

# STATE VOTER

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy  
March 2023

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## President's Message

Judie Gorenstein, [judieL728@aol.com](mailto:judieL728@aol.com)

CALLING ALL OUR MEMBERS TO CONVENTION

June 3-4, Albany Desmond Hotel

Preconvention Day with workshop and reception is on June 2<sup>nd</sup>

LWVNYS board and staff are all busy planning for our 60<sup>th</sup> convention. Soon you will be receiving the Pre Convention Kit, with the recommended as well as non- recommended studies, the slate of officers, the budget, all of which delegates will be voting on at convention. There will also be information on workshops, caucuses, speaker, and much more. We are working hard to make this a great convention, but the success of the convention will depend on YOU! Yes, we would like every member who is interested to attend. As you may know each League is allotted a designated amount of delegates depending on the number of members in that League. If YOU are interested in attending as a delegate, let your League know. For those who have never attended our conventions before and our concerned about the responsibilities, LWVNYS will be providing information needed and even holding a zoom meeting before the convention to answer your questions. For those who cannot or chose not to be a delegate, know that we want YOU also to attend. Convention offers YOU the opportunity to engage with members from all over the state, to share ideas and experiences, gain knowledge, and really feel a part of this 100+ year old organization that is more important than ever and continues to make a difference. Help us celebrate our past successes. Help us grow and be ever more vibrant and diverse. We thank everyone who has already registered, have YOU? Now is the time to begin making your plans. For more information you can check the LWVNYS website or contact the LWVNYS. To register, [click here](#). To view the full Registration Kit, [click here](#). We are here to help answer any of your questions. YOU, our members, are our greatest asset. Thank you for being a member. Hope to see YOU at convention!

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## Upcoming Events

### LWVNYS 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)

LWVNYS will host an advocacy day on May 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 LWVNYS

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.

## Electrifying the Empire State with All-Electric Emissions-Free Homes

April 12, 7 PM

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Hosted by the Capitol District LWV Environmental Committee, this presentation will focus on the science, technology, economics, and politics of building electrification in New York.

Speaker Anshul Gupta is a research scientist and a climate advocate. His research, while mostly in computer science, has touched upon areas in energy, materials, and decarbonization, in which he has multiple publications as well as one issued and three pending patents. He has volunteered in multiple roles with the NY State chapters coalition of the Climate Reality Project, an international organization founded and led by former Vice President Al Gore that prepares its members to use their voices and everyday choices to fight climate change.



### State Convention is Coming!

The LWVNYS 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](#).

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](mailto: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](mailto:Sally.s.robinson@gmail.com)

Erica Smitka, Deputy Director, [Erica@lwny.org](mailto:Erica@lwny.org)

### Small Donor Public Financing: A Tool for Empowering New Yorkers in the Age of Citizens United

On March 9th the State League, in collaboration with the Brennan Center and the Rockefeller Institute hosted a program on the new Public Campaign Finance Program. The 2024 election cycle, already underway, marks an historic first for New York State. It will be the first election where candidates running for the Senate and Assembly can opt into the state's new small donor public financing program. The voluntary program offers a match of public money for small contributions from constituents to eligible participating candidates. The presentation explored how public financing fits into the post-Citizens United landscape and how the reform amplifies the voices of everyday New Yorkers in our elections and government. See links to the recorded program and the Powerpoint presentation on the state website [here](#).



### Action Alert on Public Financing of Campaigns!

There has been a lot of pushback on the program from legislators so the State League has also asked members to call their legislators in support of the program. As part of our coalition (Fair Elex) work on this issue, there is a press conference and lobby visits on Thursday, March 30 – hope you can join us.

- **PRESS CONFERENCE:** Fair Elex will be hosting a presser on the **Million Dollar Staircase in the Capitol Building at 10:15am this Thursday (3/30)**. We will be calling on the governor and legislature to fund the Public Campaign Finance Program in the budget and implement it without delay for the 2024 elections. You can [RSVP here](#). Please plan to arrive shortly before the 10:15am start time!
- **LOBBY VISITS:** Following the presser, we will be visiting lawmakers' offices to advocate for the program. We will provide leave behind materials and talking points for anyone who wants to participate. **Please email me ([millardh@brennan.law.nyu.edu](mailto:millardh@brennan.law.nyu.edu)) as soon as possible to let me know that you would like to participate** – we want to get a rough sense of numbers as we plan out the day.

We understand traveling to Albany might not be an option for everyone – that's ok! **For those who want to apply pressure from afar, we've created a final week of budget advocacy toolkit, which you can find here:** [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1I7ODinpl8qXLiSmgFtMsrdfs5Ulf6loHgJDug8dHgk8/edit?usp=share\\_link](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1I7ODinpl8qXLiSmgFtMsrdfs5Ulf6loHgJDug8dHgk8/edit?usp=share_link). We are asking partners to continue calling, emailing, and Tweeting their lawmakers to express support for the program.

