

# STATE VOTER

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## Standing Guard for Democracy February 2026

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In moments when democratic norms are under threat, the work of the League matters more than ever. We ask our members to stay brave, grounded in our shared values, and committed to civic action that informs, empowers, and engages our communities. Together, through persistence and principle, we continue strengthening democracy for everyone.



### State Leaders Message

**Nancy Rosenthal, President,**  
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**Erica Smitka, Executive Director,** [erica@lwwny.org](mailto:erica@lwwny.org)

This month has been shaped first and foremost by grave national events, including the killings of individuals at the hands of federal agents and the arrest of journalists amid protests across the country. All clear and alarming threats to democracy. Against this backdrop, we are also navigating the release of the New York State budget, preparing testimony, advancing the League's legislative agenda, and hosting regional trainings from late February through early April.

In 2026, we must be bold, present, and influential in shaping public opinion and policy, while centering impacted communities. As Celina Stewart, CEO of LWVUS, said: "The League brings democracy infrastructure, credibility, a nationwide grassroots network, and a long history of defending constitutional rights of people...". Across the League, we urge responses that are safe, legal, and grounded in civic action and mutual-aid support.

Showing up and taking action is how we defend democracy, protect the Constitution, and hold elected officials accountable. LWVUS is rapidly developing a Civic Action Toolkit to help state and local Leagues respond to planned ICE deployments, especially in areas likely to be most affected. Informed by organizations that navigated similar challenges in Minneapolis, the toolkit will include guidance on civic actions directed at elected officials and law enforcement, plus options to support local mutual aid. Once finalized, the toolkit will be distributed to all Leagues so all of us have consistent, proactive resources ready to share.



**LWV will again serve as an official partner with No Kings for the March 28, 2026 mobilization, with additional actions anticipated later in the year.**

Finally, please register for the regional trainings, the link to register is [here](#). These sessions are valuable for both new members and local leaders. Many of us remember feeling overwhelmed at our first regional training by the scope of League work; those events put us on a path where the League becomes a daily passion, in both action and

community. Register for one of the four regional trainings across New York State and join us on that path.

In League,  
Nancy and Erica

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## LWVNYS Board Announcements

### Voter Services

#### Jane Colvin, 2nd Vice President/ Voter Services

February 14, 2026 is not just for love! It is the last day that voters can enroll in or change their political party affiliation in order to vote in the primaries. I hope many of you took advantage of the VAN training to send out text messages about the Feb. 14th deadline!! It's an important deadline both for us to educated voters about the importance of primaries and for voters to enroll in or change their party affiliation.

As we were reminded in the [UNITE AND RISE 8.5 I Power Playbook 4](#) - Deepening Electoral Power: A 90-Day Guide: "The primary season is a critical opportunity to engage communities that typically experience low voter turnout. With fewer demands on voters' attention, an unusually high number of congressional retirements, and mid-cycle redistricting creating more competitive races, the League is well-positioned to have a meaningful impact on increasing voter participation." It's not too late!

For local Leagues that would like to use emails, phone messaging, or LTES, to remind voters about primaries and the February deadline you'll find sample drafts [here](#). We're also thinking about how to help make the primary and general elections fair, accurate and accessible - beginning with poll workers who are in short supply! More on what and how we do this to come!

Check out the Election calendar [here](#) if you haven't already.

### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

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

Hopefully many of our League members had the chance to observe the birthday of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. a couple of weeks ago, in some form or fashion. It could have been just a brief reflection, or having rallied up some friends to help out in your community as a "Day of Service" participant. No one way is the best way to recognize the MLK Holiday. Any of these options is a way to help us all get past our limiting beliefs as our organization, from top to bottom, continues to strive toward the support of our national League goal of a full embrace of a multiracial, multicultural democracy.

Our plans are in the works for an interactive "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access" presentation as part of the LWVNYS regional training sessions that are coming soon to a location near you. My goal is to have attendees depart the training with the knowledge of an alternative way of looking at your internal **policies, processes/procedures, practices, and people** (or the 4P's as noted in our previous regional training)

As well, the interactive training exercise is designed to help develop the skill to apply the new perspective within each local League. The easy exercise will help to root out biases which are yet unseen but may be proving to be obstacles to equity or inclusionary intent. The attendee engagement will assist local leagues in how to make the transition from theoretical "DEI" to a practical application of the principles of "DEI".

