

STATE VOTER

Bringing in the Holidays with Democracy December 2025

Congratulations on an outstanding and successful election season, your hard work, dedication, and unity truly made a difference. As we enter the holiday season, may this time bring you joy, rest, and renewed inspiration for the year ahead.



State Leaders Message

Nancy Rosenthal, President,

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Erica Smitka, Executive Director, erica@lwvny.org

What efforts League made in November to Defend Democracy! Voter turnout was at its highest, and more young people got out to vote! In part the push to vote was driven by the candidates running and the issues on the ballot.

November was a very busy month with several lawsuits filed. The State League filed a motion to intervene in the lawsuit filed by the Department of Justice. We filed this motion to protect sensitive voter information that the DOJ was attempting to access. Our Saratoga League recently filed a lawsuit, in conjunction with LWVUS, challenging the USCIS decision to prevent non-profit groups from registering voters at administrative naturalization ceremonies. We had a huge win on the federal level in League of Women Voters Education Fund v. Trump, when a federal court granted LWVUS and other plaintiffs a permanent injunction against an executive order that would have required a passport or similar document to register to vote via the federal form. Remember, we are defending League positions and policies; these lawsuits are NOT about those persons holding elected office in Washington DC.

MAID awaits Governor Hochul's signature by December 31. The League has worked for nearly ten years on this legislation. **Please, whatever pressure can be applied is needed now.** We are also pressuring the Governor to sign the ERIC bill by the same deadline. This would help NYS clean up our voter rolls and relieve some of the burden from our local Boards of Election.

There has also been a significant uptick in new League members since LWVUS initiated the new dues system in February 2025. Our first new member meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 16, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. Please note this date and time of this meeting has changed to better accommodate schedules. We know that some may already be celebrating the holidays and may be unable to attend. Don't worry, we'll offer another orientation in 2026. Sign up [here](#). This session will focus on "League 101" for new members. We will provide an overview of the basics of League- what it means to be a member, how local, state, and national all work together- and we will encourage attendees



to engage with their local Leagues. Any new or current members are welcome to attend. Our plan is to hold these new member meetings twice a year going forward.

We would like to thank and acknowledge the efforts of all of you throughout 2025.

None of us could have anticipated what this year would bring, especially after January 20. As always, the League stepped up, pivoted, and continued to defend democracy in ways we never imagined we would be called upon to do. As the year comes to a close, we hope each of you can reflect on the work we have accomplished together and feel proud. Whatever lies ahead, we know we will continue to meet it with the same commitment and resolve.

In League,
Nancy and Erica

LWVNYS Board Announcements

Voter Services

Jane Colvin, 2nd Vice President/ Voter Services

THANK YOU all for an amazing election season! We've received Surveys from 30 Leagues for the 6/25/25 – 11/4/25 period and it's terrific. Here are some notable results: you registered almost 7,500 new voters in 655 registration events with 293 VR drives in under resourced communities. Another 4,700 VR forms were distributed; Over 1,000 students were registered in high schools and almost 1,750 new citizens were registered despite challenges at administrative naturalization ceremonies. Also of note is that not many Leagues are taking advantage of the VAN resources to GOTV, but help is on the way for that and will be announced shortly.

A summary of local Leagues' activity from November 2024 to November 2025 will be available in January but here are some astonishing numbers so far: You all registered over 11,600 in over 900 voter registration drives, with over 370 in under resourced communities and distributed another 8,200 registration forms. Congratulations to all!

We've also received great news about the increased usage of [VOTE411](#) from LWVUS in their Google analytics report. Between January 1st and December 31st, 2021, there were just over 1.5 million users on VOTE411. Between January 1st and November 4, 2025, there were nearly 2.1 million users on VOTE411, and that number grows every day as there are still elections! That is a 33% increase in users when compared to the 2021 cycle!" You are getting VOTE411 out to help the voters and it's growing in brand recognition everywhere. Data for individual New York State Leagues are available in the [report](#). Keep up the good work!!

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Regina Tillman, 3rd Vice President/ Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

Recently, several members of our State's Committee for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access helped to produce a publication which was emailed to all local DEI committee members and presidents. We observed that some addressees immediately shared the email blast with other members and colleagues which was very much appreciated considering the urgency of the matter.

That urgent matter addressed was the frightening aspect of our citizens standing in pantry lines or going without full meals in ever increasing numbers as the government shutdown ensued, salaries were cut off, and SNAP benefits withheld. Through research, early involvement in a community addressing the empty pantries, as well as personal experience, I was able to round out the information by including specific guidance as to how local leagues and their members could best be of assistance.

