



**The**  
**LOCAL VOTER**  
**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS**  
**SYRACUSE METROPOLITAN AREA**

January/February 2012

Syracuse Metro LWV  
 PO Box 11866  
 Syracuse NY 13218  
 Phone: (315) 396-8225  
 Email: [league@lwvsyr.org](mailto:league@lwvsyr.org)  
 Web Sites:  
 Local: [www.lwvsyr.org](http://www.lwvsyr.org)  
 State: [www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org)  
 National: [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Sunday February 12th**  
 Membership Event  
**Friday, March 2nd**  
 Legislative Breakfast  
**Tuesday, March 27th**  
 OASIS—Iron Jawed Angels

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**STAYING INFORMED ON THE ISSUES AND EVENTS**

Local: [www.lwvsyr.org](http://www.lwvsyr.org)  
 State: [www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org)  
 National: [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)



**Going Green -**

It is our goal to eventually send the Local Voter electronically to all members and friends of the League. Please send us an email at [league@lwvsyr.org](mailto:league@lwvsyr.org) with your current email address. We will not give out this information to other sources. We will continue to send a hard copy to members without email access. Thank you.



*A Celebration of our  
 92nd Birthday*

*For members , both old and new, and those interested in becoming a part of a group that shares a passion for creative and positive change on the local, state and national levels.*

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2012  
 1 - 4 PM

200 PIERCEFIELD DRIVE, SOLVAY NY 13209\*

The event will be held at historic "Piercefield" through the generosity of owners Walter Miller and Jane Verostek. Constructed in 1903 by Edward Pierce, president of Solvay Process Company, this home is full of hundreds of items related to the history of Syracuse and Onondaga County.

We will also be offering free trial memberships to our local League. Please see the last page of this newsletter for details. The event is open to the public. Please call us at 315-396-8225 or email us a [league@lwvsyr.org](mailto:league@lwvsyr.org) and let us know you will be there. Bring a friend or two to help us celebrate.

**Reservations are due by February 6th.**

*\* 200 Piercefield Drive is located off Route 5 (West Genesee St), west of Westvale Plaza in the town of Geddes. From the west turn left onto Wilshire and then take a sharp left onto Piercefield. From the east take Route 5 (West Genesee St) turn right onto North Orchard and left onto Piercefield.*

# BOARD NOTES

## MEMBERSHIP NOTES

We welcome new member  
**Mary Ellen Monneti**  
And returning member  
**Janet Muir**

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Our sympathy to the family of **Leona Maffei**.  
Leona, the grandmother of former Congressman Dan Maffei, was a long time member of the League and served as a member of the Board of Directors.

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Many thanks to member, **Minna Buck**, for her generous donation to the League in memory of **Leona Maffei**.



## NATURALIZATION CEREMONIES

Registering new citizens at Naturalization Ceremonies is a vital part of our Voter Service Activities. Volunteers are

needed to provide this service to our newest citizens. Please contact Susan Bush at 424-0040 or email Susan at [sjbushywca@cnymail.com](mailto:sjbushywca@cnymail.com) to volunteer or for more information. Below are dates we need volunteers:

February 2nd, 11:00am	Federal Building
March 15th, 2:00pm	County Court House
March 22nd, 11:00am	Federal Building
April 19th, 2:00pm	County Court House
May 17th, 11:00am	Federal Building
May 17th, 2:00pm	County Court House
June 14th, 2:00pm	County Court House
June 21st, 11:00am	Federal Building
July 19th, 2:00pm	County Court House
August 16th, 2:00pm	County Court House
August 23th, 11:00am	Federal Building
September 13th, 2:00pm	County Court House
September 20th, 11:00am	Federal Building
October 18th, 11:00am	Federal Building
October 18th, 2:00pm	County Court House
November 15th, 11:00am	Federal Building
December 13th, 2:00pm	County Court House

**All dates are on Thursdays**

## Officers

Co-President...	Joan Durant
Co-President...	Joan Johnson
Secretary...	Open
Treasurer...	Rhonda Hungerford

## Directors

Advocacy...	Audrey Benenati
Fundraising...	Open
Membership...	Minna Buck
Program....	Rae Rohfeld
Publications...	Joan Johnson
Public Relations...	Janet Mallan
Voter Service...	Susan Bush

## Off-Board Positions

Budget Director....	Roberta Millert
Nominating Committee.....	Mary Lou Karrat
	Lisa Alford
	Rae Rohfeld
	Rhonda Hungerford
Technical Support...	Roberta Millert
Election Specialist ....	Lenore Rapalski
Fundraising Coordinator...	Nina Tamrowski

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The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. For more information please call the League office at (315) 96-8225 or e-mail to [league@lwvsyr.org](mailto:league@lwvsyr.org)

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## Diversity Statement

The Syracuse Metropolitan League of Women Voters is committed to diversity and pluralism, which means there shall be no barriers to participation in any League activity on the basis of age, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, economic status, or national origin.

