



# The VOTER

VOLUME 53 NUMBER 5

May 2014

## Calendar (League activities in bold)

EVENT/ACTIVITY	DATE	DAY	TIME	LOCATION/INFO
<b>LWVCC Board Meeting</b>	June 2	M	7-8:45 pm	Vogelson Library (Voorhees) Meeting Room B (third floor).
<b>Voter registration</b>	July 17	Th	10 am	After the naturalization ceremony, U.S. Courthouse, 1 John F. Gerry Plaza, Fourth and Cooper Streets, Camden. Contact the League at <a href="mailto:lwvcc@hotmail.com">lwvcc@hotmail.com</a> or call 856-795-7878 if you are interested in helping register.

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### Board Report

At the May 5, 2014 Board meeting, the board:

1. Discussed ideas for an exciting meeting topic as well as ways to involve our members.
2. Planned the membership renewal process.
3. Started discussing the kickoff.

**League of Women Voters of Camden County**

## Board Message

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Dear Fellow Members,

On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, a beautiful spring day, we had our annual meeting and luncheon—a chance to meet, eat, and become informed on an issue of interest. After some time to socialize, and a delicious luncheon, we heard an informative talk from Sal Anderton of Compassion and Choices about the proposed New Jersey legislation on end-of-life choices. We then had our annual meeting.

We had hoped to see more of you at this event. Aside from specific requests for volunteers for activities such as voter registration, moderating forums, lobbying legislators, and participating in Running and Winning, we ask for your support at only three group events each year: our annual kick-off in September, our program planning /holiday party in December, and our annual meeting in May. These events are a chance to hear speakers on topics of interest and for the board to touch base with you, hear your ideas and concerns, and plan accordingly. So it is disappointing when the turnout is sparse. We would welcome your input at board meetings or by telephone or e-mail (see League directory ) concerning avoiding dates that conflict with other events and your ideas and interests. Although we have a wonderful board, all of whom work hard at various assignments, as well as pitching in on an ad hoc basis, seven people cannot do everything. We appreciate the fact of your membership, as well as the financial support of your dues, but we also need your help to keep our local League viable. We hope to hear from you.

Have a wonderful summer!

Harriet Snyder

Treasurer

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The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization of men and women, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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*The VOTER* is published ten times a year to keep the membership and public informed of the activities of the League of Women Voters of Camden County. For subscription or membership information call (856) 795-7878.

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## Getting there - Directions!

**Voorhees: Vogelson Regional Library:** Driving south on 30, turn left onto Somerdale Road just above the Voorhees Town Center. Go under the train bridge in about a half mile, then turn right onto Burnt Mill (at the light). Soon turn left onto Laurel Road at a light. The library is on your right as you pass the mall.

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## Freeholder Meetings

We encourage League members to observe Freeholder meetings when they are convenient for you. Just show up with a LWV button to let them know we are watching! Don't make any statements -- you aren't entitled to speak for the League (or even yourself after wearing a League button). You can ask a neutral/informative question, however. Meetings start at 7. It's good for Camden County!

The **May meeting** is in Berlin on May 22 (Municipal Building 135 S Route 73)

The Freeholder meeting list is online at <http://www.camdencounty.com/government/freeholder-meetings/2014-freeholder-meetings>

## Donations - thank you!

The LWVCC thanks Ed Gracely, Pearl & Joe Friedman, and Sally Thorne for their recent donations to the League.

## LWVCC Annual Meeting

The LWVCC met on May 3 at the Caffè Aldo Lamberti in Cherry Hill to hold our Annual Meeting and to hear speakers from Compassion and Choices about end of life choices. Our keynote speaker was Sal Anderton, but his Colleague Ethan Andersen joined him and added to the presentation.

Their topic was legislation in New Jersey that would allow assisted suicide, under very specific conditions designed to prevent misuse. The patient must be an adult with less than a 6 month life expectancy, and able to consent to the procedure. The drugs are self administered (perhaps with someone holding the cup, say, but not unconscious or demented).

The speakers dealt with some thorny issues -- for example the law requires that the death certificate still show the underlying disease. Life insurance companies could not invoke a suicide clause. A big issue is that it won't help people with slow mental deterioration like Alzheimer's Disease, because of the 6 month life expectancy requirement. On the other hand someone in late stages of ALS could sip the medication through a straw (because they remain mentally competent). The law is thus aimed at people who are physically disabled or in pain.

The US Supreme Court has allowed such laws as long as they are narrowly drafted. At the present time, Governor Christie doesn't support the bill, so even if it passes it is unlikely to become law. The LWV does **not** have a position on this issue.



Keynote speaker,  
Sal Anderton  
Compassion and Choices



Sal's Colleague at  
Compassion and Choices,  
Ethan Andersen



Audience members interacting with  
our speakers

## Our Voices, Our Votes Awards

### LWV of New Jersey is a Finalist!



The League of Women Voters of New Jersey is a finalist for the "High Impact Visibility" award for our documentary "Storming for the Vote: Hurricane Sandy and the Election." This is a national award given by the League of Women Voters of the United States.

You can read about all the LWVUS Awards and categories [here](#). Scroll down a few sections to find the high impact award category. Read the descriptions and cast your vote. Our video is pretty impressive and we think you'll want to vote for our entry (if not, feel free to vote for whichever you think deserves the award).

The deadline is May 19 -- so vote today!

