

STATE VOTER

New Year, New Opportunities January 2026

As we welcome the new year, we also welcome the fresh opportunities it brings for LWVNY to continue strengthening our impact across New York State. The past year was marked by the dedication, leadership, and tireless efforts of our members, whose hard work advanced our mission and amplified our collective voice. We are proud of all that was accomplished together and grateful for the commitment that made it possible.



State Leaders Message

Nancy Rosenthal, President,

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Erica Smitka, Executive Director, erica@lwvny.org

Goodbye 2025, and hello, League members, to 2026! We enter this new year with momentum, purpose, and power, because of what *you* helped accomplish in 2025.

Together, we delivered real victories for democracy:

- MAID and ERIC were signed into law, the result of years of League leadership and coalition work.
- The State League took decisive legal action to protect voters, filing a motion to intervene to defend voter registration access. Additionally, our Saratoga League filed a lawsuit with four other local/State Leagues and LWVUS to preserve the League's ability to register new citizens at naturalization ceremonies.
- We mobilized New Yorkers during a constitutional crisis through Unite & Rise 8.5.
- We expanded the reach of VOTE411, ensuring voters had trusted, nonpartisan information when it mattered most.
- We held one of the strongest State Conventions, adopted new positions on healthcare privatization, ranked choice voting, primary systems, and the voting systems approval process.
- And we successfully transitioned to the new national dues structure, strengthening our future.

This is what League leadership looks like.

The 2026 election cycle is already underway. In New York State, elections are often decided in the June Primary, and voter participation remains one of our greatest challenges and opportunities.

That is why our GOTV (Get Out the Vote) efforts must begin now. A few years ago, the State League gained access to VAN through our partnership with the New York Civic Engagement Table. VAN (Voter Activation Network) is a centralized voter database that will better allow us to effectively reach and target voters in our communities. VAN is one of the most powerful organizing tools available to us and it will be central to our success in 2026. If you are interested in helping your local League with VAN, reach out to your

local League President. To support this urgent work, Monica Ferguson (LWV of Rockland County) is our LWNYS VAN Chair and will be hosting a series of trainings in January on how to use VAN and our texting platform, GetThru. See below for more info!



Every local League should be using VAN in 2026. Every League should send at least one representative to these trainings. Every member has a role to play in driving voter turnout. If we want New York State to stop ranking near the bottom in voter participation, this is how we change it. This is a defining moment. Democracy is not self-sustaining, it requires organized, informed, persistent action.

We have the tools.
We have the experience.
We have the people.

Now let's use all three.

In League,
Nancy and Erica

LWNYS Board Announcements

Voter Services

Jane Colvin, 2nd Vice President/ Voter Services

Happy New Year, Everyone! Here's to another year of activism, engagement, and accomplishment in 2026. But before considering the challenges in the new year, a quick review of highlights from 2025: YOU accomplished a lot in 2025: registering almost 9,700 voters, including almost 1,750 naturalized citizens between June and November despite USCIS challenges; holding candidate forums for every level of government from village school boards to state legislators and everything in between with over 4,350 people attending these events and 21,476 viewing the event following the production; and, distributing GOTV materials with 9,600 palm cards, 6,900 postcards and 14,500 QR Codes.

What a strong foundation to build on for 2026!! This promises to be an even more active election year but we will be there for you to help educate voters and get them to the polls: with VAN training sessions; assistance with VOTE411 (plus State is handling ALL state-wide elections); new voter education materials; templates and new graphics for social media that you can adapt for your own use.

We look forward to working with you and hearing from you when you have questions or need assistance. Let us know!

Here's to 2026, likely another tumultuous year, but one we'll handle together. After all, we are the League!

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

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

It seems there is a new term that frames this period in our country's political efforts or at least a movement by those currently in political power. We all know what has been occurring relative to the efforts to diminish the role of BIPOC (Black, indigenous and people of color) and women within leadership at all levels. However, I just learned of this new term that addresses this negative energy. To read our 3rd Vice President's full report, click [here](#).

Local League Support

Marjorie McIntosh, 4th Vice President/ Local League Support

This is the time of year that we look back at the outgoing year and forward to the new one. Like nearly everyone else, the Local League Support Committee is doing exactly that.

