

August 2009

Special points of interest:

- Barbara Bartoletti interviewed by Capitol News, from the LWVNY.org web-site.
- Annual Meeting held, County Executive Jimino spoke.

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The Voter

League of Women Voters, Rensselaer County NY



Interview With Barbara Bartoletti

<http://www.nycapitolnews.com/>

Back and Forth: Barbara Bartoletti by Chris Bragg

Mon, 22 Jun 2009 12:18:00

Barbara Bartoletti, legislative director for the League of Women Voters of New York State, has been preaching good government in the halls of the Capitol since 1978. But she has never seen anything quite like the recent Senate coup. In the midst of it all, Bartoletti has been trying to revive a reform agenda that seemed to be progressing under the new Democratic majority, but which now appears to be in serious trouble. Bartoletti spoke with The Capitol about her memories of a previous coup attempt in the Assembly, what she thinks about the new rules reforms implemented by the Republicans, and where good government groups go from here. What follows is an edited transcript.

The Capitol: You've been around Albany for three decades. Have you ever seen anything that compares? **Barbara Bartoletti:** Ugh, no. With Mr. Spitzer, it actually played out in New York City because, of course, that's where he was. We had a lot of press here that were kind of stalking Mr. Paterson, because it was fairly clear that Mr. Paterson was going to be the new governor. But as far as what goes on in this Capitol, I have never seen anything like this. We also went through a coup in the Assembly, but that never really, obviously, got off the ground. They did it badly. It was announced on a Wednesday, and they didn't go back to session until Monday. And by the time they went back into session, Mr. Silver had squashed Mr. Bragman like a bug. Mr. Bragman, of course still a member, got up in a jam-packed gallery. I don't think I've ever seen a gallery that full, I mean, there were reporters sitting in the window seats—while Mr. Bragman aired all of the Democrats' dirty laundry. But this, the actual tussle and tug of war for power, I've never seen anything this blatant. It was definitely a power move. And if you were looking at this just as an observer who didn't know anything about issues but knew political strategy, the Republicans pulled it off perfectly.

TC: So things have reached a new level? **BB:** There is a new dynamic. Things in Albany have always been dysfunctional because we have a leadership-driven Legislature, which one might think would make this work like clockwork. And it does—when you have the kind of majority Mr. Silver has. He has 109 members. The Senate has always been controlled by the Republicans with enough seats—a

majority of enough seats—so that they did have the power securely. But with this change of power, with only a two-seat margin, it was tenuous at best, and then you have different ideologies of some of the members. You have Mr. Stachowski from Buffalo, who is a very conservative Democrat. You have Mr. Diaz, who is a Pentecostal minister and very socially conservative. You have your more liberal side of the Senate, which would be Mr. Duane and some of the Manhattan members who call themselves progressive Democrats. So there's an intermingling of a lot of different characters and ideologies in this very tenuous Senate majority.

TC: After the coup, Republicans implemented new rules. Do you think these will bring about real change, as they say? **BB:** One word: no. And I'll tell you why. Number one, [New York Public Interest Research Group] sat down with these new rules and went item by item, and compared them to what we were looking for—and there are some glaring loopholes in them. They promised a plan for a C-SPAN. Well, there have been plans for C-SPAN for 25 years, and that you can't do alone. That takes both the Senate and the Assembly. They also managed to close up a loophole, to disallow the Democrats from doing to them what they just did to the Democrats. As far as the equal-member items, that certainly remains to be seen. This session, the budget is already done. So that's to be done in the future. And what this is all about, this is all about the election of 2010. If the Republicans can hold the chamber and accomplish anything at all, they feel they would have a better chance at being elected to the majority again in 2010. The Democrats, of course, feel that if they were able to regain the majority, they would have a good chance of retaining their majority in 2010. Now why are we all focused on 2010? Because the census is done in 2010, and then redistricting happens—and that's what this is all about.