Watch Storming the Vote! (Click [here](#))

## Storming for the Vote: Hurricane Sandy and the Election



## LWVNJ Spring Workshops, 2014

### Some notes

I attended the LWVNJ spring workshops on April 26th and found them to be informative and interesting!



The day opened with a reenactment (by actress Lorraine Stone) of Sojourner Truth's famous "Aren't I a Woman?" speech, given at the 1851 Ohio Women's Rights Convention. The speech is so named because at several points she made a powerful statement about differential treatment that ended with that line. Women are supposed to be helped into a coach, aren't they? Nobody ever helped her, an African American Women, so she asked, "Aren't I a woman?" I was lucky enough to wander to the back of the meeting room after her presentation to ask Jesse Burns (LWVNJ Communications Director) a question and she wanted a picture of me and "Sojourner". Voila!

Our first panelist was Paula Franzese, Seton Hall law professor. She noted that in 2005 New Jersey was rated number 1 in the US for open government, thanks to our uniform ethics code. So, NJ does have the mechanisms to ensure openness, if they are followed. But she also expressed concerns about the current situation, in which she said that several of the people on the state ethics board have ties to the governor -- the board has been more independent in the past, and that should always be the goal, she asserted. She noted that elected officials often read the letters to the editor and comments online. Anyone can be a citizen journalist and write about what they observe.

How can we improve government? Start by teaching civics!

Walter Luers, President of the NJ Foundation for Open Government spoke next. His organization promotes and litigates on behalf of the Open Public Records Act (OPRA). OPRA gives citizens the right to make a written request of its government for documents. Much of his job is providing legal services because requests were denied. People are asking a lot of good questions, sometimes on sensitive topics, which may lead to a denial. The law requires the losing body to pay his legal fees ("fee shifting"), which provides an incentive to the government body to cooperate, and makes it possible for people to litigate without risking their own money (lawyers work on consignment).



President Toni Zimmer (left) and the 3 panelists

Almost anything government does, gets, or creates, is considered a public document, even emails and reports. There are some formal exemptions, but few and specific. What about redacting in the materials you receive (those blacked out lines and sections)? Redacting is appropriate if the information (say, unlisted phone numbers, social security numbers, maybe email and home addresses)

would be visible in the original document. His concern is that redactions are not explained, which is required under the law. And the explanation needs to be good enough as to judge the relevance. People should never get a document with large sections blacked out and only vague explanations (or none at all).

He was asked if OPRA protected the public from retaliation. "No". Have you seen instances of that sort? "Yes". This can be very hard to prove, however. Someone who persists and fights back can get beyond any retaliation, because you have established your ability to fight back!

OPMA (Open Public Meetings Act) requires not only that meetings and votes be public, but also that the governmental body explain the reason for any votes. Currently, the losing party does NOT have to pay legal fees in a meetings case. The OMPA law (from the 1970's) is much older than ORPA and at that time fee shifting was not as common. There is reason to believe that many, maybe most, governmental bodies violate OPMA because they are unlikely to be sued.

The last speaker was Jody Calendar, a motivational speaker. She has travelled around the world encouraging and helping governments establish a responsible free press. She thinks the real problem with the press is lack of citizen involvement – we need more letters, more involvement.

Debates could be more informative if there was serious follow-up to statements that were false. As run, presidential debates are almost useless for gaining new information – they too easily allow candidates to engage in posturing. She argued for more effective formats, such as "credibility round tables" – we need mechanisms whereby officials can be challenged.

There was a youth organizing session at noon that I sat in on (hey, you're as young as you feel, right?) -- the LWVNJ hopes to have fall workshops around a youth and politics theme. Should be exciting -- we need the younger generation involved in politics, and we need to understand their reasons for getting involved (or for not doing so).



In the afternoon I helped at the Presidents workshop, and took a picture of Burlington County President Loretta Lynch doing her presentation (left).

I almost always find state League workshops a good use of time, interesting in content, and good for networking. I wish more people from the LWVCC came to them!

There are more pictures from the workshops on the LWVNJ Facebook page, [here](#).

Ed



### Voter Education Meeting at Rowan

Ann Saunders was one of the speakers -- she talked about how the Voting Rights Act, passed in 1965, dramatically increased the percentage of African Americans who were registered to vote. The Act has been extended two times, and has continued to be useful against attempts to disenfranchise minority group members.

One judge in Pennsylvania invalidated a voter ID law because he realized that he himself would not be able to vote under it (his voter ID didn't have an expiration date, as required in the law).

Now the US Supreme Court has invalidated key parts of the law, mainly because the data used to determine which states should be required to submit changes for federal approval have not been updated. Some states are saying that they no longer have a problem and should be freed from restrictions. So, Congress could reinstate the law by merely updating the data used and the rules for deciding which states are covered. But under the current conditions of polarization, that won't happen.



If You Are Interested In:

- *Learning about government and the political process.*
- *Getting involved in the political process in nonpartisan ways.*
- *Meeting and working with other citizens who care about good government.*



**Join the League Of Women Voters of Camden County**

**Call 856-795-7878 or send this form to: PO Box 245, Voorhees, NJ 08043**

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 Annual membership is \$60 (plus \$30 for each additional household membership). To join, or for more information, send this form or call the number above. **First time new annual membership** is only \$25! This also applies to student and household members (for an entirely new household membership).

I want to become a member of the LWV of Camden County: \_\_\_\_\_ (Check enclosed for \$\_\_\_\_\_)

Please send me information on membership in the LWV of Camden County \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(Please include area code)

The



**OTER**

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