

STATE VOTER

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy
January 2022



President's Message

Judie Gorenstein, judieL728@aol.com

This is the beginning of 2022, a new year, which promises to be as challenging for the LWVNY as was 2021. We are still fighting for voting rights both in Washington DC for federal changes and in NYS for changes to our own state laws. In fact as most if not all of you know, the proposals on last year's ballot to make voting easier in NYS failed. However, we cannot get discouraged. We will continue to work together with LWVUS and our local leagues and MALS as well as with other good government groups. We will face our challenges and continue in our fight to defend our democracy, always adhering to our nonpartisan policy and reaching out to underserved and diverse communities. We will look to educate people on

important issues at all the governmental levels, we will register voters and then turn out the vote. In order to accomplish all we want and need to do, it is important that our Leagues are strong, grow membership, and gain influence. How can we do this? One way is to remain highly visible and keep people informed of who we are and what we do.

On February 14, LWVUS is celebrating its 102 anniversary and calling for a Day of Action. You can go to the LWVUS webpage to see what members throughout the country are doing.

Here in NYS we can have Feb 14 be a Day of Action, A Day of Recognition, a Day of Celebration!

Action: Call your state legislator and urge them to increase funding for elections and election administration.

Recognition: Members can wear their LWV buttons, tell people about the LWV and ask them to join. Members can make donations to the League. Members can volunteer to join a committee or go to a meeting and bring a friend

Celebration: Individual Leagues can decide how they want to celebrate this day. Check with your local League to see what they are doing? LWVUS is hosting a National Pep Rally on Feb 14 at 11 am. Be a part of the celebration!

Together we can and we will meet the challenges we face!

State Redistricting Process

Sally Robinson, Sally.s.robinson@gmail.com

On January 3rd the Independent Redistricting Commission voted to submit two sets of maps for Congressional and state Legislative Districts, one Democratic and one Republican. Each received five votes. The League, Citizens Union and Reinvent Albany sent a letter to the Commissioners criticizing the failure to submit one set of maps. <https://lwvny.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Letter-IRC-010322-FINAL.pdf>



Because the Commission voted, the Legislature had to consider both sets of maps. On January 10, they voted both sets of maps down. The Commission has 15 days to submit new maps to the Legislature. Only after those maps are voted down does the Legislature get to amend the maps.

We sent another letter to the Commission on January 13 asking them to come together on one set of maps after the Legislature voting down the maps. The second letter can be seen here: <https://lwvny.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Letter-to-IRC-Jan-13-2022-FINAL.pdf>.

On January 24, the Commissioners of each party of the IRC released a statement blaming the other for not even agreeing to meet to discuss the 2nd set of maps. The IRC will therefore shirk its constitutional responsibility and not submit the 2nd set of maps. The League released a statement blasting the IRC's inaction (see here: <https://lwvny.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/statement-on-IRC-inaction-Jan-25-2022.pdf>).

Development of maps now falls to the hands of the Legislature. Today we sent a letter to the Legislative leaders urging transparency in their process and urging an opportunity for public input as they consider these maps. See the letter here: <https://lwvny.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Jan-25-Letter-to-Leg-Leaders-re-Redistricting.pdf>

County Redistricting

An educational county redistricting event has been scheduled for January 27th at 6:30 pm and will be held over Zoom. Jeffrey Wice from the New York Law School, Dale Barbaria from Assemblywoman Amy Paulin's office, and Barbara Grosh from LWV Rochester will be speaking at the event. The League has created county redistricting guides that will be shared with event attendees, League members, and the public. Register

here: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwkcu2oqj4uGNB8fv8df_U72cR12jiVBFmT



Take Action on State Redistricting NOW

Today we sent a letter to the Legislative leaders urging transparency in their process and urging an opportunity for public input as they consider these maps. See the letter here: <https://lwvny.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Jan-25-Letter-to-Leg-Leaders-re-Redistricting.pdf>

We encourage members to call their own NYS Senators and Assemblymembers reiterating the demand for hearings and public input in the redistricting process, now in the hands of the legislators.

