

# AAUW-NYS GOTV Counterpart Newsletter Get Out The Vote!



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## Tonight is the second Presidential Debate!

Watch the second presidential debate at Hofstra University in New York tonight at 9 pm moderated by Candy Crowley, Chief Political Correspondent, CNN. This debate will be Town Hall-style.

### **Teens Who Sought Female Moderator Glued to Debates**

When Candy Crowley, CNN chief political correspondent, moderates the second presidential debate Oct. 16, three New Jersey high school students doubt they'll be among those in the live audience. So far, they haven't been invited even though the auditorium at Hofstra University is only miles away on Long Island. "I can understand exactly why we are not invited. We are not the commission's favorite people," said Emma Axelrod, referring to the Commission on Presidential Debates, which sponsors the debates. "We brought a lot of critical attention to how they make their decisions. I can understand why they don't want us there."

<http://tinyurl.com/cahu3yc>

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### **Protect the Vote**

When you head to the polls, make sure you keep the Election Protection website, [www.866ourvote.org](http://www.866ourvote.org), and hotline, 1-866-OUR-VOTE (866-687-8683), handy. The Election Protection coalition works to protect voting rights to ensure that all voters have an equal opportunity to participate in the political process. They've also launched a new smartphone app!

If you encounter any difficulties in casting your vote, see someone who is turned away, or notice problems with voting machines, ballots, or other irregularities, please call 1.866.OURVOTE (687-8683). Think of this voter protection information as your must-have accessory on Election Day, or whenever you vote.

## **Know Your Rights: Voter ID Laws Threaten Transgender Voters**

Imagine it's Election Day and you walk into your local polling station. Before you can get a ballot, a poll worker demands a photo ID. Luckily, you have one and remembered to bring it. You hand over a state ID, but the poll worker looks confused. The poll worker says the photo and stated gender on the ID does not match your appearance. Suddenly, a complete stranger is asking you questions about very personal aspects of your life. Perhaps you are asked to sign an affidavit and only given a provisional ballot, or worse - you are turned away or become frustrated and leave without voting at all. This is what advocates fear could happen to thousands of transgender and gender non-conforming voters in states across the country due to controversial voter ID laws.

In April, the Williams Institute estimated that 25,000 transgender voters living in states with strict voter ID laws would be unable to vote in upcoming elections. This number is a bit out of date because legal challenges have since postponed or overturned voter ID laws in states such as South Carolina and Pennsylvania, but thousands of trans and gender non-conforming citizens are still at risk.

Obtaining a photo ID can be costly and time consuming, and many trans people are already struggling to obtain updated ID's that reflect their true identity. This is nothing new, but voter ID laws bring discrimination to the ballot booth. According to the NCTE, voter ID laws erect barriers for anyone who has trouble obtaining an ID. Voter ID laws also increase the likelihood that trans and gender non-conforming voters will encounter bias, confusion and discrimination as poll workers scrutinize their ID's, according to the NCTE.

<http://tinyurl.com/d549myv>

## **Fort Drum helps soldiers process their absentee ballot paperwork**

Watertown, NY: Weeks before the Nov. 6 general elections, post and unit leaders are ensuring that soldiers have put in the appropriate paperwork so they can send in their absentee ballots. "We want to make sure all of our citizens, including our soldiers, have every opportunity they have to get to vote," said James A. Swords, the post's directorate of human resources and voting assistance officer. Each of the post's units has a voting assistance officer who is tasked by the Department of the Army to contact each soldier in their unit and offer them information about the voting process and what they will need to do to submit a ballot in their home state.

<http://www.watertowndailytimes.com/article/20121016/NEWS03/710169854>

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## Voting PSA

As you know, the League of Women Voters is one of our GOTV partners. LWNYS is pleased to share a PSA encouraging people to vote that was created by a Tompkins County LWV member (and Ithaca College student), Rhiannon Youngbauer. We have

posted the video on the state League website and facebook page, but we encourage you to post a link on your local website and share it with as many members and others as possible. We will also be sending it to some TV media in hopes that they will air it as a PSA – if you have a local station who you think might air the PSA, pass it on! Particularly if it is on a college campus.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUOsrjWZUUU&feature=youtu.be>

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## AAUW-NYS Branch GOTV Action!

The **Jamestown Branch** and the **Chautauqua County League of Women Voters** will hold a Candidate Forum in Jamestown on Oct. 22 featuring the NYS Assembly candidates and the County Court Judge.

**Jefferson County AAUW** members will attend the **21st Congressional District Debate** between Bill Owens (D) and Matt Doheny (R) at Jefferson Community College, Watertown, NY on Thursday October 25th. This is a live televised debate on YNN.

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## NYS Races to Watch

### **Fracking fighting words in the 60th**

Add fracking to the list of hot-button issues that are occupying candidates in the **60th Senate district** race this campaign season. Mike Amodeo, the Lake View resident who is running against incumbent Republican Mark J. Grisanti for the 60th district seat, this week released a statement criticizing Grisanti for being endorsed by the pro-hydrofracking group Unshackle Upstate.

<http://tinyurl.com/co5689l>

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## What's at Stake for Women (and their families) in 2012:

Issue: Campaign Spending

### **Vendors finesse law barring 'coordination' by campaigns, independent groups**

Mitt Romney's presidential campaign and **American Crossroads**, an allied interest group, are barred by federal law from working together on political advertising. But it's perfectly legal for them to hire the same company to run Internet ads. That company uses some of the same employees to represent the two clients, and the same databases to store information on people it will target with ads. The law was meant to separate campaigns from outside groups with wealthy donors — the theory being that large political contributions could have a corrupting influence on candidates. But it is a fuzzy line that separates the campaigns from groups such as Crossroads and the super PACs that have sprung up in the wake of a 2010 Supreme Court decision that allowed

unrestricted corporate spending on campaigns. And the 2012 campaign, with its surge in spending from independent groups, offers many examples of how little the law actually prohibits when it comes to “coordination.” And at least 30 political consulting companies have been hired by both a campaign or party and an independent group, according to campaign disclosure reports. The consultants provide a range of services, from polling to legal advice to media consulting. Advocates for tighter restrictions on political money say the weakness of the law has allowed interest groups to essentially become another arm of the campaigns.