### Clean Slate NY Coalition

The state Board voted to join the Clean Slate NY Coalition at its meeting last week. The Clean Slate NY campaign is fighting for a law ([S211/A1029](#)) that will automatically clear a New Yorker's conviction record once they become eligible. The passage of Clean Slate will boost economic growth, expand the state's workforce, and help businesses hire employees. Clean Slate NY is the leading advocacy organization on these efforts. Coalition members of Clean Slate NY include major labor unions, business leaders, chambers of commerce from across the state, local legislatures and dozens of advocacy groups.

<https://www.cleanslateny.org/>

### NYS Budget Update

The proposed NYS Budget has been released by the Governor in early February, 30 day amendments were made by the Governor and each house has now released their own proposed budgets. Now, it's up to the three parties (Governor, Assembly Speaker and Senate Majority Leader) to negotiate a final budget which then must be passed by the two houses as well. The deadline is April 1 but rumors are that it will be a few days late. Below are links for the League's testimony and statements on these proposed budgets. See all the letters, testimony, and memos that we've submitted on the state website under Our Work and Legislation Action (<https://lwny.org/legislative-action/>).

### Executive Budget

The Executive Budget was released on February 7, 2023. In response we submitted written testimony to the following hearings: Public Protection, Environmental Conservation, Health and Mental Hygiene, and

Elementary and Secondary Education. On February 9<sup>th</sup> we testified orally at the Public Protection hearing. View the full testimonies on the state website (<https://lwny.org/legislative-action/>).

### **Senate One House**

The League has reviewed and assessed the Senate one-house budget. We were pleased to see support for many of the issue areas on which we work. See the statement summarizing the decisions we support and those we oppose at <https://lwny.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2-One-House-Budget-Statement-2023-Senate.pdf> .

### **Assembly One House**

The League has reviewed and assessed the Assembly one-house budget. We were pleased to see support for many of the issue areas on which we work. See the statement summarizing the decisions we support and those we oppose at <https://lwny.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2-One-House-Budget-Statement-2023-Assembly.pdf> .

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## **Elder Parole and Fair and Timely Parole**

### **Vivione Marshall and Richard Rifkin, Co-Chairs, LWNYS Criminal Justice Reform Committee**

The League of Women Voters NY supports Elder Parole S2423/A2035 and Fair & Timely Parole S307/A162. Both of these bills would allow the Parole Board to grant parole to those who have been able to demonstrate through their behavior while incarcerated that they are prepared to lead meaningful and productive lives. Neither bill mandates that any individual be released.

The Elder Parole bill provides incarcerated men and women, 55 years or older that have served at least 15 years of their sentence the opportunity for parole review with the NY State Board of Parole. Those who are eligible for parole interview by this bill would not automatically be released, they would only be entitled to a hearing. If denied parole, the bill provides for reconsideration within 2 years.

The data shows that less than 2% of those release from prison between the ages of 50 and 65 are rearrested. By the age of 65 or older, the number drops to almost zero.

The Fair & Timely Parole bill sets the standard for the NY State Board of Parole to use in their review of incarcerated individuals that are already parole eligible and are now applying for parole release. It would require considering the individual's merit and rehabilitation during the time they served the minimum imposed sentence. While the original crime would be considered it would be less of a factor than the behavior of the incarcerated person while serving their sentence. The current behaviors and experiences of parole applicants while in prison can and should be used to determine a meaningful parole review and the propriety of granting parole. Like Elder Parole, the parole board will still make the ultimate decision for denial or release in all applications.

Despite unsupported rhetoric, neither bill would result in an increase in crime in New York State. They both simply enable the opportunity for release of individuals who have demonstrated to the parole board that they altered their lives while incarcerated. Enactment of Elder Parole and Fair & Timely Parole give the opportunity only to incarcerated individuals that have truly achieved rehabilitation a chance to not spend years confined in prison for no rational or just purpose.

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## **From LWVUS**

### **Abortion Legislation is a Democracy Issue**

In June 2022, the US Supreme Court ruled in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization, overturning Roe v. Wade and Planned Parenthood v. Casey and ending the federal constitutional right to abortion. This ruling increases the authority that legislation has in restricting reproductive choices.

Because the federal government has not passed laws to protect the right to abortion, state and local laws play an enormous role in determining whether constituents have the right and access to reproductive health care.

Without the ability to make reproductive decisions for one's own body, women and those who can become pregnant cannot participate equally in our democracy. Further, since the Dobbs decision, numerous state governments have introduced legislation directly or indirectly related to reproductive rights, challenging doctrines of US democracy.

