



2023-2024

ANNUAL REPORT

League of Women Voters of New York State Education Foundation

2023-2024 LWVNYS Education Foundation Board of Directors

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The League of Women Voters of New York State Education Foundation

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Message from the President

Our League boards and volunteers dedicate countless hours and unwavering effort to fulfill our mission of educating and empowering voters. It is our generous donors who provide the financial support that makes this work possible.

Over the past year, we've come together—alongside our local Leagues, MALs, and ILOs—to advance voter empowerment and safeguard our democracy. Through collaborative efforts, we've registered and educated more voters, using the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) to identify and engage underrepresented communities, ensuring that more voices are heard at the ballot box.

Our flagship program, *Students Inside Albany*, provided young people from across New York State with the tools, knowledge, and inspiration to become informed voters and active citizens. This intensive four-day training offers students an in-depth look at how public policy is created, enacted, and changed in New York, while teaching them how they can directly influence that process. Thanks to the support of our donors, the program is offered at no cost to the first student from each local League or ILO, with the exception of travel expenses to Albany.

This year, we also held regional training sessions in four areas of the state, creating opportunities for League members to network, discuss key issues, and inspire new leaders to step up within their local Leagues. The office staff, along with state League Board members, traveled statewide every Saturday in March to deliver these comprehensive training sessions. Thanks to the generosity of our donors and supporters, the costs for attending these sessions were fully covered, excluding the cost of lunch and the meeting space.

In addition, we bid farewell to Laura Ladd Bierman, who retired after 16 remarkable years as our Executive Director. Under her leadership, the League experienced tremendous growth and success. You can read more about Laura's reflections on her time with the League in the pages that follow.

Our continued success is made possible by the dedication of our donors, the State Board, local Leagues, and members. Together, we will build on this momentum and carry forward the League's mission to strengthen our democracy.

Nancy Rosenthal

ABOUT THE LWVNYs EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Throughout its history the League of Women Voters of New York State Education Foundation (Foundation) has produced and distributed nonpartisan, educational materials; funded activities which promote citizen responsibility in the democratic process; and facilitated communication between citizens and their government officials. It has a strong commitment to young people and to the promise of the continued success of democracy.

The Foundation was established in 1950 as the Foundation for Citizen Education (FCE) to support the educational activities of the League of Women Voters of New York State. It is incorporated under the Not-for-Profit Corporation Law of New York and is classified as a public educational charitable organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The Foundation is dedicated exclusively to the support and promotion of the educational programs of the League of Women Voters in New York State.

MISSION

The Foundation is the educational and fundraising arm of The League of Women Voters of New York State which derives its strength from the energy and commitment of the women and men in 42 local Leagues throughout the state. It is strictly nonpartisan, and works primarily on projects that enlighten the electorate i.e., empower through education.

The charitable support of individual people, corporations and foundations throughout New York State help us accomplish three central missions:

- Educate people on the importance of their participation in government, in the political process and, most importantly, in the life of their home community.
- Create awareness of the issues at the local, state and national levels and what average citizens can do to have an impact on their government.
- Instill in young people and new citizens the knowledge of their role and responsibilities in managing their own government.

Students Inside Albany

SIA
AGENDA

SUNDAY, MAY 19

Welcome and Agenda Overview

Laura Ladd Bierman,
Executive Director, League of Women Voters
of New York State (LWVNY)

Ice Breaker

How Does New York State Government Work?

Erica Smitka, LWVNY Legislative Director

MONDAY, MAY 20

Tour of NYS Capitol

Tips for Being a Successful Citizen Lobbyist

Laura Ladd Bierman, Executive Director, LWVNY

With Special Guests:

- **Barbara Bartoletti**
Former LWVNY Legislative Director
- **Carrie Woerner**
Assemblywoman, District 113, Saratoga,
Washington and Warren Counties

NYS Court of Appeals: Role of the Court in Policy Making

- **Heather Davis, Esq.**, Deputy Clerk of the Court
- **Margaret Wood, Esq.**, Assistant Deputy Clerk of the Court

Assembly Shadow

Media Panel

- **Dan Clark**, Reporter, Times Union
- **Alexander Gault**, Statehouse Reporter, Johnson Newspaper Corp

Evening walk to Empire State Plaza

TUESDAY, MAY 21

Political Activism: How Citizens Make a Difference

- **Blair Horner**, Executive Director, NY Public Interest
Research Group (NYPIRG)
- **Alexis Goldsmith**, National Organizing Director, Beyond Plastics

Senate Shadow

Running for Office

- **Deborah Zamer**, Albany Common Council

Evening Bowling at local bowling alley

WEDNESDAY, MAY 22

How Does NYS Government Work – Final Q & A

Erica Smitka, LWVNY Legislative Director

Voter Registration

Laura Ladd Bierman, LWVNY Executive Director

Recognition Ceremony

Nina Goldstein

My name is Nina Goldstein, and I had the pleasure of being sponsored by the Great Neck League of Women Voters to attend the Students Inside Albany conference. For those who don't know, the Students Inside Albany conference is an annual trip where high school students get to experience government up close and personal—sort of like a political reality show, but with less drama and more democracy.