Additionally, there were several tips for avoiding societal biases that may affect how a group of primarily Caucasian women such as this organization is composed of, might

approach their community-based counterparts. Food insecurity is an issue for a wide segment of the American population, thus, any biases in what those in need look like, or deserve, need to be pushed to the side. With the help of league members, we can effectively demonstrate that perspective through our actions. If you have missed the publication, it is linked [here](#) for all members. To read more from our 3rd Vice President, click [here](#).

Local League Support

Marjorie McIntosh, 4th Vice President/ Local League Support

All five regions held quarterly meetings before the end of November. As always, the regional group discussions are similar with common successes and challenges, but also projects and strategies unique to each community.

These meetings are filled with sharing of successes and brainstorming for solutions to challenges. It's impossible not to feel the energy that is generated, which is stimulating and why the meetings are so well anticipated and attended.

Common themes this quarter were the reminder to complete the critical data collection from the Voter Service Survey, the challenges with candidate forums, Vote 411, voter registration access in both expected and unexpected places, partnerships with other local organizations with similar missions, education via media articles, and the usual questions about how to most efficiently and effectively use our time and talents. Observer Corps and the need for each league to convene Nominating committees soon are some of the upcoming projects. We all know that challenges create opportunities and our people are just the ones to make the most of them.

As we approach the end of another year, we are already planning for 2026 and finding new ways to strengthen partnerships and create new ones, innovative ways to distribute and deliver accurate information and community awareness and just keep on moving with dedication and eternal hope. Happy New Year!

Transformation Support

Patty Macleish, Director

February 1 will mark the first anniversary of the LWVUS's new membership system. Implementing the new system was more difficult than was expected, but for most Leagues, things went smoothly. Problems included difficulty in receiving technical help, glitches in parts of the system that didn't work as expected, and keeping up with changes that were made as time went on—among other things.

I would like to tell you about two tools you can use to help you keep your operations running smoothly. There are two helpful guides from LWVUS: one for Administrators and one for members. [The Administrators' Guide](#) will be updated quarterly. (The latest version is dated October.) All membership chairs, roster managers, treasurers, and presidents should have a copy of the guide, as well as anyone in your League who helps with these tasks. [The Members Guide](#) will help everyone navigate the system. Please take a minute to review the table of contents.

As we come up to this anniversary, I would like to hear about your successes with the new system and changes you would like to see. [Be in touch](#).

Updates from the State League

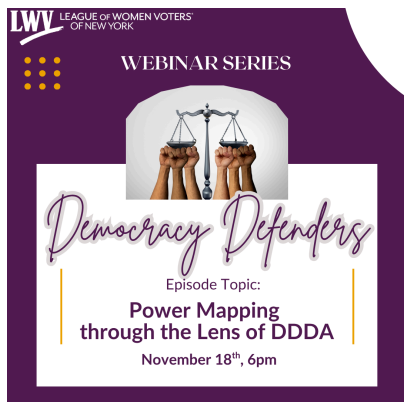
League of Women Voters of New York State Observer Corps Program

On December 10th LWVNY will host an introductory meeting to our Observer Corps Program.

Observer programs (or Observer Corps) are a structured way for individuals to exercise their right to know. They provide a valuable service to the community. They help ensure that citizens are aware of the decisions that impact their lives, and they promote government transparency and accountability. An observer is an individual who attends a governmental meeting, notes what happens at the meeting, and reports back to the League and (hopefully) the community.

This webinar will be the launch of our first statewide Observer Corps program. We will go through the basics of how to start an Observer Corps in your League, hear from Leagues that have been running Observer Corps programs successfully for a while, and share ways we can collaborate across the state to ensure our democracy is working as it should.

If you are still interested in signing up to learn more, click [here](#).



Thank you for joining us in becoming a Democracy Defender! The League of Women Voters of New York State thanks all who attended last month's episodes of our civic education and advocacy webinar series, *Democracy Defenders*.

If you missed our previous episodes, LWVNYS Campaign Director, Clyanna Lightbourn discussed the effects power mapping has on voter eligibility for detained voters. During this webinar we discussed the importance of the Democracy During Detention Act and learned more about the campaign. Click [here](#) to view.

Welcome to the League!

Calling all new members for a time to get connected!

Join us for our New Members Orientation on **Tuesday, December 16th from 5:30–6:30 PM** on Zoom.

Meet League members from across New York State, learn about the role of the state League along with our mission and impact, learn how local, state, and national leagues work together, and discover how you can get involved in statewide advocacy and education.



Please note this date and time of this meeting has changed to better accommodate schedules. We know that some may already be celebrating the holidays and may be unable to attend. Don't worry, we'll offer another orientation in 2026.

