Consensus Meeting on Nov 16th:
The Death Penalty in NY State

Since the LWVNY's Convention 2003, when delegates voted to adopt a new study of the death penalty in New York State, Leagues across the state have studied the issue. A recent court decision invalidated our state death penalty statute - and without a position in place, the state board cannot act on this issue when the legislature returns in January. Thus, the deadline for consensus has been moved up. In order for our League to be part of the statewide consensus, we must forward the results of our consensus meeting to the state committee by Dec 1.

All members may participate in the consensus process:
Study materials are available online at www.lwvny.org (click on “Education” and scroll down to the Death Penalty Study information) or on paper (call Liz Orton at 538-1253 or Barb Hein at 433-8807 to get a copy).

The LWVNY website also features information on three proposed bills in the state legislature: one repealing the death penalty, one calling for a moratorium, and one establishing a statewide registry of death penalty objectors (If a registrant became a victim of a crime punishable by the death penalty, the person(s) subsequently convicted of that crime would receive a life sentence rather than the death penalty).

On Tuesday, November 16th, at 7:30pm, we’ll hold our local consensus meeting at the First United Methodist Church, corner of Church and Chestnut Streets. All interested members are encouraged to attend and participate in the discussion. The study questions appear on page 4 of this Bulletin.

Even if you can’t attend the consensus meeting and take part in the discussion there, you can still participate by mailing your responses to the study questions to Liz Orton by Friday, November 19th.
Support the League through your online holiday shopping

Would you like to find a way to donate to the League that doesn't cost you a penny? Do your online holiday shopping through the LWVNYS website. No, that doesn't mean that you have to buy everyone LWV-embazoned mugs that say “Vote ‘til it hurts” or T-shirts that say “I went to the polls and all I got was this lousy t-shirt.” You can shop all your favorite online merchants - and a portion of your purchases will be donated to the League.

Just go to www.lwvny.org, scroll to the bottom of the page, and click on the iGive icon to explore the possibilities – you can get just about anything through the hundreds of merchants who are part of this fantastic program! Any questions? Just point and click your way to the site’s FAQs and find the answers.

LWV Observer Corps: Keeping track of government keeps government on the track

It’s no secret that League members are interested in government and there’s no better way for us to enlighten ourselves on the subject than by attending local sessions of government. We’re looking for additional volunteers for an Observer Corps - to attend meetings and report back with observations.

We’ve had observers attend Oneonta Common Council, Oneonta Town Board, Otsego County Board and Oneonta City School District Board of Education meetings. The following schedule lists meetings and our current or recent observers.

CITY OF ONEONTA COMMON COUNCIL
Observer: Bob Holstead (‘til December)
1st and 3rd Tuesdays 7:30
City Hall

ONEONTA TOWN BOARD
Observer: Gerritt Gansevoort
2nd Wednesday 7:30
Town Hall

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

ONEONTA BOARD OF EDUCATION
Observer: Sandee Fleisher
1st and 3rd Wednesday 7:00
In November at Greater Plains School
Other months location TBA

We would love to be able to increase our “coverage”, and have more than one observer attending each of these meetings on a regular basis. Would you like to attend one or more? If you can volunteer, or want more info about Observer Corps, please contact Dorothy Bloom at 432-1642 or Maggie Winne at 432-6206.
FROM THE PRESIDENT’S DESK:

Dear Members and Friends of the League,

Election is over and whether or not your candidates won or lost now we have to keep busy preparing for all of the other activities on the agenda for this year.

First - A big "Thank You" to Karen Geasey and her volunteers for her voter registration efforts (one in the rain at a football game) as well as the Forum. It has been a busy year, to say the least, and Karen has done a superb job as always.

Second - Our next big activity is the consensus on the Death Penalty Please take the time to read over the questions that are printed in this issue and if possible, join the committee that has worked so hard researching this important topic, on the night of November 16.

Third - Three priorities for the State League this year were sent on consensus by the Board. The Election Law, Open Government, and State Finances still needed to be high priorities, as considerable work is still unfinished in the State Legislature. In January we will be reviewing all of the State Positions as well as our Local Positions. If you have any new local positions you would like to see studied, bring that to the January meeting.