The conference is jam-packed with lectures, guest speakers, and, of course, everyone's favorite activity: shadowing their local legislators. This year, I had the incredible opportunity to shadow Assemblywoman Gina Sillitti and Senator Jack Martins. Trust me, it's not every day you get to see politicians up close without having to press "skip ad" to get to the video you actually wanted to see!

I am making the assumption that most of you have not been on the Senate and assembly floor so let me tell you about it. The assembly floor is a place where you can vote on healthcare bills to save lives and introduce amendments on equal rights but if you get bored you can watch Netflix, eat a snack, or play slots, and your neighbor will fill you in on what's going on. The Senate floor on the other hand is a quiet place with beautiful, and as I learned on my tour, unfinished architecture, making it mesmerizing to look around. You can stand inside fireplaces so no one hears your conversations, and at the end of your service, you get to bring home a huge red chair that most likely won't match the rest of your furniture.

But the real highlight was meeting other like-minded kids who are just as crazy about making a difference in government as I am.

It was an extremely collegial environment and the heated card games at the end of the day mirrored the spirit of debate that we had witnessed on the legislative floors.

Growing up, my grandma always told me that if I wanted to wake up feeling fulfilled every morning, I needed to do something that helps people. She's a pediatrician in Coney Island, making kids smile and curing what ails them. I, on the other hand, couldn't fathom taking biology again—those pig dissections still haunt my dreams. So, I figured the best way to make an impact on people's lives without having to wear a lab coat, was to be an elected official. After all, politics needs its own version of a doctor—someone who can diagnose problems and prescribe the right policies.

Hannah Loughner

Students Inside Albany Conference Reflection

May 19th: I arrived at the Louise M. Slaughter train station and met with Tanya before leaving for Albany. After around 5 hours, I arrived in Albany and met up with everyone else who took the train. There was around 60 of us students from across New York! After taking a bus to the hotel, we watched a presentation by Erica who is the legislative director of the LWVNYS. She taught us about how the New York state government works, compared to the federal government system.

May 20th: In the morning, we took a tour of the Capital building. We walked the million dollar staircase and got to see inside the Senate and Assembly chamber. I never knew that the Senate chamber was left unfinished. After, there was a presentation by an Assemblywoman and the former legislative director for the LWVNYS. They talked to us about how to successfully lobby. It was great to learn about how we can speak directly to those who represent us in government and talk to them about bills that we find important. We walked back to the capital, and I had a great time with Assemblyman Brian T Manktelow, who represents Wayne county and the town of Webster (Assembly district 130). I sat on the Assembly floor with him and we had some really great conversations! He is an army veteran and is on committees for local governments, energy, ways and means, veterans affairs, and environmental conservation. After I shadowed the Assemblyman, we had a very interesting media panel presentation from 2 journalists who talked about their experiences with news, radio, documentaries and television. I learned what the daily life of a journalist is like and how writers take an unbiased position on current news.



May 21st: We began the day with a member of The New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), who talked about his group. Groups can come together to support bills that they both want to pass, giving the bill more power because there are more people behind supporting it. I was very excited to meet Senator Sandra G Brouk. She represents Irondequoit, Webster, Penfield, Fairport, Perinton, Pittsford and East Rochester (55th Senate district). Senator Brouk is chair on the

mental health committee and is a member of health, legislative women's caucus, internet and technology, children and families, cities 2, consumer protection, and veterans, homeland security and military affairs committees. I got to see more around the capital from one of Brouk's staffers, who is also from

Webster! I got to watch the Senate session from the gallery, but I unfortunately could not take any photos. We then ended the night by going bowling! I had a great time with all my new friends

May 22nd: We all reflected and shared our favorite moments from our time in Albany. We then discussed voter registration and pre-registration process. I filled out my absentee ballot!

This was overall such a rewarding experience and it opened my eyes to new perspectives and helped me understand the ins and outs of the New York state government. I think this is an opportunity that should be available to all students. Education about government is crucial for the young adults of today. We are the future of democracy and have the responsibility to shape the world we want to live in.

"I learned how to use my voice and know that it is heard even though I'm only one person."

"I want to be more involved in political journalism and help educate and advocate for people to vote and promote change in their communities."

"It has inspired me to lobby on issues that are important to me."

"Now I truly understand the importance of citizens' perspectives."

"I feel more empowered to vote and lobby since I am now pre-registered AND I know how to lobby."

2024 STUDENTS INSIDE ALBANY CONFERENCE SPONSORED BY:



Voter Education

NYCET Partnership

The state League partnered with the NY Civic Engagement Table (NYCET) to better improve get-out-the-vote efforts. With this partnership, the state and local Leagues will join other organizations in working toward a stronger and more inclusive democracy. We will also all have access to new tools and tactics to educate and engage voters more in elections and strengthen our get-out-the-vote (GOTV) efforts. The local Leagues can target their efforts to specific areas with low voter turnout and areas that are under-resourced. Educational programs and training was provided to all local Leagues on the services and data available from NYCET.

