



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 **January 2021**

Local League To Do's (email: lwvny@lwvny.org or call 518-465-4162)

- Complete and return Legislative Priorities form **by Feb. 1**
- Return proposed LWNYS bylaw amendments to state League office **by March 1**
- Organize Program Planning in your local League and return completed form **by March 1**
- Schedule a membership meeting in this next month to discuss the materials (on homepage of state League website) for the update to the **League's healthcare position** (reports will be due March 10, 2021)
- Ensure that the first three articles of the LWVUS bylaws are the first three articles of your local League bylaws (as required by LWVUS); see the LWVUS bylaws here: <https://www.lwv.org/League-management/bylaws/bylaws-and-certificate-incorporation>. Bylaw amendments should be adopted at each local League's annual meeting.

President's Report, Suzanne Stassevitch, smstass@mac.com

At our core, we, the League of Women Voters are a grassroots organization. We begin this year focused on opportunities for our grassroots membership to shape how we support public policy issues.

- Program Planning: It is very important that each local League complete the Program Planning process with their members and review our current positions, that are the underpinnings of our grassroots work. Suggestions for updates to our positions or concurrence or study for new positions must be **submitted by March 1, 2021, to be considered at our Convention in June.**
- Healthcare Financing update is **due March 10, 2021**. Leagues are holding joint information sessions and the update committee is making themselves available to answer questions on this important topic.

STATE CONVENTION!!!! June 7-12, 2021 Virtual

The LWNYS Convention will go virtual this year, June 7-12, 2021. Workshops and caucuses will be available Monday, June 7 – Thursday, June 10, 2021. The opening plenary session will be the evening of Friday, June 11, followed by caucuses and roundtables and plenary, Saturday, June 12. Saturday will likely be most of the day. Please start thinking about any caucuses or workshops you would like to produce or suggestions for the state to produce. Email any suggested topics to Laura@lwvny.org.

Presidents Call: Wednesday, January 27, 5PM. Messaging and non-partisanship, and redistricting will be on the Agenda. Early results of the LWVUS semi annual survey will be presented. Over half of our Local League participated. Thank you.

LWVUS January 26 at 5 pm ET The conversation continues...

How to remain non-partisan in hyper-partisan times and overcome those challenges by supporting one another. Come and hear from League Leaders around the country about the strategies that they have implemented to stay true to LWV principles and come ready to share your own story. Click here to register:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZ0ld-mqgTIqGNTpJOb235P3nc8tiq-CunSB>

Voter Services: Judie Gorenstein, judieL728@aol.com

The LWNYS Voter Service Committee will continue to work with our local Leagues, MALs, and ILOs to achieve our mission to engage and encourage people to be educated and active participants in government and for all eligible citizens to Get Out and Vote. Once again we want to thank all the Leagues who completed their 2020 Voter Service Surveys. You spoke and told us what you had accomplished, what you liked that we had done, and what you still struggled with and need help. **YOU SPOKE AND WE LISTENED!**

1. Members of the VS Committee will continue to have contact throughout the year with the VS chairs of their designated Leagues!
2. The VS Committee will schedule zoom calls on voter registration, candidate forums, and GOTV and invite all presidents, and VS chairs to attend. (They can extend invitations to other members of their Leagues).
3. The VS Committee is editing all three toolkits (Voter Registration, Candidate Forums, GOTV) to include templates for both in person and virtual events. Much of what Leagues did when they could not hold in person events was so successful, Leagues are encouraged to continue doing what was successful and combining best practices even when events can be held face to face.
4. The VS Committee is editing The Road to the Voting Booth and adding Part IV: Getting Out The Vote
5. The VS Committee will be looking into best ways for Leagues to collect data and measure successes.

WHAT LEAGUES NEED TO DO NOW!

1. Leagues who have been able to measure their goals especially in GOTV need to contact LWNYS to share what they did.
2. All Leagues need to publicize that February 14 , 2021 is the deadline for registered voters to change their party affiliation or enroll in a party to be able to vote in he June 22, 2021 primary!

