



The League of Women Voters of New York State
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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS *of New York State*

State Board Updates **February 2022**

Local League To Do's (email: lwvny@lwvny.org or fax 518-465-0812)

- Schedule a local League meeting in Feb, March or April, 2021, to discuss the proposed principles of a new position on election administration structure; **responses due May 1**
- Forms for students selected to attend SIA must be received by the state office **by March 1**
- Complete and return the attached Pre-Budget Lobby report form or complete online at: <https://forms.gle/ZwWuCXUrXALX838T9> **by March 4**
- Register to attend one of the Regional Training Workshops in Ithaca (**Mar 12**), Rochester (**Mar 19**), Albany (**Mar 26**) or Scarsdale (**Apr 2**) using attached form or online at: https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/HOhq-CqnO8wQHms7-w8Kg .

Calendar

- February-April, 2022: Schedule a local League meeting to discuss the proposed principles of a new position on election administration structure; responses due May 1.
- March 1, 2022: LWVUS Program Planning Responses are due (see From LWVUS below)
- March 12: Regional Training in Ithaca
- March 19: Regional Training in Rochester
- March 26: Regional Training in Albany
- April 2: Regional Training in Scarsdale

President's Report, Judie Gorenstein, judieL728@aol.com

I am looking forward to March and the in-person Regional Training workshops for all our local Leagues and members. March 7, 2020 was the last regional meeting that we held in person. It was held in NYC and it was a week later before New Yorkers were asked to PAUSE and stay at home because of the pandemic. Of course, the LWV did not pause, we continued holding meetings, workshops, and even our convention virtually. Thank goodness for computers and zoom. We learned how to reach and engage with people we may never have done before. We learned that whether it was a meeting, a workshop, a candidate event, and even a convention, we could hold it on zoom. There were advantages to doing things virtually and, because of what we learned and were able to accomplish, we will continue to zoom and hold webinars but now we can also hold meetings in person.

I am so looking forward to meeting some of you for the first time in person at these meetings as President of the state League. The meetings will give you an opportunity to meet LWNYS board members and staff, to attend workshops that will help strengthen your Leagues (growing membership, leadership, being diverse and inclusive, engaging youth, holding hybrid candidate forums), to increase

your knowledge (Vote 411 training, communicating using social media, and advocating), but also is a time to come together and move forward. The workshops are open to all members. We strongly encourage all local League board members to attend, and invite all members as well. See old friends, meet new friends and share League accomplishments! See you then.

State Office: New Staff

The state League is excited to introduce two new staffers in the office: Erica Smitka is the new Deputy Director, and Aimee Messier is the new Finance Administrator. Lisa Allendorph is staying on part time as an internal auditor.



Erica Smitka, Deputy Director, Erica@lwvny.org

Most recently, Erica worked as a Senior Grants/Contracts Specialist and Program Coordinator at Policy Research Associates, Inc. She worked to expand the reach of PRA's projects through the development of proposals, management of contracts, and evaluation of programmatic funds, while also managing the Social Security Administration's ARDRAW Program. Throughout the years she has worked with a number of non-profits in a variety of capacities – in development offices, doing direct program work, strategic planning, and developing frameworks for data-driven decision making. Erica earned her Master's degree in Public Administration (MPA), with a focus on non-profit management, from Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. Prior to attending graduate school, Erica worked as an organizer and campaign director for Grassroots Campaigns, Inc., where she fundraised for non-profits and worked on a variety of political campaigns in California, Colorado, and Massachusetts. Erica holds her Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from SUNY Geneseo, with a dual minor in Africana Studies and Anthropology. As an Albany native with a passion for grassroots activism, Erica is thrilled to join the League.



Aimee Messier, Finance Administrator, Aimee@lwvny.org

Aimee has a background in administration, bookkeeping, and grants management. She spent over a decade at RPI working with a large research group on everything from grant proposal preparation to daily purchasing. More recently, she worked at Ecovative Design in all areas relating to finance and grants management. Aimee has an AS in Business Administration from HVCC.

