



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 **April 2022**

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

- Complete and return the concurrence form on the two studies: Election Administration and Voting While Incarcerated by **May 1st**.
- Register delegates from your local League to attend LWVNYS Council on **June 7** (email names to Laura@lwvny.org) or complete and return proxy form.
- Register to attend LWVUS Convention in person or virtually (<https://www.lwv.org/manage-your-League/council-convention>)

Calendar

- April 26, 7:00 pm: Concurrence Meeting for members who couldn't attend local League meeting (register: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcrfuGrrjIvGdEGPa3nKgrBcBP2ApI41W0n>)
- April 27, 7:00 pm: Court Simplification: How Simplifying our Court System can Improve Equal Access for all People on Zoom (register: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMkdO2uqzMpGtTbdJ8cWo7D8dI7vM8-EO1E>)
- May 3, 7:00 pm: Advocacy Training and Post Budget Lobby Packet on Zoom (register: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEkf-2srDojHtTKn4rX_RZUsNng4AqCkcjw)
- May 12, 5:30 pm: DEI Drop-In Sessions on Zoom
- May 22-25: Students Inside Albany Conference
- June 7, 7:00 pm: LWVNYS Council via Zoom (email Laura@lwvny.org with names of delegate)
- June 13, 7:00 pm: Presidents Zoom
- June 23-26: LWVUS Convention (register: <https://www.lwv.org/manage-your-League/council-convention>)

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

April 2022 was a very busy month for the LWVNYS

On the first two Saturdays of the month, LWVNYS held our final two regional training workshops. At the training in Scarsdale during my opening remarks, I spoke of what two things the past year had taught all of us.

1. We cannot be certain things can happen as planned. Anything can happen!
2. No matter what happens, LWVNYS and our local Leagues and MAL Units will work together and persevere to EMPOWER VOTERS and DEFEND OUR DEMOCRACY

Little did I know then, that the following week I would have COVID and therefore not be able to attend and meet all the attendees at the regional meeting in Ithaca. For those of you who were unable to attend any of the regional trainings, the PowerPoints that were presented at each of the workshops and handouts that were provided are now on the LWNYS website (under Local League Resources and then Regional Trainings). For those who were able to attend, you can now see the PowerPoints from the workshops that you missed.

LWNYS is now preparing for the upcoming Council Meeting which will be held virtually on June 7. You should have already received the 2022-2023 budget, which will be considered for approval at the meeting. You will be receiving the entire 2022 Council Kit in May, which will inform you of all that was accomplished this year.

I know that our local Leagues have also been busy, holding concurrence meetings, meeting with and lobbying their legislators, planning for school board and possibly primary candidate events, as well planning for your annual meetings. There are things I believe that Leagues can remember to do as they plan, knowing that anything can happen but we will persevere.

- Consider which events should be held in person, which virtually, and which hybrid.
- Check out the LWNYS webpage with all the resources that it provides.
- Use every event as opportunity to ASK: Would you like to be a member? If you are a member, how would you like to be involved? Who else can be reaching out to? Who are we including and who else should we include?
- Select delegates to attend the 2022 Virtual Council Meeting on **June 7, 2022 at 7:00 PM**
- Presidents and those newly elected or soon to be elected please plan on attending the next president zoom scheduled for **June 13 at 7**. The Council meeting provides a look back at what was accomplished. This meeting will begin looking ahead.

State Office

Voter Guide Part I

Order your paper copies of the updated First Vote (English or Spanish), and four of the five Your Right to Vote series (Homeless Individuals, College Students, Individuals Convicted of Crimes and/or in Prison/Jail, and Individuals with Physical Disabilities) which have all been updated and reprinted. The new versions are posted on the state website and paper copies may be ordered from the state League. Email Aimee@lwny.org to place your order and we can invoice your local League.

Regional Training Workshops

PowerPoint presentations and handouts from the four regional training workshops held recently around the state are now available on the state League website at: <https://lwny.org/regional-training-workshops/>

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

Redistricting Update (as of April 25, 2022):

The League was a strong supporter of the Constitutional amendment on redistricting that was approved by voters in 2014. That amendment established an Independent Redistricting Commission (“IRC”) and adopted a ban on partisan gerrymandering. The IRC initially submitted a set of maps that were rejected

by the Legislature. The Constitutional amendment required the IRC to send a subsequent set of maps to the Legislature for a second up or down vote after the initial rejection, but the IRC failed to do so. The Legislature then adopted its own redistricting maps.