Election Day Hotline

On election day in 2023, the state League staff assisted on the hotline organized by the national Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. The League advertised the hotline which voters could call if they had questions or were denied voting at a poll site. Staff monitored these calls and escalated those that were appropriate to the local Board of Elections offices for resolution.



Local and State League Impact in 2023



VOTER REGISTRATION

548 in-person drives with over **6,000** registered

76 drives in high schools with almost **3,500** registered

64 drives in colleges with over **1,000** registered

541 drives at naturalization ceremonies with over **3,500** registered

CANDIDATE EVENTS

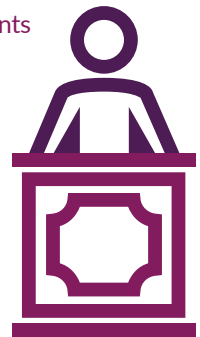
72 in person candidate events

44 virtual candidate events

27 hybrid candidate events

5610 attendees at candidate events

Over **28,000** views of candidate events during or after the event



GET OUT THE VOTE



Distributed almost **20,000** Voter Guides Part I in English and over **3,000** in Spanish; almost **7,000** Part II in English and almost **300** in Spanish

Distributed over **30,000** flyers, posters, postcards, doorhangars and palmcards

732 GOTV posts on websites
366 GOTV posts on Instagram
1050 GOTV posts on Facebook
21 GOTV posts on X

Almost **5,000** "likes" or "shares" on all social media posts



Citizen Education

New Publications

The state League has updated its Citizen Lobbyist booklet. This booklet provides educational information as to how to make your voice heard in government, from finding elected officials, searching for bills, and drafting letters or emails on issues of interest to you.

Your Guide to the Empire State Government is a new 4-fold brochure created by the state League. This brochure describes the roles, responsibilities and election requirements for each of the 3 branches of NYS government and the Attorney General and Comptroller. How a bill becomes a law is also portrayed. This brochure will be used in high schools, colleges and anywhere Leagues want to educate the public on how to make their voice heard in NYS government.



Redistricting

The redistricting saga continued in 2023-24. The Court of Appeals, in December 2023, decided that the IRC should be given a second chance to draw the congressional lines, something which the IRC failed to do in January 2021. The state League filed an amicus brief in the case of Hoffmann et al vs. IRC. The state League's position was against mid-decade redistricting and that the constitutional process and deadlines should be respected per Harkenrider case. With the ruling, new congressional lines were to be drawn by February 28, 2024.

The League continued to be involved in two aspects of redistricting. A coalition of organizations, including the state League, developed a three-prong action on the redistricting of the congressional maps in 2024:

- Educational campaign
- Media campaign
- Peoples' hearing

The state League issued a statement and the coalition of organizations sent a letter to the IRC requesting them to schedule hearings and hold open meetings on mapping for the new lines. No hearings were held and the League, with the coalition, organized a People's Hearing to allow the public to weigh in on concerns and comments on redistricting of congressional lines. The state League received \$15,000 in grant funding for its work on this project concerning the 2024 redistricting of Congressional lines.

The coalition also created a Redistricting Research group to investigate and evaluate potential changes to the redistricting process for the future. The State League received a \$5,000 grant for our participation in this effort.

Voting in Jails

The New York State League of Women Voters conducted a survey in 2022-23 of the ability of those incarcerated in county jails to exercise their right to vote. The results were quite disturbing, as only 11 of the state's 57 counties outside of New York City, which are the counties that were surveyed, had meaningful

and effective programs. The report was released in June 2023 and in January 2024, the League presented the findings to the New York State Sheriffs Association Conference to offer assistance to all Sheriffs in helping individuals detained in jails to register and vote.

Public Campaign Finance Briefing

In December, the League, in conjunction with Fair Elections and Public Citizen, hosted a briefing and training on the new public campaign finance program with details on how the program works and how all of us can support its success.

Advocacy Training

In February, a Legislative Hot Topics webinar was organized virtually for all members. Most issue specialists and issue committee chairs as well as the State Issues Committee presented the state League's advocacy agenda and how members can get involved.

In early May, almost 50 members attended the annual Advocacy Training Day in Albany. Presentations were made on how League positions are adopted, what action local Leagues and members can take, and information on specific issues. The state League Legislative Director, as well as issue specialists and issue committee chairs spoke at the event.

Regional Training Workshops

In March, over 250 members attended regional training workshops in four locations across the state. Workshops organized to train League members on a number of topics were held in Rochester, Manhasset, Cortland and Albany. Workshops included:

- The Wild Ride: Get Ready for the 2024 Election Season!
- The Story of Us: Evaluating and Tracking League Programs
- Bridge to Excellence - Strengthening Local Leagues Through DEI Mastery
- How and Why Not to Do it All: Leading a Local League
- Making your Voice Heard: Citizens and Local Leagues
- Engaging College Students in Their Communities and Beyond
- Fact vs. Fiction: Training the Public on Determining Mis and Dis-Information

16 Years of State League Accomplishments

Laura Ladd Bierman, LWVNYS
Executive Director, 2008-2024



The League was always a part of Laura's adult life. She joined the League in 1982 when she moved to Albany from Washington, DC. When Laura arrived, she knew nothing about Albany and very little about NYS politics. She joined the League to stay current and engaged in politics in New York. Since then she has been a member of five different local Leagues in four states. Laura was on the local League Board in three of those Leagues, serving in different positions including President of the League in Albany County in the early 1990s. In 2008, the state League Board hired her to be the Executive Director.