Regional Training Workshop, Laura Ladd Bierman, Laura@lwvny.org

We are so excited to be offering our regional training workshops again this year! We hope that many people will attend to reconnect with old friends and share accomplishments with other Leagues. All locations will have the same workshops that run from 9:30 am to 4:00 pm. The cost varies by location based on the cost of the venue for that location. Lunch is included in the registration fee. **Registration form is attached or you can register online at: https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/HOhq-CqnO8wQHsms7-w8Kg .**

Dates and Locations:

March 12, Ithaca \$15 (registration deadline March 4)

Coltivare (Tompkins Co Community College Culinary Center), 235 S Cayuga St, Ithaca

March 19, Rochester Area \$25 (registration deadline March 11)
The Perkins Manor, 494 East Avenue, Rochester

March 26, Capital Region \$15 (registration deadline March 18)
The Blake Annex, 1 Steuben Place, Albany

April 2, Downstate Area \$25 (registration deadline March 25)
Scarsdale Woman's Club, 37 Drake Road, Scarsdale

Schedule

9:30-10:00 coffee and welcome

10:00–11:00 Full workshop for all (It's All About the Ask: Tactics for Increasing Membership and Cultivating Leadership)

11:15-12:15 Two workshops

12:15-1:15 Lunch

1:30-2:30 Two workshops

2:45-3:45 Two workshops

Workshop Sessions:

It's All About the Ask: Tactics for Increasing Membership and Cultivating Leadership

Empower Voters and Defend Democracy. That's our mission. To further this mission we need strong, sustainable Leagues. And that requires all of us to get involved in attracting prospects, welcoming and mentoring new members, checking in with inactive ones, and identifying leadership candidates. Our best tool is The Ask:

- Ask others to attend a League program,
- Ask others to join,
- Ask members how they want to get involved, and
- Ask engaged Leaguers to take leadership positions

The 411 on Vote 411: A Beginners Guide to the New Platform (Hands-on Workshop)

Explore the new Vote411 platform (League's electronic voter guide). This workshop will walk through a step-by-step guide to setting up your local elections and will answer your questions on the new system. Bring a laptop so you can navigate the platform along with us (laptop not required).

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – Past, Present and Future

We will look at some of the “isms” that hang over our collective past, both as a country and a national organization. Thereafter, attendees will be guided in a conversation on the efforts made in recent months, both on an individual basis and by their local Leagues, in overcoming the marginalization that has placed the soul of democracy at increasing risk.

Engaging Youth Through Civic Collaborations

While the pandemic has limited our traditional abilities to get into schools, that doesn't mean we have to stop engaging the youth! Learn how to engage the next generation of voters online, in person, and everything in between even if you can't get into the classroom.

Zooming into 2022: How to Successfully Host a Virtual or Hybrid Candidate Forum

Discover various methods for hosting candidate forums in the digital age. This workshop will discuss best practices for hosting a virtual, hybrid or in-person forum.

Hacking Social Media: Getting the best use out of your League's Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts

Learn about different social media platforms, their quirks, and how to “hack” the algorithm. This workshop will explore the uniqueness of each social media platform and explain how your League can use them to your advantage.

Let's Take Action: How, When and Why?

You or your local League is passionate about an issue and wants to advocate and lobby. When is the correct time? How best to advocate? And, how does taking action vary based on local, state or national issues? Come learn more about advocacy.

All attendees are required to show proof of vaccination and booster and be willing to wear a mask. The deadlines for registration are stricter than usual as we will not hold the workshops at a specific location if we do not have enough people registered so we need to ask for all to register early.

Issues and Advocacy, Sally Robinson, VP for Issues and Advocacy, sally.s.robinson@gmail.com, and Erica Smitka, LWNYS Deputy Director, Erica@lwny.org

Pre Budget Lobby Packet

The League issued its 2022 Pre Budget Lobby Packet for local Leagues to advocate for funding for select issues. Local Leagues were/are asked to schedule meetings with their state legislators during this legislative recess and discuss these issues with the legislators or staff. Leagues are asked to complete and return a form indicating the results of these meetings; this information helps direct the state League's advocacy efforts in Albany. The full packet is attached and also available on the state League website at: <https://my.lwv.org/new-york-state/2022-legislative-packet> . The form can also be completed online at: <https://forms.gle/ZwWuCXUrXALX838T9> . All completed forms are to be returned to the state office by March 4. Thanks for your help in making our voice heard in the Legislature.

Budget Advocacy

This month the League advocated for funding for ethics reform, elections, and education financing in the New York State budget. On February 9th we testified at the Joint Legislative Public Hearing on early voting, funding for election reforms, absentee voting, and ethics reform. See testimony at: <https://lwny.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Testimony-Local-Govt-Budget-Elections-Feb-9-2022-LWVNYS.pdf> . Voting should be made as easy as possible for all New Yorkers and while we have greatly appreciated the tremendous gains that were made in the last couple of years, many of these reforms still have not been sufficiently funded, particularly with voter participation this year expected to significantly increase from last year. In order to realize the voter enhancement goals of the Legislative leaders and Governor, the State Board of Elections and county Boards of Elections need a serious funding commitment to ensure that progressive elections reforms are not unfunded mandates. There has unfortunately been no similar progress in ethics reform in New York other than the start of a

public financing program for elections. We continue to have sky-high campaign contribution limits and no effective ethics enforcement agency. We hope this year will make a new beginning at least for establishing a real ethics body capable of holding public officials accountable. The Governor has made it her priority to replace JCOPE and she has provided a serious proposal to do that. However, the League believes that her proposal could be improved to create a truly transparent and independent ethics commission.

