

League of Women Voters of Albany County

October 2023 Action and Advocacy Report

Bodily Autonomy:

- Trinity Health's proposal to close the Burdett Birthing Center in Troy:
 - The Eddy Foundation and Samaritan Hospital have stated that they oppose the closure.
 - At the NYS Attorney General's hearing on the closing, upwards of 9 women gave testimony of the value of Burdett in their lives and maternity care.
- Medical Aid in Dying:
 - The Compassion and Care legislative campaign will begin the week of January 15th, 2024. They are asking for people to show up the week before, on January 9th, to be a public presence in support of the bill. The official lobby day will be January 16th. The proposed bill has no residency requirements, and currently has 63 supporters in the Assembly and 20 in the Senate, and they are seeking more sponsors.
 - The NYS Bar has a task force currently working to evaluate the bill and whether they recommend its adoption. Richard Rifkin pointed out that the report then will go to the Legislative Committee, which he sits on, to make a final decision on whether the Bar Association will support the bill.
 - Compassion and Choices is focusing their campaign on emphasizing the compassion of providing relief as the final part of medical care for suffering patients, trying to demonstrate the morality of MAID. As part of their public campaign, they are starting to provide community educational forums as well as outreach to liberal religious clergy.

Criminal Justice: There was an excellent and productive meeting with the NYS Sheriffs Association on the status of voting within correctional facilities. It seems to be working well in Albany County.

Redistricting:

- The Independent Redistricting Commission may resume its work, depending upon the outcome of current litigation. The Appellate Division 3rd in a 3-2 decision ruled for resumption and redrawing of the lines. The case then went up to the Court of Appeals where it will be argued on November 15th. The LWVNY has filed a brief in support of maintaining the current lines. Further information can be found in the Times Union article:
<https://www.timesunion.com/state/article/redistricting-case-set-nov-15-political-showdown-18397529.php>

Elections: The constitutionality of the legislation passed in the last session that allowed for unexcused absentee voting is being challenged. The decision is needed before the April primaries.

Environment: NYS Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

- The fall period is the time to engage the public. Could the League help residents to understand and learn about the work currently being done, and would this make for an educational program, either as a single program or as an annual event.
- Emission protection goals are still needed.
- The Climate Dashboard work is continuing under the leadership of Todd Fabozzi of the Capital District Regional Planning Commission (CDRPC), with Jason West as the representative from the City of Albany. Todd Fabozzi is eager to speak to the League about this.
- Richard Rifkin noted that the wind developers are looking for funding or will leave.
- Anne also spoke about whether the League should take on an allyship role with the many climate groups.

Library Funding:

- There is a legislative hearing about providing aid for library construction.
- There was a discussion of how libraries are funded and ways to increase funding. Specifically, budgets that appear on the ballot for voters' approval – directed voter participation - tend to produce better budgets/increased funding for local libraries. It was proposed that the League do a study, focused on the City of Cohoes, on ways to get the library budget to change from a city line item onto a budget approved on the ballot. Patricia Sibilia and Paula Brewer would work on the study. A motion passed in this committee to put before the board a request for approval of such a study.