote for progress on Election Day by voting YES on Proposition 1.*

Paid for by Citizens Union and the League of Women Voters of New York State.

[www.voteyesforprogress.org](http://www.voteyesforprogress.org)

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**UNITED NATIONS DAY**

The annual League Day at the United Nations will be held on **Thursday, November 13**. All members, family and friends are invited to join us for a fun and educational day. The day includes a tour of the UN building, lunch in the Delegates Dining Room and a briefing by key UN experts. The topic this year is “Water for Life” the UN International Decade for Action 2005-2015. Go to the NYS website [http://www.lwvny.org/](http://www.lwvny.org/) for more information.
**YOUR REPRESENTATIVES IN WASHINGTON**

**SENATORS:**
- Kirsten E. Gillibrand 202-224-4451 e-mail and web-site: [www.gillibrand.senate.gov](http://www.gillibrand.senate.gov)
- Charles E. Schumer 202-224-6542; [senator@schumer.senate.gov](mailto:senator@schumer.senate.gov); [www.schumer.senate.gov](http://www.schumer.senate.gov)

**REPRESENTATIVES:**
- Tom Reed 202-225-3161; 607-654-7566; e-mail and web-site: [reed.house.gov](http://reed.house.gov)

**YOUR REPRESENTATIVES IN ALBANY**

**SENATORS**
  51st—Towns of Groton, Dryden, Caroline, Danby
  54th—Town of Lansing
  59th—Towns of Ithaca, Newfield, Enfield, Ulysses, & City of Ithaca

**ASSEMBLYWOMAN**
- Barbara Lifton 518-455-5444; 607-277-8030 [www.assembly.state.ny.us/mem/Barbara-Lifton](http://www.assembly.state.ny.us/mem/Barbara-Lifton)

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