TC: What do you make of those who orchestrated the coup doing so under the mantle of reform, which is a word typically used by people like yourself? **BB:** Our concern is that the word "reform" here in Albany no longer has any meaning. When we talk about reform, we talk about campaign finance reform with very strong enforcement. If you had that now, Mr. Espada would have caved and would have been severely fined—well, actually, what he did would have been a felony. Mr. Golisano says he will support these senators that cross over and do what he calls "real reform." However, it really rings hollow (Continued page 3)

Members of the Board

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Secretary Margaret Story 272-1566
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Treasurer Irene Wynnyczuk 279-9789
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Director Hazel Landa 279-3714 dryland2@aol.com *Local Voters Guides Compile/Publish, "They Represent You" update*

Director Mary Muller 274-0846
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Letter from the Co-Presidents

We were very pleased to see many of you at our 70th annual meeting in May. Kathy Jimino, Rensselaer County Executive, gave a broad-ranging talk on "How Long-Term Taxpayer Relief Can Be Achieved through Shared Local Government Services". This was very timely as the NYS League is initiating a two-year study on essentially the same subject. We will be looking for meaningful ways to participate in the study and to support local efforts to streamline the delivery of government services.

In June the new Rensselaer County LWV Board met to prepare for the 2009-2010 season. We have already been asked to conduct candidates' forums and to administer a special election to re-charter the Troy Public Library. We'll be at the Troy Farmers Market in coming weeks to promote the League and register new voters. Stop by and bring along a friend who might be interested in joining our League.

Even though political activity in our state and national capitals often quiets down during the summer, this year is different. Gridlock in Albany has left many local governments and other entities treading water while they wait for senators to get down to business. All this has made the need for reform even more evident and critical. In Washington, great debates are underway on health care reform and on legislation to curb greenhouse gases, both topics of major concern to the League. We are being urged to join the US League in conveying our positions to our own legislators and local press. Exciting times!!!

Diane Bell and Gail De Marco

when you know Mr. Espada has not filed his campaign filings extensively over several years and has thumbed his nose at the State Board of Elections.

TC: With a Senate that is probably going to be operating under a power-sharing agreement, where does that leave your agenda?

BB: We had eight bills that were going to be passed in committee last Monday on ethics and campaign finance reform. Now they're dead in the water. Absolutely nowhere, as it does that for most of the legislation that impacts the people of the state of New York. So right now, the Assembly has no partner in the Senate, and none of the people's business is getting done. It's simply a power struggle. Whether it's the Democrats, whether it's the Republicans, whether it's the new coalition government, it's all about power for them, it is not about the people's work. And that's the saddest, most embarrassing, worst part of this whole thing.

TC: As you've been up there during this struggle, what has been your role?

BB: We sent out a letter to this coalition government, and we want them to let the people of the State of New York know, and let us know, exactly what the positions of this coalition government are on things like cam-

paign finance reform and ethics—and we want them to do it before the end of session. If this is all about reform, then the first thing that this Senate coalition should be doing is passing those reforms. They have the language. All they need to do is put their names on Sen. Squadron's bill, put their names on Speaker Silver's bill.

TC: As somebody who's been fighting for reform for so long, are you frustrated?

BB: Oh, I think that would be a mild use of the word. I'm frustrated, I'm angry for the people of New York. I'm embarrassed for the people of New York. Yes, I have this time volunteering, trying to make government in New York ethical, trying to make government in New York efficient, and trying to make government in New York work for the people, not specifically for the party or the individual legislator. And yes, I think I'm all of those things: frustrated, angry and embarrassed.

TC: But you're going to keep at it, nonetheless?

BB: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. This is just one more little hump in the road. But absolutely we will keep doing this. □



LWV RENNELLAER COUNTY - NONPARTISAN POLICY STATEMENT

Adopted at the June 22, 2006 Board Meeting

The League of Women Voters does not support or oppose any political party or candidate. It does, however, adopt and advocate positions on governmental measures, policies, and issues in the public interest after careful study and substantial agreement among its members.

- Members of the League are encouraged to become actively involved, on an individual basis, in all public activities, including activities of, and on behalf of political parties and candidates.
- At all times, League members shall be careful to distinguish their activities as individuals from those undertaken on behalf of the League. They shall take particular care to avoid the appearance of representing the League when, in fact, they do not.
- The president, the voter service director, and any officer or board member who speaks publicly on behalf of the League shall not run for or hold elective office or work actively on behalf of a candidate for elective office while serving as a board member. Financial contribution to a candidate's campaign shall not, in itself, constitute working actively on behalf of a candidate; however, such persons shall not publicly endorse any candidate.
- No member who is running for elective office or actively supporting a candidate for public office shall participate on behalf of the League in any activity pertaining to that office, including, but not limited to, candidate's forums or debates.
- Any member who, as an individual, speaks or works against a League position shall make it clear that she/he is acting as an individual and not on behalf of the League. Any officer or board member who is strongly identified by the public with the League should consider resigning from the board before speaking or working against a League position.
- The political activities of a spouse or relative of a board member are to be considered as separate and distinct from the activities of the board member.

