



League of Women Voters of Cortland County (LWVCC)

VOTER December 2016

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LWV Mission: The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Holiday Greetings!

Recap of a Very Busy and Productive 2016

Cortland League's NEW Facebook page is up; like us on FB at LWV of Cortland County. Our new website is under construction.

Our League presented a series of events that support our 2016-2018 focus on *Making Democracy Work*. We welcome all participants. Come join us in planning, promoting, or attending future events.

PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNMENT

RESEARCH

Studies are central to the role of the league in guiding the development of policy and advocacy. This year, our League established a committee to explore the issue of whether the county should hire a county administrator. As part of the study, the committee hosted an informative forum to initiate public dialogue on the issue. (See critical issues forums below).

VOTER SERVICES: VOTER REGISTRATION

Jo Schaffer and Dottie Fowler are co-chairs of our Voter Services Committee.

- Our League actively promoted voter registration at several events in the fall. We had a booth at the Area Agency on Aging Enrichment Day on June 7, Cortland Arts & Wine Festival on August 6, SUNY Cortland student life center on September 7, and the Pumpkinfest on October 1-2. Several members helped to register voters at the NYS Fair.
- Last spring, our league signed on to participate in the LWVNYS organ donor project. The LWVNYS is part of a partnership with the New York Alliance for Donation (NYAD). The Alliance's mission is to increase organ, eye and tissue donation in New York State. In 2009, New York became the first state to include an organ and tissue donor enrollment section on voter registration forms. Our participation in the LWV Organ Donor Program had various financial benefits for our chapter. It covered the registration costs for booths at the Arts & Wine Festival and Pumpkinfest as well as the cost of 300 copies of the LWV Voter Guide Part II.

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PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNMENT continued

VOTER SERVICES: CANDIDATE FORUMS

The Cortland league organized and moderated five candidate forums this year.

In the spring, Sheila Cohen worked with the Homer School District central office to organize the **Homer School Board Candidate Forum** and on May 11, 2016 she moderated the lively forum in Bonne Auditorium.

Planning commenced in July for four **"Meet the Candidates" forums** to inform voters before Nov. 8 Election Day. Our league organized and moderated four October forums:

- Cortland County District Attorney, October 13, 2016 at 51 Port Watson St. High-Rise.
- US Congress District 22, October 15, 2016 at the Elks Club on Groton Ave.
- NYS Senate District 51, October 22, 2016 at the Elks Club on Groton Ave.
- NYS Assembly Districts 125 & 126, October 29, 2016 at the Elks Club on Groton Ave.

Forums were sponsored by the Cortland County Women's Coalition (AAUW, LWV, YWCA, Zonta, SUNY WGS Committee). Sponsors and the Cortland Chamber of Commerce developed questions for candidates. Candidates at each of the venues appreciated the opportunity to connect with voters in person. Voters appreciated the opportunity to hear candidate positions of key issues and to ask questions of the candidates. Thanks go to the Elks Lodge of Cortland County and the Cortland Housing Authority for hosting these forums and Rep. Hanna's presentation noted below.

VOTER SERVICES: ELECTION REPORTING

Our league members continue to serve as AP "stringers" on election night. Kelsey Ryan and Alison King volunteered to phone in live results from the Board of Elections office for the June 28 Primary and November 8 General Election. Our league receives a small payment from the state LWV for this service.

CRITICAL ISSUE FORUMS/PRESENTATIONS

Water Fluoridation: Public controversy over whether to fluoridate the city of Cortland's municipal water supply prompted our League to accept an invitation from Mayor Tobin to help educate the community. Alison King guided planning of a forum on the health impact of municipal water fluoridation and moderated a September 8 forum at which pro and con perspectives were presented. The LWV does not have a position on fluoridation.