[Read rest of article here](#)

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## Voter Services

**Nancy Rosenthal, VP for Voter Services, [nancyrosenthal9@gmail.com](mailto:nancyrosenthal9@gmail.com)**

**Vote 411 Training April 13, 5:30 pm**

Local Leagues are responsible for creating the Vote 411 races and candidate information for this year's elections. Since the elections are all local (no state or national), the state League does not enter anything in Vote 411. If you do not know how to access your Vote 411 page, contact [Milly@lwny.org](mailto:Milly@lwny.org) and she can get you the log in and passwords. Milly is also available to answer any questions or help as you develop your pages.

But, in addition, excitement is in the air as we anticipate the [Vote411.org](https://Vote411.org) training with Megan Brown, the LWVUS [vote411.org](https://vote411.org) guru! She will tell us the new ins and outs of [vote411.org](https://vote411.org), making it easier for us to create our League's Voters' Guide for 2023. The massive overhaul in 2022 made [vote411.org](https://vote411.org) so much easier to use. For starters, the ballot page is now more user-friendly and functional. This training is for all of us, beginners and returners alike! After the training, we will be ready to set up the races, the candidates, and the questions for candidates for the June 27 primary! With Early Voting starting June 17th, start strategizing the steps necessary for your League's [Vote411.org](https://Vote411.org) to go LIVE. This training is for people new to Vote 411, but also a great refresher for those who have done Vote 411 before.

**Vote411 Training April 13, 5:30 PM (date changed from previous announcements) [REGISTER HERE](#)**

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## Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)

**Regina Tillman, 3rd Vice President for DEI, [rmt370@gmail.com](mailto:rmt370@gmail.com), and Crystal Joseph, DEI Task Force Co-Chair, [campus@lwnynyc.org](mailto:campus@lwnynyc.org)**

**DEI Self-Assessment Surveys**

Many thanks to those who have completed or are near completion of the DEI Assessment Survey! Several have begun to come in to meet the deadline of April 1<sup>st</sup>, from both LWV individual members and from local Boards. It is a good sign that there are not many questions but please do not hesitate to ask should questions arise. Also, I have approved several local League Boards for an extension in their submission deadline. If your board needs an extension, please email me asap so I know who is looking to provide input into the question of LWVNYS policies, practices, and behaviors impacted by the principals of DEI.

**Note: Due to the delay in issuing the DEI Survey, the deadline for all members, as well as for Boards, is extended from April 1<sup>st</sup> ... to April 15th.** (Those that have consulted with me have their own specified deadline which we have agreed upon.) If anyone is missing the email blast containing the links to the PDF version (for review) and to Google Forms (for final survey submission) to the LWVNYS DEI Assessment Survey, here they are for your retrieval:

**[PDF of DEI Survey](#)**

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

Remember, there are no wrong answers! We only need your honest assessment and impressions to allow the formulation of next steps.



**Next DEI Education Event via ZOOM – SAVE THE DATES!**  
**What do NY kids learn about our racist history? *And what do you know?***  
**April 17 and April 24, 7:00 pm to 8:30pm**  
[Registration link](#)

There is serendipity in the world! Long story, but while some States fight against understanding the complete history of this country, some in NYS are making history in its entirety more accessible! Case in point... Rochester Metro Area LWV awardees for “Making Democracy Work”, elementary school teachers, *Kesha James and Shane Wiegand*, are working on their Antiracist Curriculum Project. It entails lesson plans for K-12 teachers covering the history of slavery in New York as well as racist policies in the 20th century which have made residential segregation deeply entrenched. They also teach about the resistance to slavery and racism. Yes, fellow Leaguers ...slavery existed in the North! The lesson plans and other content are adapted to our adult audience and presented with teaching techniques. All members of the LWVNYS are invited as well as League friends and partners.

**Mondays, April 17th and April 24<sup>th</sup>**, join us in this two-part learning event brought to the LWVNYS and hosted by Pathstone. Co-sponsored by the Rochester Metro Area LWV.

**DEI Virtual Drop-In Meeting:** Occurred on Wednesday, March 8<sup>th</sup>, and we give a heartfelt thank you to the featured a guest, Ms. Freddie Hamilton. She serves as the President of the Utica/Oneida County NAACP for the 2023-2025 term, is the Executive Director of Rebuilding the Village, Inc., a Community Based Organization serving at-risk children, youth and families in Cornhill and West Utica, and has been a Cultural Competency/ Racial Equity Consultant for 12 years. We very much enjoyed her input! **“SAVE THE DATE” for the next DEI Drop-In Session, scheduled for 7:00pm – 8:00pm, Wednesday, May 3rd!**

Questions about DEI in the League or our activities, please feel free to connect with Regina Tillman: [rmt370@gmail.com](mailto:rmt370@gmail.com).

