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State Board Updates **July 2023**

If you are no longer an officer or on the board of your local League, please forward this email and attachments to the new leaders of your League.

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

- Submit data tracking form to LWVNYS by **August 10** (and the 10th of each month) at: <https://forms.gle/jvvf1kFwbGC8QDsX7> (see more info below)
- Order 2023 Voter Guide Part I in English and Spanish now for summer voter registration drives (see order form attached)
- Sign up for bi-weekly email from LWVUS for state and local leaders here: <https://www.lwv.org/League-management/League-update-newsletter-sign>

President's Report, Nancy Rosenthal, nancyrosenthal9@gmail.com

This summer, the lazy days of summer seem to have included an inordinate amount of rain. I hope none of you were adversely affected, and that you are enjoying the (so far) lovely sunny days allowing you to relax, reboot and return to League refreshed!

League work, of course, is waiting just around the corner. Soon, we will begin with the upcoming surge of general election preparation of candidate forums and vote411.org to name only a couple of the jobs awaiting us this Fall-

With the start of the League's new fiscal year, new boards are *already* in place. This is a good time to review, with your board, your League's policies and procedures.

It is imperative that you review the League's Nonpartisan Policy with all of your board members. In addition, make sure your Voter Service Director establishes your League's guidelines for candidate events - both League sponsored or co-sponsored, as well as events sponsored by other organizations. Look at the Toolkit for Candidate Events on the state website for suggested policies and guidelines (<https://lwvny.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Toolkit-for-Candidate-Events-final-031121.pdf>).

Two resources on the LWVUS website offer useful guidance for new board members who may need a little coaching. They are

- ["Welcome to the League!" and "Member Onboarding Resources | League of Women Voters \(lwv.org\);](#)
- [League Governance Checklist! League of Women Voters \(lwv.org\)"](#)

Remember to review, at every Board meeting, the prior State Board Update (SBU). The SBU is emailed from the state office every month to local League leaders (using the Local League Update form you recently submitted to the state office); it has important information and guidance from the state League. Reviewing it each month at your local board meetings will allow board members to take on the specific tasks mentioned in the SBU in accordance with their roles on the Board.

In the upcoming months, look for highlights covering the topics discussed at this year's LWVUS Council meeting held in Las Vegas. For now, though, enjoy these last weeks of summer and the needed break it affords us all!

State Office

Welcome to the New LWV of Northwest Westchester MAL Unit

We are so excited to announce the creation of a new MAL Unit! Thanks to everyone who helped plan and organize this new League! The Co-Chairs of the new MAL Unit are Jess Denaro and Althema Goodson.

Local League Update Form

Each local League must complete the Local League Update form so we have current lists of officers and boards – and more importantly, so we have accurate email lists to send out this monthly State Board Update and other key information for each local League to know. Please complete the form (ask the new officers if you are not returning) and return it to Milly@lwny.org or complete the form online at <https://forms.gle/dvw2KDchZXTRsMbXA>.

Thank you to the following local Leagues who have already submitted the form:

Albany County	New Rochelle
Broome and Tioga Counties	New York City
Buffalo / Niagara	North East Westchester
Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties MAL Unit	Port Washington-Manhasset
Central Nassau	Rivertowns
Chautauqua	Rochester Metro Area
Cooperstown	Rockland County
Cortland County	Saratoga
East Nassau	Scarsdale
Geneva	Schenectady County
Great Neck MAL Unit	Smithtown
Hamptons, Shelter Island and North Fork	St. Lawrence County MAL
Huntington	Suffolk County
LWV of Rensselaer County	Syracuse Metropolitan Area
LWV Tompkins County	Utica-Rome
New Castle	Westchester ILO
	White Plains

For those of you NOT on the list above, please send it in asap. You're missing out on critical info from the state League. Here's who has not provided the form (online or paper) – if you have and you're on this list, contact us or please resend as we don't have it:

Brookhaven

Cazenovia

Larchmont/Mamaroneck

Mid-Hudson

Nassau County ILO

North Country

Oneonta

Putnam County

Rye, Rye Brook and Port Chester

Steuben/Chemung

LWVUS Data Tracking

LWVUS has asked us to compile data on activities, events, and more from our local League. We have therefore asked you all to please complete a form by the 10th of each month on what you've been doing during the past month. Some months will be busier than others and have more data and feel free to put 0 or NA if you didn't do something that month – that's ok! The form is to be completed online and each local League should assign someone to do this – it could be a board member or an off-board member but that person needs to gather the info each month to be able to report on it. We ask that the report be submitted by the 10th of each month so we can combine it for one report to LWVUS. For the activities in July (and before if you didn't complete it for earlier months), please complete the form **by August 10** online at: <https://forms.gle/jvvf1kFwbGC8QDsX7>. And, let's see if we can get more Leagues and even more data to show our tremendous impact in our communities!

