

STATE VOTER

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy
April 2023



President's Message

Judie Gorenstein, judieL728@aol.com

CALLING ALL OUR MEMBERS TO CONVENTION

June 3-4, Albany Desmond Hotel

Preconvention Day with workshop and reception is on June 2nd

LWVNY continues to work together with our local leagues, with LWVUS to defend our democracy and empower voters. Our mission is crucial. Our determination is

immense. We are counting on each of our members throughout the state to do what You CAN to help us. I hope at least 100 of you will be joining us at the 60 LWVNY Convention on June 2-4 in Albany this year.

However there are so many opportunities for all of you who will not be attending to be involved and make a difference, to help us move forward.

1. Renew your membership. There is strength in numbers. You are the boots on the ground.
2. Volunteer to be on a committee, for one special event, to make phone calls, etc.
3. Attend league events, whether in person or virtual. Let your voice be heard. Come to Albany on May 2 for Lobby Day!
4. Be knowledgeable about what your League and state league is doing. (Thank you for reading this Voter. See more on LWVNY website)
5. Share any idea you may have to help our leagues grow : a new program, names and contact information of other groups or organizations to work with, potential members ,etc.
6. Of course, if you can, register and attend the LWVNY Convention. You will meet members from all over the state, learn so much about what we have done and our planning to do and see democracy in action!

You are important! You are our volunteers! You are needed now more than ever to defend our democracy. Thank you for all you have done throughout this year! Help us as we continue to move forward!

Upcoming Events

LWVNY Advocacy Day

May 2, 9:30am-4:00pm

Where: The Blake Annex, 1 Steuben St, Albany NY 12203

Register: [Register online here](#) or mail a check made out to the League of Women Voters of New York State to 1 Steuben St, Albany NY 12207

Cost: \$20 per person (includes lunch)

LWVNY will host an advocacy day on May 2nd in Albany, NY. Join us!

- Learn about important legislative issues and how to advocate for them
- Meet new League members from across the state

- Lobby your state legislators at the Capitol
- Enjoy lunch provided by LWVNY

League members are asked to make their own appointments with legislators and schedule them for 1:30 pm at the earliest. We will walk up to the Capitol after lunch. Those without appointments may try to visit their legislators or join the state League staff in the galleries watching session.



State Convention is Coming!

The LWVNY Biennial Convention will be held on **June 2-4, 2023** at the Crowne Plaza Albany – Desmond Hotel (yes, it'll be an in-person Convention). We have started to make plans for the Convention and your local League should, too. The Registration Kit was emailed, is posted on the state website,

and is available [here](#). Or you can register online as a delegate or just to attend as an observer or to attend lunch or dinner on Saturday. [Register online here](#).

The agenda for Convention is as follows:

Pre-Convention (separate registration and fee)

Friday, June 2

- 2:00 – 4:30 Speaker and Workshop: Libby Post, President of Progressive Public Affairs and Government Relations at Communication Services
- 5:00 – 6:30 Welcome reception
- 9:00 – 10:00 Evening information sessions/caucuses

Convention

Saturday, June 3

- 8:30 – 10:00 Workshops
- 10:15 – 11:30 Workshops
- 12:00 – 1:30 Lunch with speaker: Former Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney
- 1:45 – 5:00 Plenary Session
- 5:30 – 6:30 Reception
- 6:30 – 8:30 Dinner with awards
- 8:30 – 9:30 Evening information sessions/caucuses
- 9:30 – 10:30 Evening information sessions/caucuses

Sunday, June 4

- 7:30 – 8:45 Breakfast: New Local League Presidents
- 7:30 – 8:45 Non-President Breakfast
- 9:00 – 10:00 Speaker: Ayo Atterberry, LWVUS Chief of Culture
- 10:00 – 12:00 Plenary Session

SPEAKERS

Friday, June 2, 2:00-4:30 pm

The Power of Communication: Turning Values into Action
Libby Post, President of Progressive Public Affairs and Government Relations at Communication Services

Saturday, June 3, 12 Noon

ERA Now: Let's Get It Done
Carolyn Maloney, Former Congresswoman

Sunday, June 4, 9:00 am

The Future of the League: Evaluating Our Impact
Ayo Atterberry, Chief of Culture at LWVUS

AWARDS

Boast about an event, activity or accomplishment that your local League did this year by submitting an application for an **Award** at the state Convention. There are seven categories of awards and you can submit applications to as many as you want. Let's hear about your great project and honor those who made it all happen in your local League. Submit the application ([click here](#)) **by May 1**. Any member can nominate their League or a Committee for an award. Winners will be announced at the Saturday evening banquet at the state Convention.