The League also submitted testimony on February 7th to support “Turn on the TAP”, which would include state budget funds to restore higher education funding for people who are incarcerated. See testimony at: <https://lwvny.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Testimony-LWVNY-for-Higher-Educ-Budget-Hearing-Feb.-7-2022.pdf> . We see a direct connection between providing college programs at all New York State prisons and vital benefits to incarcerated people, our prison system, and our society. “Turn on the TAP” is one way to reduce the cycle of recidivism and dependency that often undermines women’s ability to thrive, raise the next generation of engaged citizens, and maintain economic independence. We urged the State to fully fund college programs in every prison.

Finally the League submitted testimony on January 26th to voice observations on the topic of aid to state charter schools. See testimony at: <https://lwvny.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Testimony-League-of-Women-Voters-of-New-York-State-003.pdf> . The League holds a neutral position with respect to these schools and has no position on the cap. However, the League does follow trends in resource allocation between the two sub-sectors and (charter and non-charter) and has some observations about this year’s allocation. As a policy matter, it appears that both the prior year’s budget and this year’s Executive Budget are very favorable toward Charter Schools. The League questions whether the balance between the two sectors is being maintained both in terms of Operating Aid and in terms of Facilities aid.

Other Legislative Actions:

On February 8th, along with seven good government groups, the League submitted a letter to Governor Hochul and Legislative leaders in support of the need for an independent ethics commission to replace the Joint Commission on Public Ethics (JCOPE). New York State government has a significant and ongoing problem with conflicts of interest, the abuse of power and corruption. It is clear that the Joint Commission on Public Ethics is not designed for – nor capable of – enforcing ethics laws fairly and effectively. JCOPE must be replaced by an independent ethics commission. Letter is being posted to state website today so watch at <https://my.lwv.org/new-york-state/our-work/legislative-action>.

Along with 24 organizations on February 11th we submitted a letter to Governor Hochul proposing a revision to a bill that puts waste responsibility onto the producer for packaging, printed paper and toxics in packaging. See letter at: https://lwvny.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Final_Sign-on-Letter-EPR-for-Paper-and-Packaging.2.11.22.pdf . We want to ensure that New York passes a strong Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program for packaging and paper which adequately addresses the untenable solid waste and recycling crisis and puts New York on a successful path to implementing the waste sector recommendations of the State’s Climate Action Council’s Scoping Plan to combat the climate crisis. We believe a strong EPR program needs to do the following: hold producers responsible for the life cycle management of their products; modernize and improve the recycling system; provide for minimum waste reduction and recycling mandates; include strong accountability and enforcement frameworks; and eliminate toxics in packaging.

On February 4th the League submitted a memorandum of support to the NYS Assembly and members of the NYS Senate in support of A.7389B/S.6486C, a bill that establishes a moratorium on consolidated operations that use proof-of-work authentication methods to validate blockchain transactions. See Memo at: https://lwny.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/MOSreA7389BS6486C_-Feb-4-2022-Bitcoin.pdf .For decades the League of Women Voters has held positions urging vigilance in protecting air and water quality. The increasing interest in cryptocurrency is exponential. However, all forms of cryptocurrency mining are not alike with respect to impact upon the community where plants are located. Those that use Proof of Work authentication method to validate blockchain transactions present potentially serious adverse environmental consequences including significant use of electrical energy that is instead needed to power New York State's electrification goals under the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, generation of substantial amounts of greenhouse gas emissions from production and use of natural gas, use of great volumes of water which is returned to its original source (such as Seneca Lake) much hotter and thereby affecting fishing, agriculture and the wine industry, frequent replacement of supercomputers generating significant amounts of e-waste, and noise from fans running 24/7 that affects neighbors' quality of life and health. The whole process makes questionable achievement of the goals of the 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

All testimony and actions taken are on the state website at: <https://my.lwv.org/new-york-state/our-work/legislative-action>.