Find your elected officials here:

Senate: <https://www.nysenate.gov/registration/nojs/form/start/find-my-senator>

Assembly: <https://nyassembly.gov/mem/search/>

Suggested script:

"Hi, my name is _____ and I live at _____. I'm calling to urge [Your Representative's Name] to demonstrate to the public their commitment to a transparent and fair redistricting process. All amendments to the maps sent by the IRC to the legislature and the data explaining the amendments must be released as soon as possible. That release should be followed by a period during which the public can review the proposed districts before any vote. Communities impacted by the amendments, including those protected by the Voting Rights Act, should have the opportunity to offer input during a public hearing. Thank you for your time"

Other Advocacy Items

Ethics

Governor Hochul has made abolishing JCOPE, the much-maligned New York state ethics enforcement agency her main ethics priority. Her office has been working with the good government groups, including the League on this but it will also need to be negotiated with the Legislature. She included her proposal in with her budget submission last week.

Bigger Better Bottle Bill

The League is participating in a coalition working on advocacy for a bigger better bottle bill. The League was instrumental in winning passage for the original Bottle Bill in 1982 and the expansion in 2009. Watch for more info as legislative action is proposed. See the fact sheet on the new BBBB [here](#).



Voter Services

Nancy Rosenthal, nancyrosenthal9@gmail.com

The key in 2022 will be Getting Out the Vote (GOTV)! All voters were helped last week with the signing of legislation allowing for Voting by Absentee Ballot due to the Covid-19 Pandemic through 2022. This legislation will "ensure the pandemic does not create inaccessibility for voters during upcoming elections and help protect New Yorkers' access to the ballot," according to Governor Hochul. The legislature is currently debating other legislation in regards to voting; we will be certain current and accurate voting information is available to Leagues as the Tuesday June 28, 2022 primary election and Tuesday November

8, 2022 general elections get closer.

Thanks to our own Voter Services Committee member, Kathleen Stein, who also chairs the Rural Caucus Committee which includes several Leagues throughout the US, the VS Committee is looking to model packets created by other Leagues in rural areas on Voter Registration and Voting that can be distributed by local Leagues to libraries or other groups/organizations. We are just beginning to look into the particulars and hope to have packets available by the summer. These packets will facilitate registering voters!

The six pamphlets available from the League office on voting have been updated: First Vote, Individuals with Criminal Convictions or Detained in Jail or Prison, Homeless Individuals, College Students, Individuals with Disabilities, and Individuals with Mental Health Disabilities. These updated pamphlets will be available in March, if not sooner.



LWVNY DEI (Diversity Equity and Inclusion) Task Force

Regina Tillman, rmt371@live.com and Crystal Joseph, campus@lwnyc.org, Co-Chairs

Feels like we are moving through January at lightning speed! But that is exactly why the sign-up for the 21-Day Better Listening Challenge© has been extended! You can still participate... just enroll with us by next Sunday, January 31st.

Last month, we told you about the Challenge and its merits to us as individuals in our everyday lives, as well as for making our organizational environment more inclusive. If anyone in the League ... at our meetings, via virtual communications or phone, at events... does not feel heard... they do not feel seen nor valued. It is as simple as that. Effective listening puts others in the center of our focus and thus, conveys a sense of belonging and, dare I say, inclusion. Saying we are inclusive doesn't do the trick. And since the benefits of diversifying a group include getting different perspectives, one must listen and consider the offerings that only come through to us by hearing them being expressed.

Last week while doing the Challenge, I personally came across a great list called the "Listening Sixers"! The directions were as follows: Start to listen artfully to the conversations that are taking place around you at your school, workplace, place of worship, or home. Pick a specific conversation and L-I-S-T-E-N for the following:

1. Did the listener welcome the speaker to the conversation in any way?
2. Did the listener allow the speaker to express all of his or her thoughts?
3. (...to be continued on the Better Listening Challenge Page)

Register and engage to find the remaining list of #3 – #6 additional pointers to L-I-S-T-E-N for and then process what you heard. Doing this for several days, even if just in your own household, sensitizes oneself to what works in a conversation and how a conversation fails. Then you will be ready to connect with a speaker yourself using the "Listening Sixers". I personally printed off a copy to serve as a readily accessible cheat sheet to consult with.

Although we have League members from across NYS enrolled and engaged in this Challenge (many thanks for your involvement), more would be great in order to effect the change we seek in our collective behavior. Please reinforce the notice of the extension to your local league members via an email blast, or just forward this email to your friends in the League, to alert them of the new deadline date of Sunday, January 30th. It is not too late to start on completing the 21-Days by engaging in the Better Listening Challenge© after registering by the final registration date at:

<https://lwnys21daybetterlisteningchallenge.eventbrite.com> Questions? Email Regina Tillman at rmt370@gmail.com.

