State & Local Program Planning meeting Sat. Jan. 22

The LWV is a multi-issue nonpartisan political organization. This means that while we don't support or oppose political candidates or parties, we do adopt and support specific positions after study and consensus. We review the relevance and timeliness of local positions each year, and state or national positions in alternate years.

Join us Saturday, Jan. 22, 2005, 9:30am at Rowe House to review the current LWVNYS and LWV of Oneonta programs. Included in what we call "Program" are current studies and positions we've agreed on in the past. Pages 7 and 8 in your 2004-05 membership booklet give a brief overview of these positions. A complete history on all the state league items can be found on the LWVNYS website: start at www.lwvnys.org and look for Advocacy, then Impact on Issues 2003-2005. The Positions in Brief from this document appear on page 4 and 5 of this Bulletin—bring this information with you on Jan. 22.

Our program facilitator Georgia Schacht will have all the relevant materials at the meeting so that we can make informed decisions on whether to keep, delete, or update each existing state or local position. This meeting is an ideal opportunity to get better acquainted with issues, and find out how the League has impacted legislation and policy. ♦

Students Inside Albany Essay Contest & Conference

The League of Women Voters of the Oneonta Area announces its annual essay contest to choose an area high school student to attend the 2005 Students Inside Albany conference next April 3-6 in Albany. Once again, the Oneonta Area LWV will sponsor a student from this area to attend the conference, all expenses paid.

Area students in grades 10 through 12 are invited to enter the contest by writing a 1,200-1,500 word essay on the topic, "Describe three responsibilities of effective citizenship in a representative democracy. How can schools and parents prepare students to meet these responsibilities?" Essays should be typed and double-spaced. Deadline for essays to be submitted (to LWV-SIA, 108 Clinton St., Oneonta) is Monday, January 31, 2005. Area high school students interested in entering the contest should speak to their social studies or English teacher, or their guidance counselor.

Students Inside Albany has been held annually now for many years, and each year the LWV of the Oneonta Area has sponsored a student. Students' reactions have been very positive to this opportunity to observe state legislative and administrative officials and other (continued on page 2)
Otsego County Government

The County Manager study committee has begun its work. Our support of a county manager for Otsego County will remain the same, but we will update our information on the costs and actual impact of such positions in other counties. The committee has met twice to strategize our lobbying efforts of the Otsego County Board of Representatives. The entire board stands for election next fall, and we would like to make this a major issue in the campaign.

Our first step will be to send a questionnaire to comparable counties which have managers or administrators to learn the costs of the position and the experiences of those counties. The committee needs help mailing the questionnaires, recording the responses, and preparing statements to the County Board and to the media. We are also looking for someone to observe the County Board in action on a regular basis. If you would like to work with the committee, call Kay Stuligross at 432-6974 for the date of the next committee meeting. ☆

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The LWV Oneonta Bulletin is published
10 times per year for members and friends.
Contributions & constructive criticism welcome

Would you like to receive this Bulletin via e-mail
as a Microsoft Word document?

contact the Editor at
bsba17@dmcom.net or call 433-8807

Upcoming LWV Events

Sat. Jan 22
State & Local Program Planning
Rowe House, Maple St., 9:30am

Mon. Jan 31
Deadline for Students Inside Albany Essay
Submissions to Paul Scheele at 108 Clinton St., Oneonta. See article on page 1.

Mon. Feb 14
LWV Oneonta Board Meeting*
Maggie Winne’s home, 7pm, 432-6206

Tues. Feb 22
General Meeting on Financing Public Education
Speaker Marti Stayton, 7:30pm at First United Methodist Church, Oneonta.

Mon. March 14
LWV Oneonta Board Meeting*
Maggie Winne’s home, 7pm, 432-6206

Sat. March 19
LWV/AAUW Luncheon
Time/location/program TBA

*All board meetings are open to any member,
please call for info/directions.

Student Essay contest (continued from p 1)

The winner of the local essay contest will
win a prize of $100; the winner of the statewide essay
contest will receive a $3,000 scholarship for post-high
school education.

The Oneonta LWV sponsored two students at the
2004 Students Inside Albany conference, Kevin LaBuz
of Oneonta High School and Courtney Ricci of
Unatego High School.

For more information, call Paul Scheele, 432-8571. ☆
FALL FINANCE DRIVE

Our Fall Finance Drive was the most successful ever, thanks to substantial interest in the presidential election and the knowledge that the League of Women Voters is a powerful force in registering voters, getting out the vote, and advocating for fair election practices.

We extend thanks for the generosity of our member contributors as well as the following nonmember contributors: Jack and Janet Breske, Carleton and Julia Clay, Georgia Couden, Frank Gallucci, Nora Gaty, Howard and Joyce Gelbsman, Roberta Griffith, Anna Hein, Charlie and Jo Koenig, Martin and Joanne Krivin, Dottie Lawson, Anna Marie Lusins, Margaret Maguire, John and Mary Ann Mazarak, Bud and Roseanne Pirone, Walter Vom Saal and Suzanne Miller, Martin Wank, George and Helen Zimmerman, and Lori Zinniewicz.

