



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW YORK

STATE VOTER

April 2024



President's Message

Nancy Rosenthal - nancyrosenthal9@gmail.com

As you probably saw last week, I shared the news that Laura, our current Executive Director of the state League is retiring as of June 21. In case you missed this news, I thought I'd share it again.

Please [click here](#) to read the moving letter she submitted to the state Board. Laura will be deeply missed. She has given her heart and soul to our League these last 16 years. Laura has been instrumental, along with our Presidents and state Boards, in bringing our state League to be the highly respected organization it is today. Her tireless work with members and local Leagues is greatly appreciated by all of us.

We are pleased to report that Erica Smitka, our Deputy Director, has agreed to serve as Acting Executive Director upon Laura's retirement. The state League Board has formed a three-member steering committee to take this transition opportunity to reexamine the role and responsibilities of the Executive Director and staff in executing our mission and handling the essential tasks of the organization as it moves forward in our second century. The committee's work will be a collaborative effort working with both Laura and Erica, as well as multiple stakeholders.

The Board will meet again in the next month to review the findings of the Steering Committee. Members of the Steering Committee are: Nancy Rosenthal, President LWVNY, Sally Robinson, 1st Vice President, and Jane Colvin, Director.



League Advocacy Day, May 7, 2024

On May 7, 2023 the State League will host an in-person advocacy day from 9:30-4:00pm. Members will be invited to do the following

- Learn about important legislative issues and how to advocate for them
- Meet new league members from across the state
- Lobby your representative at the Capitol
- Enjoy lunch provided by LWVNY

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

[Register Here.](#)



Voter Services

Kathy Meany, VP for Voter Services

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With the Presidential Primary now behind us, local leagues are actively engaged in their communities with voter registration drives and voter information events, and are gearing up for School Boards and June Primary Elections candidate events.

| COUNTDOWN TO ELECTION DAY 2024 | PRIMARY ELECTIONS Tuesday, June 25 |
|--|---|
| Early Voting Days | June 15 - 23 |
| Register in Person or Online by | June 15 |
| Register by Mail | Must be received by June 15 |
| Apply for absentee or early mail ballot in person by | June 24 |
| Apply for absentee or early mail ballot by mail/online | Must be received by June 15 |
| Deliver ballot in person by close of polls | June 25 to poll site or BOE |
| Deliver ballot by mail | Must be postmarked by June 25 Must be received by July 2 |

NYS Primary Elections:

- U.S. Congressional Districts in NYS
- U.S. Senate in NYS District 20
- NYS Senate
- NYS Assembly

Check Your Districts: <https://www.latfor.state.ny.us/maps/>

Vote411.org

When you are seeking voting information, VOTE411.org is the perfect tool to use. This is a **national** voter guide. Everyone can check their voter registration status from here; register to vote; and obtain ballot and candidates' information. Feel free to share this website information with your family and friends who reside anywhere in the U.S.

Text Alerts

Want to see reminders of deadlines - or reminders to vote? Text **VOTENY to 474747** and receive timely notices and reminders of deadlines concerning upcoming elections! Tell your friends to sign up too!



Issues and Advocacy

Sally Robinson, VP for Issues and Advocacy

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FY2025 Budget Finalized

On Saturday, April 20th the 2025 budget for New York State was finalized at \$237 Billion. Check out our thoughts on the final budget below.

What were we happy to see included:

- Sufficient funds for the NYS Board of Elections- \$33.5M
- Dr. John L. Flateau Voting and Elections Database of New York- \$2.5M- We will continue to look into the funding provided for this measure as it appears certain stipulations in the bill were left out.
- AI use in political campaigns- provides relief against the use of materially deceptive media in political communications
- Direct line of funding for local boards of elections- \$5M
- Full support for the NYS Public Campaign Finance Program at \$114.5M
- Reproductive Freedom and Equity Grant program funding to establish a grant program to provide funding to New York abortion providers and non-profit organizations to increase access to abortion care.
- Clean Water Infrastructure Act -which will provide \$500M in clean water support across NYS

- Restoration of the hold harmless provision of education foundation aid financing
 - What we were disappointed to see:
 - Only \$5M in direct funding for local Boards of Elections and not our proposed \$10M.
 - Exclusion of funds to allow the state to join a multistate voter role system like ERIC (Electronic Registration Information Center)
 - No inclusion of the Bigger Better Bottle Bill (S237/A6353)
-



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Regina Tillman, VP for DEI

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I should call this piece something in the nature of how the LWV needs to stop being a social club and get back to being a part of the movement for social change. However, let me back up a little bit.

Recently really great conversations were had which spoke to League members having become more mature in their assessment of the importance of Equity and Inclusion to the League than they had been if compared to two to three years ago. That was followed by just as intense and forthright a conversation at April's LWVNYS DEI meeting.

What captured my imagination in those conversations was the clear need to broaden our recruitment horizons as a League. Essentially, some 40 - 70 years ago or so, the League may have been made up of a group of women that knew each other either from living on the same blocks, or were from within their family, or already friends, or from similar social circles. They often were not working outside of the home so that schedules for meetings were built upon ease of availability.

