

STATE VOTER

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy
May 2023



President's Message

Judie Gorenstein, judieL728@aol.com

This is my last message as LWVNY President. It has been an honor to serve as president for the past two years. Previously I have written of our challenges, our goals and our accomplishments. We were only able to accomplish all we did because of you are members. I thank each of you for your contributions, whether it be paying your annual dues, joining on committees, taking a leadership role and serving on your local boards, contributing new ideas, or making donations. Working together in our own Leagues, with other Leagues, with LWVNY, with LWVUS and networking with other groups and organizations has helped us gain influence, visibility and move ahead in our mission.

I will be leaving the presidency, but not certainly not LWV.

L League of Women Voters is a trusted respected organization that is more needed now than ever. Let us all make a commitment to remain involved.

W We must continue to fight not just for Women's rights and equality but for human rights and equality. We are not for Women only. We need to meet challenges but always adhere to our nonpartisan and DEI policies.

V Voting rights and their expansion is crucial for our democracy to flourish. Voter services is the core of the LWV. We must continue to register, educate voters and Get Out The Vote.

N Networking is more important than ever. It enables us to grow in power and influence. It enables us to engage underserved communities and have them gain power and influence.

Y Youth are our future. Youth are getting more involved. Youth understand the threats to our environment and democracy. We must continue to engage, educate, and empower our Youth.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the LWVNY Convention on June 2-4. It will be a wonderful opportunity to work together, to learn together, to share ideas to hear from our speakers, to have fun, and to move forward with a new program, new budget, and a new board member. The 2021-2023 LWVNY board was excellent but I have confidence that the 2023-2025 can be even better building on our strengths and working with LWVUS and all of our leagues and members. Yes, the LWVNY can and will Empower Voters and Defend Our Democracy.



State Convention is Coming!

The LWVNY Biennial Convention will be held on **June 2-4, 2023** at the Crowne Plaza Albany – Desmond Hotel. 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 **Pre Convention Kit** is also available [here](#) and contains information about the items to be voted upon at the Convention (all delegates should read in advance to be prepared to vote at Convention):

- Proposed Slate of Officers and Board of Directors
- Proposed 2023-24 LWVNY Budget
- Proposed 2023-25 Program
 - o Board Recommended Study on the use of RCV and alternatives to party primaries for state, congressional and local offices
 - o Board Recommended Study on the process used by the state Board of Elections to approve [voting](#) systems with the purpose of seeing if the process can be improved to be more effective in ensuring that approved voting systems meet a balance of the SARAT (“secure, accurate, recountable, accessible and transparent”) criteria.
 - o Board Recommended Concurrence with Waste position of the 4 Capital District Leagues

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

9:00 – 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

Come join the fun of state Convention!



League's Spring Auction

There is only one week to bid in our spring auction! By participating, you can directly support the League's educational efforts. Plus, you have the chance to win some fantastic prizes! From a few days on Martha's Vineyard or in the NH near the Mascoma State Forest to baskets of goodies from the NYS archives or the Albany Institute of Art and History - or how about tennis lessons from a pro or limited release handcrafted wine! There's something for everyone in the auction!

To participate, visit our page on BetterWorld by clicking [here](#). Bidding closes on June 3 at 6:30 PM. Winners will be announced during the banquet at State Convention on June 3.

All proceeds will go directly to the State League Education Foundation, allowing us to continue our vitally important projects like our civic education initiatives and youth leadership programs.

Thank you for your continued support, and we can't wait to see what you'll bid on!

Issues and Advocacy

Sally Robinson, VP for Issues and Advocacy,

Sally.s.robinson@gmail.com

Erica Smitka, Deputy Director, Erica@lwvny.org

New York State Budget Passed

On May 2, the NYS budget was finally passed.