Thank you!

Local League News



On January 6, approximately 150 people gather together in below freezing temperatures to stand with **LWV of Albany** at a Candlelight Vigil held in front of the NYS Capitol building. The League speaker, Gail Volk, reminded people that all of their grassroots work was important, stressing the need to participate, become educated and also encouraged them to join organizations such as the LWV, which is not just for women only, in the effort to preserve democracy. Television coverage was great- local NBC, CBS and ABC affiliates, with stories in last night's news reports. Also had great coverage from the public radio station, WAMC. (see photo upper left)

In **Huntington**, the League approximately 50 people rallied on January 6 with the message of saving American democracy by protecting the vote. (see photo upper right)

Great job by **LWV of Utica/Rome!** Last year, the Utica/Rome LWV was one of the chapters that received funding from LWVNYS for Get Out the Vote initiatives. We had proposed putting together a videos targeted at formerly incarcerated individuals who are now eligible to vote, but may be unfamiliar with the process. As we began creating the video, we decided to create several short videos on selected topics related to the process, since there are many constituent groups to whom this information would be beneficial. We ended up with 6 short instructional videos that can be used by anyone in New York State. The topics are:

- Introduction to Voting for Parolees
- Registering to Vote
- Step-by-Step instructions to Complete a Voter Registration Form
- How to Vote Absentee
- How to Vote during Early Voting
- How to Vote on the Day of Election

These videos can be found on our YouTube page; feel free to distribute/use as you see fit:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtweBc0LSBdiS0cVV9-zroA>

LWV of Buffalo has scheduled a meeting at which Elizabeth Lowes will present information about the nuclear clean-up at the West Valley Demonstration Project and environmental and health concerns related to the nuclear waste stored there.

Peter Iwanowicz, Executive Director of Environmental Advocates NY and a Member of the New York Climate Action Council, presented an analysis of the long awaited plan for the State of New York to implement New York's clean energy and greenhouse gas emission goals set forth in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act at a recent meeting of **LWV of Saratoga**.

Kim Margosian of **LWV of Syracuse** had a Letter to the Editor published regarding redistricting. See the letter here:

<https://www.syracuse.com/opinion/2022/01/onondaga-county-did-not-listen-to-the-voters-on-redistricting-your-letters.html>

LWV of Brookhaven invited Suffolk County Sheriff, Errol Toulon, to talk with them about initiatives he has introduced in the Suffolk County jails, especially for those leaving incarceration and youth who are serving time.

Susan Weisfeld of the **LWV of Rivertowns** drafted a short summary of the impact Sarah Weddington, 26-year old attorney who argued Roe V Wade, had on reproductive rights. Sarah passed away in December, 2021. [See the summary here.](#)

Over 180 people attended (by Zoom) the recent meeting of the **LWVs of Tompkins County and Cortland County** entitled, *Bitcoin, Cryptocurrency, Blockchain: the Promise and Peril*. Speaker Irene Weiser, Coordinator of Fossil Free Tompkins, covered the basics of cryptocurrencies and blockchain technologies and how the energy appetite of some forms can threaten to derail achievement of NYS climate goals.

The **LWV of Rochester** is hosting its Next Community Forum: Teaching the History of Racist Policy and Resistance in Rochester. Shane Wiegand and Kesha James will examine how federal and local policies like redlining, racially restrictive covenants, blackface minstrel shows, and urban renewal segregated Rochester, built wealth for its white citizens and disenfranchised people of color.

This year the Committee for Criminal Justice Reform (CCJR) of **LWV of NYC** partnered with the Katal Center and other statewide organizations to work on the "Less Is More" campaign. "Less Is More" addresses the injustice of immediate incarceration of people on parole for accusations of technical violations: such as being late for hearings, missing a probation appointment, or having a positive alcohol urine screening.

Heather Urtz Amendolare, library director at the Village Library of **Cooperstown** and a new member of the League, has invited League members to join in a group reading and discussion of Ezra Klein's *Why We're Polarized*. Heather is trained as a facilitator for the series and would be leading the group discussion.