Is it Time to Rehire a County Administrator?: This forum was part of a study by a committee organized by our league. After extensive research, the committee published a local editorial on July 6 and organized an educational forum on July 14. At the forum, Alison King, LWVCC President, reviewed the history of the Cortland County Administrator position; Joe Mareane, Tompkins County Administrator, reviewed administrator responsibilities, pros and cons, and practical ground rules for success in the role; and Mary McGuire, SUNY Cortland's Assistant Professor of Political Science, discussed different models of county administration implemented in central NY. Copies of the presentations are available upon request by emailing lwvcortland@gmail.com.

Richard Hanna: Can We Make Democracy Work Better?: Our league was pleased to host Congressman Hanna's talk on October 5th at 51 Port Watson Street High-Rise to hear his candid views on gridlock in Washington and what the public can do. He emphasized that Cortland County is in a swing district, so our votes matter, and he urged people to vote in political primaries.

Political Literacy: Our League arranged a November presentation for Zonta members by LWV NYS Director of Program and Policy Jennifer Wilson. Wilson addressed topics such as finding unbiased sources of information and how to fact-check candidates' statements. LWV President Alison King provided local perspective.

PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNMENT continued

CONSENSUS MEETING

The LWV develops and updates policies through a consensus process that incorporates input from local leagues. Following up on a vote at the 2015 LWVNYS convention, the LWVNYS is now updating its 1977 position on Legislative Procedures. Specifically, 2015 convention delegates voted to reevaluate whether the state legislature should be a part-time body and whether legislators' terms should change. The focus is policy change that might advance ethics reform and performance of the state legislature.

Our members had a lively discussion at our December 6th meeting and holiday event. We discussed the following questions in light of financial malfeasance and the recent scandals among legislators in New York State: 1. Should there be an outright ban or limits on outside earned income for New York State legislators?

2. What should be the length of the terms in each chamber

3. Should terms in either chamber be staggered?

4. Should there be term limits on legislative leadership?

Our recommendations to the NYS League were NO to questions 1-3 and YES to question 4 about restricting length of leadership positions in both chambers. While we thought terms of leadership should be limited, we agreed that legislators should be able to take on another leadership position without having to sit out for a time.

YOUTH SERVICES: ENCOURAGING STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT

STUDENTS INSIDE ALBANY

Thanks go to the hard work of Linda Frank, Youth Services Chair, who reached out to high school Civics teachers across the county, last spring for help in selecting students to attend the NYS League's *Students Inside Albany* Conference. Linda and her committee chose two very deserving young women. At our annual meeting last spring, Cortland High's Julia Marshall gave an insightful and humorous report on her experience as a delegate and the opportunity it presented to meet others across the state with similar interests. Linda read the following statement by Samantha Oakley of McGraw, who could not be at the dinner, "It was honestly one of the best events I have yet to experience."

KEEPING UP WITH HIGH SCHOOL CONNECTIONS

In the fall, Linda Frank contacted high school Social Studies teachers across the county to learn how they were promoting good government in their classrooms. Here's what she discovered:

- Some were helping students register to vote for the first time,
- Some watched the presidential debates together in the classroom [within class time limits]
- Some conducted informal mock voting,
- There were discussions about election-related news: conventions, polls, national candidates (Democratic, Republican and Third-Party candidates), local New York State Senate and Assembly Candidates, and Electoral College rules.
- There were historical comparisons with previous elections, including those in the 19th century,
- There were issue-related flyers posted around the school leading to issue based voting,
- There was a planned gathering in a high school library to watch the election results come in.

CONNECTING WITH COLLEGE STUDENTS

In September, Alison King gave a presentation on behalf of the league to Emilie Kudela's SUNY Cortland class of Childhood/Early Childhood majors after which she received the following letter from Dr. Kudela (continued on p. 4):

YOUTH SERVICES: ENCOURAGING STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT

Dear Alison,

Thank you for coming and presenting to my class last week. You had a very thorough and relevant presentation. I believe that the students were inspired by your passion and commitment to advocacy.