What we were glad to see:

State Board of Elections:

- Funding of \$14.5 million in administrative funds and \$25 million in matching funds for the public campaign finance program
- Inclusion of \$15 million for local boards of elections for new voting equipment and software/technology upgrades
- Funding for the Attorney General's office to support pre-clearance for the New York Voting Rights Act.
- \$15.2 million in re-appropriated funds to continue to build New York's online voter registration system

Elementary and Secondary Education:

- \$24 billion to fund Foundation Aid

Environmental Conservation:

- Take a look at our Bond Act Coalition statement on the budget outcomes [here](#)
- \$500 million for the Clean Water Infrastructure Act.
- \$400 million for the Environmental Protection Agency
- The inclusion of the All Electric Building Act
- The inclusion of the Build Public Renewables Act

Department of Health:

- \$8.3 million to support School Based Health Centers
- Increased Medicaid reimbursements for abortion access

What we were disappointed to see:

Environmental Conservation:



- Exclusion of the Bigger Better Bottle Bill

Department of Health

- The budget walks back last year's important win by removing the 2022 law that mandates home care workers are paid at least \$3 above the minimum wage. Instead the budget caps home care wages at \$3 above the minimum wage — showing \$3 is not 'a start' but rather the absolute limit. There is also no accountability for insurance companies.

Division of Criminal Justice Services:

- Changes to the bail laws. For the last several years, judges have been required to impose the "least restrictive" conditions to ensure someone will return to court. The new rules would eliminate that requirement and give judges more discretion to set the conditions they think are appropriate. We believe not enough research has been done on the effectiveness of the current law in order for changes to be made. Read more about these changes here.

Elementary and Secondary Education:

- New York City will be allowed to add 14 new charter schools and 8 others will be allowed across the state. Reviving what some refer to as "zombie charters". Read more about zombie charters here.

Other notable items:

- Exclusion of all mention of housing related reform
- Minimum wage in NYS will increase
- Exclusion of the proposal to expand taxes on ultra-wealthy New Yorkers

Online Action Party to Pass Packaging Reduction in NYS

On May 25 we co-sponsored an online action party with Beyond Plastics to Pass Packaging Reduction in NYS. Attendees registered with the app Climate Action Network to make calls to help NYS pass landmark legislation to cut packaging waste by 50%, stem plastic pollution, slow climate change, and support recycling and composting programs.

Bill Status Update

We are nearing the end of session and have only a few legislative days left before it is scheduled to adjourn on June 8th. Below is an overview on some of the initiatives from our post budget lobby packet and where we stand on each.

Mandatory Training Curriculum for Poll Workers ([S587 Comrie/A268 Walker](#))

Relates to mandatory training curriculum for poll workers; requires the state board of elections to develop and provide to each county materials for a model poll worker training program which the counties may use to train individuals to serve as poll workers in state and county elections. **This legislation passed the Senate and has been referred to Ways and Means in the Assembly.** Likely to pass.

Absentee Ballot Illness Expansion ([A3291 Dinowitz/ S7046 Fernandez](#))

This bill would make permanently change the definition of illness for purposes of absentee voting to include in cases where the voter is unable to appear personally because of a risk of contracting or spreading illness. **This legislation is in the Election Law committee in both the Assembly and Senate.**

Plain Language Ballot Initiative ([S1381 Comrie/A1722 Zinerman](#))

Requires proposed amendment to the constitution or other question provided by law to be submitted to a statewide vote be submitted to the people for their approval in plain language. **This legislation has passed in the Senate and is in the Election Law Committee in the Assembly.**

10-day Voter Registration Implementation ([S2381 Myrie/A5007 Burgos](#))

Relates to enabling constitutionally-qualified electors to register to vote and to cast a ballot on the same day at a polling location. This bill would allow for the effective implementation of the 10-day

voter registration bill that was passed last session. It would allow voters to complete a conditional voter registration application and cast an affidavit ballot. The conditional registration would then be validated by the board of elections, and if the individual is deemed eligible to register, and their information can be validated in conjunction with the state DMV or federal SSA, then their ballot would be canvassed. **This legislation was not moving forward. However, there is similar legislation that is moving forward [A6132A Carrol/S5984A Kavanagh](#). This bill is on the floor calendar in the Senate and is in Ways and Means in the Assembly. LWNYS supports [A6132A/S5984A](#).**

Bigger Better Bottle Bill ([S237 May/A6353 Glick](#))

