



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF NEW JERSEY

## ***STATE BOARD REPORT***

December 2016

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LWVNJ President's Letter  
Nancy Hedinger, President

SBR – December 2016

Dear Local League Presidents and Leaders:

As 2016 comes to a close, I hope you can find time to reflect on all we've accomplished this year. I've been privileged to visit with many local Leagues and I am amazed at all that's happening! Whether they participated in Vote411, sponsored local studies, tried new ways to register voters, organized candidate forums or simply maintained an active membership, local Leagues contributed significantly to making democracy work in New Jersey during this very unique election year. Thank you for your dedication and leadership.

At the state level, the League has an accomplished board that has dedicated significant time and effort to ensure League vitality well into the future. This year, the board conducted a major update and revision of LWVNJ and LWVNJEF by-laws, performed a thorough assessment of the organization in furtherance of our fiscal management, partnered with Eagleton Institute on a program to educate students on running for office (RU Running), held a successful Making Democracy Awards cocktail reception and two statewide member forums, and adopted a Strategic Plan designed to lead up to the League's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020. This is just a sampling of the work of the LWVNJ board in 2016!

While the board has worked hard to establish policies, raise funds and set direction, our staff is responsible for the day to day operations of the League. Jesse Burns, our Executive Director, and Pat Thompson, our Office Manager, worked tirelessly this year to support the League board and membership in every aspect of League activity. Jesse executed board initiatives, interacted with our advocacy team and statewide program committees, and promoted LWVNJ with other New Jersey nonprofits, businesses, state government and civic organizations. Her work on the LWVNJ voter modernization and redistricting platform has been invaluable. In 2016, Pat Thompson celebrated ten years at the League where she maintains our membership lists, assigns moderators for candidates' forums, manages our mailings and the volunteers who help with them, and keeps our tenants happy and our building safe. If you've been active in the League, you know that she is also the go-to person who answers the phone when League members need help or have questions or concerns.

The League's off-board members also gave generously of their time and expertise to support the work of LWVNJ this year. Particularly helpful were those members who worked on board and committee nominations, lobbied state legislators and prepared the League's budget, as well as those who served as state program committee chairs or on state program committees. Each of these committees could be strengthened and made more resilient with larger membership participation in 2017. So if you're looking for an interesting and fun way to become more engaged in League activities, call the League office! For members at large, in particular, working on committees is a great way to meet other League members and learn more about statewide programs while developing and sharing your own expertise.

This was a busy year for the League at all levels but I hope that after you've rested and reflected a bit, you'll be ready for an even busier 2017. The LWVNJ Biennial Convention is on April 28<sup>th</sup> and next year New Jersey citizens will be voting on a new governor and the entire Legislature. Onward – ever onward!

I wish you joy and good health this holiday season and look forward to working with you in the new year!

In League,



**Meeting held: Saturday, December 10, 2017**

**League of Women Voters of New Jersey :**

1. Voted to support Education Committee request to oppose replacing current school funding law with the “Fairness Formula”.
2. Voted to support civics education working group request to support civics education initiatives.  
Tabled voted on request to support 2018-19 field trip proposal (Under the Dome).
3. Voted to reconsider the change in our organizational structure next year.
4. Draft by-laws changes were approved.
5. Voted to adopt Strategic Plan for 2017 – 2020.

**Pay Equity Act S.992 veto override attempt**

Senator Weinberg announced at a December 12 press conference attended by President Nancy Hedinger that she would put S.992 up for a veto override attempt the following Monday, December 19.

The bill originally passed the Senate in February with 28 yes votes, which included 22 Democrat Senators and 6 Republican Senators. 27 votes are needed for an override.

Thank you to all who made calls to the Republican Senators asking them to stand firm in their original support for the bill and to vote to override the Governor's veto.

Unfortunately the vote to override was postponed. The main decision factor in the postponement was probably the absence of one Democrat Senator, which would mean that 4 of the 6 Republicans who voted yes in February would be needed for an override.

**School Funding: Governor Christie's "Fairness Formula"**

The LWVNJ Board voted in December to oppose replacing the current school funding law (School Funding Reform Act, SFRA) with the "Fairness Formula". The "Fairness Formula" provides equal per pupil sharing of the current \$9.1 billion sent in direct student aid to districts across the state. This would mean providing student aid of \$6,599 per pupil. The SFRA is equalized aid based on an adequacy budget to educate a child and the fiscal capacity of the local district to fund their schools.

There is concern that the Governor may introduce some, or all, of his plan into budget language. Although it would probably not survive the legislative budget process, school districts must adopt budgets in early April before the June 30 deadline for state budget adoption. Advocates for education are organizing to try to raise awareness and rejection of the fairness formula.

**DEP proposed rules to increase septic density standards in Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act**

The LWVNJ testified in support of ACR 192 which states that the proposed rules are inconsistent with legislative intent of the Act. ACR 192 passed the Assembly December 19.

This is the first step in a process for the legislature to invalidate rules. Once it passes both the Senate and Assembly, the Commissioner of Environmental Protection has 30 days to amend or withdraw the proposed regulation. If the Commissioner takes no action, the legislature may by passage of another concurrent resolution, use its authority under the Constitution to invalidate the regulation in whole or in part.

**Natural gas pipeline proposed by South Jersey Gas Company to be constructed within the State designated Pinelands Area**

The League signed on to a letter to the Pinelands Commission asking for a 90 day extension to the comment period and the addition of two public hearings to the one now scheduled for January 24, 2017.