Categories for Awards are (see more in Awards packet [here](#)):

- Educating Voters to Action Award (Citizen Education)
- Mobilizing Democracy into Action Award (Get Out the Vote)
- Lighting the Way Award (Membership and Leadership)
- Building Bridges to Excellence Award (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion)
- Thinking Out of the Box
- Shaping Our Future Award (Youth Award)
- Inspiring Citizens into Action Award (Citizen Engagement)

Volunteers Needed

To make Convention successful, we need lots of volunteers! We need just a few to help with registration and the sales/exhibits room, but we need more to help during the plenary sessions on Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning. Delegates may volunteer at registration and sales, but they cannot volunteer during plenary sessions. Training will be provided for volunteers for plenary sessions. Email Milly@lwny.org if you would like to volunteer and tell her when you can volunteer.

Volunteers who work either the Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning plenary session may attend EITHER the Saturday lunch or Saturday dinner at no cost. Plenary volunteers must agree to work the entire session and training before (Saturday 1:00-5:00 or Sunday 9:00-12 noon).

All volunteers may attend any workshops at no cost and if there is room, may observe during plenary (if not working then).

Come join the fun of state Convention!

Issues and Advocacy

Sally Robinson, VP for Issues and Advocacy,

Sally.s.robinson@gmail.com

Erica Smitka, Deputy Director, Erica@lwny.org

Redistricting

Assembly maps, drafted by the Independent Redistricting Commission, were released on the 20th of April. New Yorkers had until April 1st to comment on the draft maps. The final maps were voted on by the IRC and passed with a 9-1 vote. The maps will now go to the Legislature for a vote. Read more about the maps [here](#).



We responded to this news via a joint statement:

Yesterday, pursuant to court order, the Independent Redistricting Commission [voted](#) on "new" New York State Assembly lines. In response, Susan Lerner, Executive Director of Common Cause/NY, Blair Horner, Executive Director of NYPIRG, and Laura Bierman, Executive Director of League of Women Voters of NYS, issued the following statement:

"The Assembly maps drawn by the Independent Redistricting Commission are almost identical to the maps drawn by the Assembly already in place – showing that this whole process was a waste of New Yorkers' time and money. New Yorkers deserve non-partisan

maps not drawn by politicians who have their own stake in the outcome. We have long maintained that people, not politicians, should decide what the maps look like. If New York lawmakers want to respond to voters' desire that this chaos never happens again, they must advance an amendment that enshrines a truly independent redistricting process into the constitution."

In mid-April, New York Attorney General Letitia James and Governor Kathy Hochul filed an [amicus brief in support of efforts to redraw New York's Congressional district lines](#) rather than leaving the lines drawn by a court-appointed special master in place between now and the 2030 census. The state's Independent Redistricting Commission's (IRC) maps were rejected by the Legislature and then the IRC failed to submit a second set of maps. The process was taken over by the Legislature and the Congressional maps drafted afterwards were challenged in the courts, resulting in a special master drawing lines ahead of the 2022 Election.

In the brief, filed in the Appellate Division, Third Department, Attorney General James and Governor Hochul assert that while the special master's maps may have been appropriate for the 2022 Election, there is significant time for IRC to generate new maps and follow the process outlined in the New York State Constitution for Congressional maps going forward. *The League believes that redrawing the maps at this point would be unconstitutional. They should remain as is until being redrawn in 2032.*

Budget Delayed

Lawmakers continue to pass extenders to push the budget back. Recent reports lead us to believe that the budget may be voted on by the Legislature on May 1st.

Climate Legislation Under Attack

In early April, Senator Parker and Assemblymember Barrett, introduced [S6030](#) which would have a disastrous impact on NY State's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). The CLCPA measures greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions using a 20-year time frame. Heat trapping methane emissions, which account for approximately one-quarter of global warming effects today, present the greatest planetary harm in the first 20 years after release.