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Please let us know your email address.

- It is the most efficient way to communicate
  - You will be notified of upcoming local events
  - LWV National & State Action Alerts
- Your e-mail address will not be shared or sold. Please respond to [league@lwvsyr.org](mailto:league@lwvsyr.org)

# FROM THE PRESIDENT

Happy New Year to all! A new year is here and it promises to be a busy year for the League with a presidential election as well as all state legislative races up for grabs. Presidential candidates are fighting it out in primaries throughout the country. Our congressional and state legislative members have decisions to be made on difficult issues. The League will be there to do our part in making democracy work. With this in mind, we have a very busy agenda.

We begin with a membership fun event you will not want to miss – a 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday party for the League on Sunday, February 12, 2012. The event provides the opportunity to meet old members and greet new members. Details are on the front page of this newsletter. Please plan to attend and bring your friends, neighbors and anyone with an interest in what the league does. We will be offering a free trial membership for both men and women at this “Getting to Know the League” event.

Then we plan to get down to business with two education forums planned for February and March. Plans are in the works and we will get the details to you as soon as they are finalized. (see page 5)

On March 2, 2012 we will hold our annual legislative breakfast at the Rosamund Gifford Zoo.

Susan Bush, Voter Service Director, is available to present a power point program on ways that can increase voter participation that many other states are using. (see page 4).

With September, we anticipate participating in debates and forums as the election season heats up after Labor Day.  
**Joan Johnson, Co-President**

## CALENDAR

Sunday, February 12, 2012 200 Piercefield Drive, Solvay NY, 1– 4PM	Getting to Know the League & 92nd Birthday Party
Friday, March 2, 2012, 7:45AM—9:30AM Roamund Gifford Zoo	Annual Legislative Breakfast
Tuesday, March 27, 2012, 9AM—Noon OASIS, 6333 Route 298, East Syracuse NY 13057	Screening of Iron Jawed Angels followed by a discussion with Christi Anderson, SU Professor of Political Science

***WATCH FOR INFORMATION ON OUR UPCOMING EDUCATION FORUMS***

## PLEASE NOTE

We no longer have office space at Unity Mutual Insurance Company. Our many thanks to John and Patrick Mannion for their generosity the past several years. Until we can locate new office space, our files etc. are being housed at the YWCA offices. Thank you to Executive Director, Joan Durant and her staff for making room for us. If you know of available office space that meets our budget, please let us know.

Our address remains the same but we have a new telephone number:  
315-396-8225

## NEWS FROM LWVNYS

### 2012 Legislative Agenda

Based on the responses we had from local leagues with suggestions for the 2012 legislative agenda, and consideration of both resources and legislative opportunities for the next year, the Board adopted the following as the League's 2012 Legislative Agenda.

#### Steps To A Better New York

##### # Election Reform

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

##### # Campaign Finance Reform

Support lower contribution limits, increased disclosure and public financing. Support stronger and effective campaign finance enforcement with increased civil and criminal penalties for violations.

##### # Other Government Positions

Support structural reform to legislative redistricting; support effective ethics enforcement and open and transparent government processes; monitor impact of the property tax cap on localities and schools.

##### # Health Care

Support affordable and effective health care for all New Yorkers.

##### # Natural Resources

Support protection and management of New York's natural resources in the public interest.

##### # Other League Positions

The League also has positions on the Judiciary, State Finances, and Social Policy under which we can and do take action .

### Voter Participation Project

How can our voter registration process and voting methods be improved to increase voter participation? What are other states doing? How does early voting or vote by mail work? Can the design of the ballot and poll worker training be improved to simplify voting and encourage more to vote? These and other questions are answered in the Increasing Voter Participation program prepared by the State League.

The power point presentation and a League leader are available to all local civic organizations. Please contact Voter Service Director, **Susan Bush**, at 422-0040 to learn more about the program or to schedule a presentation.

### 2012 Redistricting Project



On October 18th the League co-sponsored a forum on redistricting reform at the Maxwell School. The event was sponsored by the Center For

Electoral Politics and Democracy at Fordham University and the Campbell Public Affairs Institute at SU. Featured from left to right; Costas Panagopoulos, PhD from Fordham; Barbara Bartoletti, Legislative Director, LWVNY, Dick Dadey, Citizens Union, Executive Director and Jeffrey Stonecash, PhD, Syracuse University.