This bill would expand the Bottle Bill passed in the 80s to include wine, spirits, hard cider, and most non-carbonated beverages. It would also increase the deposit from 5 cents to 10 cents and use revenues to support recycling equity. **This legislation is in the Senate and Assembly Environmental Conservation Committees.**

The Packaging Reduction and Recycling Act ([S4246 Harckam/A5322 Glick](#))

Plastic accounts for nearly all packaging that cannot be reused or effectively recycled - but two bills in New York could transform that. The Packaging Reduction and Recycling Act would require companies to reduce their packaging by 50% in 12 years, make the remaining packaging truly reusable or recyclable, get certain toxic chemicals out of packaging, and pay to clean up their packaging waste by reimbursing municipalities and taxpayers for the collection and processing of those materials. The bill would also prohibit incineration and "chemical recycling" (waste-derived fuels) from counting as recycling. **This legislation is in the Senate and Assembly Environmental Conservation Committees.**

Reproductive Telehealth ([S1066A Mayer/A1709 Reyes](#))

Provides certain legal protections for reproductive health service providers who provide legally protected health activities including protection from extradition, arrest and legal proceedings in other states relating to such services; restricts the use of evidence relating to the involvement of a party in providing legally protected health activity to persons located out-of-state. **This legislation has been amended and is on the floor in the Senate. It's currently in the Assembly Codes Committee.**



Voter Services

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

June 27, 2023 Primary Election

Mark the date: Tuesday, June 27 Primary Election for county and local races. Log on to Vote411.org to find out if you have a Primary in your county or town.

Note the following dates and deadlines:

- Saturday, June 17-Sunday, June 25: Early voting. Check your local Board of Elections to find the location of Early Voting poll sites.
- June 12: Last day change of address must be received by the Board of Elections.
- June 17: Last day a voter registration application must be received by the Board of Elections.
- Tuesday, June 27: Primary Election Day

Absentee Ballots

Due to a recent change in law, voters will no longer be permitted to cast a ballot on a voting machine if they have already been issued an absentee ballot for that election. Instead, voters who show up in person who have already been issued an absentee ballot will be able to vote in person using an affidavit ballot, which will be kept separate until the election is completed. Election officials will then verify whether or not the voter's absentee has been received.

- June 12 is the last day for the BoE to RECEIVE an application by mail or on the online portal.
- June 26 is the last day for applicant (or agent) to apply in person at the BoE for the absentee ballot.
- June 27 is the last day to postmark the Primary Election absentee ballot. The absentee ballot must be received by the BoE no later than July 4.
- June 27 is the last day to deliver the Primary Election absentee ballot to the BoE , or at any poll site throughout your county (all 5 boroughs in the case of New York City), by the close of the polls on election day.

Please refer to the board of elections website for your county, or NYS BOE for detailed information about requirements for applying for an absentee ballot

Vote 411 Training

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@lww.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.



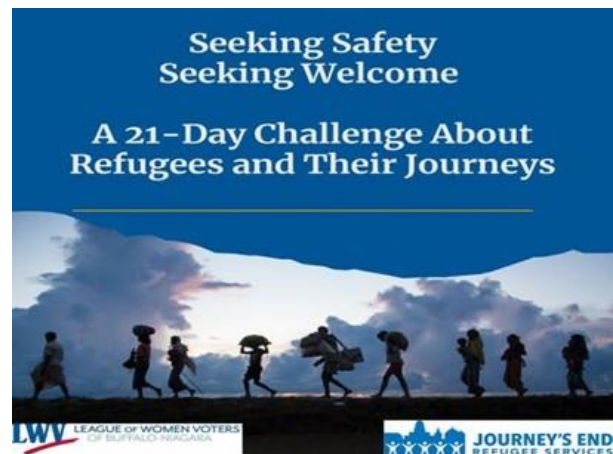
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)

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

It is indeed a pleasure that we are welcoming you to yet another DEI education piece that was developed by a NYS League in conjunction with a local partner.