In 2008-2009 in NYS, there were 49 local Leagues with 5,940 members. A Bigger Better Bottle Bill passed both houses in the Legislature. Local Leagues distributed over 36,000 Voter Guide Part Is and over 39,000 Part IIs. Over 100 people attended an event at the United Nations on the impact of global warming on women and children. And, 27 students attended the Students Inside Albany conference. This was Laura's first year as Executive Director of the State League.

The 16 years of Laura's tenure saw ups and downs for the League. Since 2008, membership for the League has declined to 3,200 and the number of local Leagues has also decreased to 40 local Leagues (plus two ILOs). The number of local Leagues had a high of 52 in 2013 and membership increased in 2019 slightly, but the trend has been a decrease. Fluctuation in the number of local leagues has been caused by the creation and demise of MAL Units and the merger of some existing local Leagues. The influence of the League in the state, however, has remained strong.

As with many people's own experiences, the League's work can be divided into pre-pandemic and post-pandemic. The COVID pandemic altered the way the

League functions as before the pandemic, much of the League's activities were on paper and in person. Leagues were learning to use websites and social media to broadcast their materials and messages, but there was still a heavy reliance on in-person efforts. In 2020, the Leagues became experts at Zoom and virtual meetings to engage, educate and excite the public on voting, advocacy and issues. Since 2020, Leagues have again had to redesign their efforts to offer hybrid programs and information.

In the voter services activities, local Leagues have distributed over 468,000 Voter Guides and another 22,000 in Spanish in the last 16 years.

Candidate events have continued to be a struggle for many local Leagues – and the state League. In 2017, the state board adopted the “no empty chair” policy for all races.. This policy has required local Leagues to cancel candidate events and caused some criticism of the League by candidates.

In the fall of 2018, the state League organized its own debate among the gubernatorial candidates after the media declined to co-sponsor a debate. The League partnered with the College of

Publications

FIRST VOTE: Info for first time voters; Distributed at naturalization ceremonies; Distributed to high school seniors

YOUR RIGHT TO VOTE (SERIES): College Students; Individuals Experiencing Homelessness; Individuals with Physical Disabilities; Individuals with Criminal Convictions or Detained in Jail or Prison

CITIZEN LOBBYIST: Info on advocacy and legislative process

WELCOME TO NEW YORK: YOUR GUIDE TO THE EMPIRE STATE GOVERNMENT



Saint Rose in Albany and invited all five candidates to attend. Four out of five candidates did participate and the League created a Go Fund Me account to offset the expenses. This was the first, and only, time that the state League had organized its own gubernatorial debate without media partners.

With the introduction of new voting equipment in fall of 2009, the state League undertook a survey of voters to evaluate the new machines and processes. Over 1,000 voters submitted responses allowing the League to make recommendations to the Legislature and the state Board of Elections. The League repeated the survey in 2012 and again over 1,000 voters from across the state submitted responses.

Vote 411 was initiated by the national League with the state League adopting its usage in 2011. The state League has provided ongoing training to local Leagues and also coordinated its implementation statewide. Nationwide, over 2 million voters accessed Vote 411 in 2023 with 40k+ candidates listed on the site; in New York state, almost 127,000 people viewed their ballots in 2023 on Vote 411. A new texting service was also introduced by the state League in 2019 to provide timely reminders on voting deadlines.

In 2014-15, the state League received a grant of \$25,000 for a multi-year project to educate the public on the opportunity to become an organ donor when they registered to vote. This was a pilot to see if educating people on organ donation when registering to vote could increase the number of organ donors

statewide. Training for local Leagues was initiated, as well as connecting local Leagues with organ donation organizations in their areas to coordinate and assist at voter registration drives.

From 2018 through 2024, the state League received over \$196,000 in grant funding to support voter education efforts and get-out-the-vote (GOTV) activities. This funding has supported state staff, but also provided funding for education on early voting, translation of voter guides and brochures, the new texting service, and Vote 411 license fee. With the pandemic, many GOTV efforts had to be redesigned completely, allowing the state League to offer mini-grants, totaling over \$30,000, to local Leagues to encourage creative, new ways to educate and engage the public in voting, for example, billboards, bus and radio ads, postcards, flyers and lawn signs.

Since the pandemic, the state League has offered more educational programs on Zoom, allowing members and the to attend and participate without requiring the local Leagues to organize their own forums. These programs have included topics such as election reforms, environmental issues, and DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion). The most ambitious of these programs has focused on the redistricting efforts.