New Position on Election Administration and Voting for the Incarcerated

An Election Administration Structure Committee was created right after the delegates at the LWNYS approved a new study on the topic at the state Convention in June, 2021. The Committee met many times during the fall researching:

- How other states administer elections, including speaking with administrators in some states, for a broad look at what other states do see
- Testimony from other good government groups regarding BOE reform,
- Senate Election Committee report on BOE Reform,
- Statutory reforms we have been urging in recent years

The Committee has finished the first part of its work and prepared a set of principles to be used to write a new position on how to structure election administration in New York. A full packet of materials, including the principles to be considered by each local League with their members, will be distributed in the next week. **ALL LOCAL LEAGUES SHOULD SCHEDULE A MEETING BEFORE MAY 1, 2021, TO CONSIDER THESE PRINCIPLES.** All responses will be due to the state League by May 1, 2021.

With these materials, local Leagues and members will also be asked to concur with a position allowing individuals currently incarcerated to be able to vote.

Voter Services, Nancy Rosenthal, VP for Voter Services, **nancyrosenthal9@gmail.com**

The regional meetings in March and April will find us gathering together for the first time in how long? It will be so good to see everyone able to attend !!!!

Those on your Board, serving on the Voter Service Committee, are excited to greet members and share information at the workshops on candidate forums and Vote 411.

- **Zooming into 2022: How to Successfully Host a Virtual or Hybrid Candidate Forum**

Discover various methods for hosting candidate forums in the digital age. This workshop will discuss best practices for hosting a virtual, hybrid or in-person forum.

- **The 411 on Vote 411: A Beginners Guide to the New Platform (Hands-on Workshop)**

Explore the new Vote411 platform. This workshop will walk through a step-by-step guide to setting up your local elections and will answer your questions on the new system. Bring a laptop so you can navigate the platform along with us (laptop not required).

We are lucky to have Erica Smitka, the League's new Deputy Director, and our Organizer and Redistricting guru, Milly Czerwinski, leading these workshops.

Thanks to all the voter service representatives from local Leagues who took calls from their Voter Service Board contact to answer questions on when local elections occur and their League's Vote411 contact person even though the State office will be handling the confessional and state offices up for election in 2022.

County Redistricting, Milly Czerwinski, Milly@lwny.org

The county redistricting process has begun in New York, and our local Leagues are getting in on the action! Here are some stories about county redistricting from throughout the state.

The Chautauqua County redistricting commission has a unique makeup; Along with 2 members of the Legislature, 4 community members, and a representative from the County Chamber of Commerce, the County Charter mandates that a member of the Chautauqua County League of Women Voters be included on the Commission. This year, Sue Evans will be serving as the League Commissioner.

Monroe County has started their redistricting process over again after the County Executive vetoed the maps submitted by the County Legislature. Since before the veto, the Rochester League has been advocating for transparency from the Legislature and has been educating the community on how the redistricting process will affect them. The League will continue their efforts as the process begins again!

Tompkins County is redistricting with an Independent Redistricting Commission for the second time after achieving great success during the 2012 redistricting cycle. The redistricting process has been well advertised by the County, and members of the community have been encouraged to participate by applying to be commissioners and submitting public comment. Tompkins County League member Linda Duttweiler served as a Commissioner in 2012 and has been following this year's redistricting cycle closely. Tompkins County also has a webpage dedicated to redistricting, [which you can view here](#).

Have a question about redistricting or want to get involved in your League's efforts? Email milly@lwny.org.

Students Inside Albany Conference, Laura Ladd Bierman, Laura@lwny.org

We are excited as we are receiving the completed forms from the selected students attending the 2022 Students Inside Albany Conference scheduled for May 22-25 at the Hampton Inn in downtown Albany. Just a reminder that all student forms must be received by the state office by March 1 (mail, email or fax). All local Leagues are urged to make sure the students **and** parents know and agree to the following:

- All students will be required to show proof of being vaccinated and boosted based on CDC recommendations just prior to SIA commencing (right now that is 2 vaccines and booster – could be more by May 22);
- All students must wear a mask over their nose and mouth at all times in public or common areas; and
- All students will be sharing a hotel room with another student.

From LWVUS

2022 Program Planning Leader's Guide Now Available!

As the first step in the Program process that will culminate in adoption of LWVUS organization-wide program at Convention 2022, the Program Planning Leaders Guide and Survey response form is now available for Leagues to use at their program planning meetings in early 2022. The input of League boards will help shape the proposed program of study and action that will be debated and voted on by convention delegates. Program planning reports forms must be returned online by Tuesday, Mar. 1, 2022. Each League is entitled to one response, and individual member responses are not accepted. You can access the [Leader's Guide here](#) and the [2022 Program Survey here](#). For questions about program planning, email progplan@lww.org.