

# STATE VOTER

**Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy**  
**November-December 2021**



## President's Message

**Judie Gorenstein,**  
[judieL728@aol.com](mailto:judieL728@aol.com)

I wish you all a very happy holiday season. Comparing it to last year at this time, we have so much to celebrate. Although we

still cannot celebrate in all the same ways as we did before COVID, most of us are able to get together in person with family and friends. Although many of us are still shopping on line for ease and out of precaution, there are many of us venturing into stores to buy gifts. As always, there are people whom we do not know what to give. For some of these people, I am proposing the gift of membership to the LWV. I suppose many of you never thought of this before, but think of what a membership in the LEAGUE offers:

- An opportunity to meet a wonderful group of people
- An opportunity to become educated about important issues re voting, good government, environment, healthcare and many more.
- An opportunity to advocate and take action on important issues.
- An opportunity to be part of a nonpartisan organization, EMPOWERING PEOPLE and DEFENDING OUR
- DEMOCRACY

Do you have people on your list who are 16 years old or older and would appreciate these these opportunities? Give them membership to their local league to LWVNYS. It will be a gift that keeps giving.

## League Receives \$1M Gift

On Giving Tuesday, December 1, 2021, the League of Women Voters of NYS (LWVNYS) announced it has received an anonymous \$1 million donation to expand and strengthen its fight to defend democracy and voting rights for all.

The donation, the largest ever received by LWVNYS, comes during a time of great transformation for the organization which recently celebrated its one hundredth anniversary in 2019. This gift will allow the League to bolster efforts to address voter suppression at the state and local level. With this gift, the League will expand efforts to educate voters and work to ensure voting ease and access for all New Yorkers.

Judie Gorenstein, President of the State League said, "With the beginning of our 2nd century of work, the state League sees this gift as a new opportunity that will create a more impactful state League for all New Yorkers. While this is a significant gift, it does not fully fund the State League in perpetuity..."

See full press release [here](#).



## League Gavel Displayed in Governor's Office

One of two gavels used by Susan B. Anthony at the National Suffrage Convention in Atlanta in 1895 is now on display in the Governor's office on loan from LWVNYS.

The date March 3, 1895 is inscribed in ink on the gavel head. Mrs. F. Warren Green of Larchmont presented the gavel to the state League at our 50th Anniversary Convention in 1969.



## Voter Services

**Nancy Rosenthal, [nancyrosenthal9@gmail.com](mailto:nancyrosenthal9@gmail.com)**

### Voter Services Survey Responses

Thanks to the many local Leagues for their responses to the 2021 Voter Survey. (See full report on responses [here](#).) As a few remaining Leagues have yet to respond, we will update the results once they have submitted them. The information gained from your replies will allow the state League to better assist local League efforts to Get Out the Vote (GOTV)! 29 Leagues (of the 42 so only 70%!) so far have responded to the survey. Leagues do what they are able, thus, not all questions in the survey have replies. The local Leagues should be proud!

To summarize, the results from the 29 responses received are:

- 956 League members volunteered to assist in voter registration drives and candidate forums;
- 49 joined the League as new members.
- 20 Leagues participated in Vote411.
- Leagues held 404 registration events (ie schools, farmers markets, naturalization ceremonies, underserved communities) and registered 1,083 new voters.
- 61 Candidate forums were held, 43 of which were virtual and 18 in person. Those forums had 8,240 views after the live event, whether held in person or virtually.
- Over 12,520 pieces of voting information were distributed or handed out.

Some of the comments from local League responses included:

All Leagues look forward to in person events; virtual events, though reaching more people, are a challenge for several of our Leagues because of the technology required. The Voters Guide Part II is a very useful document to educate voters; its availability in several languages helped reach underserved and underrepresented communities. All Leagues distributed and appreciated the materials the State League provided local Leagues for distribution (ie Voters Guides, information on ballot proposals).

National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) allowed many local Leagues to ramp up registration events and partner with local organizations and businesses, some of whom, like Price Chopper in Albany, are already agreeing to partner for the 2022 election season. Several Leagues trained volunteers in other organizations to register voters, including high school students and college students. Partnering with local libraries and school districts allowed for dissemination of voting information in all communities, but especially in targeted minority and underserved areas. Several Leagues accessed voter turnout information from the 2020 election, allowing them to target areas to improve voter turnout.

For many Leagues, a relationship with the local Board of Elections facilitated their GOTV efforts and their accessing of candidate information. Most Leagues have a good relationship with both local BOE commissioners, though a few said one commissioner was more accessible than the other commissioner. Continuing to build a relationship with the Board of Elections will better serve League efforts.

