

League of Women Voters of Albany County

September 2023 Action and Advocacy Report

Observer Corps:

- Patricia Silbila shared the Observer Corps report that she did for our Board meeting which you can find [at this link](#). She plans on speaking at the September 11th meeting about the upcoming local elections (all 39 legislative seats up for election) and having candidates reach out for our consideration about doing a candidate forum.
- In general, there aren't enough members of the Observer Corps to attend all the meetings, so the focus will be on obtaining updates from counties and municipalities.
- Lars Dahl will be joining Patricia Silbila as a regular observer at the Albany County Legislature. Christine Florez expressed interest in taking on that role at Colonie Town Board meetings. Amy Vastola will be an observer at Bethlehem Town Board meetings in 2024.

Burdett Birthing Center:

- MaryKate reported that the group who began the effort to fight against Trinity Health's closing of the Burdett Birthing Center have created a robust community coalition. Christine Florez plans to attend the public hearing about the proposed closing that is being conducted by the Office of the Attorney General on Monday September 18th. Christine also pointed out that Bishop Scarfenberg of the Catholic Diocese has made a public statement opposing the closing.
- Update: Christine Florez did attend the public hearing and reported it was fairly well attended. A few great points were made. 1) maternal health is not a health problem. It is a social problem with health implications. 2) What happens at Burdett will happen elsewhere no matter what promises are made 3) They'll never cut a cardiac unit but women's healthcare? Um, yeah. 4) What happens to any of the hospitals in the Capital region has a ripple impact on an already overburdened healthcare ecosystem extending well beyond Rennselaer or Albany 5) Medicare/Medicaid reimbursements are too low 6) it isn't that Burdett doesn't make money. It is that it doesn't make enough money 7) St Peter's decision making is being made without community consultation 8) Trinity is operating as a for-profit entity evidenced by the million dollar bonuses given to St Peter's staff when it made profits 9) there's a lot of very good people in the Capital Region that care about the larger community

Environment:

- Anne Erling reported that she is continuing to consider in what way the League may take a specific role that is not duplicative of current efforts by other groups.
- Regarding the League's environmental efforts, it was clarified by MaryKate and others that a citizen may do work on a League committee without being a member of the chapter. In that vein, Anne will be reaching out to Carol Waterman who is active in the

Clean Air Coalition. MaryKate clarified that anyone can join a League chapter without necessarily being a member of that county.

- The Birds and Bees Act has not been signed. Opponents are using this period of delay to send letters opposing the legislation. There is an effort being made to push Governor Hochul to sign the bill during Earth Week.
- Anne reported that the Capital District Regional Planning Commission has started to develop a dashboard for implementation of the CLCPA,
- The 4 League (Albany, Saratoga, Schenectady, Rensselaer) Environmental Committee is trying to determine how to work together now that the updated Waste Position has been adopted by NYS.
- Anne is looking for more members and will be doing outreach via a blurb in the next monthly bulletin.

Criminal Justice

- Most activity here is at the state-wide level, in terms of laws and League work. Richard serves on the LWNYS Criminal Justice committee. They will be prioritizing 8-9 bills. The Clean Slate bill was passed but remains unsigned. The state League is submitting a memo in support to the Governor.
- A study done at the state level was on the status of voting within correctional facilities. It seems to be working well in Albany County. Richard, Laura, and Erica will be speaking at the Sheriffs Association conference in January 2024.

Albany County items

- Lars is following some work being done by the County on substance abuse mitigation and will be sharing information with MaryKate and Amy Vastola.
- The County has received a large state grant to study options to re-work the 787 corridor. Many possibilities have already been proposed and the study is designed to consider all options. Lars noted that 787 only has 10-20 years left of lifespan before major investments in repair would have to be made. Public meetings are slated to begin in late spring or summer of 2024. Aimee Allaud raised the possibility that the League could invite to our next annual meeting a speaker who could discuss the 787 effort.

Bodily Autonomy

- Amy Vastola will be checking in with the State League Health Committee because there are at least two pending bills in the legislature related to body autonomy. One would allow minors to receive treatment for sexually transmitted diseases without parents / guardians being informed or granting permission, and the other would give minors similar autonomous rights regarding going to providers to get vaccinations.