2005 Fall Election Season Candidate Forums

The LWV of the Oneonta Area will be hosting candidate forums for local races this year.
The Daily Star and the Central New York Radio Group will be co-sponsoring the debates.

Candidates’ Forum:

Tuesday, October 25
Morris Hall 7:00 – 9:00 P.M.

Otsego County Board of Representatives
Candidates for District 3: Ron Feldstein and Sheryl Lifgren-Charity

Otsego County Board of Representatives
Candidates for District 5: Ben Friedell and Stephen Fournier

5 minute Statements from the candidates for Otsego County Treasurer
Myrna Thayne and Henry R. Bachman

Candidates’ Forum:

Tuesday, November 1
Morris Hall 7:00 – 9:00P.M.

Candidates for the Mayor of the City of Oneonta
Sean Farrell and John Nader

5 minute Statements from the 3 candidates for Oneonta Town Justice: John Cook, Bruce Smith and June Sheehan

The forums will be held in the Craven Lounge at Morris Hall, SUNY Oneonta
Broadcast live on Public Access Channel 23 by IRC-TV Studio staff and crew.
Why an Observer Corps?

League observers at government meetings have been invaluable. In August, Garrit Gantoort, our Town observer, reported on a planned public hearing on a proposed extension of the area in the town in which open burning is prohibited. Since we have a position opposing open burning anywhere in Otsego County, Maggie Winnie, our Vice President and a Town resident, spoke in favor of the extension and urged a complete ban. The law was passed. Thank you Garrit for your timely report.

A few years ago, Dennis Shea, then our Common Council observer, reported on meetings of board and commissions at times not in keeping with the City Charter. This information led us to do a detailed study of the charter, charter amendment process, and the wishes of City residents.

We are fortunate this year to have observers at Common Council, the County Board and Town Board. We do not have anyone observing school board. Would you be interested?

President’s Letter

Our 2005-2006 year began with many questions and answers about county management as 75 concerned citizens joined us for dinner and a presentation by representatives from Livingston and Tioga County boards and their administrators spoke of the responsibilities of county administration. Led by questions by Dave Brenner, the audience of county board representatives, candidates, Leaguers, and guests asked the tough questions we need answered.

Thanks to Shirley Fioravanti, Ruth Tarter, Maggie Winnie, and Diane Slocum the room was beautifully set up for dinner. We all joined Dolly Layman’s cleanup committee at the end of the evening.

I have received many congratulatory comments about the excellent program. Thank you Peg Hathaway for organizing the panel.

Many thanks from all of us to Vivien Anderson who has stepped forward to edit the bulletin. We all rely on this publication for the times and dates of League events and information from the State and National Leagues.

Mark Oct. 25 on your calendar if you live in Otsego or Laurens (County Board District 3) of Hartwick, Milford or New Lisbon (County Board District 5) debates between candidates for those seats.

Nov. 1st is the date for the City of Oneonta Mayoral debate. This promises to elicit many tough questions about city issues. At both debates, reporters at a media table will alternate questions with the public. Join us at Morris Hall or on Channel 23.

Calendar


Oct. 25 – Candidate Forum: County Districts 3 and 5 and County Treasurer Morris Hall 7:00 P.M.

Nov. 1 – Candidate Forum: Mayor of the City of Oneonta, Oneonta Town Justices Morris Hall 7:00 P.M.

Nov. 8 – Election Day

Nov. 14 – Board Meeting – 7:00 P.M.
10 Walnut St. Everyone welcome

Nov. 16 – League Day at the UN

Officers
President ............. Kay Stuligross .......... 432-6974
Vice President ...... Maggie Winnie ........ 432-6206
Secretary ............ Alice Collin...........
Treasurer ............ Liz Burns .............. 433-0987
Financing Education Study

At our Convention last May, delegates voted to update our eight-year old position on state financing of education. In accordance with our existing position, the League supported the plaintiffs, the Campaign Fiscal Equity (CFE), by submitting *Amicus Curiae* briefs to the Court of Appeals and the Referees.

Our original position left unanswered the question of who would pay for a more equitable education system. That is the question that the current study will address. It will focus on potential revenue sources, evaluating these sources with respect to volume of revenues generated; fairness, from the standpoint of the relationship the revenue measure has to ability to pay; stability; and the impact on the business climate within the state. Also included in the study will be a look at the impact of charter schools on school finance, gambling revenues as a source of financing education, and the impact of the School Taxpayers’ Relief Program (STAR).

The State Study Committee has been working throughout the summer to lay the groundwork for this study. It has prepared a study outline and a preliminary bibliography to assist us in our study.