Lawn signs were used by many Leagues. There was a widespread use of Eblasts. All Leagues made some use of social media to educate and inform voters on deadlines for registering to vote, submitting applications for absentee ballots, early voting dates, times and sites, etc. Some Leagues have requested additional training in using social media channels to improve their outreach. Being able to provide links to Voters Guides, Palm Cards, Voter Registration forms and instructions on filling out the forms helped in outreach efforts.

Many Leagues reached out to communities with minorities and with disabilities by partnering with other community organizations like Self Advocate of NYS GOTV Task Force, state facilities and organizations that deal with mental health and physical disabilities. These organizations, being present at League events, greatly assisted in providing handouts at food pantries, school snack programs.



## People Powered Fair Maps

**Milly Czerwinski, LWVNY Organizer, [Milly@lwvny.org](mailto:Milly@lwvny.org)**

The state redistricting process has been a challenging one – with the unexpected release of the two sets of maps and the hearing dates falling mainly during election season, many Leagues faced a steep learning curve and a busy autumn. With every written testimony, map, or comment submitted to the IRC, our local Leagues' efforts have accumulated into a united front that has been noticed by many.

Below are highlights just a few of our local Leagues' tremendous efforts to influence redistricting in their areas.  
**LWVs of Albany, Saratoga, and Rensselaer**

Albany, Saratoga, and Rensselaer were a major part of the Capitol Region's One Person, One Vote Coalition on redistricting. The Coalition had the capitol region's Leagues work with The Capital Area Council of Churches, the NAACP, and The Capital District Coalition of Black Trade Unionists to educate the public on State redistricting through public events and community outreach. They're still working now on educating the public and keeping them aware of the next steps now that the IRC hearings are almost over.

### **LWV of the North Country**

Throughout the entire redistricting process, the North Country League sent all educational materials from the State League to all of their members, and to a second email list that consisted of "friends" of the League – people and organizations who were not members of the North Country League. Not many people testified at the North Country IRC hearing. However, one of the only people who did testify was someone who was on the "friends of the League" email list, and who had learned more about the 2021 redistricting process from the materials North Country sent them.

### **LWV of Rochester Metro Area**

At the start of the redistricting process, The Rochester League prioritized community involvement. Rochester put together an email list of over 300 new groups and individuals that they hadn't previously been in contact with. They sent this list information about redistricting, the IRC hearings, and educational events. Rochester went above and beyond in making sure that their community was aware of the redistricting process, and they are seeing an uptick of community involvement as a result.

### **LWVs of Westchester ILO**

Westchester County was extremely involved during the redistricting process, and worked with community groups such as Latino Justice to get the word out on redistricting. They hosted several educational events, sent out informational e-mail blasts, and designed flyers. Most notably, their testimony included six examples of potential congressional districts within the county.

Kathy Meany, the president of the Westchester County League, testified at the White Plains IRC hearing on November 8. The Westchester League's testimony reminded the commissioners of their duty to release a single set of maps. After Westchester's testimony, IRC Commissioner Jack Martins complimented the Westchester League and Leagues from throughout New York.

"I want to thank the league for taking such a strong position on [releasing a single set of maps]," he said. "Everywhere we have held and heard testimony we have gotten that admonishment from the league, and I thank you for that."

### **Local Redistricting**

Now that the state redistricting process is winding down to a close, the State League has begun to shift our focus to local redistricting. The local redistricting process may look different for a few counties this cycle. A bill (S.5160-B ) that sets solid redistricting standards for all New York counties, was recently signed into law by Governor Hochul. Despite this new, universal standard, all New York counties have varied redistricting processes. Because of this, the State League is currently working on creating guides that explain the individual redistricting process in each New York County. These guides will be sent out to all local Leagues in January.

Additionally, we have been meeting with redistricting professionals and experts from throughout the state. Educational programs on local redistricting will be offered in the near future for all members.



## **Climate Emergency Declaration Gains Momentum in Westchester**

**Beth Radow, Chair, LWVNY State Committee on Energy, Environment and Agriculture, [enradow@gmail.com](mailto:enradow@gmail.com)**

The unanimous passage of the Declaration of Climate Emergency by the NYS League delegates at convention in June, 2021 has been followed by the Westchester County Board of Legislators and the Town of Mamaroneck Town Council each passing a Declaration of Climate Emergency. The NYS League's action helped to create the

momentum needed.

