



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

OF SARATOGA COUNTY, NEW YORK

BULLETIN

JANUARY 2012

OUR 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.

Diversity Policy

The League of Women Voters of Saratoga County, in both its values and practices, is committed to inclusion and diversity.

This means:

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

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

We believe inclusiveness enhances the organization's ability to respond more effectively to changing conditions and needs.

We affirm our commitment to reflecting the diversity of Saratoga County.

LOSING GROUND: EFFORTS TO RESTRICT VOTING RIGHTS IN USA

Thursday, January 19 at 7pm

Gannett Auditorium, Skidmore College

Sounding the alarm will be

TIM O'BRIEN

LWVUS Voter Protection Project, Washington, DC

Co-sponsored by

LWVNYS, other Capital District Leagues, Skidmore College, and other community organizations.

PLEASE PLAN TO ATTEND THIS IMPORTANT EVENT

see page 3

MARTIN LUTHER KING, Jr. DAY

Monday, JANUARY 16th, SSPL

This year's theme, "Dignity for All," will reflect Dr. King's affirmation of the dignity of all people and all labor. Saratoga LWV will again play a prominent role in the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day observance.

This will be the second year that the public celebration will include a volunteer component, as participants spend a morning working at various area non-profit agencies – a part of the National Day of Service. The volunteers will return to the library for a luncheon served by LWV members prior to the public program, which will include reflections on the day's theme, "Dignity for All," by LWV President Patricia Nugent and featured speaker, Jim Kates. Kates is an author and motivational speaker, who as a teenager from Saratoga took part in the Freedom Summer experience in the 1960's, challenging institutional racism in the South. Garland Nelson, of "Soul Session," will blend musical interpretations of the dignity theme into the program.

Go to page 7 for schedule and Mr. Kates' biography.



**League of Women Voters
of Saratoga County** (NY-639)
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PO Box 1029, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
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President: **Elizabeth MacNamara**



President's Column

Happy New Year! I hope you've had a chance to rest up after the holidays because we are going to need our membership operating at full throttle in 2012. There are so many issues that require action of us as an organization concerned with ensuring a truly representative government.

January is a very busy month. Our League is a sponsor of the Martin Luther King Jr. commemoration on Monday, January 16th, with the theme of *Dignity for All*. I'll be addressing the volunteers as the LWV president because that is the core of what we stand for. We hope you'll participate. See page 1 and 7 for more information.

Please consider attending LWV Lobby Day in Albany on Wednesday, January 18th in Albany. It's an opportunity to lobby state officials on issues of good government, like campaign finance reform. LWVNY provides training and an update on the issues that morning before turning us loose. And I hear the (free) lunch is good! Visit our website for more information.

Defending the right to vote is front and center on our radar screen. Please make it a priority to attend our program, *Losing Ground: Efforts to Restrict Voting Rights in the USA*, on January 19 at 7pm at Skidmore College, where an expert from the LWV national office will be speaking on the legislation sweeping our country and threatening voting rights for a significant portion of our citizens (see article on pages 1 & 3).

On a related note, I had the privilege of attending a 90th birthday party last weekend. An 87 year old fellow attendee came up to me to complain about the new NYS ballot. To him, as to many, it seemed like a step backward, returning to paper and pen. I explained the intent to verify votes if needed. He was quiet for a moment and then said, "Well, you know, my grandfather told me about voting in Albany. There were guys out front telling everyone how to vote and extracting commitments to support certain candidates. When you went into the booth, there was a hole cut into the top, and men were up there spying on how you voted. If you didn't vote the way they wanted, they were waiting for you when you exited." Scary stuff when one party bullies people into voting a certain way. Are those days over? (By the way, I'm still trying to recruit this gentleman as a member...and have been for years! Speaking of which, we should ALL be trying to recruit members. Our mission is *THAT* important.)

Mother Jones is coming to brunch on March 10th! Get ready for a rabble-rousing time!

Onward, **Pat**

Protect Your Right to Vote – January 19th

By Patricia Nugent

How precious is our right to vote in a democracy! Our organization is founded on the fact that female citizens were once denied the right to vote. Our brave soldiers have fought and died to ensure the right to vote in other countries. Yet as many as five million US citizens have recently lost their right to vote as a result of legislation being passed in more than 20 states, with several more on the verge of passing similar restrictions. In particular, the elderly, minorities, and youth are being disenfranchised. This is the greatest threat to voting rights in our lifetime. And it is a concerted effort to sway election results.