A lively discussion took place on redistricting reform as opposed to the status quo. The discussion was followed by a software demonstration designed to raise awareness about the 2012 redistricting cycle taking place in New York State and to encourage citizens to get involved in the process.

**CAPITOL BEAT** makes its return for the 2012 Legislative Session. Written by LWVNY Legislative Director, Barbara Bartoletti, it promises to keep you informed on what is happening in Albany including redistricting, funding education, campaign financing, hydrofracking and other issues of interest. Check it out at [www.lwvny.org](http://www.lwvny.org). You can find it in the upper right hand corner of the home page.



### Tax Cap Opponents Meet

LWVNY President Betsy Swan recently testified at a gathering of tax cap opponents at the Mohonk Mountain House on the Hudson River. Opponents of the state's new 2% property tax cap are calling for a "circuit breaker" that would shift the burden for funding schools and local government toward income tax. Swan stated that the tax cap will likely hit poorer communities the hardest. Since the property tax levies are lower in poor communities, the 2% limit makes it that much harder to catch up. Although the governor has called for higher school aid, especially for poor districts for the next two years, recent budget shortfalls may change his promise. This should be a big issue when the legislature convenes in January.

## **FIRST THINGS FIRST 2012**

The above-named event took place in the state Capitol this past Tuesday January 10, and as a longtime LWV member and retired school professional, I felt compelled to participate. Organized by the Alliance for Quality Education and Citizen Action NY, non-profit community-based organizations, this was a demonstration and speak out for students and restoration of public school funding.

The League of Women Voters has held a position and lobbied in favor of equitable education finance for many years. As a new member in the early 80's when Ruth Timmerman and Mary Jo Fairbanks were president, I first learned about the huge funding gap between wealthy and poor school districts from participation in a League committee. Unfortunately the problem continues, as I am now seeing cuts in my school district in foreign language classes, counseling services, and other areas.

Our bus to Albany this past week included parents, community advocates, retired educators, and members of the Occupy Syracuse movement – a diverse and dedicated group. We joined about 500 other people from all over the state at the Million Dollar Staircase in the Capitol first to chant about education cuts and how “THIS is what democracy looks like”, and to sing inspiring songs like “This little light of mine”.

Next was the speak out in the Hamilton Hearing Room in the Legislative Office Building. We heard from Assembly members, including Speaker Sheldon Silver, parents, students, BOCES, NYC PTA, SUNY, and community advocates. Parents and students described classes with 35 students unable to bring textbooks home due to shortages, cuts in high school math and science electives for students hoping to go to college, and a special needs student in Syracuse unable to get mandated support due to lack of funding for teacher aides. A SUNY student spoke about decreased class offerings and increased tuition and student debt.

Assembly Speaker Silver conveyed a message of support, promising to work toward approval of the Board of Regents proposal to send 73% of state funding increases to the highest needs districts this year. He also said, “I would respectfully disagree with the Governor on one point. The most powerful lobbying group for our students is their parents.”

After the speak out, parents made visits to legislators' offices dropping off literature outlining the importance of enacting the Board of Regents proposal and also how closing corporate tax loopholes would help in restoring deep education cuts. After eating our box lunches, we met one last time to hear about strategies for future action, and then rode back on our bus to Syracuse feeling hopeful.

After this experience of being part of democracy in action, I now look forward to the Syracuse LWV programs upcoming in the next 2 to 3 months where we plan to present local speakers and panel discussions on the impact of poverty on education and the issue of education finance. This is an important cause affecting the future of our children, and we have a long way to go. New York State ranks 47<sup>th</sup> in the country in the funding gap between rich and poor school districts, and the Campaign for Fiscal Equity court decision requiring reform of the school aid formula still has not been met. The League of Women Voters will continue to participate in this good fight.

***Rhonda Hungerford, LWVSYR Treasurer***

## **COMING SOON TRANSFORMING EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

Our League's Program Committee has been planning a two-part program to consider “Transforming Education in Our Communities.” The two issues we will address are:

- (1) The Impact of Poverty on Education and How We Can Meet the Needs of All, and
- (2) Funding Education: How to Achieve Sufficient and Equitable Funding.

Speakers will be leaders in the field, including practitioners, such as teachers and social workers. Dates and speakers have not been finalized, but we anticipate holding these events in February and March, in a Syracuse school auditorium. Look for the final announcement. Many exciting ideas and activities are being tried in our public schools. We hope you will come and bring your friends to see what changes might be possible.

