



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF NEW JERSEY

STATE BOARD REPORT

JUNE, 2016

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204 West State Street, Trenton, NJ 08608
609-394-3303 * 800-792-VOTE * Fax: 609-599-3993
Email: contact@lwnj.org Web site: www.lwnj.org

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Dear Presidents and League Leaders,

I had the privilege last week of attending LWWUS Convention 2016 along with 16 other NJ League members and delegates from 47 other states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. As with our past annual gatherings the energy in the air was palpable, but this year there was a difference. The focus was on greater engagement, organizational change and becoming **the** voters' service organization of first choice.

Our new President, Chris Carson sums it up in today's League Leaders Update when she writes, "a winning plan for the League will mean accelerating the pace of change within the League and having a bias toward action, taking advantage of alternative engagement opportunities, focusing our agenda, and wrestling with the tough questions of whether our current structure and approaches reflect a 21st century organization." At a meeting of State Presidents and Executive Directors, we learned that a task force has been formed to assess over the coming year our organization's preparedness and flexibility to implement this aggressive action plan. We were asked to submit ideas - "everything is on the table." Feel free to contribute by forwarding your thoughts to me.

Delegates also voted to support the Making Democracy Work campaign which will focus on engaging new voters and strengthening laws that govern voting rights, redistricting and money in politics. To that end, we passed a redistricting position by concurrence with a LWWUS redistricting task force. We also voted to change our bylaws to allow non-citizens and individuals who are at least 16 years of age to become voting members of the League. For more information on speakers, resolutions passed, the budget, etc. please visit the following link: <http://forum.lww.org/category/member-resources/council-and-convention/convention-2016>. In this month's Learning the League, three LWWNJ Board members share their impressions of our 52nd biennial LWWUS Convention. The NJ League also gained recognition when our former president, Toni Zimmer, was elected LWWUS board secretary.

This is an historic presidential election of special significance to the League of Women Voters - **the** organization that fought for women's suffrage. It is also an election rife with vitriol, divisive sound bites and less than civil discourse. How do League leaders celebrate this historic moment and stay true to our values while remaining nonpartisan? This question was posed to delegates by outgoing President, Elizabeth MacNamara, during a Convention plenary session. League leaders throughout the country have been and will continue to be asked to comment on the historic significance of this election as

well as the discourse that is taking place. **We must be careful not to “take the bait” and say anything that can be interpreted as favoring a particular party or candidate.**

We can and should celebrate the historic significance of this election but we must speak generically, and we can continue to promote civil discourse and active civic engagement without referencing specific candidates. LWVUS will be providing us with messaging and talking points to facilitate our continuing efforts to Make Democracy Work while remaining true to our nonpartisan values.

I hope you have a wonderful summer and take time to recharge – it’s going to be a busy and exciting fall for the League!

In League,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Hedinger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'N' and 'H'.

2015-2017 Expanded Board List

Nancy Hedinger, President hedingern@gmail.com	Stacey Faella, Director staceyfaella@gmail.com
Dawn Clarke, Vice President, Voters Service clarkeda@comcast.net	Nickole Forbes, Director nickoleforbes@hotmail.com
Ed Gracely, Vice President, Program edgracely@verizon.net	Brendan Keating, Director blkleague@gmail.com
Loretta Lynch, Vice President, Governance lynchloretta@aol.com	Casey Olesko, Director casey.olesko@gmail.com
Ann Saunders, Vice President, Development saunders12@verizon.net	Melissa Scott, Director mescott@comcast.net
Susan Varga, Secretary scvarga@hotmail.com	Terry Thompson, Director ta-thompson@hotmail.com
Ellen Kemp, Treasurer ellenmkemp@gmail.com	

Off-Board

Sandra Matsen, Chair
Nominating Committee
slmatsen@aol.com

Michelle Bobrow
Budget Committee
m.bobrow@verizon.net

Crystal Matsibekker
Nominating Committee
crystal.matsibekker@nyu.edu

Marlene Sincaglia, Chair
Nominating Committee
jcsmmm@verizon.net

LWVNJ/EF Board Meeting Key Decisions

Meeting held: Saturday, June 11, 2016

League of Women Voters of New Jersey Key Decisions

1. The LWVNJ board voted to support A.3591/S.2116, the New Voter Empowerment Act, which permits 17 year olds to vote in a primary election if they will turn 18 before the general election.
2. Established a task force to accomplish the following three goals:
 - Revise the LWVNJ bylaws
 - Revise the LWVNJEF bylaws to include articles required by LWVUS and the articles that make our organization a member-driven organization, such as program planning, budget, nominating program, participation, etc.
 - Draft a document establishing how to merge LWVNJ and LWVEF

The task force will report out its findings at the November meeting.