Republican voters sued to enjoin the Congressional and State Senate maps as unconstitutional under the 2014 Amendment. The lower court held a trial in March and found the Congressional map violated the new Constitutional provision against gerrymandering, and in addition voided that map as well as the State Senate and State Assembly maps because the redistricting procedure set forth in the Constitution was not followed.

The defendants appealed to the Appellate Division, Fourth Department. The League filed an amicus curiae (“friend of the court”) brief with the Appellate Division that called for the Court to invalidate the Legislature’s electoral maps, as the constitutionally mandated process for redistricting was violated by both the IRC and the Legislature. The League argued in its brief that, as a result of the violation of the required process, the Constitutional amendment now requires that the New York courts, not the Legislature, draw the electoral maps.

The Appellate Division, by a plurality decision on April 21, 2021, rejected the State Supreme Court’s determination that the redistricting process had violated the Constitution, but held that the Congressional map violated the anti-gerrymandering provisions of the Constitution, and ruled that the Legislature would be given until April 30 to enact a constitutional replacement for the Congressional map. The Appellate Division upheld the State Senate and State Assembly maps. One Justice dissented from the plurality opinion’s conclusion regarding the process, stating that the Justice “largely adopt[s] the well-reasoned analysis of the procedural issue offered in the amicus curiae brief filed by The League of Women Voters of New York State.”

The Appellate Division’s decision is being appealed to the Court of Appeals, New York’s highest court. The League filed a supplemental amicus curiae brief with the Court of Appeals contesting certain conclusions in the Appellate Division decision, and arguing that the Constitution clearly provides for the Judiciary, not the Legislature, to remedy the violations of the process mandated by the 2014 Constitutional Amendment. The League further argued that the 2014 Amendment’s process was carefully designed to further substantive goals and values – accountability, deliberation, and some independence from the worst of the partisan political process – that should be respected by the Court. Our brief concluded:

“To be sure, [the amendment’s] carefully-specified process does not guarantee that the scourge of gerrymandering will be eliminated, but the Judiciary should give that framework a chance to work. The Court would thereby honor the promise of the amendment – an independent redistricting process that conduces to competitive elections rather than protection of incumbents or particular political parties.”

The Court of Appeals has set 11 a.m. on Tuesday, April 26 for oral argument. The oral argument will be livestreamed through a video-link at <https://www.nycourts.gov/ctapps/live.html> . In view of the extraordinary importance of this appeal and, in particular, the procedural process mandated by the 2014 Amendment to reduce partisan gerrymandering, the League’s counsel has requested that the Court permit it the opportunity to provide oral argument on Tuesday. We encourage all interested members to watch the livestream of the oral argument for this historic case on Tuesday.

You can read a copy of the League's initial amicus brief at: <https://lwvny.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Exhibit-A-Amicus-Brief.pdf> and a copy of the League's supplemental amicus brief at <https://lwvny.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/LWV-CoA-Amicus-Letter-Brief-Final-042422.pdf>

2022 State Budget Wins!

The state budget officially passed on Saturday, April 9th. We are pleased that this year many of the League's budget priorities were included in the final budget proposal. Through our lobbying efforts the League was able to secure:

- \$5 million in TAP funding for incarcerated individuals
- \$4 million for local boards of elections to reimburse the cost of pre-paid postage for absentee ballot applications and absentee ballots
- Expansion of early voting polling places on college campuses

Thank you to our members who helped advocate for these critical funding needs! This successful budget outcome would not have been possible without your grassroots support.

The state budget is only one part of the League's extensive legislative agenda. Now that the budget has been passed our efforts will focus on ensuring an open and transparent redistricting process, reducing the voter registration deadline, protecting the integrity of voters ballots even if they vote at the wrong location, expansion of early voting and absentee voting options, the New York State Voting Rights Act, court simplification, environmental justices issues such as the bigger better bottle bill, elder parole, fair and timely parole, and many other comprehensive good government reforms.

Post-Budget Lobby Packet

We sent out the post budget lobby packet on April 18th along with some additional educational materials. These materials can also be found on our website at <https://lwvny.org/legislative-packet/>. Please try to meet with your legislators and return the post-budget lobby forms back by May 13th.