***Rae Rohfeld, Program Chair***



# WE SEND LETTERS

This past election season several of our members submitted letters to the Post Standard. Here are a few that were included on the Readers Page. We encourage members to add their thoughts to the editorial pages. See the next page for more letters.

## ***Why Bother?***

### ***In today's world, voting may not be worth the effort***

I was raised and schooled to believe that informed voting was the essence of a democratic society. In today's world, an informed vote appears to be an oxymoron. To be informed is to become aware of how little difference, if any, a vote makes. Democracy as a governing system based on debate, compromise and a willingness to tolerate and accept difference no longer seems a viable option. Not only is the financial base 'broken,' but the system itself teeters on the edge of totally breaking apart, of having citizen vote merely as a symbolic act of loyalty to concepts that no longer hold. To be informed is to recognize that voting may not be worth the effort.

A winner-take-all Electoral College system of determining majority rule destroys any real commitment to representative democracy. Voting districts find elected representatives often "representing" over 100,000 people. Couple that with a mindless economic (campaign?) system based on "invisible" hands filling selected invisible pockets, and one finds no level playing field available to average citizens.

Political power embedded in some artificial balance appears to restrict public participation and distort public opinion. We find a Senate that is dysfunctional through its own special voting rules that make it nearly impossible to pass legislation. We find congressional acceptance of ideological oaths that negate public debate and compromise. The executive branch reflects the weaknesses embodied in a two-party system and finds a controlling influence that exceeds its constitutional role. The appointed non-elected Supreme Court serves a life-long tenure and appears to have increased its policy-making power. And this in a period of exponential change!

Our government has a tacit acceptance of torture, rendition, assassination and preemptive military aggression. This is embedded in a culture in which half of the population embraces the nation's mission as being "exceptional" and to be carried out under some mythical external guidance.

All of this is cushioned in a media increasingly controlled by advertising, privatizing and corporate interests. The educational system is constantly tested and weighed down by business models, concepts supporting consumerism and products and a commitment to free-market democracy rather than encouraging free thought, open mindedness, and disciplined thinking.

So, unfortunately one looks at voting as a pointless, dull activity in which an oxymoron-oriented citizenship seems right at home.

A government of the people, by the people, and for the people no longer operates.

Why Vote?

***John T. Mallan, Member Syracuse LWV***

## ***If your outraged, help save our democracy***

Where is the outrage? Many of our elected Congresspeople have taken a pledge never to raise revenue by raising taxes under any circumstances (through the machinations of the Washington lobbyist Grover Norquist- see 60 Minutes -11/20). If a Congressperson reneges on that pledge Norquist makes sure they are not reelected by pouring money into electing an opponent who will take the anti tax pledge.. Is this not in conflict with the spirit and letter of the oath of office to which we elected them? Should they not be recalled immediately or voted out?

Where is the outrage? In the 2010 Congressional election only between 29% -39% of eligible voters exercised their precious right to vote. A minority has blocked all Congressional activity since then and the media acts as if the majority spoke! Why doesn't the press talk about how we get more people to vote - early voting, Saturday-Sunday voting, expanded hours, day of election registration etc.

Where is the outrage? The poor family traditionally managed to get ahead by saving money in a bank ( who can remember?) - poor families and retirees get absolutely no return of hard earned savings - we are not greedy and many of us do not wish to gamble in equities- 3% would keep ahead of inflation and 5% would maintain peace of mind.

Where is the outrage at the continued existence of our volunteer armed services - our courageous volunteers service people are really being abused by multiple deployment which contribute to unspeakable mental and physical damage to the volunteer and his family. How long do you honestly think our imperial machinations would last if we had a draft? And yet we go along and scarcely remember our brave young volunteers or the havoc we reek on them and the rest of the world.. All 18 year olds would benefit by giving public service military or otherwise for 2 - 4 years and then pursuing their studies and careers with maturity.

Take your outrage and take another look at Occupy Wall Street. Their outrage is clear to me. Hopefully they will define their goals and concentrate their energy on : Number one- - the non partisan determination of congressional districts. Number two - getting money out of the election process Three - support of candidates that go to Washington with an open, conciliatory mind set free of outrageous pledges and commitments to their big money supporters. A tall order ?- an impossible dream? In the short time we all have between now and November 2012 turn you outrage away from the boredom of the talking heads, endless political ads and recriminations and turn your outrage to joining with those organizations that work toward change. At the very least think of four more years of gridlock or worse.