For this study to proceed, a significant number of local Leagues must participate. Will we be one of them? To do so we need a committee chair and committee members. We have one interested member. It is possible for non-League members to participate on the committee, but not in the consensus itself. If you are interested, please call Kay at 432-6974 and she will get the preliminary information to you.

LWVNYS 2006 Legislative Agenda and YOU

In November, the State Board will meet to establish our legislative priorities for 2006. Now is your opportunity to tell them what you think the League should emphasize. Call or email Kay with your suggestions by Oct. 27th.

Criteria:
Is the issue “unfinished business” from 2005?
Is the issue likely to receive attention in the 2006 season?
Is action on the issue supported by a League position?

Consult the 2005 Agenda which follows and the LWVNYS positions in brief on pages 5 and 6.

2005 Legislative Agenda

Reforming New York State Government-
Redistricting, Campaign Finance, Public
Authorities, Elections, Freedom of
Information, Ethics, Budget, Legislative
Rules, Lobbying, Constitutional Convention.

Equity in School Financing
Greater equity in school financing for both
taxpayers and students from pre-K through
high school.

Smart Growth/Containing Sprawl
Regional land use planning; enhancement of
urban neighborhoods; protection of
agricultural land, open space, watersheds and
other sensitive areas. Empire Zone Law should
support investment in census tracts in areas of
poverty or job loss.

Capital Punishment in New York State
Abolish the death penalty with the use of life
without parole.

Voter Service News

The Grand and Glorious Garage Sale was a fun
time in September as usual where the League
registered a few new or moved voters and gave
out absentee ballot applications and information.
We had some politically interested people stop
by to chat about timely issues and it was a
wonderful warm day. Thanks to many League
members who contributed to the garage sale:
Barb Hein, Annette Lindell, Dave Hutchison,
Sandy Fleisher, Gerri Haan, Bette Wagner, Peg
Hathaway and Alice Collins.

Our League members have now handed out
1,000 copies of the Voters’ Guide Parts I and II
from the LWVNY. The Guides can be found in
City and Town Halls, local businesses, schools, the library and other public places. Part I includes information about registering voters, this year's primary and general election deadlines and Part II contains specific information on the ballot proposals we will find in the voting booth on November 8. Thanks so much to all the members who helped distribute these Guides.

We are hosting Candidates' Forums which are being co-sponsored by The Daily Star and Central New York Radio Group for a few local races. On Tuesday, October 25, there will be a debate between the 2 candidates for the District 3 seat and the 2 candidates for the District 5 seat of the Otsego County Board of Representatives. The 2 candidates for the position of Otsego County Treasurer have been invited to give a 5 minute statement of position in the time between the two Board of Representative debates.

On Tuesday, November 1, the 2 candidates for the position of City of Oneonta Mayor will debate. The 3 candidates for the 2 available Oneonta Town Justice positions have been invited to give 5 minute statements about their candidacy starting at 7:00pm before the mayoral debate. All debates will be held from 7:00-9:00pm in the Craven Lounge of Morris Hall on the SUNY Oneonta campus. The IRC-TV Studio staff and crew directed by Dave Geasey will be broadcasting both evenings live on Public Access Channel 23. Oneonta LWV President Kay Stuligross will be moderating the debates and Karen Geasey will be screening the questions. Studio audience members will be given the choice to ask questions at the microphone or have them read by the moderator. I will be calling our members to ask for timers and greeters for the debate nights.

We are also working on publishing Voters' Guides for these above local races. The Guides will be done in a tri-fold pamphlet format and then distributed to the appropriate sections of the city, town and county districts this year, according to the relevant races. There will be Guides available at the October 25th debate for distribution.

Encourage all your friends and neighbors to participate in the debates by calling in their questions for these very important races this year and by giving them our election materials!

Thanks - Karen Geasey, Voter Service Director

**Hello Oneonta League Members**

Since I am now the person sending email alerts to members, I want to make sure that 1) I have everyone's accurate email address and 2) Everyone has my correct (NEW) email address in their email address book, so that when I send messages from the LWV, they won't be mistaken as spam and filtered out.

Please double-check the email address that's listed for you in newest membership booklet (2005-2006). If the address listed is incorrect (or you didn't have one listed but would like to receive email) please send an email message to me at: barbarahin@verizon.net.

And please, add barbarahin@verizon.net to your email address book, so that you won't miss any Oneonta LWV messages from me.

Thanks, Barbara Illin

**League Day at the UN – Nov. 9, 2005 at the United Nations Headquarters**

This year, League Day at the UN will feature Briefings on the Status of Democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan. 9:00 A.M. registration. 10:00 Briefing; lunch at 12:45 P.M., 2:30 P.M. tour. Registration $50 for members/ $70 others. Optional buffet lunch at the UN: $32.50. Optional tour of the UN: $11.50.