What's the big deal, you might ask. So, someone just has to have a photo ID. Well, it IS a big deal. Many of the recently disenfranchised don't have drivers' licenses due to age or poverty. And, yes, some states issue ID's for free. But...first you have to get to Motor Vehicles, and then you have to show a birth certificate to get the ID. Many can't locate their birth certificate or, if born at home, never had one. If your married or adopted name is different than your birth name, you have to show an ID with your original name to request a new birth certificate. (How many of us still have those? You can see how women are particularly impacted.) And on it goes. Plus, there's a fee for applying for a replacement birth certificate, which is a re-introduction of the poll tax, which was outlawed for its discriminatory nature.

This legislation is also very expensive to enact and enforce, at a time when so many municipalities are struggling financially. Yet, statistically, we have a greater chance of being struck by lightning than of being impersonated at the polls.

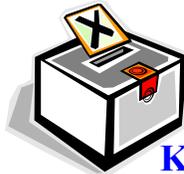
This has the cumulative effect of suppressing the votes of the elderly, minority, and youth populations. If you've seen the elderly women crying on TV because they could not vote this past November – women who have not missed an election in over 60 years – you have a sense of the personal pain involved. Yet, the damage goes much deeper, striking at the very heart of our democracy.

We know you care about this issue – you told us at meetings and through your contributions. On January 19th at 7pm at Gannett Auditorium at Skidmore College, we are privileged to be hosting Tim

O'Brien from LWVUS, a specialist on Voter Protection, speaking to us about what is happening and why, and what we can do about it. There will also be panelists from the Albany-based Law and Justice Center, who just returned from the march in DC, and the NYCLU. Under our League's leadership, neighboring Leagues and other organizations will also be joining us as co-sponsors.

We need all hands on deck for this one – NOTHING this organization does is more important than defending every citizen's right to vote. Please show up on January 19th and bring your neighbors – don't let democracy slip through our fingers.

Check our website www.lwvsaratoga.org for additional information.



Keynote Speaker: TIM O'BRIEN

Tim O'Brien is the Project Manager for the Public Advocacy for Voter Protection (PAVP) project at the League of Women Voters of the U.S. based in Washington DC. He has worked for the League since 2007 – during that time he has expanded the PAVP project's work from 6 to 22 states.

The PAVP project focuses on six major areas identified as essential elements in protecting the votes of all citizens and improving election administration overall:

1. Opposing photo ID and documentary proof-of-citizenship in the voting and registration;
2. Guarding against undue restrictions on voter registration;
3. Improving administration of statewide voter registration database systems and guarding against wrongful or incorrect purging;
4. Improving polling place management;
5. Improving poll worker training and recruitment; and,
6. Fighting against last minute barriers to voting.

Prior to working for the League, Mr. O'Brien was the State Affairs Director for the Human Rights Campaign. He spent five years working in the Wisconsin State Legislature as a policy analyst and owned and operated a small business in Madison, Wisconsin.

COUNTY OBSERVER CORPS

Saratoga County Board of Supervisors Meetings, Dec. 1, and Dec. 14, 2011

Reported by Margie Van Meter

On December 1, the County held its only public hearing on the county budget, I had been authorized by the League President to speak at the hearing to say that the county should hold more than one public hearing on its budget. I arrived to find a full house. As I signed in to speak at the public hearing I was the 48th person requesting to speak! Most of the speakers were protesting the increase in health care costs for county employees and retirees. Employees of Maplewood Manor, supporters of Brookside Museum, and assorted others were also protesting cuts. The interesting speakers to me were those who offered to work with the Board to lobby in Albany for mandate relief and to find savings in county administrative costs. When it was my turn to speak, I pointed out that at least 44 people had already spoken and the county should consider holding another hearing. My remark was applauded by those behind me waiting to speak. Nevertheless, the county board did not hold another hearing and, without publicity, amendments were drafted by the Republican caucus to address the concerns expressed at the hearing.

On December 14, the board held a special session to pass the budget. At the Law and Finance Committee, held just before the board meeting, the change was explained: the county had contracted with a consultant firm to find health care savings. This is based on a change from having Blue Cross Blue Shield manage the claims to a self-insured system.

Once the board meeting opened, the amendments to the budget were outlined. Several of the agencies cut received some restoration of their funds, funding for vacant positions in the county were eliminated, and a raise in property taxes for county residents was proposed. Since this was the first increase in property taxes in 10 years, a number of supervisors spoke against this decision. Concerns were articulated by several supervisors that they had a very short time to study the budget because it was not released until the day after the election. Proposals to begin to look at the county budget and possible savings in the county early in the year were accepted by Board Chairman Wood. *See the report of the Nov. 15th meeting on our website.*

STUDY OF PRIVATIZATION

The final membership consensus on the LWVUS Privatization Study is on March 27.