Website Requirements

As the digital landscape continues to evolve, local Leagues need to be aware of the legal obligations they need to fulfill to safeguard their online platforms, eg, websites. Each website needs the following policies:

- Cookie
- Privacy
- Data Request

To that end, we have purchased a statewide subscription to illow.io which will create, monitor, and update these policies for all NYS Leagues. If you'd like your League to use this service, please send an email to Milly@lwvny.org with your web address and webmaster's phone number so that we can send the instructions to your webmaster or have the software installed for you.

Social Media

Stay up-to-date with LWVNYS by following us on social media! Follow us on Facebook at [@LWVNYS](https://www.facebook.com/LWVNYS), on Instagram at [@lwvnys](https://www.instagram.com/lwvnys), and on Twitter at [@LWVNYS](https://twitter.com/LWVNYS).

Liking, commenting, and sharing our posts can make a huge impact in reaching more people and spreading the League's message throughout New York State. Additionally, sharing our posts on your League's pages (Facebook and Instagram) means that you have a quick and easy way to keep your page active – no graphic design skills required! So share from the state League's Facebook page but also from LWVUS Facebook page – no need to make new content – just share what is already there!

Local League Tax Deductible Gifts

Your local League can receive tax deductible gifts by using the grants management system set up by the state League's Education Foundation. Basically the gifts are payable to LWNYS Education Foundation, but we hold them in a separate internal account for your League and you may access the funds to pay for any education related activity. See more in the attached document, Guidelines for LWNYS EF Local Grants Management Service. People may also donate online to your specific local League by using this link (advertise the link on your website or in newsletters):

https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/LzxNifgwHedZPbpqOOCfBw

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

Unfortunately, the New York state redistricting saga continues to play out. For now it is on its way to the state's highest court for a second look. Democracy Docket has an excellent and balanced review of what has happened. The headline refers to the recent decision of an intermediate court.

<https://www.democracymatters.com/analysis/new-york-court-orders-redraw-of-congressional-map-how-did-we-get-here/>

End of Session Legislation

We were up at the Capitol the last week of session lobbying to push a few final bills through. The New York State Senate convened on June 9th and the Assembly took a brief recess before re-convening on the 20th and 21st of June. There were a ton of bills that were left on the table, most legislators gave the excuse that the budget delay pushed things back, so it meant they did not get as many bills out of committee. Despite that, we were still able to get a number of our bills passed. The Governor's office reported they are still in the preliminary stages of reviewing bills to be signed. There are over 800 pieces of legislation waiting to be reviewed and signed or vetoed by December 31, 2023. To review what passed, see the End of Year Legislative Summary emailed from the state office in late June:

<https://conta.cc/3NpZU2h>

Other Election Reform Bills

Two pieces of voting reform legislation that the League does not have a position on passed towards the end of session. Both will have a significant impact on elections. The first is a bill proposed by Senator Gianaris, which allows for voting by mail for early voting. The "[New York Early Mail Voter Act](#)" would bring New York as close as possible to universal, no-excuse absentee voting (or its equivalent) without amending the state constitution by allowing all voters to mail-in a ballot during the nine days of early voting that prefaces every primary and general election, beginning in 2024. Because mailed ballots would be accepted through election day, the bill would open a parallel vote-by-mail system to New York's existing absentee ballot system, which would also remain on the books. We expect there to be litigation against the bill. The Governor has not yet signed it into law.

The second is a bill passed to move several town and county elections in [New York](#) State to even-numbered years to synchronize them with state and federal races. The measure would not affect city

elections or certain local posts such as county district attorney, which are held on odd-numbered years under terms of the state constitution. Read more [here](#).