Advocacy: Sally Robinson, sally.s.robinson@gmail.com and Jennifer Wilson, Jennifer@lwny.org

Redistricting Advocacy

This month the State Legislature convened to begin the 2021 session. The Senate and Assembly have already passed a constitutional amendment to alter the voting structure of the state's new Independent Redistricting Commission. We issued a [memo of opposition](#) to all members of the Senate and later a [statement of opposition](#) to members of the press.

The Commission has continued its regular meetings and we have provided notes of these meetings in our Friday emails to our members. Most recent meetings have focused on funding for the Commission. Initially the FY 2020-2021 budget had indicated there was \$750,000 available for the Commission through the Department of State, but more recent reports have stated there is actually \$1million available as grant funding through the SUNY Research Foundation. In December, before we were aware of this discrepancy, we issued a [joint letter](#) to the Governor urging him to work with the Department of State to ensure these funds are released. The League also issued an action alert to all members urging them to contact the Governor's office to direct the Department of State to release these funds.

At the Commission's most recent meeting, the Co-Executive Directors indicated that SUNY Research Foundation had said the funding may be delayed for an additional 3 weeks but did not say why this delay persists. We again worked with our partners to issue a [letter](#) to legislative leaders to order that these funds be immediately released.

Although we have not yet seen the Commission's budget request letter, early reports have indicated the Commission will be requesting \$3.9 million for FY 2021-2022. Once we see the final budget request and Governor's proposed budget we will work to advocate for the funds that are requested by the Commission.

Redistricting Campaign

On January 14th the League held its campaign kickoff webinar. We had 239 participants signed up and around 150 who attended. The PowerPoint presentation is posted on the state League website and can be viewed here: <https://www.lwvnyonline.org/advocacy/redistricting/2021/january/New-York-State-Redistricting-Campaign-Kick-Off-PowerPoint.pdf>. The full YouTube of the event can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/yCYaVz5A5cs>

The League has also hired our Fellow to help us in our redistricting campaign. Alison Martinez will be assisting us in our work. Here is her bio:

“Alison Martinez is a second year graduate student in the Higher Education Masters program at the University at Albany. She obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology with a minor in Leadership Studies in 2019. During her undergraduate career she served as the Student Association Director of Intercultural Affairs, Student Liaison for the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and the Student Affairs Department, as well as Public Relations Chair for the Epsilon Nu Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. Alison has since been accepted into the 2021 Women and Public Fellowship Program through the Center of Women in Government and Civil Society. Through her placement at the League of Women Voters, Alison hopes to strengthen her leadership skills in public advocacy, merging her passion for education and public policy to drive civic change.”

The League has scheduled a second campaign **webinar for January 28th at 6:30 pm**. This webinar will be an expert panel discussion which will be open to public participation. Click here to register for the event: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_E5KpYE9ZTIS2l6f7EgYoZQ. Our expert panelists will discuss the status of New York State's Redistricting Commission, how to engage in Unity Mapping, and how to involve community organizations in the redistricting process. Participants can submit their questions ahead of the forum here: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSftyAQ0LkLuK5ATbaBgo4XWvgF-U9sMUgjA_W4uLq797fvaqg/viewform

Featured Panelists:

Rosalind Gold, Chief Public Policy Officer for NALEO Educational Fund

Jerry G. Vattamala Director, Democracy Program, Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund

Jeff Wice, Adjunct Professor & Senior Fellow, New York Law School

Moderated by Jennifer Wilson, Deputy Director, League of Women Voters of New York State.