This change would delay harmful emissions reductions and prolong unacceptable conditions that pollute, provoke extreme weather and could potentially trigger irreversible climate effects. The role of human generated GHG must be addressed aggressively and cannot be delayed. The NYS League strongly opposes the recently proposed bill and wrote a memo of opposition which you can read [here](#).

Later this week, the Governor announced that S6030 would be taken out of budget negotiations, but that does not mean that the bill can't move once the budget has passed. We will continue to monitor this issue.

Selection Process Changed for NYS Court of Appeals

Citizens Union, the League of Women Voters of New York State, and the Committee for Modern Courts, released a statement calling on the Assembly to reject Governor Hochul's proposed "program bill" (A5983/S06061) will change the selection process for appointing judges to the New York State Court of Appeals. This bill unfortunately passed in both the Senate and the Assembly.

If an Associate Judge of the Court of Appeals is appointed to be the Chief Judge, the Governor will be permitted to nominate someone to the vacant Associate Judge position from the list of recommended names that the Commission on Judicial Nomination provided to fill the Chief Judge position. This will heavily politicize a sensitive nomination process that centers appropriate qualifications for each Court position, and conflicts with the plain language of the State Constitution.

Here are the top reasons we oppose this measure:

- We believe this proposal would be unconstitutional.

- Associate Judge and Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals are two positions requiring different qualifications.
- This proposal would reintroduce politicization into a sensitive nomination process that should be left detached from political-horse trading.

Read the statement we sent yesterday [here](#). Read more about pushback to the bill [here](#).

Public Campaign Finance Rally

As a part of the Fair Elections Coalition, we held a press conference on the Public Campaign Finance program on March 30th. Legislators including AM Harvey Epstein, Senator Rachel May and others made statements in support of the program.

We submitted the following quote as a part of the press release that went out before the conference:

"New Yorkers have long been frustrated by the deplorable condition of our state's campaign finance system and the outsized power of wealthy interests in Albany. The task now before the legislature is to finish this historic improvement to our broken campaign finance system, a system which has for far too long undermined democracy and sown public distrust in government. Elected officials should be beholden to their constituents, not their large donors. The League of Women Voters of New York State strongly supports the new Public Campaign Finance Program and calls on the Governor and Legislative leaders to fund the program and not delay its implementation." – *Laura Ladd Bierman, Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of New York State*



Voter Services

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

Vote 411 Training

The Vote 411 Training held on April 13 was a huge success. If you're interested in learning more, watch the recording of the training [here](#). Local Leagues are always looking for people willing to organize their Vote 411 pages so please let your local League know that you are interested - and trained!



Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)

Regina Tillman, 3rd Vice President for DEI, rmt370@gmail.com, and Crystal Joseph, DEI Task Force Co-Chair, campus@lwvny.org

Spring, the period of hope, has sprung. And we close out the month of April with one of the most hopeful positions one can think of...that of supportive efforts towards the education of all our children in the history and contributions of formerly enslaved Black people in NYS and their descendants. While several States in this Union proceed to take the opposite direction, most of the discussions with local school boards and teachers in NYS of this new history curriculum has been met with open hearts and minds.

Branded as the "The Antiracist Curriculum Project", under development by two Rochester educators, our Leaguers who viewed the two-part DEI webinars in April, called it ... "fabulous" ... "wonderful..." "necessary"! Entitled, "What Do NY Kids Learn About Our Racist NYS History? And What Do You Know?" required two webinar sessions to be presented to the League in April. *Many thanks go to Barbara Grosh, former LWVNY DEI Task Force Member, and current President of the Rochester Metro Area LWV*, for letting me in on this local effort which is at the point now of going state-wide so justifiably, you need to know as well!

Missed it? It was recorded and the links will be out to you shortly. Stay tuned to view and then to aid us as we endeavor to make this potentially our first “JEEDI Project”! In the meantime, a DEI Virtual Drop-In session is being planned for May 3rd at 7:30pm so we can share our feelings and impressions about this webinar’s info, along with sharing your thoughts about how it relates to what is going on in our country and the actions we, as a League, could take. [Save This Zoom Link to Attend](#). (FYI: No registration is required, and no recording is made.)