The LWVUS Committee Chair, Janis McMillen offers the scope of the study:

“The purpose of this study is to identify those parameters and policy issues to be considered in connection with proposals to transfer federal, state, or local government services, assets, and/or functions to the private sector. It will review the stated goals and the community impact of such transfers, and identify strategies to ensure transparency, accountability, and preservation of the common good.”

And, the organization of the study: *“The committee will provide a history and background of privatization, a glossary of terms, legal issues to be considered when privatizing and case studies on successful and unsuccessful privatizing efforts. Finally, the committee will provide suggested policies and parameters to be considered when privatizing.”*

This material will be forthcoming in mid-January, 2012. We are the only League in the Capital District undertaking this expansive study, which can be most intriguing. Some subjects possibly worthy of discussion:

Is there a case for or against privatizing water systems, prisons, covert operations and intelligence gathering, support for our troops, contract negotiations and oversight, or public schools (charters, vouchers, and school services, such as lunch programs), jobs programs, road and bridge construction and repair, public assistance for the needy? *These are just some of the things folks have suggested privatizing.* What criteria should we use to decide?

Should we in Saratoga County consider privatizing Maplewood Manor Nursing Home or the Saratoga County Landfill?

Other Considerations Temporary vs. Long-Term Contracts vs. Full Ownership; Non-Profit Privatization vs. For-Profit Privatization; Laws and Contracts; Quasi-Governmental units like Authorities, Fannie Mae.

The Privatization Study Committee needs more members (that's you) who can meet fairly frequently from mid-January until the consensus meeting in March. Contact Cliff Ammon, 587-4204 or cammon2@nycap.rr.com.

LOBBY DAY: JAN. 18, 2012

All League members are invited to Albany to learn about the League's positions, tour the Capitol, watch the Assembly or Senate in action, and possibly meet some key legislative staffers.

The day will start at 11:00 am with a workshop on how we develop our positions, what are our positions, what are the key issues this year, and how members can participate in the legislative process. After a lunch, attendees will be given a tour of the Capitol and may stay to watch the legislative sessions (they are scheduled to be in session on this day, but no guarantees) and meet key staffers.

The workshop, tours and introductions will be led by LWVNYS Vice President for Issues and Advocacy, Sally Robinson, and LWVNYS Legislative Director, Barbara Bartoletti.

The day is designed for any League members interested in becoming more active in our advocacy agenda or just interested in learning about our advocacy work. If you want to register for Lobby Day 2012, please email Katrina (katrina@lwvny.org) at the state League office by Jan 6.



EDUCATION STUDY STATUS

When will we know the LWVUS position?

By Terry Lowenthal

Back in the Fall, our league participated in a LWVUS study and consensus regarding the proper role of the Federal Government in Education. Reaching consensus on a national study is a time consuming rather complex experience; we are right in the middle of the procedure.

Our local consensus first had to go to our board for approval, then Francine Rodger and I (the chairs of the study) had to write it up and submit it along with the results from hundreds of other local Leagues. The national committee then has to read and analyze all the reports, write up a proposed position and submit it with a recommendation to the National Board. When that board has decided, we will find out whether we reached a national consensus on which we can act.

As soon as we hear the results, we will post them here in the Bulletin and on our website.

FIX NEW YORK STATE NOW!



LWVNY's 2011 Legislative Agenda Steps To a New and Better State Government

Redistricting: Create an independent redistricting commission to draft the New York State legislative and Congressional district lines for the 2012 elections.

Campaign Finance Reform: Support lower contribution limits, increased disclosure and public financing. In particular, support stronger and effective campaign finance enforcement with increased civil and criminal penalties for violations.

Ethics Reform: Put in place a new independent ethics oversight agency and tougher enforcement. Make the legislature more open and accountable through continued rules reform.

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

Other League Positions: The League also has positions on Health Care, the Judiciary, Natural Resources, State Finances, and Social Policy (including Women's Issues) under which we can and do take action.

THEY'RE CLICKING ON US!

By Francine Rodger and Christine Alexander

This was the third year we produced an online voters' guide, and we continue to have increasing results in viewership. There were 952 visits to our guide and that is a great number of folks.

It was also interesting to see how people got to our website. Our own members, of course, know about our website, www.lwvsaratoga.org, but we had referrals from the Saratogian website, two library websites, Facebook, The Times Union website and the state and national Leagues' websites. While they accessed our site throughout the fall, there was a big jump in visitors on election day (240). People were seeking us out to get information. This is how the social media works, and we need to continue to have a presence out there. It is clear that the referrals are the key to reaching people. We need everyone to think about where we can make a linkage with other internet sites as we continue on into the future.