Educational Materials

State League Briefing Papers and Presentations, 2010-2016

“Increasing Voter Participation”

- over 30 community forums
- Received \$18,000 in grants

“New York State Redistricting Reform”

- over 20 forums
- constitutional amendment ballot proposal

“New York State Campaign Finance Reform”

- over 25 presentations statewide
- Received \$19,000 in grants

“Albany on the Record”

- coalition of organizations for program on ethics reforms
- Received \$10,000 in grants

Election Reform Forums (2010 and 2014)

- Partnered with Rockefeller Institute

“The People’s Convention: An Overview of the Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How of New York State’s Constitutional Convention Question”

- Partnered with Rockefeller Institute
- Forums across state and website creation
- Ballot proposal

Redistricting Efforts 2021-2024

Total over \$88,000 in grants received

2021

- Virtual training programs
 - redistricting process
 - communities of interest
 - mapping software
 - preparing testimony for hearings
- People’s Hearing 2021 (virtual)
 - 22 diverse organizations presented
 - Over 1,000 attended
 - Over 1,000 viewed recording
 - Over 100,000 New Yorkers engaged (January to June)
- 18 Leagues submitted testimony online to IRC
- 8 Leagues testified in person to IRC
- State League distributed over 50,000 guides in multiple languages on ballot proposals
- Advocated for funding and staffing for IRC
- Created statewide task force with 79 local League members connecting with over 350 stakeholder community partners
- Received \$68,000 grants

2022

- Amicus Brief filed in Harkenrider v Hochul
- Press statements and educational forums/webinars

2023

- Amicus Brief filed in Hoffman v NYS IRC
- Press statements and educational forums/webinars

2023-24

- Issued statements requesting hearings
- People’s Hearing
 - Organized with coalition of organizations
 - Received \$15,000 grant
- Research Group (continuing)
 - Coalition of organizations
 - Evaluate other states’ processes
 - Create proposal for reform
 - Received \$5,000 grant

During the 16 years, there have been many successes for the state League in its advocacy agenda, but also many frustrations. Early in these years, leadership in the Senate was a bit chaotic especially with the existence of the Independent Democratic Caucus, a group of several Democratic members of the Senate formed to caucus with the Republicans to allow the Republicans a majority and therefore share leadership with the IDC; the IDC ended in 2018 with a majority of Democrats elected to the Senate. The divided houses prevented some legislative successes at that time.

Highlights of Advocacy Successes

Election Reforms

- Early Voting
- Pre-registration of 16 and 17 year olds
- Online voter registration
- Anti-Voter Suppression
- Online absentee ballot applications
- NY Voting Rights Act
- Reduced voter registration deadline from 25 to 10 days
- Voting on college campuses
- Restoration of voting rights for people on parole

National Popular Vote Compact

Marriage Equality

Women's Equality Agenda

NYS Equal Rights Amendment

Environmental Issues

- Bigger Better Bottle Bill (2009)
- Moratorium on fracking
- Defining fracking materials as hazardous waste
- Clean water, air and healthful environment
- Climate change

Ethics Reforms

- Creation of Joint Commission on Public Ethics (JCOPE)
- Creation of Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government (COELIG)

Healthcare Issues

- Reproductive Health Act
- Safe Staffing

Campaign Finance Reforms

... and many more

Changes in the League's positions have been undertaken with studies, consensuses and concurrences. Marriage Equality, Death with Dignity, Criminal Justice Reform, Raise the Age and Human Trafficking positions were adopted through concurrences with other states' positions. The healthcare position, charter school position and constitutional convention position were all updated through the League's study process. Fusion voting position was also adopted through the study and consensus process.

In 2019, the state League celebrated its centennial. With a consultant, a book was written summarizing the 100 years of the state League, "A Force to Reckon With: A Centennial History of the League of Women Voters of NYS." This book is an important resource on the significant contributions of our members and supporters to our democratic process. Local Leagues were also asked to submit their own histories and a separate book, "Forces to Reckon With: A Collection of Histories

of Local Leagues in NYS" was printed as well. In addition, the state League organized a celebration in Buffalo in November 2019 honoring five New York State changemakers, including the then Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul and her husband. Another celebratory event was held in Albany in March 2020 at which communications expert and former Capitol reporter Liz Benjamin interviewed recently retired LWWNYS Legislative Director Barbara Bartoletti about her 35 years of experience and stories lobbying at the state Capitol.

Educating youth about their communities and government has been a high priority for the state League. The state League's Students Inside Albany (SIA) Conference is its foundation program, highly regarded by school districts, local leagues and elected officials. SIA hosted 27 students in 2009, growing quickly to 60 students which became its maximum capacity. Except for 2020-2022 (cancelled because of the pandemic), the Conference includes 4 days of interactive speakers, tours and shadowing of their own Assemblymember and Senator for these students from across the state with the goal of educating them on how to engage and influence public policy decision-making. The Conference won the Community Connections Award at the 2012 LWWUS Convention. 724 high school students have participated during these 16 years with many currently working in the NYS Legislature and other governmental positions. Over \$170,000 has been received from the sponsors of this program during these years, including NYSUT, CSEA, Key Bank, Stewart's Shops, and Golub Foundation.

The state League created lesson plans in 2018 in seven areas of civics and elections:

- Structure of New York State Government
- Individual Rights and Responsibilities in New York State
- Voting in New York State
- The Public Policy Process (Laws) in New York
- Influencing New York State Government
- Participating in Political Action in Your Local Community
- Participating in Community Service in Your Local Community

These plans were created by high school teachers with the state League staff to be utilized by social studies teachers across the state. The League posted them in customizable formats on the state League website and the NYS Education Department has posted them on their website as a resource to teachers.