The LLSC, comprised of facilitators for all five regions, is extremely proud of our work this last year. Among other accomplishments, we have established a consistent quarterly meeting schedule, while still maintaining the autonomy of each region to be a bit flexible. We have shared challenges and successes as well as guidance and strategies across the state. We are pleased to say that our regional meetings are anticipated and well attended, filled with camaraderie and concerns (often with potential solutions) and an amazing array of creative ideas that are openly shared.

Looking ahead to 2026, the LLSC is determined to become an even stronger resource for individual regional units, which translates into an even stronger network around the state. We also serve as an information conduit between the State office and local leagues. There is much work to do this coming year, and the entire NYS office and Board is committed to providing the best guidance and information possible to allow local Leagues to carry on the work that will be so crucial this year.

We look forward to the first-round of 2026 regional meetings, which will be in February 2026.

In the meantime, many of our local leagues will keep on keeping on even during the holidays and as always, we are appreciative of their commitment and work. However you begin the new year, the LLSC wishes you all the best while spending time with family and friends and a renewal of energy and Hope for 2026! We will be ready to keep the Faith in 2026 and beyond!

Transformation Support

Patty MacLeish, Director

January 31, 2026, marks the first anniversary of the new League dues system. I want to thank all the Leagues who have worked so hard during this first year of the new system. I know how fussy some of the system set up was and how some Leagues suffered from situations that were more than simple hiccups. Thank you for your patience.

League members owe a “thank-you” to League Membership in Washington DC. Although there was much careful planning before the launch, there were many unanticipated situations. As the year passed, I was surprised by Membership and their swift and thoughtful responses to problems (perhaps not as quickly as you needed). They worked to not only solve simple problems as they came up, but the staff also organized procedures in response to League members’ requests. Can we give gift memberships? Done! Rather than do something twice, can we add the name of another person in our household who also wants to renew? Sure! Is there a way we can talk with other Leagues about problems and how to solve them? Yes!
(Contact membership@LWV.org to join the treasurers Google group and look for more peer-to-peer support from membership in the future.) And that’s only a fraction of what has been done.

To read our Transformation Support Director's full report, click [here](#).

Updates from the State League

VAN/ GetThru Training Series

Join us in welcoming **Monica Ferguson (LWV of Rockland County)** as our new **VAN (Voter Activation Network) Chair for LWNYS!**

VAN is a powerful new tool in our outreach toolkit, and we want to ensure you have the support you need to use it effectively in upcoming elections. Monica will be your go-to resource for all things VAN. She'll assist with getting accounts set up and running smoothly, serve as our liaison with the NYCET team, and lead a series of trainings on best practices for using both VAN and our texting platform, GetThru. If you have any questions at all you can reach Monica at LWVNY.VAN@gmail.com.



**VAN/GetThru
TRAINING
SERIES**

- January 7th: Intro to Basics
7PM-8:30PM
- January 14th: Making a List in VAN
7PM-8:30PM
- January 21st: Using Get Thru
7PM-8:30PM

**JANUARY
OFFICE HOURS
EVERY FRIDAY 12PM-1PM**

with
MONICA FERGUSON
LWVNYS VAN Chair

The graphic features a purple and yellow color scheme with a circular portrait of Monica Ferguson on the right. The text is arranged in a list format with checkmarks and clock icons for the training sessions.

Pre-register for the **VAN/Get Thru January Training Series:**

- January 7th from 7pm-8:30pm - Training #1: Basic Introduction and Navigation in VAN <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/17HkM4jzQGqJnXAvTT8JtQ>
- January 14th from 7pm-8:30pm - Training #2: Making a List in VAN <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/RUJF4be6TKOXM5w89UV-aw>
- January 21st from 7pm-8:30pm - Training #3: Using Get Thru <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/siryeXxEQdOgMv1aNkuPFw>

Monica will also be hosting VAN Office Hours- Every Friday in January from 12pm-1pm: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84802396569>

League of Women Voters of New York State Observer Corps Program

This past month LWVNYS hosted our introductory meeting to our first statewide 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.

Click [here](#) to view the full presentation and share with your Local League as you see fit. We discussed the basics of how to start an Observer Corps in your League, heard from Leagues that have been running Observer Corps programs successfully for a while, and shared ways we can collaborate across the state to ensure our democracy is working as it should.