Have you signed up yet for the LWVNYS Convention in June? As usual, good workshops are being offered but be sure to add our DEI Workshop to your must-see list if you are interested in locally moving along in your League’s DEI Journey toward a more multicultural, more multiracial, and more equitable organization. Entitled “**Successes, Missteps & Next Steps in Our Journey to Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion!**”, meet with me and your fellow DEI Task Force members on June 3rd at 10:15:00am.

Have you been working on making DEI-related changes (in policy, practices, processes, or behaviors)? Please be sure to nominate your League in the newest Recognition Category entitled, **Building Bridges to Excellence Award (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion)**. Any and all efforts designed to bring about change should be considered. [Click here for the application](#). Due by May 1st.

Also, due May 1st, any outstanding local League submissions of their LWVNYS DEI Assessment Survey. Several Leagues were granted an extension to May 1st therefore stragglers, either as Leagues or as individual League Members, will also be accepted by, or before, this date.

[PDF of DEI Survey](#) (Keep for your copy)

[LINK for DEI Survey via Google Form](#) (Submit information)

Hope does “spring eternal” so we are looking forward to more sessions with you like the upcoming **ABA (American Bar Association) 21-Day Disability Equity Habit-Building Challenge** ©, during Disability Pride Month this July! We also invite local leaders to consider sending in a nomination for one of their members, assessed with possessing leadership qualities, to **represent your League on the LWVNYS DEI Task Force**. Consider current or new members of your BOD and Chairs of Committees such as Membership, Nominations, Advocacy and DEI. *Nominations should be made by June 30th*. Thank you. And any questions or clarifications, please feel free to connect with me at rmt370@gmail.com.

“What Do NY Kids Learn About Our Racist History? And What Do You Know?”

Webinars Sponsored by LWV of Rochester and LWVNYS

The Antiracist Curriculum Project, co-led by Rochester educators Kesha James and Shane Wiegand, is developing lesson plans for K-12 teachers covering the history of slavery in New York, as well as racist policies which have entrenched residential segregation. They also teach about the resistance to slavery and racism. Adults need the information they’ve put together as well. Kesha and James presented a webinar of their project and educated many League members about this issue.

Recordings for the two-part presentation can be seen here (click on date):

[April 17 Presentation](#)

[April 17 Slides](#)

[April 24 Presentation](#)

[April 24 Slides](#)

Learn more about the Anti-Racism Curriculum Project here: <https://www.ccsi.org/blog/articles/antiracist-curriculum-project/> and here:

<http://resistancemapping.org/s/m/page/welcome>

Kesha and Shane are working with school districts all over the state and would be happy to be introduced to more districts. If you think your local district could benefit from the Anti-Racism Curriculum Project, please reach out to Kesha and introduce her and Shane to your district. Tell them you're with the League!

Contact Kesha James kjames@ccsi.org or Shane Wiegand swiegand@ccsi.org



Local League News

LWV of Rockland

The President of LWV of Rockland, Linda Berns, was recently honored as the 2023 Woman of Achievement Award by the Rockland AAUW. Congratulations, Linda! We are all so proud of your accomplishments!

Rochester Metro League

The Rochester League recently hosted "What Do NY Kids Learn About Our Racist History? And What Do You Know?" Speakers Kesha James and Shane Wiegand co-lead The Antiracist Curriculum Project, which develops lesson plans for K-12 teachers covering the history of slavery in New York, as well as racist policies which have entrenched residential segregation.

In the first session, Kesha and Shane discussed slavery in New York, which provided the basis for many of the biggest and most profitable corporations. The second session focused on racist policies in the 20th century and the persistent legacy of segregation that continues to trap black and brown communities in toxic dilapidated housing.

New York City League

As part of the ongoing "Lunch with the League" speaker series, the New York City League hosted a presentation on civics education. The League was joined by Jenna Ryall, Director of Civics for All at the New York City Department of Education, and Sanda Balaban, Co-Founder/Director, YVote and Next Generation Politics. The speakers discussed recent actions that New York City has taken to reintroduce civics education and engagement, and how the city can ensure the next generation learns about the role and importance of government in their lives.

White Plains League

The White Plains League, along with the White Plains Public Library and the YWCA hosted their Common Ground conversation group. Founded five years ago, Common Ground emerged as a place to discuss national and local issues from a local perspective.