Immediately following convention, I informed the Town of Mamaroneck (TOM) Sustainability Collaborative of which I am a member and County Legislator Catherine Parker of the NYS League's Declaration of Climate Emergency with the recommendation - sought by the LWV NYS Declaration- that we appeal to our local government to pass its own Declaration of Climate Emergency. A Declaration of Climate Emergency (aka resolution) was already in the works at the County level. The League's action reinforced the momentum. Westchester's resolution unanimously passed on October 18, 2021. <https://westchesterlegislators.com/latest-news/3184-board-passes-declaration-of-climate-emergency>. For text of the County resolution visit: <https://bit.ly/3vq41Cn>

The County of Westchester legislation includes these two key Resolutions in the text-amounting to a call to action for local governments:

“RESOLVED, that the Westchester County Board of Legislators urges state and local governments to adopt and publicize Declarations of Climate Emergency appropriate to local conditions and take appropriate action to implement the Declarations of Climate Emergency”;

RESOLVED, that Westchester County’s Director of Energy Conservation and 2 Sustainability and the Westchester Climate Crisis Task Force work with Westchester’s 41 municipalities to examine the local implications of the Climate Crisis and identify additional steps to mitigate the impact”

This text was mirrored in the text of the proposed Declaration prepared by the TOM Sustainability Collaborative and presented to the TOM Town Board:

The Town of Mamaroneck passed its climate emergency declaration on November 17, 2021.

To view the Town of Mamaroneck Climate Crisis Declaration, please click [here](#).

The legislation involves a role for members of the Sustainability Collaborative to develop for the Town Board a draft response to the climate emergency with recommendations to meet current climate mitigation impact goals. The overall effect of these governmental declarations is to re-orient local government officials to perform their duties through the lens of the climate emergency, create potential access to emergency funding, and educate voters through focused messaging. Note for those who live in flood prone areas and want to take similar action with your local and county government to pass a climate emergency declaration, you may find it useful having familiarity with FEMA’s role in disaster recovery and the required 5-year update of the State (and County) Hazard Mitigation Plan(s)

<https://www.dhSES.ny.gov/recovery/mitigation/plan.cfm>

This LWVNYS webpage provides important links including to the global climate mobilization toolkit monitoring worldwide progress. <https://lwwny.org/climate-emergency/>

Here is the direct link to the climate mobilization organization charting progress globally.

<https://www.theclimatemobilization.org/climate-emergency/>



## **LWVNYS DEI (Diversity Equity and Inclusion) Task Force** **Regina Tillman, [rmt371@live.com](mailto:rmt371@live.com) and Crystal Joseph, [campus@lwwnyc.org](mailto:campus@lwwnyc.org), Co-Chairs**

I want to begin by announcing the next educational opportunity for those interested in helping, both yourselves and our organization, to continue to grow in the implementation of DEI. Many members even noted in submitted workshop responses and surveys that skills to become more effective listeners was important!

Thus, beginning January along with your other New Year’s Resolutions, please look forward to joining us in a 21-DAY BETTER LISTENING CHALLENGE©. It is open to all members of LWVNYS. Info will be forth coming shortly to allow for pre-register. In the meantime, mark your calendar to sign-in and begin the Challenge as of Sunday, January 2, 2022.

But let us first ask the question... what does listening have to do with implementing DEI? You have heard it said numerous times already... groups can be diverse but diverse groups are not inherently inclusive. What then is the special sauce that allows the practice of inclusion?

First, it is coming to an understanding of inclusion as behavior. It is not just a convenient label but rather, a word that implies actions moving toward a certain direction. As we learned in the October workshops, part of the recipe for authentic inclusion is using the language of “transformational conversation.” Doing so is an example of a mindful, intentional action that helps to create an inclusive environment.

Another part of the sauce is engaging from the perspective of curiosity! If feelings or observations are revealed in conversation or in meetings, the best immediate response is not denial or defensiveness but rather, in the spirit of “allyship” to ask, “can you tell me more.”

And yet another element in the inclusion ‘sauce’ is active listening. Effective listening acknowledges others and reveals to them that you see them, that you hear them and that you are trying to understand them. Per the developers of this copyrighted 21-Day Challenge, effective listening ranks up there with being considered by social science experts as a healing force, much needed within organizations and communities today.

Within our League, effectively listening to each other as well as to people who join us from historically marginalized and “othered” groups, can aid in retention and engagement because it conveys value and community. Thus, I do hope to see most of you at the 21-Day Better Listening Challenge!