The state League also was represented on the NYS Education Department's Task Force on Civics Readiness. The goal of the Task Force was to create a seal of civic readiness for high school students to achieve in becoming engaged citizens. The seal is now in its second year of implementation by many school districts across the state.

The state League reinstated the biennial regional training workshops with over 250 members attending each year in four different areas of the state. Topics have included current advocacy issues, voter service efforts, DEI (diversity, equity and

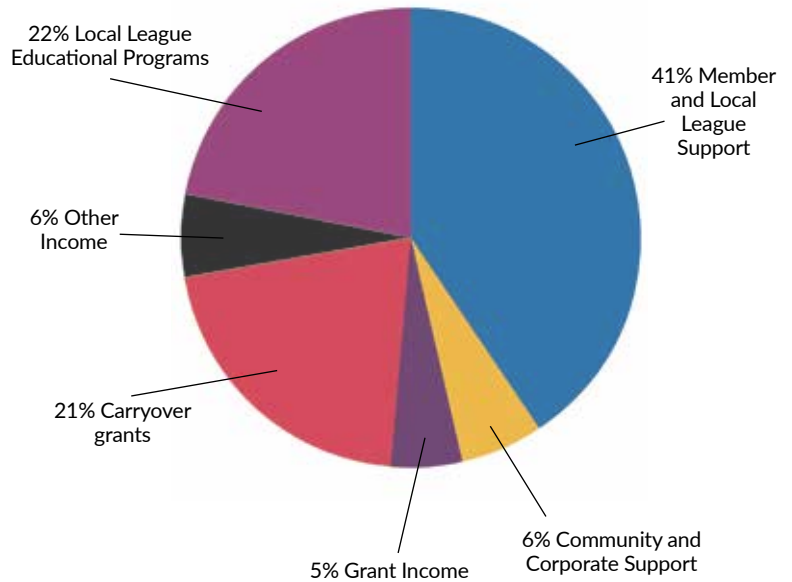
inclusion) projects, and management of local Leagues; these workshops have served to share successes among the local Leagues for replication by others. State Conventions have also been held biennially with speakers such as political pollsters, media, local and state elected officials, women's suffrage historians and authors, civil discourse experts, youth programs administrators and more. In 2019 to celebrate the centennials of the League and women's suffrage, the Convention was held in Syracuse with a pre-conference field trip to Seneca Falls with tours of the Elizabeth Cady Stanton home, Women's Hall of Fame, and the Women's Rights National Park (including Wesleyan Chapel).

All that has been accomplished by the state League has needed financial support. Our members, supporters and local Leagues have provided crucial donations to the state League to allow it to be so successful. The state League organized a "League Matters" campaign from 2012-2015 in which over \$400,000 was raised from members and the public separate and in addition to the annual fundraising. Also, a \$1 million gift was received in 2021 to support state staff capacity and to help fund local League's voter service activities; the majority of this gift was used to create the RNS Endowment fund to support the League in the future. A 1919 Society was also created in the last 16 years inviting members to include the state League in their wills and estate planning. Over \$400,000 has been received in grants for a multitude of programs in addition to the \$171,000 in sponsorships for the SIA Conference since 2008. In addition, in-kind donations have supported printing of many of the brochures, voter guides and legislative agendas over the years. While the portion of membership dues collected by the local Leagues and shared with the state has provided a foundation for the state League's efforts, it is only with grants, donations, and sponsorships that the state League has accomplished all that it has.

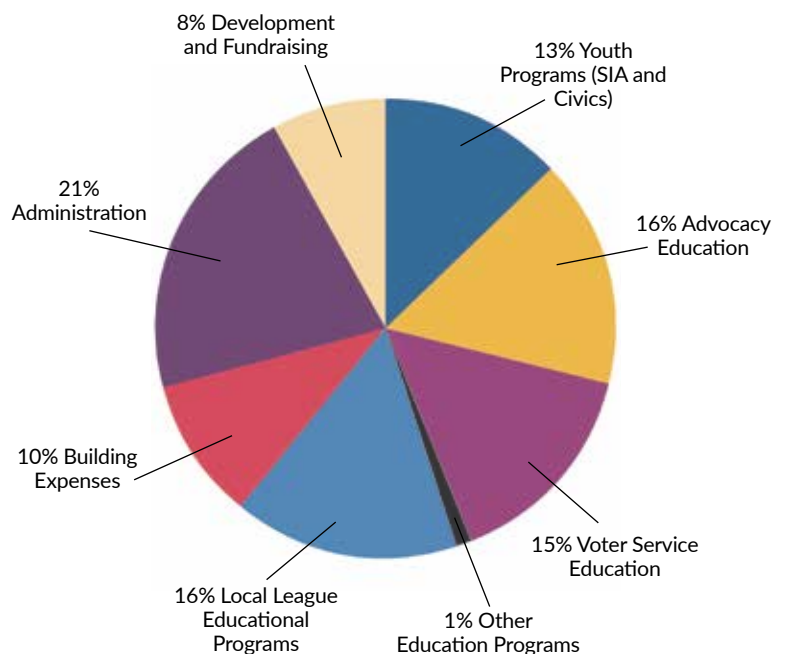
During these 16 years, the state League has expanded existing programs and efforts, implemented new ideas and projects, created new educational brochures and programs, and strengthened its influence and activities across New York State. Only with its members and the local Leagues has so much been possible.