Think outrage - think change - think and respectfully listen to the occupy wall-streeters, then act and vote lest our democracy - our brave experiment - be relegated to the dustbin of history.

***Ellen Runge, Member Syracuse LWV***

# **MORE LETTERS**

## **LWVNY Urges June Primary Date**

The League of Women Voters of New York State is outraged at the state Legislature's inability to agree on a primary election date that is compliant with federal law. The September date for New York's nonpresidential primary does not satisfy the 2009 federal MOVE Act, which requires states to get ballots to overseas military voters 45 days before a federal election.

For 2010, the state received a one-time waiver that allowed it to continue holding congressional and state legislative primaries in September. There will not be a waiver for 2012. Now, the state faces the daunting prospect of holding three primaries – presidential, congressional, and state legislative – next year unless the Legislature acts soon.

A federal court is scheduled to set a new date for congressional primaries early next year unless the Legislature acts first. (State legislative primaries are not affected.)

Moving the primary to August, as some suggest, is a particularly bad idea. Too few New Yorkers turn out to vote now; imagine scheduling a primary during a month when many are away from home. Not everyone preparing for vacation will have the foresight to go through the multiple steps necessary to vote absentee in New York.

The League of Women Voters of New York State favors a primary in June, the month in which primaries were held before 1974. The Legislature must act immediately to pass a June Primary date to provide more New Yorkers the opportunity to vote and avoid the extraordinary expense of three primaries.

***Betsy Swan, President***

***League of Women Voters of New York State***

***(Published in the Albany Times Union, December 31, 2012)***

## **Educates People About Voters Group Citizenship**

The thoughtful responses to John Mallan's September 10 letter, "Why Vote?," prompted this letter, inviting all your readers to join the League of Women Voters of the Syracuse metropolitan Area.

For more than 90 years, the League of Women Voters has been the "gold Standard" of good government, helping people use the powers of citizenship more effectively. Members are assured of receiving timely, accurate, *non-partisan* information on voting procedures, redistricting, campaign financing, state and local legislation and many other issues of concern to our community.

Membership in the Metro League also enrolls you as a member of the New York State and National Leagues, and adds your voice to those of other volunteer members, giving our work greater impact.

For more information, check [www.lwvsyr.org](http://www.lwvsyr.org).

Contact the League and join us as we pursue the goal of strengthening our democracy; call 315-488-7199 or email to [league@lwvsyr.org](mailto:league@lwvsyr.org).

Incidentally, John Mallan is a long-time and enthusiastic supporter of the Metro League (yes men can become members too!). He assumed the role of "devil's advocate," hoping to provoke the critical responses that were sent to the Readers' Page.

***Minna R. Buck, Membership Chair***

***League of Women Voters of the Syracuse Metropolitan Area***

## **DEMOCRACY FOR ALL? THE BARRIERS OF PHOTO ID**

Early next Voter ID bills are expected to be moved in MN, MI, OH, PA and VA. This is in addition to the eight states that passed photo ID bills in 2011.

Dorothy Cooper, a resident of Chattanooga TN has been voting for over 70 years. When Tennessee passed a voter ID law, she gathered her paperwork and headed to the local election office to get a free ID card. She had a rent receipt, a copy of her lease, her voter registration card and her birth certificate but she was still turned down for an ID.

The League of Women Voters opposes these new laws and legislation because it risks disenfranchising millions of eligible voters across the country, will cost millions of dollars to implement and there is no need for such draconian measures.

**LWVUS**





**SYRACUSE METRO  
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
PO BOX 11866  
SYRACUSE NY 13218**

**January/February 2012**

**Non-Profit  
Organization  
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Syracuse, NY  
Permit no. 372**

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

## Join the League of Women Voters

### With A Free Trial Membership

The League of Women Voters of the Syracuse Metro Area is offering a free trial membership to our local League for new members. The first time membership only runs from now until June 30, 2012 when you will be invited to join as a full member of the League—local, state and national. We are offering many new programs this spring. Take advantage of this offer and learn what the League is all about and our 92 year history.

Please share this information with others who have expressed interest in our work or who have thought about becoming a member of the League.

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_ **State** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_ **Work Phone** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-mail** \_\_\_\_\_

**To join call us at (315)396-8225; email us at [www.lwvsyr.org](http://www.lwvsyr.org); mail this form to Syracuse Metro LWV PO Box 11866 Syracuse NY 13218 or attend our “Getting to Know the League” event on Saturday February 11, 2012.**