3. The State Program Committee Responsibilities document was approved.

League of Women Voters of New Jersey Education Fund Key Decisions

1. The task force established to accomplish the above referenced goals will also be working on the EF bylaws, etc.
2. Board voted to look for a central location for the fall forum.

LWVNJ CALENDAR
Upcoming Events 2016

Please note that dates are subject to change. If you have any questions, please contact the LWVNJ office at contact@lwnj.org or 609-394-3303.

June 2016

- June 1: PBBs due
- June 11: LWVNJ/EF Board meeting
- **19: LWVUS Convention 2016**
- June 29: PBBs for July meeting due

July 2016

- July 9: LWVNJ/EF Board Meeting

August 2016

- Aug. 26: Women's Equality Day

September 2016

- Sept. 7: PBBs for September meeting due
- Sept. 17: LWVNJ/EF Board Meeting
- Sept 24 – 25: Statewide Voter Registration Weekend

October 2016

- Oct 2 – 4: Rosh Hashanah
- Oct. 8: Fall Forum and Workshops
- Oct. 11 – 12: Yom Kippur

November 2016

- Nov. 1: Annual Member Appeal begins
- Nov. 8: General Election Day
- Nov 9: PBBs for November meeting due
- Nov. 19: LWVNJ/EF Board Meeting

December 2016

- Dec. 8: Annual Advocacy Meet & Greet
- Dec. 23 – Jan. 2: Office Closed for the Holidays

Volunteers Needed

It has been a busy year for the League of Women Voters and we can use a few extra hands! We are looking for volunteers to help grow the organization. Opportunities include:

- **Vote411:** This summer and fall we will be using [Vote411](#), an online voter guide, to help New Jersey voters learn more about candidates. At the state level we will be covering all congressional races – but we need some help getting it up and running. This volunteer position requires a computer savvy person willing to travel to our state office in Trenton.
- **Office Help:** The League's beautiful home located at 204 West State Street, Trenton, NJ is in need of a little TLC. We are looking for volunteers to help organize and clean up the state office. We are also looking for volunteers willing to take on a few administrative tasks including data entry and filing.
- **Development Committee:** The League of Women Voters of New Jersey's Development Committee, under the VP of Development, has begun the process of planning the League's fundraising plan for the year. Have an eye for sponsorship asks? Want to plan fundraising events? Interested in grant writing? The Development Committee is looking for you!

If you are interested in any of the above volunteer opportunities, please contact Jesse Burns, Executive Director at jburns@lwvnj.org for more information.

Melissa Baggitt Scott

I am a member of LWV of the Princeton Area and a member of the Board of Directors of LWVNJ.

I attended the LWVUS Convention this June, 2016 as a delegate for the Montclair Area League. This was my first time attending a League of Woman Voters national convention. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to attend a thought provoking and inspirational convention with talented, dedicated league members from 48 states and two United States Territories.

The energy in the room during the plenary sessions was palpable and I was able to participate first hand in debates and voting on several contested proposals.

I learned an enormous amount from passionate speakers Joe Goldman of the Democracy Fund and Ari Berman, author of Give us the Ballot.

The early morning breakout sessions I attended on Vote 411 and converting from 501(c)(3) to 501(c) (4) status were informative and helpful.

Each morning when the convention was called to order, I felt great pride to be a member of a group united to "make democracy work", particularly on the eve of a national election and at a time in our nation's history when commitment to inclusion, diversity and safe guarding the right to vote for all who qualify or should qualify is critical to our country.