RSVP today and take the next step toward making democracy work!

Local League Happenings

Check out these updates from our Local Leagues!

League of Women Voters Cortland County- LWV Cortland County will host their Holiday Dinner & Discussion Event on **Monday, Dec. 1st** at the CNY Living History Center. Liz Arnold, Homer Village Trustee and Maxwell School Professor, will discuss how improving communication with elected officials can be beneficial to everyone. She'll cover the "how to", "why", and "when". And, of course, she'll offer specific ways you can

communicate more effectively with all elected officials from the dog catcher to your member of Congress.

League of Women Voters Brookhaven- The LWV Brookhaven, held an informative zoom program- a Virtual Forum on Immigration. The first presenter, a representative from Sepa Mujer of Suffolk County, described the organization's mission to elevate community voices and strengthen civic engagement through leadership development and legal support. They explained how Sepa Mujer helps individuals protect themselves from unlawful seizures and potential detention, offering outreach and education to promote family security. The next presenter, an immigration attorney, discussed the challenges faced by immigrants and Black and Brown communities. They also outlined how they guide clients through the court system.



League of Women Voters of Utica Metro- In recognition of Election Heroes Day, LWV Utica Metro presented the Oneida County Board of Elections with a Certificate and an assortment of donuts as a thank you for their work keeping our elections safe and accessible for all. The Commissioners and employees were surprised and gratified by the acknowledgement.

We also had a presentation on Plastic Pollution and the Road to Activism from Kim Cameron, President LWV Cortland. It was well attended and brought in members of the public as well as members of a local climate watchdog group. We hope to have closer working relationships with local community groups on these issues. A link to the recording can be found here.

<https://youtu.be/-41OAIMX7qE?si=IISnnPKPbQpbLk>

League of Women Voters of the Hamptons, Shelter Island & North Fork- Following up on a forum titled "School Boards, the Training Wheels of Democracy" that our Gov't Committee led by Andrea Gabor held on Sept. 18, the League of Women Voters of the Hamptons, Shelter Island & North Fork's Youth Committee, chaired by Susan Wilson, held a "Running & Winning" workshop with the same title on Nov. 19. Juniors and seniors, including the new student "ex officio" school board members, attended from seven local high schools, along with a selection of school board members (some of whom had gone on to higher elected office) who educated students on running for office, and their school board responsibilities. The students at each table then planned their own school board campaigns and presented them to the entire group.

League of Women Voters of New York City- In November, the League of Women Voters of NYC partnered with Ben & Jerry's, the ACLU, and Amnesty International in the "Party for Protest Rights", registering voters and providing information about the 2025 Ballot Proposals. LWVNYC's positions on the 2025 Ballot Proposals had more than 107,000 hits on the dedicated website page and helped thousands of New Yorkers cast a more informed vote. We also hosted a "Melt ICE" training in partnership with Immigrant ARC to give our members and volunteers crucial instructions on witnessing, documenting, and reporting ICE activity in their communities.



League of Women Voters of Cooperstown- Lindsey Cormack, author of *How to Raise a Citizen (and why it's up to you to do it)*, spoke to members of the LWV of the Cooperstown Area and the broader community on November 6. She reviewed the state of civics education in our country and how attention to civics has declined nationwide in schools. She gave a hopeful and informative message about what parents and caring adults can do to supplement the limited work of schools. Her presentation

was entirely nonpartisan, as is her book. She's an energetic and captivating presenter, and we highly recommend her as a speaker.

The Cooperstown League brought together a broad range of co-sponsors for this event - eight diverse community organizations - which extended our outreach into the community and demonstrated the wide support for the defense of democracy through education. The League also collaborated with a local independent bookstore, The Green Toad. The owner brought copies of Comack's book for signing, and he sold out and took additional orders. The event was held at Cooperstown Coworks, a woman-owned, small business in the heart of the community. This was our second public event of the fall, aimed at exploring how our government works and how we, as citizens, can be effective in supporting democracy as part of our Unite and Rise 8.5 efforts.

League of Women Voters Scarsdale- The League of Women Voters of Scarsdale's Youth Portfolio engaged with middle schoolers in Scarsdale during October and November. LWVS recruited over 40 volunteers to run 'Civics Jeopardy,' a game that helped eight graders learn about voting and civics engagement in an interactive and fun way. In early November, LWVS ran a mock election for all 6-8th graders at Scarsdale Middle School. LWVS created a voters' guide, which students consulted before they made their voting choices at the polls. LWVS thanks the Scarsdale Middle School Social Studies Department for partnering to run such educational opportunities for students.

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