Voters' Service Wrap-Up

Be in the know before you vote



By Ann Kril, Chair
The League is known for fair, nonpartisan, informative Candidates Events and we did it again this fall! Approximately 500 audience members

heard from 55 candidates in the five candidate forums:

- Malta**, 40 attendees.
- Charlton**, 80 attendees.
- Clifton Park/Halfmoon**, 140 attendees.
- Saratoga Springs City Council**, 160 attendees.
- Wilton**, 80 attendees.

Audience members had good questions and were eager to participate.

Our online Voters Guide (VOTE 411) included all county supervisor candidates running in contested races plus many of the unopposed candidates and all candidates for Saratoga Springs City Council. We also included the name of the office, candidate names and party lines for the 70 town races in Saratoga County.

Print Version: All of the online guide information was printed in a pull out section of Spotlight News during the first week of October. 20,000 copies were printed with 800 coming to us directly to distribute as we chose. The Saratogian printed some of our online guide information on the Sunday before the election. We distributed our local voters guides in libraries, at Skidmore College, at candidate forums and directly to candidates who wanted them.

TAKE ME TO VOTE! Results

TAKE ME TO VOTE! Results: Two grade 5 teachers had the highest participation in the county. Both teach at Dorothy Nolan. They will receive plaques and a visit from Tony Jordon-- again. First place is Susan Jablonski. Second place is Kaile Doti. Notable participants this year include Schuylerville, Orenda at Shenendehowa, Corinth, Ballston's Wood Road (all grade 5 teachers), Burnt Hills- Ballston Lake's Stevens, Dorothy Nolan (all grade 5 teachers), and Geysers Road.

By Mary Ratzer, Chair

Welcome New Members

Ellie Dillon

Ann Shepard

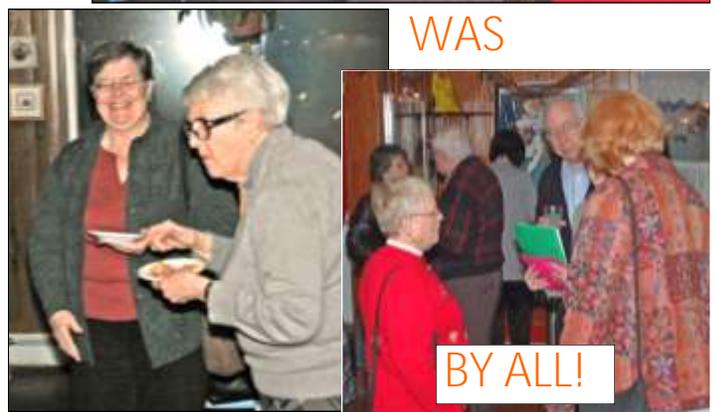
PARTY TIME REVISITED



HAPPY HOLI-



A GOOD TIME



WAS

BY ALL!

We will co-sponsor the
Saratoga Film Forum's showing of
Gasland January 5 & 6, 7:30pm
At Saratoga Arts Center on Broadway
Amy Durland will moderate a panel afterward.

**Please attend to learn more about
the dangers of hydrofracking!**

Continued from page 1

MARTIN LUTHER KING, Jr. DAY

The Day's Schedule

9:30 – 10:00 Volunteers report to Library Community Room for their assignments

Noon: LWV volunteers report to Community Room to prepare the lunch

1:00 – 2:00 Lunch will be served by the LWV

2:00 – 4:00 Community Celebration in the Dutcher Community Room

2:00 – 3:00 MLK Day program for children in the Crenshaw Story Room

MLK Day program for teens in the Susman Rm.

Keynote speaker: James Kates born in 1945, in White Plains, New York, volunteered for the Mississippi Summer Project after his freshman year at Wesleyan University, and spent that summer helping to implement a special court order encouraging registration in Panola County.

In the fall of 1964, he organized a Friends of SNCC/COFO in Paris, France, to support the work of the American civil rights movement. He returned to Mississippi in 1965, working in Natchez, and later became a public school teacher, a nonviolence trainer for interpersonal and political movements, a poet and a literary translator.

Since 1997, he has co-directed the non-profit literary publishing house Zephyr Press, publishers of *Letters from Mississippi: Reports from Civil Rights Volunteers & Poetry of the 1964 Freedom Summer*.



New Year's Resolution

I am only one.

But still I am one.

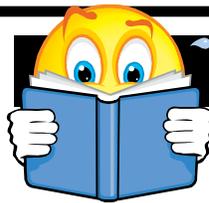
I cannot do everything,

But I still can do something.

And because I cannot do everything,

I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.