Keep an eye out for an announcement of regular monthly Observer Corps Meetings starting in February!

New Members Orientation

Thank you for joining us for our New Members Orientation! We hope you found our presentation helpful as our new members navigate how to get involved in their Local Leagues.

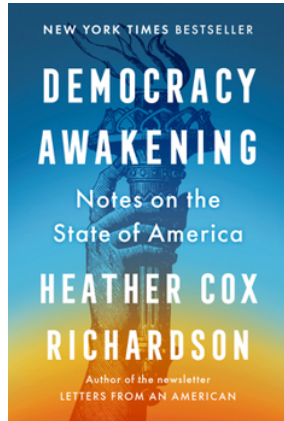
We know that some had already be celebrating the holidays and were unable to attend. Don't worry, you may find the presentation [here](#).

We will be offering another orientation in 2026!

Local League Happenings

Check out these updates from our Local Leagues!

League of Women Voters of Utica- Rome Metro Area- CONGRATULATIONS to LWV Utica Rome on receiving a grant from LWVUS to use for a Youth Voter Services project. They plan on linking with new high schools, tech schools and colleges in the area to increase voter registration, provide voter education and hopefully encourage young voters to become more engaged in the 2026 election cycle. Great work LWV Utica Rome Metro Area!



League of Women Voters of Central Nassau- On January 16th after their membership meeting, LWV Central Nassau will host a book discussion of *Democracy Awakening* by Heather Cox Richardson. For more information and to RSVP reach out to lww.central.nassau1@gmail.com.

League of Women Voters Huntington—The Huntington League partnered with the Health Education Project of 1199/SEIU Health Care Workers Union to present an educational webinar about the effects of the federal budget bill on health care on Long Island. Coordinated by Cynthia Ngombe of the Health Education Project, the speakers panel consisted of Vanessa Baird-Streeter of the Health & Welfare Council of Long Island, Mark Hannay of Metro New York Healthcare for All, and Anna Barone, a consultant with Grace Group Medicare. The presentations were followed by a robust Q&A. About 50 people attended. Among other likely effects of the federal budget, the panelists warned about the effect of the Medicaid cuts on the New York State budget.



The Huntington LWV also set up food drives in Northport and Babylon to assist neighbors in need. Shoppers were generous with their donations and just couldn't resist our members asking for their help. Donations, including about \$200 in cash, went to Long Island Cares Food Pantry and the Little Shelter for pet supplies.

League of Women Voters of Cooperstown Area- The League of Women Voters of the Cooperstown Area presented a program called "Healthy Homes, Healthy Holidays" at the Clark Sports Center (CSC) on December 4, 2025. Almost 40 community members attended, and participant engagement was robust. The program focused on the problems of single-use plastic packaging and products; the presenters provided a brief overview of why it's important for consumers to reduce purchasing these products and suggested alternative products that avoid them. Emphasis was given to



homecare and personal care products that are commonly packaged in plastic. In addition, there was a DIY demonstration of how to make products such as bird suet and waxed fabric to wrap leftover food as a replacement for plastic wrap and plastic baggies. Special mention was made to encourage participants to hold in the front of their minds the importance of reducing waste as they consider holiday gift giving. Shopping locally at Cooperstown Natural Foods, the Cooperstown Art Association's holiday show, the Farmers Market, and other local shops for plastic-free gifts was encouraged, with several sample gift items shown. The audience was extremely receptive and engaged, asking excellent questions, adding their own suggestions, and contacting the presenters

afterwards with follow-up questions and information. Numerous participants said they found it empowering and they got great ideas.



League of Women Voters of Broome and Tioga Counties- Sara Wokan, a Board Director for the League of Women Voters for Broome and Tioga Counties was recently acknowledged for her work with Union Presbyterian Church and their food pantry. We are extremely proud of Sara's tireless efforts and dedication to helping her community. She is a strong advocate for equity, civil liberties and rights and seeks to right the wrongs in our community and government.

In addition to running the pantry, Sara is committed to educating her church family on the trials and tribulations of a working SNAP recipient and how the program functions and its associated limitations.

During the pantry anniversary celebration, [this video](#) was shared.

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