League Calls Out Failed Ethics Reform

The final budget approved a new state ethics committee- Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government- however, it fails to address many of the reasons we called for reform in the first place. On April 22nd, the League along with multiple good government groups submitted a letter to Senate and Assembly leaders highlighting the serious deficiencies in the new state ethics law.

The letter focuses on the lack of independence in the selection process. There is an obvious conflict between an elected official's duty to select a person who will enforce the law without fear or favor and their self-interest in avoiding or minimizing accountability should they violate the state's ethics laws.

The post-appointment vetting role of the law school deans does nothing to mitigate these conflicts. The deans are limited to reviewing background and expertise; if the deans reject elected officials' appointees, which may take great fortitude, they simply get to appoint another.

The letter highlights six areas where action should be taken to fix the state's ethics laws:

1. Independence;

2. Transparency;
3. Nonpartisanship;
4. Discriminatory harassment;
5. Reporting misconduct; and
6. Removing preferential treatment of the legislature.

League Submits Memo of Support for Medical Aid in Dying

On April 25th, the League submitted a memo in support of bill **A4321-A/S6471** to Senate and Assembly leaders and Health Committees. This legislation would provide that a mentally competent, terminally ill patient may request medication to be self-administered for the purpose of hastening the patient's death provided the requirements set forth in the act are met, and to provide certain protections and immunities to health care providers and other persons, including a physician who prescribes medication in compliance with the provisions of the article to the terminally ill patient to be self-administered by the patient.

This reform will give terminally ill patients access to safe, comprehensive end of life options. Our memo of support will be posted on the League website within the next few days.

We encourage local Leagues to write letters to the editor in support of this bill and to spread the word about the upcoming rally on social media.

- [Social Media Toolkit](#)
- Sample Letter to the editor:

To the Editor:

Too many New Yorkers suffer needlessly at the end of life We all know that. We've watched loved ones writhing in pain or unable to control their basic body functions. That's why members of the League of Women Voters studied what other States have done to alleviate that suffering.

In 2017 & 18 we looked at the way Medical Aid in Dying works in Oregon, Washington, California and reached a consensus that New York State should adopt similar laws. We saw that terminally ill people could be effectively protected from coercion, while having access to a humane and peaceful death.

The Medical Aid in Dying Act (A. 4321a, Paulin, S.3947- Savino) would allow a terminally ill, mentally capable adult to request life-ending medication from a doctor that the person can self-administer at a time of his or her choosing, or never, should suffering become unbearable.

Our neighbors in Vermont, Maine and New Jersey have already adopted medical aid in dying. Currently 1 in 5 Americans have access to medical aid in dying – in the 9 states/10 jurisdictions with laws allowing it. It is time for New York State to join the ranks of those compassionate states.

Your name and League title,
League of Women Voters of _____

***You MUST vary the sentence structure or content so that we don't have the same letter going to multiple newspapers or they won't be published.**

BOE Study Concurrence:

A reminder that local Leagues have been asked to vote on the BOE and voting for the incarcerated concurrence by May 1st. Please reach out to the State League with any questions.

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

What a delight to be with fellow League members at the four regional trainings and in the training sessions on Vote411 and Candidate Forums! We covered so much information! Thanks to Erica Smitka and Milly Czerwinski for their presentations. The Voter Service Committee members will be following up in May to the Vote411 administrators from local Leagues; we are always available for any and all questions or concerns on Candidate forums!

Deborah Turner, President of LWVUS, offered thoughts on what to do when candidates refuse to participate in Candidate forums (see guidance here: https://www.lwv.org/League-management/elections-tools/guidance-Leagues-candidates-unwilling-participate-voter-education?utm_source=LeagueUpdate&utm_medium=email&utm_id=04212022):

When Candidates Refuse to Participate in Voter Education Opportunities

Every year, Leagues hold hundreds of candidate debates and forums and produce hundreds of voter guides to help voters learn about the candidates on their ballot. Unfortunately, there are some candidates who refuse to participate in these voter education activities and call into question the League's reputation. This guidance can help shape the public narrative and news coverage of these situations.

As to the Primary in New York and candidate forums for the primary? The primary is on schedule for June 28th. See Redistricting section above for more info about the status of the lines).

With the potential issues with the court case on the district lines, League will again pivot with whatever happens and provide voters of New York State with accurate information on candidate positions and the how, when and where to vote for the primary.