We’re especially grateful to the Future for Oneonta Foundation, whose generous contribution enables us to publish local Voters Guides and purchase LWNYS Voters Guides for distribution throughout the community.

Thanks too to League members Katie Kotz, who provided database support and printed letters; to Beth Strong, who wrote thank-you notes; to the many League members and friends who hand-addressed envelopes and wrote personal notes on our appeal letter; and to those who made follow-up phone calls.

The survival of our local League depends upon contributors who indicate their appreciation by helping us financially - we’re most grateful. ☆

FROM THE PRESIDENT’S DESK:

Dear Members and Friends of the League,

A very HAPPY NEW YEAR to all!

Let’s make 2005 a productive year for our League here in Oneonta. We can start by attending the Program Planning session on Saturday, January 22 at the Rowe House. Bring a snack to share while we review and discuss our current New York State and Local Positions. The meeting will start at 9:30am, and will be led by Georgia Schadt.

Think about whether the LWVNYS should adopt a new study at the convention this May. Bring the enclosed sheet of state positions as well as your Membership Booklet to the meeting and we will decide on whether the current positions should be retained, dropped, or updated. If you cannot attend the meeting, your input is important so please call or email me with your ideas. Are there local concerns that need a study so we can adopt them here in Oneonta? As you will read in Kay’s article, presently, the study on the need for a County Manager is being reevaluated.

A big “Thank You” to Sandy Fleisher for hosting our Christmas Party in December. League members and elected officials enjoyed a social afternoon of delicious snacks, drink and conversation on a cool, crisp afternoon.

Our Consensus meeting on the Death Penalty Study was well attended and I thank Liz Orton and her committee - Kathy Greenblatt, Mary Lou Austin, Verna Engstrom-Heg, Karen Geasey, Barbara Hein, and Bette Wagner for their research and input. It was not an easy task; however, they did a great job. The results will be announced at the convention in May.

Looking forward, Oneonta School Board President (and League member) Martha Stayton will share information on public school financing at our Feb. 22 general meeting. Join us for an enlightening discussion on this vitally important topic.

Maggie ☆
LWVNYS Positions in Brief 2003-2005

ELECTION LAW
- Support of measures to protect, extend and encourage the use of the franchise; open the political system by enacting a public campaign financing law for statewide offices; establish legal, ethical campaign guidelines; monitor campaign practices; simplify rules for ballot access. And restore integrity to the election process – specifically support uniformity in election laws and procedures and in their implementation and enforcement; promote measures that ensure the integrity of all ballots; and support adequate funding for these procedures and for training of all involved election personnel.*
- Opposition to term limits for members of the NYS Legislature.
- Opposition to term limits for NYS statewide elected officials.

GOVERNMENT
- Support of standards to ensure equitable representation in the State Legislature and the Congress.
- Support of improved measures to provide representation for legislative districts in case of a vacancy.
- Support of responsive and responsible legislative processes which increase the role of the individual member and the committee system.
- Support of effective lobbying and ethics regulation.
- Support of procedural reforms in the constitutional convention process to promote openness and nonpartisanship.

HEALTH CARE
- Support of measures to assure a basic level of quality physical and mental health care for all state residents including regulatory incentives to encourage development of cost-effective alternative methods of delivery; funding for health promotion and disease prevention programs; provisions for effective citizen participation in health policy decisions.
- Support of measures that enable individuals to assume responsibility for their own health and to participate in decisions including termination of extraordinary life-extending procedures.
- Support for uniform eligibility and coverage of basic health care costs through public financing.

JUDICIAL
- Support of a unified state court system with improved provisions for judicial selection.
- Support of statewide guidelines for law enforcement at all levels to prevent racial and economic profiling.
- Support of measures to improve pretrial procedures in the criminal courts.
- Support of measures to promote a fair and efficient jury system.
- Support of alternatives to incarceration.

NATURAL RESOURCES
- Support for measures to achieve watershed protection including limiting pesticide uses and applying Best Management Practices.
- Support for a state-established, intergovernmental system for land resource management.
- Support for a proactive role for New York State in regional land use planning, containing urban sprawl and protecting sensitive areas
- Support of reconditioning of the New York State Erie/Barge Canal System and its development for recreational uses.

SOCIAL POLICY
- Support measures to meet the needs for low-income housing through use of state funds and incentives to localities

STATE FINANCES
- Support reforms for greater equity in education financing for both pupils and the taxpayers.
- Oppose in principle the use of public funds to support non-public schools, kindergarten-twelfth grade.
- Support of a uniform equitable assessment and property tax system.
- Support of measures to provide for openness and accountability in the operation of the New York State public authority system.
- Support of a timely and responsive state budget.
- Support the funding of public higher education and the existing formula for financing the community system, 1/3 tuition, 1/3 state aid, and 1/3 county support.