<http://tinyurl.com/bv5a48g>

### **Industry trade groups investing big in positive political messages**

In an election dominated by negative advertising, one group of big spenders is determined to stay positive. Industry trade associations, from dentists to credit unions, are pumping money into races and spending it overwhelmingly on feel-good messages. Officials at trade associations, which tend to be more bipartisan than other interest groups, say they’re glad to be doing things differently. Political spending by industry associations has shot up — \$8 million was spent through September, with all of it going for positive ads, according to documents filed with the Federal Election Commission. That is double the figure in each of the previous two campaigns and 10 times the 2006 spending. The trade associations are spending more following a landmark 2010 Supreme Court decision and other rulings easing restrictions on corporate political spending.

Federal law bars corporations, unions and other interest groups from donating directly to candidates, but they have traditionally sponsored political action committees to funnel employee donations in amounts limited to \$5,000. That still accounts for most of the corporate-linked money flowing to federal races. In 2010, the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* struck down limits on corporate or interest group spending to support candidates, as long as the groups don’t coordinate with the candidates.

<http://tinyurl.com/d3dycjo>

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Issue: Health Care

### **Analysis Finds Likely U.S. Voters Rank Health Care Second Most Important Issue in Presidential Choice**

A new analysis of 37 national opinion polls conducted by 17 survey organizations finds that health care is the second most important issue for likely voters in deciding their 2012 presidential vote. This is the highest that health care has been ranked as a presidential election issue since 1992. When likely voters were asked to choose from a list of issues, similar to the approach used in election-day exit polls, one in five (20%) named "health care and Medicare" as the most important issue in their 2012 voting choice, far behind "the economy and jobs" (cited by 51%). Likely voters who said "health care and Medicare" will be the most important issue in deciding their presidential vote were much more supportive of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) than the public in general is. The analysis also looked at the issue of changing Medicare in the future to a system in

which the government provides seniors with a fixed sum of money they could use to purchase either private health insurance or Medicare coverage. An average of current polls of the general public shows that 27% favor such a proposed change, while a majority (66%) are opposed.

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/10/121010172214.htm>

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## Spotlight on New York State Issues:

Here are two videos from the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government. You can watch them from this site: <http://www.rockinst.org/forumsandevents/>

### **The Challenge of Mandate Relief in New York State**

Co-sponsored by the Rockefeller Institute and the League of Women Voters of New York State on Oct. 2, 2012 this Forum focused on **the challenges New York State localities face in dealing with diminished state aid and unfunded mandates imposed by the state.**

Panelists discussed the prospects for state mandate relief on municipalities and school districts and how local governments are managing their responsibilities under difficult circumstances. Panelists include:

- ♦ Robert L. Megna, New York State Budget Director
- ♦ Senator Betty Little, New York State Senate
- ♦ Stephen J. Acquario, Executive Director of the NYS Association of Counties
- ♦ Timothy G. Kremer, Executive Director of NYS School Boards Association

### **Safeguarding the Right to a Sound Basic Education in Times of Fiscal Constraint**

**In times of fiscal constraint, governors and legislatures must balance state budgets while ensuring that schools have the resources to provide students what the courts have defined as a “sound basic education.”** Experts at this forum discussed the challenge of meeting both those requirements. The discussion was launched by Michael Rebell, head of The Campaign for Educational Equity at Teachers College, Columbia University, which champions the right of all children to meaningful educational opportunity. Responding were attorney John J. Faso (pictured, right), a partner at Manatt, Phelps & Phillips, former minority leader in the state Assembly and the Republican candidate for governor in 2006, and Robert N. Lowry, deputy director of the New York State Council of School Superintendents.

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## Civic Education:

### **Civic Education Found Lacking in Most States**

The 2012 presidential election and many other state and local races are only a few weeks away, but **schools are not doing much to promote student interest in the elections or provide civic education more broadly, says new research.** According to a report released

by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, CIRCLE, only eight states have standardized tests specifically in civics and U.S. government at the high school level, and Ohio and Virginia are the only two that require students to pass them in order to graduate. (Civic education is defined as coursework in civics, government, and U.S. government.)

CIRCLE, a nonprofit that performs research on youth participation in politics and civic education, based at Tufts University in Medford, Mass., also found only 21 states require students to take a social studies test (a broader category that includes U.S. history and economics), and only nine require the test be passed to graduate. That number is down from 34 states in 2001 that conducted regular assessments.

According to W. Lance Bennett, a professor of political science at the University of Washington, in Seattle, and director of the Center for Communication & Civic Engagement, students need to be taught civics in a more modern way that is engaging and appropriate to the world they live in. "The main problem with civic education, when it happens, is that it tends to reflect civic values that young people seldom embrace—the old 20th-century model of dutiful citizenship," Mr. Bennett said. "Since most teachers, policymakers, and curriculum developers grew up with that model, they often do not appreciate the gap that is created with more peer-oriented, experiential, and digitally mediated forms of engagement preferred by young people."

<http://tinyurl.com/9yraosz>

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### **AAUW NYS Facebook:**

Remember to “like” our state Facebook page and stay up to date with all the breaking news. <http://www.facebook.com/AAUW.NYS> Share things from our page to yours and help us build our social network for change!

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Share your successes!