Fourth - Dorothy Bloom is our Observer Corps Director and needs volunteers to cover local and county meetings. Volunteer if you can - her number is 432 - 1642. We like to be present at all City Council, School Board, Town Board, and County Board meetings. She does have some coverage but this could be divided up with enough volunteers that no one person need attend all meetings. Give it some thought and call Dorothy.

Happy Thanksgiving and I'll see you at the Christmas Party in December.

Maggie [ ]

Otsego County Government

In 1989 we adopted a strong position supporting an appointed county manager with training and experience. What would that cost today? What has been the experience of comparable counties? Join the County Government Study Committee and help us find out. The County Study Committee will meet Monday evening, Nov. 22 at 7:30 at 10 Walnut St. Call ahead (432-6974) or just come.

Students Inside Albany Essay Contest & Conference

The LWVNYS is again sponsoring an essay contest and Legislative Conference for high school students. Locally, we will be contacting high school teachers to invite their students to participate. A local prize will be awarded, and local winners will be able to attend the Students Inside Albany conference on April 3-6, all expenses paid.

The deadline for essay submissions will be February 2. For more information, contact Paul Scheele at 432-8571.

Membership Update

Please note the following changes to the membership directory:

Alice Collins
4048 County Rt. 23
West Oneonta, NY 13861

Holly Conway
380 Main St.
Oneonta NY 13820


**Death Penalty Consensus Questions**

1. (A) If a revised death penalty law is instituted in New York State, should there be exclusions for certain categories of people? (Check any you would exclude)
   - Mentally ill
   - Developmentally disabled (excluded by Supreme Court mandate)
   - Younger than 18 at the time of the crime (excluded by NYS law)
   - Foreign nationals
   - Other (specify)

(B) Should the criminal law require proof “beyond any doubt” rather than “beyond a reasonable doubt” for capital cases, as proposed by the state’s Capital Defender Office?
   - Yes
   - No

2. (A) Should a moratorium be adopted to allow further study of the law by a state commission?
   - Yes
   - No

   Why or why not? (check one)
   - The death penalty is fair and equitable as it stands
   - A moratorium would prevent the abolition of the death penalty
   - Other (specify)

(B) If a moratorium were adopted, what aspects should the state commission consider?
   - Adequate mechanisms for introducing new evidence
   - Powers given to county District Attorney in seeking the death penalty
   - Racial, ethnic and economic issues of defendants and victims (including data from other states)
   - Geographic disparities in the application of New York law
   - Costs of death penalty versus life in prison
   - Equitable justice for all defendants
   - Reliability of evidence in New York criminal convictions
   - Human rights aspects of state killing
   - Other (specify)

3. (A) Should the death penalty be an option in New York State criminal law?
   - Yes
   - No

(B) If no, what should the penalty options be for murder I? (check any)
   - Life without parole
   - 20/25 years to life
   - Other (specify)

Please put other comments below.

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**BE PART OF THIS CONSENSUS!** Bring this form to the Nov 16 meeting
OR return it to Liz Orton at 2053 Whiskey Hollow Rd, Hobart NY 13788 by Nov 19
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**Voter Service Report**

We've come to the end of our busy Presidential Election season! By the time we read this Bulletin, results from the 2004 elections will be out. I'm sure there will still be lots of issues to discuss regardless of who wins what race, especially because of the new HAVA regulations.

We did a lot of work on voter registration this year, with very high numbers being registered to vote here or elsewhere via absentee ballots. However, our debate schedule was a bit unusual. We held a primary debate in September for the first time in several years, between the two Democratic candidates for District 13 for the Otsego County Board of Representatives. On October 26, we held another debate between the two general election candidates for that seat. We'd also planned to hold a debate between candidates for the 24th Congressional District seat that evening, but Congressman Boehlert was unable to attend due to his recent bypass surgery. We were unable to get a commitment from Dr. David Walrath to debate with Jeffrey Miller, so that debate was canceled.

The IRC-TV studio staff and crew were very professional. Thanks to Shirley Fiorvante and Mary Simpson for their part as greeters, to Laurel Elder for moderating, and to her Hartwick students who were timers and runners.

Our local Voters’ Guide publication, which is usually a staple of our voter services, also did not come to fruition this fall. The Congressional candidates never responded to the Oneonta area questionnaires - due to their confusion between our questionnaire and the one they received for the new LWVNYS Voters’ Guide. County Representative candidate Rudolph Laguna replied to his candidate questionnaire, but his opponent Michael Swiderski did not, so we did not publish a Voters’ Guide this season.