Reaffirmed June 30, 2009

(Every year we run this statement to remind members and the public of our basic principles)

“League members shall be careful to distinguish their activities as individuals from those undertaken on behalf of the League. “



League members should be ready to answer questions from voters this election year.



BYLAWS REVISIONS -- LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF RENSS- LAER COUNTY

May 20, 2009

ARTICLE IV

Board of Directors

Sec. 1. Number, Manner of Selection and Term of Office. The Board of Directors shall consist of the officers of the League, six elected Directors, and not more than six appointed Directors. One-half of the elected Directors shall be elected by the general membership at each Annual Meeting and shall serve for a term of two years, or until their successors have been elected and qualified. The elected members shall appoint such additional Directors, not exceeding six, as they deem necessary to carry on the work of the League. The Nominating Committee will be charged to recruit candidates for the officers and directors whose positions are open. In addition they may recommend names for appointed Directors, not exceeding six, as is necessary to carry on the work of the League. The terms of office of the appointed Directors shall be one year and shall expire at the conclusion of the next Annual Meeting.

ARTICLE V

Officers

Sec. 1. Enumeration and Election of Officers. The Officers of the League of Women Voters of Rensselaer County shall be a President or co-equal Co-Presidents, two Vice-Presidents, a Secretary, and a Treasurer who shall be elected for terms of two years, by the general membership at an Annual Meeting and take office immediately. The President or one Co-President, one Vice-President and Secretary shall be elected in odd-numbered years. One Co-President, one Vice-President and the Treasurer shall be elected in even-numbered years.

Sec. 3. The Vice-Presidents. The Vice-Presidents shall, in order of rank, in the event of absence, disability or death of the President or Co-Presidents, possess all the powers and perform all the duties of that office, until such time as the Board of Directors shall elect one of its members to fill the vacancy. The Vice-Presidents shall perform such other duties as the President or Co-Presidents and the Board may designate.

(If you wish a copy of the entire text of the ByLaws, please contact Gail DeMarco)

LWV RENSSELAER COUNTY LOCAL PROGRAM POLICY POSITIONS - 2009-10

- 1. WE WILL SUPPORT AND ADVOCATE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT - COUNTY, CITY, TOWN, VILLAGE - OPERATIONS, AND COUNTY AND CITY CHARTERS THAT CONFORM TO THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:**
 - A. Government, policies, programs and performance should provide for:
 - Competent personnel with clear lines of responsibility,
 - Coordination among various agencies and levels of government,
 - Adequate financing,
 - Effective enforcement, and
 - Well-defined channels for citizen input.
 - B. Charter amendments should provide for:
 - Independent Charter Revision Commissions that are representative of the community and do not include any elected or political party official at the local level.
 - A Districting Plan following each decennial census, after meaningful community participation.
 - The Districting Plan shall be guided by criteria in NYS Election Law which requires that districts be as compact, contiguous and convenient as possible. Also the plan as far as practical shall follow the principle of equal representation both numerically and by number of legislators from each district.
- 2. WE WILL ADVOCATE FOR CHANGING THE PRESENT METHOD OF RE-DISTRICTING THE RENSSELAER COUNTY LEGISLATURE TO A PLAN THAT SHALL:**
 - Provide for equal representation for citizens both numerically and by number of elected representatives from each district, with preference for single-member districts as the system most prevalent and familiar to citizens and most likely to represent constituencies of similar interests and concerns.
 - Be prepared by an Independent Districting Commission with meaningful public participation that is representative of the community and does not include any elected County / political party official.
- 3. WE WILL SUPPORT AND ADVOCATE FOR THE LEAGUE'S CAPITAL REGION SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT CONSENSUS THAT INCLUDES:**
 - Waste and toxicity reduction, and
 - Environmentally sound methods of recycling and reuse as primary forms of solid waste management.