See www.lwvny.org or call 518-465-4162 for registration or additional information.

**Diversity Policy**

The League of Women Voters of the Oneonta Area, in both its values and practices, is committed to diversity and pluralism. There shall be no barriers to participation in the League. The League of Women Voters of the Oneonta Area recognizes that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision making.
2005-2007 LWVNYS Positions in Brief

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.
Opposition to the death penalty, with life without parole as the primary alternative.
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.
PROPOSAL NUMBER ONE, AN AMENDMENT

FORM OF SUBMISSION (How the proposal will be presented to you on the ballot):

Amendment to Articles IV and VII of the Constitution, in relation to the submission of the budget to the Legislature by the Governor

The proposed amendment to Articles IV and VII of the Constitution would change the process for enactment of the state budget by (a) providing for a contingency budget if the Legislature does not act on the Governor's appropriation bills before the start of the fiscal year; (b) placing limits on the amount of spending during such contingency period; (c) once such contingency period begins, eliminating the requirement that the Legislature act on the Governor's proposed appropriation bills, and instead authorizing the Legislature to end the contingency period by adopting a multiple appropriation bill making changes to the contingency budget, subject to line item veto by the Governor; and (d) authorizing the Legislature, subject to veto by the Governor, to modify the spending limits for future contingency budgets, except that such changes cannot take effect until three years after enactment. The proposed amendment also sets forth certain requirements for the operation of a fiscal stabilization reserve fund, from which money could be disbursed in a subsequent year. It would require estimates and information provided by state departments to the Governor for use in preparing the budget to be available to the public. It would provide a date certain by which the Governor must submit a budget and appropriation bills to the Legislature. It would reduce the time the Governor has to make changes to the budget and appropriation bills submitted to the Legislature without the Legislature's consent from thirty days to twenty-one days. Shall the proposed amendment be approved?

What will this amendment do if approved?

Summary of changes which will occur as a result of the amendment and implementing legislation: (In addition to passing the Constitutional Amendment, the Legislature also passed legislation to implement the amendment. The implementing legislation will go into effect only if the Constitutional Amendment is passed by the voters.)

Fiscal Year – The legislation would change the start of the state fiscal year from April 1 to May 1. This would first apply to the state budget period starting April 1, 2006 and ending on April 30, 2007.

Early Budget Submission – The Constitutional Amendment would require earlier submission of the Executive budget, by January 15 (February 1 for a newly elected Governor) and shorten the amendment period from 30 days to 21 days to allow additional time for legislative review.

Contingency Budget – If a new budget is not adopted by May 1, provisions in both the implementing legislation (the Budget Reform Bill) and the Constitutional Amendment would require that the previous year's budget continue for the following fiscal year. This contingency budget would provide the same appropriations, re-appropriations, spending and revenue provisions as enacted for the preceding fiscal year, with exceptions that include school aid, public assistance, state employee health insurance and pension costs, debt service and certain federal funds. Once in effect, the contingency budget will remain until the Legislature passes a multiple appropriation bill that alters it. If, after a contingency budget becomes effective, the Independent Budget Office projects that revenues are insufficient, uniform reductions will have to be made to ensure a balanced budget. Exceptions include school aid, as well as federally required programs such as public assistance, certain federal funds, and constitutionally mandated expenses such as state employee health insurance and pension costs and debt service.

Agency Budget Requests – The Constitutional Amendment requires that all agency budget request submissions be made public prior to the submission of the Executive budget.

Three-Year Financial Plan – The Budget Reform Bill requires a three-year projection by the Governor of the financial impact of any changes to the Executive budget.

Expanded Reserve Funds – Two reserve funds, equal to six percent, would be created to provide funds for May and June school aid payments, and to cushion against unexpected economic downturns, revenue shortfalls and natural disasters. Expanded reserve fund provisions are included in both the amendment and the bill.

Enhanced Fast Start – Under the Enhanced Fast Start plan, discussions between the Governor and the Legislature on forecasts of tax revenues, Medicaid disbursements, school aid disbursements and public assistance caseloads would begin on or before December 5 of each year.

Two-Year Education Funding – The Budget Reform Bill requires the Governor to include a two-year appropriation for aid to education in the Executive budget.

Health Care Reform in Budget – Beginning in the 2006-07 state fiscal year, the Budget Reform Bill would require the Executive budget to include all spending related to the Health Care Reform Act.