As you know, I asked the students to reflect on what you said and to provide me with their thoughts. I reviewed their reflections and found that they emphasized what they learned and what they might apply. I thought you might be interested.

For information, several indicated [sic] that they learned about the League of Women Voters and that there is a local organization and national organization. At least two students said that they learned that there were local forums and that college students are invited. I am hoping that some of the students will attend. Many students noted the need for integrity and respect when doing advocacy. Others said that they realized the importance of providing public opinion and using your voice to make a difference. Some said that they were not aware of all of the positions in government or the candidates who are running for the positions. Some students said that it was important to understand different points of view. A few students realized that they could register in Cortland if they are attending college in Cortland. Several students said that they did not know about the Cortland problem with fluoride in the water or incineration. These students had some opinions on these issues.

Some ideas expressed by the students for applying what they learned to advocacy included being a professional, including credible people for facts and information and stating your credibility to the officials. Some indicated that there are steps that must be taken to prepare to talk to officials, to visit with officials, and to write letters to the officials and the newspaper. Researching an issue thoroughly is important. Visits are best done by a team of people each of which has a role to play. Some noted that it is not appropriate to give gifts to officials.

I think that the students really benefitted from your presentation. I am looking forward to them applying what they have learned in their own advocacy on an early childhood education issue and of course I will continue to encourage them to register to vote.

Thanks again.

Emilie Kudela, Ph.D.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Our socials at the Finger Lakes Tasting Room and BRU 64 provided an opportunity for long time, former, new and potential members to get to know one another. We welcomed new or returning members to help us in our efforts to promote good government: Skylin Baestlein; Susan Beals; James Bugh; Ingrid Casper; Christine Cecconi; Mary Kay Hickey; Jeanine Masse; Mecke Nagel; Irene Rutan; Kelsey Ryan; Susan Suben; and Sara Watrous.

BOARD MEETINGS

Board meetings are held on the first Monday of each month, except for holidays, from 1:30-3:00pm, generally at the Cortland Free Library. All members are invited to attend. Stay tuned for meeting reminders and plan to join us!

BOARD MEMBERS

Officers 2016-2017

Alison King, President
Suzanne Etherington, Secretary
Lenore Schwager, Treasurer

Board Members 2016-2018: Dottie Fowler, Norma Rhodes, Jo Schaffer, Sara Watrous

Board Members 2015-2017: Sheila Cohen, Charlotte Farris, Linda Frank, Kelsey Ryan

Become a Member of the League of Women Voters of Cortland County

Need to stretch your mind and skills as well as make a difference in the community and the world? These are reasons to become a member and volunteer with other members of our organization. We are affiliated with highly effective NYS and US League organizations that support our activities in multiple ways and provide opportunities for state and national involvement.

We tailor the experience to your needs. Below are some ideas to help you think about the perfect role for you!

- Serve on one or more committees. Check your preference:
 - Communications** (work on the newsletter and website; publicize league activities and positions)
 - Membership and Fundraising** (keep our base of support increasing and strong);
 - Voter Services** (organize candidate forums for local, state, and national elections; plan voter registration activities);
 - Program** (plan and execute programs on current issues based on the state and national League agenda);
 - Youth Services** (register new voters through League-sponsored programs such as "First Vote" and identify outstanding students to participate in "Students Inside Albany;")
 - Nominating** (make sure we have a dynamic Board of Directors and committees,) and
 - Good Government** (help ensure that local government is open and responsive to citizens)
- Serve as a member of the Board of Directors or as an officer. We are always looking for new leadership.

League of Women Voters Membership Application – Cortland Branch

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

*Please send this page with check payable to:
"League of Women Voters Cortland"
c/o Lenore Schwager, Treasurer
42 Pearl St. Cortland, NY 13045*

*Tax Deductible donations of any amount for educational programs payable to "LWVNY Education Foundation"
c/o Lenore Schwager, Treasurer
42 Pearl St. Cortland, NY 1304*