Election Law

The State Senate passed a package of absentee voting reforms including the following:

- S.253: Legislation that would allow absentee ballots to be counted if they have stray marks or are missing a signature date <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/s253>
- S.264: Legislation to expand the deadline to submit an absentee ballot application from 17 days to 15 days ahead of an election <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/s264>
- S.492: Legislation to allow for drop boxes to be used for absentee voting <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/s492>
- S.516: Legislation to mandate speedier sending of absentee ballots <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/s516>
- S.631: Legislation to allow voters to submit absentee ballot application sooner than 30 days ahead of the election (the 2020 bill sunset in December) <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/s631>
- S.632: Legislation to allow voters to submit their absentee ballot request electronically (the 2020 bill sunset in December) <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/s632>
- S.1027: Legislation to expedite absentee ballot counting <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/s1027>
- S.1028: Legislation to require boards of election to have an absentee ballot tracker <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/s1028>

The Senate also again passed constitutional amendments to allow for no-excuse absentee voting and same day voter registration. We have sent a request to the new the Chair of Assembly Election Law Committee so see if we can determine when these bills may be taken up in the Assembly.

The League is also working with our coalition partners to support passage of restoration of voting rights for individuals who are on parole. The League signed onto a [joint letter](#) to legislative leaders and Governor Cuomo calling for swift passage of this reform.

Good Government

Before the legislative session convened the League signed onto a [letter](#) urging legislative leaders to implement rules reforms that would ensure the legislature remain open and transparent while operating remotely. Recommendations included: Providing both internet and phone options to listen and participate, to accommodate different levels of technology literacy and internet access; providing a fast and intuitive process for signing up to speak, and include an opportunity to request language or ADA accommodation; enabling some chat feature or a phone number to allow participants to report technical problems or send in clarifying questions; and providing visible information on the number of viewers watching, and allow hearing attendees to connect with other participants via chat or other forms to help to recreate some of the experience of participating in person. To date it does not appear that either house has followed our recommendations. We will continue to monitor the issue of remote transparency and may provide additional follow up to the legislature if issues arise.

Program Planning (Convention Preparation)

Preparing Program Planning for State Convention 2021

Attached to this email are directions to all Leagues on developing a State Program, i.e. any new issues selected for concentrated study, which positions need to be updated, and which existing positions are maintained for possible action, for 2021-2023. “Program” really means positions, so this is the time to determine which positions we want to keep, delete, update/revise or even consider new studies for new positions or concurrence with existing positions of other Leagues. We hope you will review our present program and recommend any changes through the process noted in these guidelines. After reviewing with your members, send the completed form to the state League office **by March 1, 2021**, to be included for consideration at Convention. A full packet with more information and the return form are attached to this email. A 2020 Updated Impact on Issues can be found on our website at: **This is the only method for suggesting new studies to be adopted at Convention 2021 and the March 1 deadline for submission must be met. Changes in Program cannot be suggested for the first time at Convention for adoption at Convention.**

Legislative Priorities

As the legislative session approaches, the State League is beginning to meet with coalition partners to make plans for our advocacy efforts in the coming year. The State League will once again be asking local Leagues to meet to make recommendations for our legislative priorities for 2021. The recommendations made by local Leagues will be used to help decide our priority issues in the coming legislative session. Please complete the attached form with your members’ input; responses are due by February 1st.

Healthcare Update:

Each local League should be planning a membership meeting to consider the updates to the two state League healthcare positions. There are two new positions that the Update Committee proposes to replace the current positions (drafted in 1991):

- 1) Update of our Healthcare position and
- 2) Update of our position on the Financing of Healthcare

The materials are posted on the state website and all local Leagues **MUST** complete and return the form by March 10 to the state League office.

Students Inside Albany Conference: Laura Ladd Bierman, Laura@lwvny.org

We are excited to announce that the 2021 Students Inside Albany (SIA) Conference will happen – just not in the format as it has in the past. The Conference will be a virtual event this year held on **Friday, May 21st from 4:00-6:00 pm, and on Saturday, May 22nd from 10:00 -4 :30 pm**. We are mindful that the pandemic has changed the way we organize this program, but the benefit will be that issues of importance to our young people will still be recognized. During this program, as with the usual in-person conference, we plan to have a packed agenda filled with tools to instruct our students on how to influence public policy decision-making at the state level. Similarly, the highlight of the in-person program of meeting with legislators will remain as we arrange virtual meetings in small groups with state legislators to discuss issues and advocacy.