Brendan Keating

As a first time attendee at the LWV National convention I left feeling inspired to get out and continue the fight to "Make Democracy Work for All". Not only did we discuss the importance of helping others vote, but we also made some monumental changes in our organization that will impact our future. With two votes ratified by a 3/4ths majority consensus, we welcomed all citizens 16 years of age or older to become voting members of the LWV, and we invited all people to become associate members, regardless of age or citizenship. As a person who works so hard with the YPN to appeal to younger demographics, the ability to work with high school kids is really exciting. If we can get young people excited about voting and running for office, we will be more likely to create lifelong voters.

We also discussed strategies to ensure that we remain non-partisan, even though we have the historical chance to vote for the first woman President in this country's history. We learned strategies to strengthen our conversations by using data as a persuasive tool. We were trained to enhance our activities through social media, public relations and fundraising techniques. And we also attended many informative information sessions to help us make our local and state leagues stronger and more financially sound. Above all, it was so nice to be able to spend time with my friends from the Leagues around NJ, but also see some familiar faces from other leagues around the country and meet some new friends along the way. I was able to make some great connections to other people who use the League as a tool to inspire young people to become more civically involved, as well as meet some inspiring and helpful environmental activists who were able to provide me with mentorship and advice on other things I'm working on. The League is such a supportive service oriented community, and sometimes we forget that we are also a social organization too. Going to conventions was a great reminder that in addition to all of the fantastic service we provide as a United Nations recognized NGO, we can also have fun with the best of 'em. The LWV truly is a great place to meet other Non-Partisan Party Animals, who also like to get things done...

Ed Gracely

The voting and decisions at this year's LWVUS convention were interesting and contentious. Since I like a good floor debate, done in League style (fair, time limited, polite), I enjoyed the process, except for a few unnecessary problems.

At the Friday afternoon plenary, a delegate tried to introduce a wording change to our position on equality as a non-recommended item, but it was quickly ruled out of order (non-recommended items are for studies and such -- you can't change an existing program directly in that manner). There were no other non-recommended items proposed.

We also took up the two-year emphasis on protecting the vote that LWVUS had recommended. This was adopted, as was the retention of all existing positions.

The redistricting concurrence (put together by a LWVUS team from existing state positions) created quite a bit of discussion and a group was actively opposing it. They said it was too specific. The proposed position says that it does not override existing state positions -- this is both good (because it allows states to keep their own) and bad (because allowing that could create confusion, and because it is unclear if states can

create new positions). Opponents had several other objections, which they listed in a handout. No amendments were allowed. After considerable discussion, the new position passed, on a close card vote. Even the call to end debate required a card count vote! This new position is fairly good, in my view, and covers most of the content needed. However, it may not work perfectly in New Jersey so we will be assessing whether to use the national position or continue with our own study.

The concurrence on behavioral health got some discussion as well, although very few were actively opposed to it (mostly as being not something we should focus on now). It passed with only a few no votes. This concurrence (with the Colorado League) adds specific language that behavioral health (defined as including both mental illness and substance abuse) should be funded and handled in a manner that has parity with physical health. There is support for mental health services in the existing position, but this addition is a much more thorough and specific statement.

We had some extra time Saturday morning, which we planned to use for discussion of partisanship issues in this historic election. The president wisely decided to deal with bylaws first, because the change of membership to include noncitizens and then to change the minimum age generated a long discussion. Including noncitizens got some discussion, but passed pretty easily. The elimination of the lower age generated heavy discussion, and ultimately failed on a card count (clearly less than 2/3). But the president admitted soon after that she had made a mistake in not allowing certain kinds of amendments. Someone asked for reconsideration for that purpose, the delegates voted to allow it, and the amendment was proposed to strike 18 and add 16 years as a minimum age. Unfortunately, the amendment was not well thought out, because it inserted the 16 into the proposed amendment that struck out the minimum age altogether, which wouldn't have worked! The leadership went back and forth for several minutes struggling with the proper parliamentary method to fix it, but finally concluded that we all knew what the intent of the amendment was -- so they asked for unanimous consent to make the necessary changes. All agreed, then the vote was quite clearly in favor, so we now allow voting members as young as 16 who don't have to be citizens.

After several somewhat hot meetings to discuss the budget (with a lot of concern about finances) the actual discussion on the last day was rather tame -- no more comments from the floor and the budget along with the existing \$32 per member payment both passed easily.