Edgar Everett Hale



LWV BOOK CLUB

We are halfway through the League Positions, and are still going strong! Having looked at all of the Social

Policy Issues, we will turn in January and February to the positions covered by Representative Government.

On January 3, we will meet at the Clifton Park Halfmoon Library and examine The Citizens Right to Vote, DC Self Government, Apportionment, Campaign Financing and the Selection of the President. I can't think of more timely topics to tackle as the 2012 election series takes off in full flow. Please join us, even if you have not been able to get to any of the other meetings. We have great discussions and you will learn more about your League. Meeting time is 1:00 pm. Our February date is February 7th, also at the Clifton Park Library.

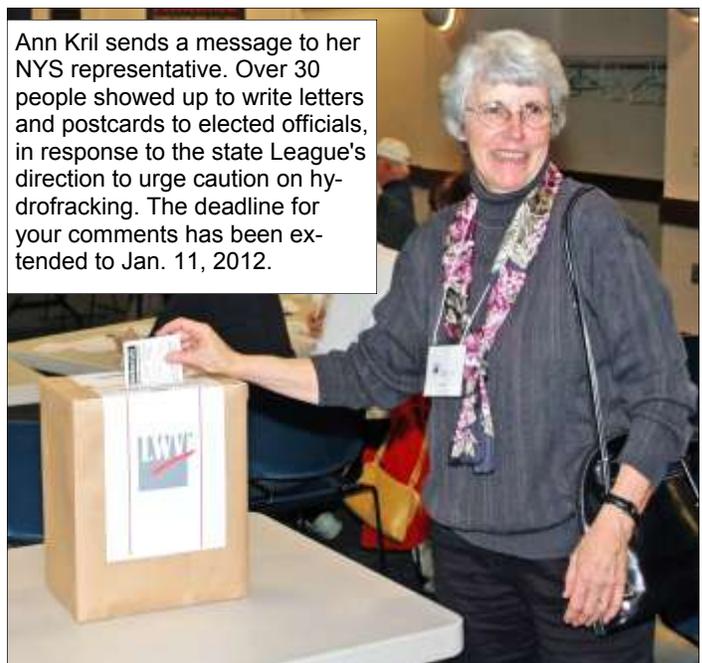
The January meeting will also be used to decide on items to recommend to LWVUS for consideration at the national convention

The Clifton Park Halfmoon Library is on Moe Road in Clifton Park, and there is plenty of parking. As always, check in case of bad weather, to be sure the library is open !

Everyone is welcome, and you can call email Francine at aerodger@aol.com or call her at 371-8032 or more information.

FRACKING EVENT –Report

Ann Kril sends a message to her NYS representative. Over 30 people showed up to write letters and postcards to elected officials, in response to the state League's direction to urge caution on hydrofracking. The deadline for your comments has been extended to Jan. 11, 2012.



Jan 3, Tuesday, *Book Club and Program Planning*, 1 pm, Clifton Park/Halfmoon Library

January 5 & 6, Thurs and Friday **GASLAND** at Saratoga Arts, on Broadway, Film Forum, 7:30pm

Jan. 16, Monday, *Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration*, 9:30-4, SSPL

COMING EVENTS

January 18, Wednesday, *LWVNY Lobby Day*, 11am, LOB, Albany

January 19, Thursday, *Losing Ground: Efforts to Suppress Voting Rights in the USA*, 7pm, see pages 1&3

February 7, Tuesday, *Book Club*, 1pm, Clifton Park/Halfmoon Library

March 10, Brunch with Mother Jones



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SARATOGA COUNTY
P.O. BOX 1029 SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY 12866

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January 2012

In Memoriam

Charlotte Justin, longtime LWV member, educational activist (Beagle School, Waldorf School, Saratoga Springs School Board member, Literacy Volunteers), community fundraiser, wife and mother, died September 12th.

She is survived by her husband, orthodontist Alan Justin, also a LWV member and three adult children.

Our sympathy to Charlotte's family and friends.
We will miss her.

Please join in observing our county government in 2012
Contact: Margie VanMeter, 587-1545

JOIN US & MAKE A DIFFERENCE

THE BULLETIN IS FREE WITH YOUR MEMBERSHIP

- YES!** I Would like to join the League.
- 2011 –2012 dues enclosed. \$50. Individual \$75 Family \$20 Student
- Please send more information Non-members may subscribe to the BULLETIN for \$15., enclosed
- In addition, I would like to contribute \$ _____ Send a gift membership to:

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____ PHONE (home) _____ (work) _____

E-MAIL _____ Gift Membership given by _____

Mail to: Membership, League of Women Voters P.O. Box 1029, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866