Approved 5/20/09

LWV NYS "BIG LEAGUE RAFFLE" REPORT

The Raffle in which many of you participated resulted in a net profit of over \$12,000 for the State League. They retained 50% and the winner – Francine Frank of the Albany County League - received 25%. The remaining 20% was shared with the local Leagues based on the number of tickets sold by their members. Our League received a check for \$58.38 as our share. The local League of the winner (Albany County) received a bonus of the remaining 5% of the net profit.

The Executive Director, Laura Ladd Bierman thanked us for our support in helping to reduce the anticipated financial shortfall of the state League in the 2008-09 fiscal year.

Welcome to our newest members:

Mr. and Mrs.
Robert and Alice
Trost

2678 NY Route
43

Phone: 674-1473

Averill Park, NY
12018

Anne Katharine (Ross) Fairbanks

We are saddened to report that Anne Ross Fairbanks died peacefully after a brief illness on June 18, 2009. Anne was an active member of the Rensselaer County Chapter of the League of Women Voters for most of the time that she lived in Troy, beginning in 1959. Born in Port Washington, Long Island, in 1923, she received her bachelor's degree from Barnard College and a master's in physical education from Wellesley College. Her teaching career included Washington University, Stellenbosh University in South Africa, the University of Wisconsin in Madison, the University of Rochester, the Troy YWCA, and she retired after 20 years of teaching at Skidmore College in 1985. Anne was an accomplished springboard diver: she was the U.S. National Springboard Champion from 1940-1944. Named to the "Mythical Olympic Team" of 1944, she is honored at the International Swimming Hall of Fame. She authored a book on teaching springboard diving, and continued to dive for fun and teach until her retirement.

She was involved with the St. John's Episcopal Church for 50 years, sang in the choir, and was an active member of the Haiti Mission including trips to Haiti until very recently.

There will be a celebration of her life on Saturday, August 22 at 10 a.m. at St. John's Episcopal Church at 146 First Street in Troy. Donations may be made in her name to the Haiti Mission at St. John's or to the American Red Cross.

Call for Volunteer Observers: City, Town, and County Government

League members are encouraged to attend the monthly meetings of our local governmental entities: City Councils, Town Councils, and the County Legislature. Short reports on issues, procedures, and controversies from the many Rensselaer County governments are very welcome. Just email your report of meetings to the Voter editor at mullers@mac.com and we can all share in your observations. Here is the schedule for most of the meetings:

Rensselaer County Legislature: Second Tuesday of the month at 6 pm, and on the preceding Wednesday at 6 pm a Public Forum is held—both in the Third Floor Legislative Chambers, Pattison government Center, 1600 Seventh Avenue, Troy

Troy: City Council meets First Thursday of the month at 7 pm at City Hall, Monument Square, Troy

Rensselaer: City Common Council meets at City Hall on the first and third Wednesday of each month at 7 pm at City Hall, 505 Broadway, Rensselaer.

Towns of Brunswick, Grafton, & Schodack: each meet on the Second Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm Schodack also meets on the fourth Thursday as well.

Berlin & Nassau: each meet on the Second Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm

Sand Lake & Schaghticoke: each meet on the Second Wednesday of the month at 7:30 pm

Hoosick: Second Monday at 7 pm

Pittstown: Second Monday at 7:30 pm

Poestenkill: Third Wednesday at 7 pm

Petersburgh: Third Monday at 7 pm

Stephentown: Third Monday at 7:30 pm

This information is taken from “They Represent You, 2009 edition” a publication of the League of Women Voters of Rensselaer County. Check our website at www.lwvrc.org for updates.



Local newspapers no longer cover local government meetings on a regular basis. We rely on our members to keep us informed.



League of Women Voters of Rensselaer County Calendar for August—September 2009

AUGUST 2009

20 - LWVRC Monthly Board Meeting (Thurs.)

SEPTEMBER 2009

4 - Labor Day (Mon.)

15 - Primary Election Day (Tues.)

17 - LWVRC Monthly Board Meeting (Thurs.)

18 - Rosh Hashanah (Fri.)

27 - Yom Kippur (Sun.)

(Note: See Bd. of Elections website at www.elections.state.ny.us for dates related to voter registration and absentee ballots.)



League of Women Voters,
Rensselaer County

265 River Street

Troy, NY 12180

www.lwvrc.org