The most recent Common Ground meeting handed younger White Plains citizens the microphone. Young people from the Slater Center and the Youth Bureau shared their views on the changes in White Plains and how the continued impact they've had on the youth. Other guests included staffers from the White Plains Planning Department and Youth Bureau, as well as White Plains Council Member Vicki Presser.

Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady County Leagues

The 4-League Capitol District Environmental Committee recently hosted "Electrifying the Empire State", a presentation focused on the science, technology, economics, and politics of building electrification in New York. The Leagues were joined by research scientist and climate advocate Anshul Gupta, whose research has touched upon areas in energy, materials, and decarbonization. Most notably, Gupta got involved in the presentation's subject after converting his own home to all-electric operations and disconnecting his gas service.

Chautauqua County League

The Chautauqua County League joined SUNY Fredonia's American Democracy Project chapter and the Criminal Justice Club in sponsoring a panel on bail reform in New York State. The panel was hosted at SUNY Fredonia and was moderated by Chautauqua County League member Mary Croxton. Panel members presented an overview of bail in New York state, bail reform laws that were enacted in 2020, and proposed reforms of bail made so far in 2023. The discussion also covered assessments of the effectiveness of bail, as well as the harms of pre-trial detention, particularly among those who are unable to make bail. Panel members included Department of Sociocultural and Justice Sciences Assistant Professor Jessica Finkeldey; Alexandra Harrington, associate professor and director of the Criminal Justice Advocacy Clinic and director of the Innocence and Justice Project, all at the University at Buffalo; and Abbey DiRusso, a SUNY Fredonia senior majoring in Criminal Justice, with a minor in Sociology, and a graduate of Fredonia High School.



The State League's New Home

As you probably all have learned, the state League has recently moved its offices in Albany. We have moved into a building called The Blake Annex. The Blake was created by the United Way of the Capital Region with the following mission:

The Blake elevates the critical role that non-profit organizations and grassroots movements play in creating communities in which all can thrive. This space allows non-profit and tax-exempt ventures to focus more on mission and less on overhead and daily operations by providing working space at a rate below the fair market value and an organizational structure for promoting collaboration for the common purpose.

Over 30 nonprofits share space at the Blake and can coordinate services provided by each and collaborate on projects. At a recent event, Angelique Powell, Director of Community Animation, spoke about the history of the building.

"The space in which we are working was named in honor of Adam Blake, Jr., a black entrepreneur born on April 6, 1830, who was the adopted son of enslaved African, Adam Blake, Sr. Utilizing the privileges afforded to him, such as obtaining education alongside the Van Rensselaer children, on the manor where his father was enslaved, it was clear that he navigated life in a way that you have the capacity to do when you have had some level of privilege, opportunity and hope in the very fabric of your upbringing. It is said he seamlessly navigated the white business community of his time and his own community all the while being described as charming and gregarious by those who knew him. Doing so as he started out right in this neighborhood, starting out at Delavan on Broadway he began his incredible career from waiter to restaurant proprietor where he finally poised himself perfectly to aid those who looked like him, using his business as a way to train and develop other black men so they could gain employment, not only with him, but move on to bigger and better opportunities at the finest establishments across the nation and in this way he was not only able to create generational wealth in the form of the Kenmore Hotel but created space for the resistors, thought leaders and changemakers of his time. While there's still much of his life that is a mystery, what we do know is that he and his wife, Catherine, were beloved by many in this community, and upon his passing, the very restaurant where he got his start had become his number one competitor and they honored him by lowering their flag half-mast. And just as he meant this much to this downtown business community, he was also honored by The Israel AME church, the oldest Black church in upstate NY, and a station of the underground railroad where they memorialized him with these words, "he loved liberty and abhorred slavery. He believed in the equality of all." We acknowledge him and his wife Catherine, daily, in recognition of their leadership and their strife."

The state League is proud to call The Blake its home.

DONATE TO LWWNYS

DONATE TO LWWNYS
EDUCATION FOUNDATION

**The League of Women Voters of
New York State
The Blake
1 Steuben Place
Albany, NY 12207
Tel: 518-465-4162
website: lwwny.org
email: lwwny@lwwny.org**