Income and Expenses 2023-2024

LWVNYS EF Income 2023-2024



LWVNYS EF Expenses 2023-2024



Thank you to our donors

DONOR PROFILE:

Dare Thompson, *LWVNYS President, 2015-2019*



I probably never would have joined the League if I had not been hired to teach social studies instead of English which I was actually trained to teach. My seventh graders were talking about the writing of the Constitution and it dawned on me that the new democracy it created depended totally on individual citizens stepping up — whether it was with their vote, fighting for a new law, or taking an injustice to court. I was ashamed that except for voting regularly I was really not doing my part. I remember thinking, “We all own this country and I’m not showing up for work.” I can still hear it in my head.

I was a newly-wed, so I was probably like many young people just getting started in adult life, but considering that I graduated from a college (Swarthmore) founded by Lucretia Mott and attended by Alice Paul, and considering it was the 60’s and the campus was alive with activists — well, DUH!

As I contemplated having a child, I also heeded the feminist wisdom of the day that suggested that my brain would turn to mush if I was home with just a baby and housework, so I looked for a civic organization with serious learning opportunities. It was a college town so no surprise there was a League, and all I remember is that almost immediately I was on the local board and that I attended both the 1975 state convention in Pittsburgh and the LWVUS convention in NYC a year later. Packets of important information kept arriving from the state and national offices (no computers or even phone conferencing then) and I would devour them. This was not school, it was about real life — fascinating!

I also found my people: down to earth women (and a few men — the League opened membership to men in 1974) who were smart, attentive to the important things going on, and willing to consider all sides of an issue.

As we moved over the years, I quickly found the closest League and got the scoop on housing, schools, and potential work. Previous government work elsewhere helped me figure out my new political environment pretty quickly too. I am home.

And everywhere I’ve lived, the League has given me memorable experiences proving that government isn’t just

something that happens on TV. Before moving to Rhode Island in 1976, I was lucky enough to attend the Ford-Carter presidential debate organized by the national League and presented in nearby Philadelphia. I saw Carter many times after that in person — twice at the White House, and once in Providence — all because of the League. One of those White House visits was a lunch in support of the ERA and Sarah Weddington, the woman famous for arguing *Roe v Wade*, was one of the “celebrity” guests. (I’ve since learned she was only one month older than me!)

The Rhode Island years were followed by fourteen years in the Utica-Rome area. By then I had two sons and was juggling a job as the ED of a community art center as well — a job I took because I realized that the skills I had gained in the League would transfer to almost any management job. When we moved to the Columbus, Ohio, area in 1994 I headed up the arts advocacy organization allied with the Ohio Arts Council. My NY experience in the arts and my League background made me perfect for the job and my office was in the same block as the state League office where I again served on a state League board as well as my local League board. One of the most admired representatives in the state legislature was a past state League president and she gave me valuable access to information and contacts — and the female Speaker of the House even appointed me to a commission.

I’ve been back in NY since 1998, but now in the Hudson Valley where I have served both my local League and the state League. My experience with three other state Leagues and with an LWVUS strategic planning committee have made me particularly aware of the importance — and challenges — of state Leagues. LWVUS has cachet as the top of the pyramid, local Leagues have invaluable community connections, but the state Leagues are the critical hubs that keep the whole system working. LWVUS, local League boards, and state government folks appreciate the important work state Leagues do, but it is sometimes hard to explain to outside funders and even to many members. Like the plumbing and electrical systems in a building, they play a critical role that is usually only fully recognized when something goes wrong. But that is why I am a faithful donor and try to be there when they say “Help!”

DONOR PROFILE:

Judie Gorenstein, *LWVNYS President, 2021-2023*

It may take a village to raise a child, but it takes all our local Leagues, the ILO's and state League working together to educate voters, lobby for bills when we have positions, and protect our democracy. This means all our members throughout New York state need to do their share. They need to do what they are capable and able to do. There are those that are able to donate their time, to take on leadership roles, to be involved in committees and have the skills to make their League stronger, more visible and moving forward. Then there are those who may not be able to donate time, but have the ability to make substantial financial contributions and make the League stronger by making it more financially secure and solvent. And of course there are many members who are able to do both, donating their time and effort as well as financial support.

I know that over the years, I have often wondered where and how much I should donate and I think many of you may be in that same position. I joined and became active in the League after retiring as a psychiatric social worker in 2003. I had found my work very rewarding and felt I had made a difference in the lives of my clients and their families. I was looking to do something meaningful and to continue to make a difference in my retirement. I contacted several organizations to see if they needed volunteers. After volunteering at a voter registration in an underserved community, I joined the LWV of Huntington and immediately became an active member on the voter service committee. Not long afterwards I became co-chair of that committee, then chair, 1st VP, and then president of LWV of Huntington. During that time I also was the voter service chair of the Suffolk County ILO. I loved everything about the League: the mission, the work, the other members I met and their passion and dedication.