Beginning on June 1st, if you want to learn a little more about the challenges facing refugees around the world, you are invited to register for the LWV Buffalo/Niagara's 21 Day Challenge entitled, **"Seeking Safety, Seeking Welcome: A 21-Day Challenge About Refugees and Their Journeys"**. It is presented by the League of Women Voters of Buffalo-Niagara and Journey's End Refugee Services. It is timed well to allow us to "walk in someone else's shoes" considering the concerns of late tied to refugees being bussed around the country to various destinations without explanation, and into New York State in particular.

This Challenge is open to all, so we ask you to broadcast its availability widely - to members and to the public - at your local level as the latest DEI education effort. It introduces participants to local, national, and international aspects of the global refugee crisis, a major humanitarian and national security issue of our time.



If you register by May 31st, you will receive a daily email for 21 days as of June 1st, with links to videos and readings to explore at your own pace. Register here --> <https://lnkd.in/eKvRNWCf>

Following that, we have a scheduled **ABA (American Bar Association) 21-Day Disability Equity Habit Building Challenge** © which was developed in honor of Disability Pride Month. The month of July was designated as a time to celebrate and recognize the contributions of people with disabilities in society. It is a month to also raise awareness about the challenges and barriers that people with disabilities face, while also promoting acceptance, inclusion, and respect. Disability Pride Month was first celebrated in 1990 and 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. To ensure we are aiding in that mission, our DEI education includes this opportunity for all members, and the public as well, to participate in this Challenge. Registration info will be forthcoming shortly but please mark your calendars. The challenge will begin on July 9th for those that pre-register so that the daily suggestions for materials can be received via email. And look for another DEI Virtual Drop-In Session to be scheduled thereafter so we can talk about these Challenges you just undertook.

Solicitation for the Task Force: If a local League wishes to have a representative on the State-wide DEI Task Force, please contact me asap: rmt370@gmail.com. We will be planning a more formalized on-boarding for 2023 than we have had previously, thus, I would like all who are new on the Task Force, or requiring a refresher, to be accounted for soon! If you have had any participation in our DEI educational events, you know that there is so very much to learn and to share, beyond DEI definitions, to help the League become a more diverse and equitable organization.

And our team hopes to see you at the NYS Convention and at our workshop, **"Successes, Missteps, and Next Steps in Our DEI Journey"**, to be held on Saturday, June 3rd at 10:00am.



Local League News

St. Lawrence County

St. Lawrence County Board member Donna Seymour (photo on left) is the recipient of the 2023 Rachel Somers Grant Social Action Award. Awarded by the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canton, the award recognizes a person in the wider North Country community who is an advocate for social justice, and who has been actively involved in local groups working for a stronger community.

In addition to being a St. Lawrence County board member, Donna is currently on the leadership team of the PowHer NY Coalition, and was active in the local chapter of the American Association of University Women. She has also worked as a moderator for the educational “Conversations with Candidates” and regularly participates in “North Country Matters,” setting a standard for informed and balanced conversations about local issues. **Congratulations, Donna!**

Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga & Schenectady

The Capital District Leagues presented a screening of *The Story of Plastic*, an Emmy award-winning documentary that reveals the ugly truth behind plastic pollution and the false solution of plastic recycling. It explores how we got to our current global plastic pollution crisis and how the oil and gas industry has successfully manipulated the narrative around it. David Sayer, the Community Manager for the Beyond Plastics Virtual Group, answered questions and led a discussion following the film screening.

Utica-Rome

The Utica-Rome League recently held its annual meeting on May 20th. The League was joined by Dustin Czarny, a Commissioner on the Onondaga County Board of Elections and Co-Founder of Fair Maps CN, for a presentation on local elections and why they matter. The Utica-Rome League also honored the two local students who were selected to represent them at LWWNYS Students Inside Albany Conference!

Cooperstown

In preparation for election season, the Cooperstown League held an event for League members wanting to refresh their candidate moderation skills. The event prepared League members on how to conduct effective, fair, and interesting candidate events. Participants learned practical information, League rules and policies, the use of a flexible script, as well as how to maintain the gold standard of a fair and non-partisan approach, how to support audience engagement, how to assure equal time for all candidates’ voices, and what strategies are needed for success.

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