**2022 ELECTION IMPACT REPORT**



<b>27+ mil.</b> voters contacted	<b>17.4+ mil.</b> voters protected through litigation	<b>4.8+ mil.</b> people received voting info at <a href="http://VOTE411.org">VOTE411.org</a>
<b>3+ mil.</b> voters reached with English and Spanish ads	<b>245k+</b> visits to VOTE411's Spanish-language pages	<b>52k+</b> candidate voter guides created

**From LWVUS  
 Dr. Deborah Turner, LWVUS  
 President**

Last week, LWVUS shared its 2022 Election Impact report, highlighting your impact in the 2022 midterm elections. Despite anti-voter laws, election mis- and disinformation, and poll worker shortages, we saw record-breaking turnout last November. Together, we reached more than 27 million voters, our largest voter engagement program to date! I encourage you

to celebrate your impact and learn more about how you powered the vote in 2022. Read our report on [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org).

Over the past month I have shared updates on the new phase of our transformation journey: Framing the Future. As we shift into this new phase of our journey, your voice will be critical in shaping and framing out our future. In the coming weeks, all members will receive an invitation to complete a short survey about their unique experiences in the League. League experience is broad and diverse, and we want to hear from every voice in our League community. Stay tuned for a survey link in early April.

I am also excited to announce that we have assembled our four key working groups, composed of local and state League members from across the country. Over the next few months, these groups will convene to inform and develop four key pillars of this phase: League capacity, our business model, building power through data, and functional specification (our membership system).

The results of the all-member survey and the insights from our core working groups will guide the next steps of our transformation journey. Leagues can find information on working groups, the Framing the Future phase, and next steps on the League Management Site. For questions, please reach out to [transformation@lwv.org](mailto:transformation@lwv.org).

Finally, I encourage you to check out our upcoming webinars and trainings. These provide great opportunities to enhance your League work. From office hours to an introduction to our new Legal Center, LWVUS is here to support Leagues as you ramp up for local elections and prepare for a busy 2024. See the calendar of events on the [LWVUS website](#).

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## Local League News

### Westchester County ILO

Kathy Meany, President of the LWV of Westchester ILO presented a Civics 101/Voting Education seminar to another organization focusing on helping to educate new citizens and immigrants on the citizenship pathway - a bit of civics 101 and basic voter ed. She worked with a Spanish translator, talking through the slides, posing questions to engage the audience, and then answering the questions posed to her. The most notable question was "Why do citizens not want to vote?" It was a lively and engaging discussion and well received by all. The presentation in English is available here (pdf format) but if you would like to see the slides in English or Spanish in PPT, then email Kathy at [kzmeany@gmail.com](mailto:kzmeany@gmail.com). Leagues can use the presentation or customize it for their own area of the state.

### Northeast Westchester

The Northeast Westchester League was joined by Assemblymember Chris Burdick for a Q&A session on the New York State Housing Compact. Questions were submitted beforehand by constituents of Assembly District 93. Participants discussed the Housing Compact's potential impact on local communities and the budget process.

### Rochester Metro Area

As New York Leagues are considering whether to concur with LWVNYC's position in favor of Ranked Choice Voting, the Rochester Metro League is exploring the option of championing ranked choice voting in Monroe County. The League recently hosted an educational webinar titled "Ranked Choice Voting: Would It Be Good for Rochester?". Attendees learned about rank choice voting, how it works, and why people think it's better than the current plurality system. They also looked at the NYC League's position and discussed hear the pros and cons. The League was joined by the Port Washington/Manhasset League Elections Reform Committee chair Joe Maissel.

### Chautauqua County

The Chautauqua County League held a luncheon and virtual discussion on the New York Equal Rights Amendment. The League was joined by Erica Smitka, Deputy Director of the State League. Since the New York legislature passed the Equal Rights Amendment in its second consecutive session, the amendment will be presented to New Yorkers for ratification in 2024. Attendees learned more about the amendment, and what steps they can take before the 2024 General Election.

### New York City

In continuation of the "Lunch with the League" program, the New York City League was joined by former Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney for a discussion on the Equal Rights Amendment. Carolyn Maloney began advocating for women's rights and achieved a series of firsts: the first woman to represent New York's 14th Congressional District, the first woman to represent New York City's 7th Council District, and the first woman to serve as Chair of the Joint Economic Committee. During the program, she discussed the steps and challenges she faced in promoting women's rights, and New York's relationship with the Equal Rights Amendment.

### Albany County

The Albany County League has continued its online group reading and discussion series "American Politics & Community Today." Participants read *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown v. Board of Education* by Danielle Allen and *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison* edited by John F. Callahan. The discussion was led by Frankie Y. Bailey, PhD, a professor in the School of Criminal Justice University at Albany (SUNY). Participants were encouraged to engage with the text and the theme of the group through the lens of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), and in regard to politics and the current state of civic thought, feeling, and participation.