A third bill, that we do have a position to support but were not aware of during session, was sponsored by Senator Brisport and passed late in session. It requires information to be distributed on voting for all eligible citizens released from NYS jails ([A4009](#)). The bill has not yet been signed by the Governor. If signed, it would take effect 180 days (about 6 months) after being signed.

Public Campaign Finance Changes

Lastly, in the final few days of session a bill revising the New York State Public Campaign Finance Program was pushed through and passed. The League strongly opposes this bill (S7564/A7760). It would change the public financing law in ways that will undermine the program's core objective of empowering small donors. Instead of matching the contributions up to \$250, this bill would allow for the first \$250 of all contributions to be matched, taking away the power from small donors. The bill was passed by a close margin and votes were being whipped on the floor. It was initially passed 32 to 31 in the Senate, but votes were changed after to widen the margin a bit. The League along with several other good government groups called for the Governor to veto the bill. Read our memo of opposition [here](#). We plan to issue an op-ed to the NY Daily News to call for a veto.

Jail Based Voting Study

This month we released the results of a study conducted by Hazel Weiser of the LWVNYS Criminal Justice Committee on voting in jails in counties across New York State.

The results were quite disturbing, as only 11 of the state's 57 counties outside of New York City had meaningful and effective programs. Under New York law, individuals detained in jail are entitled to vote unless they have been convicted of a felony. Yet, the survey revealed that few counties make a serious attempt to enable those within their facilities to exercise this right. Most county sheriffs do little to encourage participation in the electoral process. Of the 45 counties that responded to the survey, 16 had no voting program whatsoever, while 18 took only minimal steps toward encouraging those for whom they are responsible to vote.

Take a look at the full report [here](#). Hazel Weiser and Erica Smitka have participated in several media interviews as a result of the press release on the study. We met with the Times Union and were also featured on Capitol Pressroom with Dave Lombardo. We will also be featured on News Channel 10 in Rochester, and we received interest from several other outlets.

Voter Services, Kathy Meany, VP for Voter Services, kzmeany@gmail.com

Voter Guide Part I

Voter Guide part 1 in English and Spanish is available! Order yours for voter registrations and other upcoming events in your community. They are also posted on the Voting page of the state website: <https://lwvny.org/voting/>

We are halfway through 2023, and election season is approaching! Get ready for election season by reviewing all Voter Service Toolkits; informing your membership and the public of voting dates;

registering new voters (especially on college campuses); planning for potential Candidate Debates in your local areas; helping to recruit election inspectors; and promoting Vote411.org.

All You Need to Know About Voting in NYS: <https://www.elections.ny.gov/>

Important Dates to Remember

General Election: November 7, 2023

Early Voting: October 28 – November 5, 2023

Date	Deadline Information
October 23	Last day for Board of Elections to receive absentee ballot application by letter, telefax, or through the absentee request portal.
October 23	Last day for change of address.
October 28	Last day for IN-PERSON Voter Registration; MAIL IN registrations must be received by a Board of Elections.
November 6	Last day to apply IN-PERSON for absentee ballot.
November 7	Last day to postmark ballot. Must be received by the local Board of Elections no later than Nov. 14th. Military Voter Ballots must be received no later than Nov. 20th.
November 7	Last day to deliver ballot IN-PERSON to the local Board of Elections or to any poll site in your county.

National Voter Registration Day

Sign up as a local League and participate in National Voter Registration Day on September 19, 2023! This is a great time to get out on college campuses, but the planning begins now! Contact your local universities and colleges, community colleges, and vocational/trade schools. To prepare for NVRD, check out all the resources, materials, swag, and more. <https://nationalvoterregistrationday.org/>

Time to Brush Up on All Things Voter Service: Review Toolkits Today (links to them are from our state website)

- [GOTV: How to Successfully Get Out the Vote](#)
- [Voter Registration Drives: How to Organize a Successful Voter Registration Drive](#)
- [Candidate Events: How to Hold a Successful Candidate Event](#)

Empty Chair Policy and Candidate Events

The LWVNY Voter Service Committee revisited the established Empty Chair Policy as written in the Candidate Events Toolkit (pages 6-7, 9, 15, 24, 26, 36, 52-53), and also reviewed the League of Women Voters Empty Chair Policy as stated on the website:

<https://www.lwv.org/league-management/voter-services/guidelines-state-and-local-league-debates-including-empty-chair>.