However, as I recall one of the earlier board meetings when the board had received a request from state League for a donation, there was a discussion as to whether as a local League we needed to make a donation. Our local League was struggling financially and most did not see that the state League needed our financial assistance. After all, most of the dues we collected went to LWVUS and state League and we were not doing much fundraising ourselves. I was influenced by that discussion. We were the boots on the ground, we were doing the work and we needed the funds to do it.

My donations were initially made only to LWV of Huntington, my local League. However, that was then. As I became more involved in the LWV of Huntington, I realized how important it was for us to do fundraising, that we could not rely just on our dues and that we also needed to help support the state League. I remember my first state League convention and how impressed I was by what the state League was doing

as well as all the local Leagues. I loved how the convention and particularly how the plenary was run; I felt I was seeing democracy in action.

15 years ago, I was asked to be an off-board director and chair of youth services for the state League; I said yes without hesitation. I have always seen youth as our future and had worked in Huntington with high school students, interviewing students for SIA and bringing the program VOTE 18 into the high schools. As youth chair, I was first tasked with trying to increase the number of students attending SIA. I was elected to be a director on the state League board the following year and served in that position for 5 years. The number of SIA students grew from 30 to 60 which was then the maximum. Leagues throughout the state were encouraged to expand youth services which they did. I then moved to become voter service chair for six years during which time we first developed toolkits for voter registration, candidate events and then GOTV.

The entire state League board was now working more diligently to help and support all our local Leagues and the response we were getting from our local Leagues encouraged us to do even more. As a member, as a leader, I realized that we all must and were working together. When I was nominated and elected as president of the state League in June of 2021, my goal was to have the state League, our ILOs and local Leagues move forward working together. After serving as President for two years, I am now chair of the nominating committee of the state League, was nominating chair of the Westchester County ILO this year, and am a proud member of the LWV of the Rivertowns. I also recently rejoined the LWV of Huntington. I gladly donate to my local Leagues, ILO and the state League. I know every contribution is needed and helps.

In this time of high anxiety and uncertainty, we all need to be certain that the League will be able to continue its work to protect our democracy.

We all need to do our part. Of course it is always important to support your local League. It is also crucial to support the state League. The state League finances Vote 411 so that local Leagues do not need to. The state League organizes and funds a large share of SIA so even Leagues without strong finances can send a student. The state League provides most of the materials you need for educating voters. The state League keeps us informed not only of what is happening in our state government, but also in the other Leagues throughout the state. The state League supports us; it is so important you support the state League!



Thank you to our donors

The League of Women Voters of New York State Education Foundation, Inc. is pleased to acknowledge the following members and community partners whose philanthropy in the 2023-2024 fiscal year has supported our efforts. Thank you for being part of our community and making our success possible!

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Sustaining gifts, given monthly or quarterly, help create financial stability for the EF. These gifts are made with a credit card and happen automatically on the schedule that works best for our donors. Sustaining support like this means the EF can continue to provide meaningful resources for New York State voters. Thanks to our 2023/2024 EF and League recurring donors:

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For more information on making recurring gifts to the League, please contact Erica Smitka, at (518) 465-4162 or Erica@lwvny.org.

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1919 Society

The 1919 Society was created in celebration of the state League's 90th birthday to ensure that the League is able to maintain its vibrant reputation in the 21st century. Remembering a charity in your will or other estate plans is a powerful way to ensure that your values survive you and that the League remains robust for the next generation. In addition to providing a wonderful legacy for the community, bequests decrease the size of your taxable estate.

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2023-2024 Local Leagues in New York State

Albany County	Northeast Westchester County
Allegany & Cattaraugus Counties MAL Unit	Northwest Westchester County MAL Unit
Brookhaven	Oneonta
Broome/Tioga Counties	Port Washington/Manhasset
Buffalo/Niagara	Rensselaer County
Cazenovia	Rivertowns
Central Nassau County	Rochester Metro
Chautauqua County	Rockland County
Cooperstown	Rye, Rye Brook, Port Chester
Cortland	Saratoga County
East Nassau County	Scarsdale
Geneva	Schenectady County
Great Neck MAL Unit	Smithtown
Hamptons, Shelter Island & North Fork	St. Lawrence MAL Unit
Huntington	Steuben and Chemung Counties
Larchmont/Mamaroneck	Syracuse Metropolitan Area
Mid-Hudson Region	Tompkins County
New Castle	Utica/Rome Metro Area
New Rochelle	White Plains
New York City	Inter-League Organizations
North Country serving Clinton, Essex and Franklin Counties	Suffolk County ILO
	Westchester County ILO

“America, as the world’s greatest proponent of democracy, has good reason to demand of herself civic and social consciousness, tolerance, justice, high standards of political honesty – for those we must strive if we are to defend our democracy by making it a shining example.”

– *The League of Women Voters of NYS, 1946*