Local LWVNYS DEI Committee Members will be on-hand to facilitate the training and assist with subsequent follow up. We look forward to seeing many League members as we recall once again that *"DEI" is a verb...*going beyond just each one of us being a "nice person" as referenced by Debby Irving, a previous workshop leader, but rather requiring action rooted in knowledge, justice, empathy, good will, better listening along with mutual

support and respect. *Per LWVUS, DEI is not just a buzzword, but rather a set of core values that we need to retain in order to defend and uphold a representative democracy.*

## Transformation Support

Patty MacLeish, Director

### League Transformation Roadmap Part Two Begins Year Two

At the 2018 LWVUS Convention, delegates approved the League Structure Transformation Plan with a goal of growing League membership in number and diversity, strengthening our grassroots power, and bolstering our ability to empower voters and defend democracy. Part 1 of this “Transformation Roadmap” focused on DEI and Members Rights and Responsibilities. Next up was developing a consistent and aligned membership system. We focused on eliminating financial barriers to participation (pay-what-you-can membership), creating an equitable division of dues between levels of League (more funds to State Leagues to carry out our voters’ rights work), and overall, simplifying mechanics of joining the League.

In 2025, local League presidents, treasurers, roster managers, and membership chairs introduced the new system to New York League members. There were problems from the start, especially with the problem-solving! But you were patient, and LWVUS Membership staff worked hard to respond during the transition to the new system. The staff were overwhelmed in the early days but Membership brought together a nationwide group of League leaders to troubleshoot the problems.

Which brings me to the best news, Leagues no longer have to finalize memberships by the January 31 date. During the PMP era, LWVUS set January 31 as the official membership “count” day. LWVUS needed to know how many had joined between February 1 of the previous year and January 31 of the current year. Six months later with the information from the “count,” LWVUS and State Leagues could finally invoice local Leagues to collect their shares of the dues. Now when someone joins the League, the dues are split immediately and each level of the League has a better idea of the number of members and the income they will receive.

Today, we have rolling dues so new memberships and renewals are being received all the time, and income from the dues automatically goes to LWVUS and LWVNY. Total membership numbers are available day to day. LWVUS and LWVNY can tell at any time how many members the League has simply by looking at the records; no need for Local Leagues to report “the count” on a set day. Best of all, it is so much easier for the people, people we need to help with our work, to join the League.

Everyone at LWVNY thanks all the local leaders for their work and patience over this past year. You made it happen and we think, were key in insuring the League’s future. (Learn more about the Structure Transformation at <https://www.lvw.org/structure#Membership>).

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## Updates from the State League

### Party Registration Deadline: February 14th

**Reminder:** make sure your party registration is up to date by February 14th.

You can:

Visit [elections.ny.gov](https://elections.ny.gov) to:

- Find your County Board of Elections, any NYS Agency-Based voter registration center, or your local DMV to file in person
- Fill out a printable version of the application and mail it
- Update or confirm your party registration online

You can also visit [voterreg.dmv.ny.gov](https://voterreg.dmv.ny.gov) to register to vote or change your party designation online.

## **Don't Forget the Special Election on February 3, 2026!**

If you are in any of the following election districts don't forget to vote in the Special Election tomorrow, February 3rd:

- New York State Senate District 47 (Manhattan)
- New York State Senate District 61 (Erie)
- New York State Assembly District 36 (Queens)
- New York State Assembly District 74 (Manhattan)

This special election will be electing NYS Senators and Assemblymembers who have left their seats in those districts.

Not sure if this means you? Find your Senate district [here](#) and your Assembly district [here](#)! The polls will be open from 6:00AM- 9:00PM. Visit the Erie County Board of Elections site [here](#) or the NYC Board of Elections site [here](#) to find your poll site.

## **League of Women Voters of New York State Observer Corps Program**

On **February 18<sup>th</sup>** from 6:00pm-7:00pm, LWVNY will host our second meeting for the statewide Observer Corps Program. If you are still interested in signing up to learn more, click [here](#).

This will be an opportunity for you to connect with other local Leagues running observer corps, to collaborate and identify trends across the state, and to share ways we can collaborate across the state to ensure our democracy is working as it should.

If you're looking for the basics of how to start an Observer Corps in your League, watch the training video [here](#).

**LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEW YORK**

### REGIONAL TRAININGS

**PREPARING FOR 2026**

These training workshops deliver actionable skills you can apply within your Local League during 2026.