I spoke with students and faculty from both colleges about Get Out the Vote ideas, including posting the polling location info in each dorm and researching the transportation options to get there.

DNNet was a great website for all kinds of election and voting information on a state and national level. We gave Time Warner a Public Service Announcement which was co-produced by the LWVUS and World Wrestling Entertainment in an attempt to attract voters. The NYS Voters’ Guide was well-received: we distributed 2,500 copies in the Oneonta area - Thanks to Kathie Greenblatt, Beth Strong, Bette Wagner, Julie Pollak and Emily Marlin and all the rest who helped with this job. I’m happy to say that none are left sitting around at my home!

Thanks again to our many members who participated in our voter registration activities this fall. I hope to have a busy spring ahead, preparing for the Board of Education election activities this fall. I’ll be looking for volunteers to help out.

Karen Geasey, Voter Service Director
432-8158

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**In Memoriam**

**Ed Shuman**

LWV supporter and husband of Marjorie Murphy Shuman

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**Election Night Reporting**

Several of our members served as election reporters - calling in vote totals at the end of the evening to the Daily Star. Thanks to Peg Hathaway, Maggie Winne, Karen Geasey, Kay Stuligross, Mary Simpson, Cheryl Carter Lipari and Bergitte Beehler, Alice Collins, Gay and Gerrit Gantooy.  

**Fall Highway Cleanup Completed**

Thanks to the following eager volunteers who fulfilled our Adopt-a-highway pledge on Nov 4: Gay and Gerrit Gantooy, Norma and John Havens, Dave Hutchison, Annette Lindell, Georgia Schadt and Kay Stuligross, led by Lucille Wiggin. Next cleanup date will be in early May – more details in a spring issue of the Bulletin.
Community Awareness Taskforce to sponsor forums on housing

The Community Awareness Taskforce of Delaware and Otsego Counties will hold two forums on housing this month in Oneonta. The Community Awareness Taskforce (CAT) is a coalition of individuals and organizations created in 2002 with the backing of the State of New York Office of the Attorney General Eliot Spitzer. CAT’s mission is to inform the community about civil and consumer rights.

The first housing issues forum, “Know Your Rights: Tenants’ and Landlords’ Rights and Responsibilities” will take place on Saturday, November 13, 2004, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church, 66 Chestnut Street, Oneonta, right after Saturday’s Bread has finished serving. Issues to be addressed will include:

- local resources for finding an apartment or house to rent;
- standard lease agreements and sub-leases;
- Warranty of Habitability;
- rent charges and security deposits;
- payments for heat and other utilities;
- inspection of premises prior to occupation;
- effective communication between landlords and tenants;
- resolving conflicts with neighbors;
- conflict resolution agencies (alternatives to court);
- use of Small Claims Court;
- the eviction process;
- acceptable wear and tear;
- emergency call numbers for fire and other emergencies;
- landlords responsibilities for making repairs and recourses for non-compliance;
- landlords’ responsibility in providing clean premises and tenants’ responsibility in leaving premises clean;
- how to get deposit money returned.

The second forum, “Know Your Rights: Affordable Housing” will take place on Tuesday, November 16th, at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 12 Ford Avenue, Oneonta, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. The goal of the meeting will be two-fold, part informational and part brainstorming, concerning the eligibility criteria for emergency housing, short-term rentals, and financial assistance, in the face of a scarcity of affordable housing in the area.

Representatives of the Department of Social Services, Opportunities for Otsego, Rehabilitation Support Services, Otsego Rural Housing, and Catholic Charities will participate in a discussion with the audience, members of which will include professionals from various fields, to explore possible solutions to the lack of affordable housing.

This event will provide a unique and significant opportunity for community members and housing providers to come together and formulate plans to resolve long-standing problems in our community. Hopefully, a coalition of interested individuals and organizations will be formed to work on the suggested solutions. Refreshments will be provided.

Both of these meetings are free of charge and open to all. Contact the CAT at (607) 435-0248, or via email: cattaskforce@aol.com. Their mailing address is PO Box 396, Oneonta NY 13820.