Consensus was reached to uphold the Empty Chair Policy to maintain the Nonpartisan Policy of the League, and uphold the Empty Chair Policy as stated in both National and NYS Leagues' policies in order to maintain the nonpartisan perception in the community, and protect the League and its volunteers. Nonpartisanship is what makes the League unique among other organizations, and provides value to voters. The Voter Service Committee will revisit the Candidate Events Toolkit to expand solutions and provide examples of how to address empty chair situations.

(<https://www.lwv.org/league-management/policies-guidance/national-board-nonpartisan-policy>)

LWVNYS Policy on Open or Empty Chairs in Candidate Events

It is extremely important that all Leagues throughout New York State speak with one voice, have clear and consistent policies, and adhere to our nonpartisan policy. Therefore "open or empty" chair candidate meetings will not be allowed at any level of League for any elected position. Any League sponsored public event that invites a candidate for elected office will be considered a candidate meeting. A candidate meeting with only one candidate physically present is an "open or empty" chair candidate meeting. (Adopted by State Board July 2017)

You may call this policy:

- *Empty Chair*
- *Empty Chair: Two or More Candidates for Each Race Must Be Present*
- *Or you can just refer to it as candidate event policy and state requirements.*

Requirement: Two or more candidates for each race must be present.

Vote 411

Vote411.org is THE tool and website to empower and educate voters in their communities. It provides up to date information on candidates and elections.

It's Time to Promote Vote411.org: A Nationwide Voter Guide

- Check Your Voter Registration
- See What's On Your Ballot
- Find Your Polling Place
- Discover Upcoming Debates In Your Area
- Watch Post-Debate Recordings
- Search by State and Topic
- Review Voting Rules

Ahead of the 2024 election, LWVUS will be offering trainings on all things VOTE411. To register for upcoming trainings, click the links below. For questions, please reach out to Megan Brown at mbrown@lwv.org.

August 9, 2023, 6pm ET | VOTE411 + League in Action: Your Tools for Election Season:

VOTE411 and League in Action are powerful digital tools for election season. They are especially effective when paired with one another! Join the VOTE411 and Organizing Team to learn how to use these tools to strengthen your voter and community outreach in 2024 and beyond.

September 13, 2023, 6pm ET | Engaging Volunteers for VOTE411: 2024 will be a big year for the League, and we want to help you engage your volunteers to reach more voters in your community. The VOTE411 Team and the Digital Organizing Team will share resources and tips for engaging volunteers to promote your VOTE411 voter guide.

November 15, 2023, 6pm ET | VOTE411 Branding and Promotions: VOTE411 will be a powerful tool for voters in the 2024 election season! Join the LWVUS Communications team and VOTE411 team to learn more about the resources available to help make promoting your voter guide easier.

December 13, 2023, 6pm ET | Getting More Candidates to Respond: The more candidates fill out your voter guide, the better it is for voters! Join the VOTE411 Team as they share seven ways to get more candidate responses to your voter guide.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI), Regina Tillman, VP for DEI,
rmt370@gmail.com

As an advocate for what the LWV does, I appreciate being asked to again serve in the position of LWVNYS 3rd Vice President for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. Culture changes take time. However, I will not tire of addressing the need for this change as it was brilliantly articulate in the National League's "Transformational Roadmap." The survival of this venerated organization will require facing up to the truth of the past - and the present - and adding many more voices, not for show, but rather that will be respected, and heard. Thank you for standing with me on this mission!

"Seeking Safety, Seeking Welcoming: A 21 Day Challenge"

While immigrants today are still being "othered" and still being bussed around to various parts of our country, without rhyme or reason as to their destinations, it is hoped that many of you took advantage of the recent DEI work by the *Buffalo/Niagara LWV*. If missed, we will be hosting it again soon as the bussing continues because your understanding, and empathy, are two essential elements of DEI work.

July's "Disability Pride Month" 21 Day Challenge

Why July? That month coincides with the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a landmark civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life. Challenge we identified was developed by the American Bar Association and speaks to our "othering" of those with various disabilities and how we can address. It will be made available later this year.