**Sign up for Callathon**

Thank you to everyone who has sent in an Annual Appeal gift. If you haven't sent in your donation, please consider making a gift today. We are facing many challenges in 2017 and need your support.

I hope that your League will participate in this year's Callathon. **The deadline to sign up to participate is 1/25/2017.** Participating Leagues receive a percentage of the donations made by the members of the League they are calling. This is a great way to support the League and earn some money for your local League.

To sign up please email Pat, [thompson@lwvni.org](mailto:thompson@lwvni.org), and let her know if you would like to call your own League, prefer to call a different League, or both.

Once you agree to participate, the state office will send you a packet on February 1st with instructions and people to call.

New to organizing Callathon? No worries! In addition to the instructions in your Callathon packet, the staff/board will offer you some training and answer any of your questions.

**Deadline to Update your Membership Roster is January 31, 2016**

Your local League's PMP payment to LWVNJ and LWVUS for the 2017-2018 FY is based on your membership roster as of midnight January 31.

This is your opportunity to access the National roster and to make sure the listing for your local League is correct. If you have added members from last year, be certain they are listed and mark members as inactive or deceased when appropriate. Check EVERYTHING for the correct spelling of names, addresses, phone numbers, emails and expiration date.

It is the local League's responsibility to maintain its roster. The state office is doing more with less, and while we can help answer your questions, we cannot be responsible for ensuring the accuracy of local League rosters. If you have any questions, please contact Pat Thompson at [thompson@lwvni.org](mailto:thompson@lwvni.org).

**Important Timeline Information for Local Leagues**

- December 21, 2016: Call for Award Nominations sent to local Leagues (December SBR)
- December 21, 2016: Call for New Board Members sent to local Leagues (December SBR)
- **January 27, 2017: Program Planning Responses Due to LWVNJ Board**
- January 28, 2017: First Call to Convention
- January 28, 2017: Suggestions for New Board Members due to Nominating Committee
- January 28, 2017: Any recommended PMP increase must be sent to local Leagues (if proposed)

- February 28, 2017: Proposed Budget/Program/Bylaws must be sent to local Leagues no later than this date
- February 28, 2017: Award Nominations due from local Leagues
- April 28, 2017 and April 29, 2017: League of Women Voters of New Jersey Convention

### **Program Planning Responses Due to LWNJ Board**

Program planning responses are due by January 27, 2017. Information about participating and response forms are available here: <http://lwnj.org/members.html>

### **Convention Committee**

If you are interested in serving on the Convention Planning Committee, please email Nancy Hedinger at [hedingern@gmail.com](mailto:hedingern@gmail.com).

### **Current Study: Sexual Assault on College Campuses – Due February 17, 2017**

All resources and material available here (scroll down): [http://lwnj.org/issues\\_womenfamily.html](http://lwnj.org/issues_womenfamily.html)

### **Voters Service Activity Report**

Please complete your voters service activities report and email to Jesse Burns at [jburns@lwnj.org](mailto:jburns@lwnj.org) by December 31, 2016.

The League of Women Voters of New Jersey is looking to form a statewide voters service committee that will work on meeting some of the goals of our strategic plan. 2017 is a crucial election year in New Jersey and, by working together at all levels of the League, we can strengthen our efforts and benefit even more New Jersey voters.

The statewide voters service committee will meet by conference call and work in subcommittees to meet the following goals to improve our voters service efforts to better meet the needs of NJ voters:

- Implement a system to track voter service efforts and results around the state.
- Use information from the new system to help increase voter service activities and share best practices.
- Increase number of active, recently trained moderators so that LWVNJ can meet demand offer more debates.
- Increase efforts to reach future voters, particularly in underserved NJ communities.
- Continue to develop programming and disseminate information on elections and policy issues at the national, state, and local level.
- Improve upon briefings and materials on candidates and issues before local elections; explore a leadership role for local leagues on this effort.
- Increase local league participation in Vote411 efforts and raise visibility of the site as a valuable voter education resource produced by LWVNJ.

If you are interested in joining the Voters Service Committee and working on any of these goals, please contact Dawn Clarke, VP Voters Service at [clarkeda@comcast.net](mailto:clarkeda@comcast.net).

### **League Observer Corps**

A great way to involve new members and energize others in the League is to invite them to join (or form) a local League Observer Corps. The Observer Corps is a group of League members who regularly attend meetings of governmental bodies, like the Board of Education, Township or City Council and Board of Chosen Freeholders, to name a few. Observers take notes and report back to the League with information that can then be disseminated to your community.

By attending public meetings of local governmental bodies, League Observers learn more about what their government is doing, what issues are facing the community and how those issues are being addressed. They are also letting elected officials know the League is not only interested in the issues they are confronting but also in the decision making process. Attending and observing meetings promotes government transparency and accountability in your community. The knowledge acquired by Observers empowers the League and your community to take action when necessary.

If your local League doesn't have an active Observer Corps, I encourage you to read the LWVUS resource guide, [Observing Your Government in Action – Protecting Your Right to Know](#). This document explains how to start an Observer Corps, the mechanics of the program, internal and external opportunities, and other important information. It also provides sample reporting forms and tips on working with the media.

Find out what local issues interest the members you are trying to engage. If it's education, for example, ask her or him to attend Board of Education meetings. Once the Observer Corps gets off the ground, you will find that your local League meetings will become more informative and your members more engaged.