Each local League is encouraged to select two high school students to attend this virtual conference at no charge to the students or the local Leagues. While the program is free for students to attend please note that the State League still will incur some expenses affiliated with this conference and we would greatly appreciate any small donations from local Leagues to cover these costs. Stay tuned for the full program outline and details on forms to be completed by the selected students in the next few weeks.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Regina Tillman, rmt370@gmail.com

LWVNYS DEI Task Force: Has been meeting virtually since August 2020 with good attendance and our most recent discussions included the following:

- Ways in which a “DEI lens” had been applied by local Leagues to their GOTV activities (i.e., partnerships with Operation PUSH and NAACP, door hangers in and postcards to historically poor turn out communities, lawn signs, Hispanic radio PSA’s, VR in non-traditional locations e.g., in a Mosque, supporting voters in long lines occurring in underserved communities, bus signage to broaden the audience for our message to “be a Voter”.)
- Beginning to identify how to include Organizational Equity as part of our LWVNYS Strategic Plan. To do that, we have to understand the differences between the standard objectives of Equality versus today’s goals as relate to Equity. For assistance in your understanding:
 - Equality – is a system in which everyone has the same amount of resources provided despite their existing needs or assets.
 - Equity – is fair treatment in access, treatment, opportunity, and advancement for all while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society.
- Confirmation that local Leagues that have not yet started to adopt the LWVUS DEI Policy, and placed it in visible locations, do need to begin. Although aspirational in its tone, it holds us to account for our actions, to both our members and to our communities. Our team will be assessing related metrics to be utilized to help track progress in process and outcomes (impact).

DEI Assessment Survey: As of January, the State League has joined the ranks of the local Leagues represented on the Task Force who have completed a DEI Assessment Survey. I understand that discussion where sometimes difficult, but I hope that they were nevertheless valuable in determining potential next steps for your League. Next Steps: The results will be aggregated shortly for the Task Force to disseminate and compare against while a state-wide plan of action is being fashioned. Also, these results will be used to consult with DEI workshop speakers and educators as we plan for conducting DEI-related state-wide training, beginning this year.

Resources available: A handout referencing how to apply a “DEI Lens” to LWV events (used by this writer at the regional training in NYC, held in March 2020) is now made available through an upcoming LWVUS DEI webinar scheduled for February 18, entitled, “Event Planning Through a DEI Lens and How to Apply it for The Day of Action” : Register here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ1vf-uurj4uGNOONLV9Iisf28SzeQdMnuHe>. All League members are invited to attend.

DEI Policy and Bylaws

Each local League must adopt/adapt the LWVUS DEI Policy Statement into your League's local policy and bylaws; it is also recommended to make the statement evident via newsletters, websites, etc. See the LWVUS bylaws here: <https://www.lwv.org/League-management/bylaws/bylaws-and-certificate-incorporation>

Harvard Case Method for High School Teachers: Nominate a Teacher

The case method civics project, a collaboration between the Case Method Institute and the League, working closely with Harvard Business School is again seeking nominations from local Leagues. Since 2019, over 60 League chapters in 28 states have nominated nearly 100 teachers to take part in this project which aims to train high school students for active citizenship. The training is the entry point to a sustained partnership with the Case Method Institute for Education and Democracy, which aims to help teachers more effectively deliver on the democratic promise of a high school education. The Institute provides training, case materials and ongoing teacher support entirely free of charge. The deadline for Nominations from local Leagues is March 7, 2021. See the attached info for more information.

FROM LWVUS

Upcoming LWVUS Trainings (open to all members):

Data and Evaluation

- February 4, 7 PM ET: Semi-Annual Survey: Sharing Our Successes. [Register now!](#)

Advocacy and Litigation

- April 21, 3 PM ET: How to Effectively Assess Litigation Opportunities [Register here.](#)

LWV U.S. Climate Team

- January 19, 12 PM ET: Renewable Energy Webinar. [Register here.](#)