“Freedom to Learn 2023: Truth Telling and Real History”

All members of the LWVNYS had an opportunity to participate in a series of panels in July whose current year theme was to allow communities to “combat gag-order legislation and fight for truth, justice and change.”

“Successes, Missteps and Next Steps in the DEI Journey”

Much appreciation is extended to those who attended the DEI Workshop, “Successes, Missteps and Next Steps in the DEI Journey”, at the June LWVNYS Convention in Albany! I was able to share preliminary DEI Survey results followed by my fellow Leaguers and DEI Task Force Members, and with a special guest, who shared their DEI stories and outcomes:

- *Linda McKenney, LWV Saratoga Co-President*
- *Kathy Meany, LWV Westchester President*
- *Barbara Grosh, LWV Rochester Metro Area President*
- *Shirley Buel, President & Noreen McKee, Member - LWV Rensselaer County, with Renee Powell, Troy NY NAACP President*



The consistent themes that ran through the information provided included: (1) the importance of local League leadership to set the tone that DEI is a vital effort, which then allowed the local League to be responsive to a wider array of community priorities; (2) LWV partnerships with community organizations are most effective when developed as ally relationships, not from the perspective of “saviors”.

Email me if interested in the one-pager descriptions of the actions taken by these four Leagues. (Note: missing from above photo of workshop presenters: Barbara Grosh)

State DEI Committee: Here to stay!

This year, the LWVNYS DEI Task Force under the newly elected Board of Directors and President, became a Committee of the Corporation. It continues to be a hybrid, however, with equal participation of Leaguers in the field. Thus, I am thrilled to have received a sizable number of hands-up as those League members from around the State identified their interest in joining the DEI Committee.

An orientation meeting will be conducted in August, and prior to that, a list of resources will be emailed out to both interested candidates and the local leadership so that we are all assured of a successful on-boarding with the DEI Committee. Should you not hear from me by August 1st, please reach out again in case your contact information was misplaced: rmt370@gmail.com. And I look forward to beginning my third term as VP for DEI with yet another talented team to work with!

DEI Survey

Thank you to those who made it their mission to complete the LWVNYS DEI survey issued in the Spring of 2023. The results provided several elements to potentially identify as future metrics and as well as informing us of the status of DEI adoption in our Leagues. And most surveys delineated an initial DEI Action Plan. Look for the specifics in the upcoming Board Update after the full analysis has been completed.

Youth Programs, Nick Doran, VP for Youth Programs, ndoran33@gmail.com

We had a great turnout for our workshop at Convention on Engaging College Students! Thank you to everyone who came out to participate. If you learned a lot and want to get more involved, or if you'd like to join the statewide Youth Committee, please contact me. We are looking for individuals interested in improving youth programming around the state. This year, the focus will be college students and providing college students with the skills and knowledge of effecting change in the legislative process as well as voter registration programs. We will still do some work around engaging elementary and high school students but are focusing on a demographic the League has not focused on as much in the past. As always, please send any youth programs to me to be included in future versions of the Youth Toolkit!

LWVUS

[League Update: Newsletter Signup](#)

LWVUS sends a bi-weekly (every other week) email newsletter to all state and local League presidents, and other engaged League leaders may sign up to receive this newsletter using the form below. Includes important information about grant opportunities, communications resources like graphics and talking points, information about upcoming webinars and trainings, surveys for Leagues to give feedback to help LWVUS better serve them, opportunities for action around priority issues, and more. Sign up here: <https://www.lwv.org/League-management/League-update-newsletter-sign>

Threads

The LWVUS communications team is aware of the new social media platform, Threads, and is closely exploring the possibility of creating an account. Threads is a new text-based social platform launched by Meta that is already connected to one's Instagram account. Within the app, you can post and reply to threads and include text, links, photos, or videos. We anticipate changes to the platform in the upcoming weeks as it is in its early stages.

As of this writing, LWVUS is currently not on Threads but will continue to explore the possibility of joining. It is still unclear how well organizational accounts will fit in with the platform. If we determine that Threads is an ideal platform for us to join, we will let Leagues know ASAP and provide more guidance and best practices. [Leagues can find updated guidance on the League Management Site.](#)