**WOMENS ISSUES/SOCIAL POLICY**
- Support of measures which hold marriage to be an economic partnership with a presumption of equality between the spouses.
- Opposition to measures that contain a presumption of joint custody of the children.
- Support for equity in employment laws and practices and equal pay for jobs of comparable worth.
- Support of measures to reduce the incidence and effects of domestic violence.
- Support for measures to meet the needs for affordable and accessible housing through use of state funds and incentives to localities.

*These state positions are based on LWVUS principles and public policy positions. State actions on other items not covered under a state position can also be taken under LWVUS positions. Reproductive choices (Government position) and welfare reform (Meeting Basic Human Needs position) are two examples.*

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**Death Penalty Consensus Report**

Barely approved by the LWVNY in May of 2003, the study of the Death Penalty in New York State proved an increasingly topical subject.

Our committee began meeting in November 2003 and reached consensus on November 16th, 2004. Coincidentally, a virtual moratorium on the death penalty went into effect last year, and our original February 2005 consensus deadline was advanced to December 2004.

Twenty or so LWV members attended the consensus meeting on Nov 16th, where we discussed pros and cons on each question. Four completed questionnaires from members who could not attend were included in the consensus.

Pros and cons regarding a guarantee of absolute guilt, and an examination of DNA testing were of special interest, as were the recommendation to adopt a formal moratorium, and mental illness in the prison population.

The Board of Directors endorsed the members’ findings according to the sense of the group. Cathy Greenblatt served as the recorder, and a memorandum of the meeting was sent to the LWVNY at the end of November.

Thanks to Mary-Lou Austin who provided data on foreign nationals and press clippings; Verna Engstrom-Hegg who shared information on the death penalty in other countries and human rights issues; Karen Geasey who researched the Capital Defender’s Office; Maggie Winne, ex-officio, for her guidance and contributions; Bette Wagner who investigated the reliability of evidence; Barb Hein for keeping the membership informed via the bulletin, and to Georgia Schadt who invited the panel of officials to the April meeting. Thanks to all who attended and participated in the study.

LWVNY Study Chair Ann Brandon informs us of a Jan 25th hearing on the death penalty in the state legislature. Thanks to early consensus meetings we will have a membership stance on this vital issue.

Elizabeth Orton
Death Penalty Study Committee Chair
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HELP WANTED:
LWV Observer Corps

Dorothy Bloom is looking for a few more volunteers to complete our Observer Corps roster - to attend meetings of Oneonta Common Council, Town Board, School Board and County Board of Representatives. You can commit to attend one of these meetings every month, or just volunteer to go once or twice to see what it's like. As a League observer at a public meeting, you may go alone or bring a friend, or ask Dorothy to pair you with another League observer.

Typically, observers do only that - observe meeting proceedings and report back to the League about notable developments or issues of concern. You don't have to take extensive notes, or make public statements on behalf of the League. If you have ever been curious about the workings of our local governmental bodies, this is a great way to find out how they work.

Check the following list and choose a meeting that fits your schedule. Then contact Dorothy at 432-1642 (or email dorothybloom@yahoo.com) and tell her you'll be the League's eyes and ears for a day (or an evening). Who knows, perhaps you'll get hooked and decide you want to run for office! ☆

CITY OF ONEONTA COMMON COUNCIL
1st and 3rd Tuesdays 7:30
City Hall

ONEONTA TOWN BOARD
2nd Wednesday 7:30
Town Hall

OTSEGO COUNTY BOARD OF REPRESENTATIVES
1st Wednesday 10:00 am
3rd Wednesday 7:30 pm
County Office Building, Cooperstown

ONEONTA BOARD OF EDUCATION
1st and 3rd Wednesday 7:00
Call for location 432-8232

Meet the Board of Directors
Each month this column profiles one or more of our local League leaders.

Susan R. Hughson

"I think the League is the best organization in Oneonta! It's an opportunity to learn about important issues, meet interesting people, experience personal growth, and feel that you can make a difference in the community."

Susan Hughson, a former adjunct Chemistry professor for SUNY Oneonta, is and has been a major player in LWV-Oneonta for many years. When we asked her to recall when she joined the League, Susan replied, "It seems as if I've been a League member forever, with some time off when my two sons were young."

A member of our local Board of Directors since the mid-1980's, Susan's served as President, Voter Service chair and most recently Finance Chair. She also served on the LWVNY Board for six years, handling the Voter Service portfolio: two of those years as Second Vice President.

Susan's organizational flair and efforts to involve numerous members in fundraising activities have yielded strong results for our League over the past few years. Her own credibility and reputation in the community have benefited the League enormously. Susan is also President of the Future for Oneonta Foundation, Catskill Area Hospice and a Hartwick College Trustee. In the past she's served on the Boards of the Oneonta Concert Association and Family Service Association.

Susan's sons are grown now - and now she's got two grandchildren to enjoy. A high-energy grandmother, she stays energized for all of her volunteer meetings and administrative work by enjoying outdoor sports year-round: including swimming, skiing and tennis. ☆