It is that approach to recruitment that lingers and prevents the League from being more reflective of today's changing society. It is not until League members are asked "where do you need to GO that is different" and "what do you need to DO that is different" that will allow the League to look more like their communities as a whole. It is then that they begin to reimagine their recruitment strategies, or even to think about having a strategy. Demographically, the League continues to look much like it did years ago. If you watched the March 2024 LWVUS DEI Webinar recording, you already know that fact since the results of the national member survey were presented therein. It provided data which included self-identified race/ethnicity and compared it to the US population. We could do the same "census-based evaluations" locally for youth, for disabled, for the neurodivergent, for socioeconomic standing, for men, etc.!

And when we compare ourselves to the larger population these days, we are clearly losing ground. We want the older women to stay with us because they understand the origins of "the League way" but we also need the energy associated with new members enriching us from their divergent backgrounds along with differing life experiences and perspectives.

League members like to ask how they should seek out members from backgrounds different from their own. But surprisingly, they begin to figure out different paths to that end if they consider it important to do so! One key finding is that it is not hard to reach out to other humans if one begins by seeking a relationship. It is gratifying that the conversations I mentioned in my opening indicate that some League members have already found out that this, in a nutshell, is what DEI is! And members of the local League chapters are free to pursue personal relationship-building with members of other communities without further mandates, thereby, positively influencing other communities to join us.

Why is data-based validation necessary, versus taking a guess or just listing every population group one can think of? I have personally been told that there are no Black people in one League's area so there is no need to consider DEI practices. Yet... when looking at the demographic data... there is a significant Asian population documented to be in their area, yet not reflected in their membership. Also, for a League that has a significant number of colleges in its area, many continue to be without youth represented in their League's decision-making. Plus, I do have to inquire if some of the League's

even know what the official boundary of their catchment area is?

As a League member, I challenge each of you to go to your Board of Directors and ask them what they are doing to ensure your chapter reflects the voices of all in your community. Please feel free to contact me in the meantime if you have any questions.

Local League News

LWV of Cattaraugus and Allegany MAL Unit helped to organize a walk to bring awareness to the NYS ERA amendment to the NYS Constitution that is on the ballot this November. The event was one of five across the state to kick-off awareness of the amendment that seeks to prohibit discrimination based on a person's ethnicity, national origin, disability, age, sex, including sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy and pregnancy outcomes, reproductive health care and autonomy.

LWV of Rockland County is currently working with Spring Valley High School to pre-register 16- and 17-year olds, and building educational programs to instill the importance of lifelong civic involvement. They are also on the campuses of Rockland Community College, St. Thomas Aquinas, and Dominican this Spring meeting with students, answering questions, and doing Voter Registration drives.

LWV of NYC's recent Lunch with the League featured esteemed author and historian, Blanche Wiesen Cook, professor of history and women's studies at the CUNY Graduate Center and John Jay College, and the author of a definitive, three-volume biography of Eleanor Roosevelt.

At this year's annual meeting of the **LWV of Utica/Rome**, 2023 SIA participants, Amiyah Evans and Sophia O'Neill, spoke about how they have continued their civic involvement and how their experiences at SIA have molded them. A conversation on strategies to effectively engage our youth was also part of this presentation.

LWV of Cooperstown promoted 3 ways to help celebrate Earth Day and keep our planet healthy:

1. April 22 is the official Earth Day 2024. Find a way to show your dedication to Mother Earth by taking part in an Earth Day activity like OCCA's (Otsego County Conservation Association) Earth Fest at Milford Central School.
2. The League will be at Earth Fest to register voters. Can you help?
3. On April 27, OCCA will sponsor a drive-through drop-off of difficult to recycle materials, including clothing and textiles, Styrofoam, cork, paper shredding, and more at Brewery Ommegang.

LWV of Albany County will be conducting a voter registration drive at the annual Tulip Festival in Albany in May.

In April, **LWV of Brookhaven and the League of the Hamptons, Shelter Island and the North Fork** were at the Riverhead Legislative Building with students from local high schools in a program sponsored by the Suffolk County Legislature. It featured a tour of the legislative building, visits by our county legislators, ending with a mock meeting around the horseshoe with the students serving as legislators, the presiding officer, and any staff.

Each month, **LWV of Buffalo and Niagara Counties** attends naturalization ceremonies to welcome our new U.S. citizens and help them register to vote.

At the annual luncheon organized by **LWV of Larchmont/Mamaroneck and Rye, Rye Brook, Port Chester**, the topic was "Empowering our Children's Future through Education in Civics, Climate Change and Experiential Learning." Speakers included Michael Rebell, Esq., Executive Director of the Center for Educational Equity; Harriet Shugarman, Executive Director of Climate Mama; and Rajeev Rajam, CEO of Globe From Home.

LWV of Mid-Hudson Region recently held an educational program on What You Need to Know About Running for School Board. Attendees were able to find out what it takes to make a difference in their community.

In May, **LWV of Rivertowns** will organize a program, "Trying to Solve the Puzzle of Affordable Housing in Westchester." The program will focus on how the lack of affordable housing in Westchester affects seniors, young adults & workers, and proposes solutions..



LWVUS Convention: June 27-30, 2024 Washington, DC

LWVUS Convention is coming. If you are interested in attending and representing your local League, contact your League's leaders. See all info on LWVUS

website [here](#). Register now [here](#) and reserve a hotel room at the Washington Hilton [here](#). All local Leagues are entitled to one delegate and then one more for each 50 members (as of the Jan. 31 US database) thereafter.

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Donate to LWNYS Education Foundation

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