- Cazenovia Regional Training**  
Cazenovia Presbyterian Church  
28 FEBRUARY 2026 9:30 AM - 3:30 PM
- New York City Regional Training**  
Society for Ethical Culture  
14 MARCH 2026 9:30 AM - 3:30 PM
- Saratoga Springs Regional Training**  
Saratoga Springs United Methodist Church  
21 MARCH 2026 9:30 AM - 3:30 PM
- Rochester Regional Training**  
Third Presbyterian Church  
11 APRIL 2026 9:15AM-3:15PM

REGISTRATION COMING SOON!

## **Regional Trainings: Preparing for 2026**

Join us for a regional training near you as we prepare for the 2026 election. We will discuss several topics to improve our impact and our reach in the communities we serve.

You can look forward to the below training topics:

- Advocating and Taking Action
- Observer Corps
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Youth Engagement/ Brand Awareness (Social Media)
- Changes to Election Law in NY and Combatting Mis & Dis Information

**[Register TODAY!](#)**

- Cazenovia Regional Training- February 28, 2026
- New York City Regional Training- March 14, 2026
- Saratoga Springs Regional Training- March 21, 2026
- Rochester Regional Training- April 11, 2026

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## **Local League Happenings**

Check out these updates from our Local Leagues!

**League of Women Voters of Larchmont-Mamaroneck-** The League of Women Voters Larchmont/Mamaroneck hosted THE ART OF DEMOCRACY on October 11, 2025 and is posting highlights here to demonstrate how other communities can organize their own. THE ART OF DEMOCRACY is a voter education event connecting the creative spirit in each of us with our need to preserve our democratic processes.

[Watch the video](#) with highlights of THE ART OF DEMOCRACY event,

- See the community canvas, below, created by guests,
- Read the ART OF DEMOCRACY community poem, below, created by event guest
- **Use the [ART OF DEMOCRACY toolkit](#) for hosting an ART OF DEMOCRACY event near you.**
- For more information, write to Beth at [LWVofLarchmontMamaroneck@gmail.com](mailto:LWVofLarchmontMamaroneck@gmail.com)

**League of Women Voters Albany County-** League of Women Voters of Albany County and Albany Public Library presents **What About Ranked Choice Voting?** Join us to view Majority Rules 101, a 30-minute video about Alaska's revolutionizing their election system and changing to Ranked Choice Voting (RCV). Following the film, hear about examples of RCV implementation and planning, as well as about an initiative to bring it to the City of Albany.

- **February 11, 6-8 pm**, Howe Library APL.
- **March 28, 2-4 pm** at Pine Hills Library APL

**The League of Women Voters of Suffolk County (ILO)-**The League of Women Voters of Suffolk County (ILO) serves as a coordinating council for our four local Leagues in the county- LWV Brookhaven, LWV Hamptons, Shelter Island and the North Fork, LWV Huntington and LWV Smithtown. On our monthly zoom meetings, we robustly share the accomplishments, programs and plans at the local League level, and discuss areas of interest, concern and coordination throughout our county (pop: 1.5 million!). Since 2017, LWVSC has been writing a monthly Making Democracy Work column in the TBR NewsMedia papers (six weekly editions across northwestern Suffolk County). All the columns are archived on our LWVSC website: <https://my.lwv.org/new-york/suffolk-county/local-media-columns>. The most recent, by Elise Antonelli published Jan, 29, was titled: What Do We Do Next in the Fight for Affordable Health Care?



**League of Women Voters of Broome and Tioga Counties-** On January 24, the LWVBTC held a winter brunch hosting LWWNYS Campaign Director, Clyanna Lightbourn and the Amnesty International students from Union-Endicott High School. They presented on the "Democracy in During Detention Act," explaining its importance and current status in the legislature. The event was held at an Endicott church, not far from the high school. Amnesty has worked with the LWVBTC over the past two years, assisting

with voter registration as well as preparing numerous programs for our members and the community. The League's mission of educating the public is very enhanced by the activities and commitment of these students and we are so grateful for their help and enthusiasm.

**League of Women Voters of Buffalo/ Niagara-** President, Lori Robinson, recently participated in a Buffalo United Coalition gathering alongside a local legislator, highlighting the many organizations working to strengthen our Buffalo community.

LWVBN continues to engage their members through their monthly Voter Infogram, which focuses on key issues of interest and is archived on their website, and partnered with UB Votes to host a candidate forum for the NYS Senate District 61 special election, now available on [YouTube](#) and Facebook.

Additionally, LWVBN Speakers Bureau have seen strong regional interest in presentations on Ranked Choice Voting, with two completed and more in development. As a chapter, they have created a new trifold brochure outlining their mission and work, and their Board will convene on January 31 for a retreat to set priorities and guide their efforts for the year ahead.



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