Independent Budget Office – The Budget Reform Bill creates an Independent Budget Office (IBO). The IBO would provide the Legislature with detailed information, including an annual economic and revenue forecast, a three-year fiscal outlook, quarterly reports on state revenues, and fiscal impact statements on proposed legislation. All reports of the IBO would be made available to the public. The Director of the IBO will be appointed jointly by the Speaker of the Assembly and the President Pro Tem of the Senate. The Director will serve a two-year term and have the authority to appoint personnel and procure services of experts and consultants as necessary.

Additional Financial Reporting – The budget reform plan would require additional detail and financial reporting in the Executive budget relating to the financial plan.

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Voters' Guide, League of Women Voters of New York State Part II.
PROPOSAL ONE

Arguments for:
Proponents of the budget amendment say:
• it would allow more time for discussion, debate and review of budget details;
• it would put a contingency budget in place if legislators fail to agree on a budget by the beginning of the fiscal year, allowing the state to function normally;
• it would allow school districts to better plan their budgets;
• it would prevent shortfalls due to unexpected events such as economic downturns or natural disasters;
• it would alter the power relationship between the Governor and Legislature to make it more like that found in the rest of the nation;
• it would require more accountability from the Governor and allow more access to budget information; and
• it would give the Legislature more of a say in the budget process.

Arguments Against:
Opponents to the budget amendment say:
• it would disrupt state finances and return the state to costly borrowing practices because the fiscal year would end in a volatile revenue month, increasing the risk of year-end shortfalls;
• it would reward legislators for refusing to enact an on-time budget, and would lead to even higher spending, taxes and debt;
• it would dramatically tilt the budgetary powers in favor of the legislative branch, thus creating fiscal instability;
• it would make the state's dysfunctional budget process worse; and
• it contains no provisions to constrain the state's appetite for debt.

PROPOSAL TWO

PROPOSAL NUMBER TWO: A PROPOSITION

FORM OF SUBMISSION (How the proposal will be presented to you on the ballot):
To promote and assure the preservation, renewal and improvement of the state’s roads and bridges; subways, trains and buses; waterways and airports; and other vital transportation systems, facilities and equipment for the benefit of the people of the state, shall section one of part I of chapter 60 of the laws of two thousand five, entitled and constituting the “REBUILD AND RENEW NEW YORK TRANSPORTATION BOND ACT OF 2005” authorizing the creation of a state debt in the amount of two billion nine hundred million dollars ($2,900,000,000) for the construction, improvement, reconditioning and preservation of transportation systems and facilities, including the acquisition of equipment be approved?

What will this proposal do if approved?
The purpose of the proposal is to authorize a state debt and the sale of state bonds of up to two billion nine hundred million dollars ($2,900,000,000) to provide money for the purpose of improving, enhancing, preserving, and restoring the quality of the state’s transportation infrastructure. Half would be used to improve public transportation, the other half for roads and bridges.

The money would be for the planning and design, construction, reconstruction, replacement, improvement, reconditioning, rehabilitation and preservation of roads, bridges and public highways, border crossing enhancements, highway-railroad grade crossings; pedestrian and bicycle trails and pathways; rail and high speed rail projects; airports and aviation facilities, equipment and related projects; the canal system and incidental property, ports, marine terminals and marine transportation facilities; urban, commuter, and intercity passenger rail, freight rail, and intermodal (multi-mode) passenger and freight facilities and equipment; urban and commuter passenger and freight rail, omnibus, and mass transit and rapid transit systems, facilities and equipment.

The state Legislature would be authorized to use the bond proceeds for state programs or state grants to cities, counties, towns, villages, public benefit or other public corporations or authorities, for the purpose of the act or to match available federal funds for such purpose.

Arguments for:
Proponents of the Transportation Bond Act of 2005 say:
• it will contribute to the state's economic recovery;
• it will pay for itself through the creation of construction jobs and increased commerce;
• it is needed to provide the state's share of the cost of certain important projects in order to qualify for the federal government's contribution towards those projects;
• with less funding coming from the federal government, it provides an opportunity to rebuild NYS infrastructure and maintain its economic viability for years to come.

Arguments Against:
Opponents to the Transportation Bond Act of 2005 say:
• it is not fiscally responsible;
• there is already a dedicated highway trust fund designed to pay for many of these projects; a more sound approach would be a constitutional amendment to prohibit state government from using these dedicated funds for other purposes;
• approval would lead to increased taxes;
• it would be stealing from the future to pay for today's costs.
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Certified Public Accountant

THOMAS C. POTTER, C.P.A.
19 FORD AVENUE
ONEONTA, NEW YORK 13820
TELEPHONE 607-432-9082
HOME PHONE 607-278-5256

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