Reminders:

- LWVNYS will be handling Vote411 for all statewide/federal elections.
- Plan those VR events --Engage other community organization in your efforts!
- Voter Guide Part 1 is available in both English and Spanish! Email Aimee@lwvny.org to order paper copies.

Important Dates to Remember:

June 28 - Primary Election

June 3 - last day to postmark Voter Registration application or register in person at BOE

June 8 - last day for Change of Address

June 13 - last day to apply via letter, fax, or email for Primary Election Absentee Ballot (MUST apply first) to the Board of Elections

June 18-26 - Early Voting

June 27 - last day to apply in person at BOE for Primary Election Absentee Ballot

June 28 - last day to postmark Primary Election Absentee Ballot or submit at BOE or polling location

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

We are planning for the Students Inside Albany Conference – it will be different than in the past because of pandemic restrictions and the operations at the Capitol, but we believe it will still be an educational and fun experience for all students. 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.

Youth Committee, Crystal Joseph (campus@lwvnyc.org) and Nick Doran (ndoran33@gmail.com), Co-Chairs

Thank you for a fantastic month of feedback, best practices and resources shared through our state-wide regional training sessions. It made Nick and me extremely proud to work alongside each of our local Leagues and continue to inspire our youth. All your hard work will allow other Leagues to help reach more students across the state through a variety of youth programs and voter turnout initiatives. In the coming months, Nick and I will use all the shared information to develop our toolkit which will be available on the state website.

Additionally, I want to give a major shout out to Kathy Meany and the Westchester League for hosting a phenomenal “Running and Winning” program for high school juniors and seniors, this month at Manhattanville College. The young women participated in programming that covered everything from what it means to be female in the context of leadership, political involvement and being a change agent in the 21st Century. With programs like “Running and Winning,” students can identify expectations if they decide to run for office and connect with elected officials who can provide guidance on effective campaign strategies which are all great ways to cultivate a leadership pipeline and encourage young people to continue a dialogue around the importance of representation in civics and government affairs

Local League Support Committee, Joy Rosenzweig (joyrose6@gmail.com) and Kathy Stein (kstein1@twcny.rr.com), Co-Chairs

The Local League Support Committee’s (LLSC) regional training workshop, “It’s All About the Ask: Tactics for Increasing Membership and Cultivating Leadership,” was well received. We are planning to follow up on member suggestions such as creating sample new member/board member packets and orientation materials, and providing additional guidance for nominating committees. Above all we want to keep this conversation going!

The Committee has been working with a group in Great Neck to start up a MAL in their community. They now have more than 18 paid-up members and are almost ready to submit the necessary documents to the LWVNYS.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force: Regina Tillman (rmt371@live.com) and Crystal Joseph (crystal.y.joseph@gmail.com), Co-Chairs

Unforeseen circumstances required that the DEI workshop, scheduled for April 21st, be postponed. However, both authors (Kimberlee Yolanda Williams and Debby Irving) are eagerly looking forward to the rescheduled workshop come this Fall.

In the meantime, look for a forthcoming advertisement for a DEI Drop-In Meeting, planned for zoom on **Thursday, May 12th at 5:30pm**. As a reminder, DEI Drop-In Meetings are informal, unrecorded gathering of NYS League members held for them to discuss with each other, and any available members of the LWVNYS DEI Task Force, their DEI challenges, and successes.

One of the messages I provided at the Regional Trainings, that I had some further inquiry about afterward, was the advisement to look at Four P's when trying to assess your League chapter for what needs to change to bring down barriers to diversity and inclusion. Along with applying a DEI Lens to each part of your operation... membership, voter services, advocacy, governance, etc., the Four P's can give you yet another tool to help drill down to determine what change can make a difference for your League.

What are the Four P's?! Once you have targeted the area to concentrate on, check each of these for how they are applied for inclusivity, or to exist as barriers: People, Policies, Procedures, and Practices. This is a filtering process that will get you deeper into your analysis of the opportunities to make meaningful change. DEI literature is actually not uniformly consistent with which P's to use... there are others ... but after reviewing the frequency of citations along with my own experiences in management and leadership, I confidently settled on this P's as effect options for your execution. Let me know how it works for you as a local League as I try to also apply them at the State Board level. Questions? Email Regina Tillman at rmt370@gmail.com. Thank you!

From LWVUS

Registration is open for LWVUS Convention June 23-26 in Denver and virtually. See the agenda, how to register and more at: <https://www.lwv.org/manage-your-League/council-convention> .