The **LWVNYS DEI Task Force** has been joined by several new members in the past months. Plus, a DEI Task Force Steering Committee has been formed that will allow the team to work on several projects at the same time. League members joining me on this Committee are Crystal Joseph, Task Force Co-Chair (LWVNYS & LWVNYC); Gail Volk (LWV Albany); Linda McKenny (LWV Saratoga); Kathy Meany (LWV Westchester ILO). It is also gratifying to have so many of the previously appointed members carry over into 2022! All our team members are invaluable in their input and the emotional support they render. I thank them all and wish the best of the Holiday Season to them – and as well, to you and your families!

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## Local League News

Cynthia Bell, President of the **LWV of Mid-Hudson Region**, recently attended the United Nations COP26 meetings on climate change. Her summary of the presentations and her reactions can be seen [here](#).

**LWV of NYC** is hosting a meeting in December, *Media Bias: It's More Complex Than You Think*. The phrase media bias is often thought as the tendency of a reporter to slant a story in favor of or against a political cause. In fact, the topic is more subtle. It can be based on what stories are covered and which are not; which stories are substantiated by facts; or even in what stories are deemed most important to cover. Professor Marjorie Hershey from Indiana University discusses some of these more subtle forms of bias that can impact how a person perceives a political personality or event.

The Town of Mamaroneck can now add its name to this ever-growing list of 2043 jurisdictions and local governments in more than 37 countries worldwide (including the European Union counted as one jurisdiction), covering more than one Billion people, that have declared a climate emergency, thanks to **Beth Radow and the LWV of Larchmont/Mamaroneck**. New Rochelle and the County of Westchester are also on the list: <https://climateemergencydeclaration.org/climate-emergency-declarations-cover-15-million-citizens/> See full article above.

**Albany County League** members were active in organizing a November 12 rally and press conference with other voter-rights advocates, to urge Senator Schumer to do everything in his power to pass the Freedom to Vote Act. Rally attendees signed a letter to Schumer asking him to prioritize passage of the Act, concluding "Senators must do everything in their power to pass the Freedom to Vote Act, and let nothing, including the outdated Jim Crow era filibuster „stand in the way." Senator Schumer's Deputy State Director, Steve Mann, was at the rally and promised to personally deliver the letter to Senator Schumer.

**LWV of Saratoga** invited Perry Grossman, Senior Staff Attorney of the Voting Rights Project of the New York Civil Liberties Union, for a discussion of voter suppression. New York State, a progressive leader on social issues, has been behind the curve regarding voting rights and policies. Despite some forward movement in recent years, New York still has some way to go toward solving inequities in voting and becoming the kind of national leader it aspires to be.

Assemblyman Keith Brown recognized distinguished women in the town of Huntington and Liz Thalheimer, President of the **League of Women Voters of Huntington** was among them. Liz was recognized for her leadership and commitment to voting rights for all Americans. As President of Huntington LWV, Liz has led campaigns on voter registration, voting rights and voter education for high school students and the wider public in public forums. Under her leadership, the LWVH has partnered with many organizations, expanding the reach of voter education efforts. Congrats, Liz!

In November, **LWV of Brookhaven** invited Elise Nichols-Powell to explain what dioxane is, and why we should be concerned about it. In 2016, more than 70% of Long Island wells were found to have some trace of 1,4-dioxane, making it a national hot spot for the chemical, according to EPA data. Elise will show that it is also in our personal care products —our toothpaste and our cosmetics— and why that is dangerous.

Also in November, **LWV of Utica-Rome** hosted a meeting with speaker Sheila Rayam, Executive Editor, Observer - Dispatch. Ms. Rayam was named the Executive Editor of the Observer-Dispatch in March 2021, along with leading the Times Telegram in Herkimer and the Mid-York Weekly. She is a Rochester, NY native and the first Black Executive Editor of the OD. We are excited to hear from Ms. Rayam on her vision for the print media in the Mohawk Valley, as well as discuss how we can work together to achieve our mutual missions.

Brian Langloss, Field Representative for Oceana, presented their campaign to reduce plastic pollution at a meeting of the **LWV of East Nassau**. Oceana is the world's largest nonprofit advocacy group dedicated to ocean conservation. He discussed:

- The plastic pollution crisis, which is a crisis of production, not litter,
- Why & how recycling falls short as a solution to plastic pollution,

- What the impacts of plastic are on human and environmental health,
- Some of the proposed policies to deal with this issue, at both the local and federal levels.

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