State Board Updates
July 2020

If you are no longer an officer or on the board of your local League, please forward this email and attachments to the new leaders of your League.

Local League To Do’s (email: lwvny@lwvny.org or call 518-465-4162)

- Submit your Local League Update forms (attached) for new officers and board members ASAP – we need these names and contacts to update the email lists used for communication such as this SBU
- Schedule a membership meeting in fall or winter to discuss the materials for the update to the League’s healthcare position (reports will be due March 1, 2021)

President’s Report, Suzanne Stassevitch, smstass@mac.com

Summer! Finally! Please stay safe and healthy even as summer weather beacons us out to gather together. Have we all recovered from the June Zoom? Kudo’s to all the Leagues who held virtual candidate forums, virtual annual meetings, attended the virtual state Council, or were delegates to the LWVUS virtual convention, a weeklong marathon of virtual meetings.( links to caucuses and events are on our website) I especially enjoyed our LWVNYS delegate prep meetings and all of the texting and emailing conversations during the National convention. Always so much to learn from each other.

Although many of us missed the opportunities to be together during these meetings, being inspired by the work our League colleagues are doing and enjoying the energy and bonds we have together, virtual meetings gave many more League members an opportunity to participate, especially for National convention. And, virtual Candidate Forums have generally been viewed by many more people than would have attended a Candidate Forum. Our newly found virtual dexterity gives us another tool to engage members, supporters and the public.

The virtual world was also busy with issues that concerned all of us behind the scenes at the LWV National Convention. State Leagues across the country came together to propose an urgent resolution for Racial Justice for Black People and People of Color* in response to the outrage and protests after the death of George Floyd. The League of Women Voters speaks with one voice to our mission, our values and our principles, and so to, this resolution. Based on our LWV positions on Individual Liberty, Equality of Opportunity and our Diversity Equity and Inclusion policies this resolution was adopted unanimously by the convention delegates. Here is a call to action for all Leagues and League members to “eradicate systemic racism at every level of government: for the end of excessive force and brutality in law enforcement; and for equal protection under the law regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, disability, and gender identity or sexual orientation.

*RESOLUTION
RACIAL JUSTICE FOR BLACK PEOPLE AND ALL PEOPLE OF COLOR
SUBMITTED BY
LWMO, LWVAZ, LWVCA, LWVDE, LWVMA, LWVMN, LWVNM, LWVNY, LWVAL,
LWVCT, LWVIA, LWVKS, LWVMD, LWVNJ, LWVOH, LWVSC, LWVTN, LWVUT, LWVOR, LWVFL

1. Whereas, the killings of George Floyd and countless other Black people have focused our nation’s attention on the continuing structural and systemic racism in law enforcement and the justice system; and,

2. Whereas, Black people and all historically marginalized people of color are disproportionately criminalized and targeted by excessive force and brutality by law enforcement; and,

3. Whereas, delegates to the 2020 League of Women Voters (League) Convention are outraged by these injustices in law enforcement that unfairly target Black people and all people of color; and,

4. Whereas, the current crisis is a result of racism and socio-economic inequalities that have marginalized, discriminated against and harmed Black people and all people of color. Education, housing, employment, healthcare and every aspect of American life have been impacted; and,

5. Whereas, the League acknowledges painfully that America is a nation founded on racism.

6. Whereas, the League commemorates the centennial of our organization and passage of the 19th Amendment along with the courage, persistence and vision of our founding members. We have openly acknowledged that our past has been marred by racism and we will continue to work toward being Diverse, Equitable and Inclusive, (DEI); and

7. Whereas, the League believes in individual liberties, civil rights, human rights, and voting rights writ large; we defend democracy and oppose all threats to these constitutional rights; therefore,

8. Motion #136 - We Resolve First, That the League advocates against systemic racism in the justice system and, at a minimum, for preventing excessive force and brutality by law enforcement. We also call for prompt actions by all League members to advocate within every level of government to eradicate systemic racism, and the harm that it causes; and,

9. Motion #139 - We Resolve Second, That the League help our elected officials and all Americans recognize these truths to be self-evident; that Black, Indigenous and all people of color (BIPOC) deserve equal protection under the law; and that we demand solutions for the terrible wrongs done, so that regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, disability, and gender identity or sexual orientation we may truly become a nation “indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”


iii The Constitution of the United States of America, Article I, Section 2(2)


**State Office: Laura Ladd Bierman, Laura@lwvnyny.org**

**2020 State Council**

The 2020 State Council meeting was held on June 11 at 7:00 pm on Zoom. We had 103 delegates registered, representing 36 local leagues, 1 ILO and 1 Mal unit, and 15 proxy votes. Zoom indicates that there are 94 individuals present at the beginning of Council (the count went up to 98 as the meeting continued). Whereas we need only 14 individuals for a quorum, there was a quorum present.

The Council Kit had been sent electronically to all local Leagues and posted on the state website. The 2020-2021 League budget passed and select state board members reported on their upcoming activities and agendas.

**New Staff**

Please welcome Keri Kramer to the State League staff. Keri is the new part-time Finance Administrator. Our huge thanks to Lisa Allendorph, who has filled that position on and off for over 10 years – and she is patiently now training Keri for this position. Any questions you have concerning your grants management account may now be directed to keri@lwvnyny.org.

**Healthcare Position Update**

At the state Convention in June 2019, the delegates voted to update the current state League position on healthcare financing. A committee was formed and has been working hard to gather information and materials for a consideration of this update. By early September, all materials will be distributed to the local Leagues to use with members to discuss this updated position. **EACH LOCAL LEAGUE SHOULD SCHEDULE A MEMBERSHIP MEETING SOMETIME BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 2020 AND MARCH 1, 2021, TO DISCUSS THE UPDATE.** The materials will include potential speakers for presentation of the materials at a meeting. The local League’s decision on the proposed new position will be due on March 1, 2021 to the state League office.

**Advocacy: Sally Robinson, sally.s.robinson@gmail.com and Jennifer Wilson, jennifer@lwvnyny.org**

**Advocacy Efforts**

**Voting Reforms**

**LetNYVote Coalition Work**

LetNYVote put out a package of COVID-19 related voting reforms they are hoping the legislature will take up in the coming week when session resumes. These bills are specifically related to voting during COVID and extending and expanding on changes to the absentee voting process made through executive orders for the June primary. We are supporting these bills and working with LetNYVote to put out action alerts on the legislation.

This week we sent an email to all members urging them to contact their legislators on these voting bills ahead of the November election.

**NYC Online Voter Registration Legislation**

The NYC Campaign Finance Board recently released a report on voter registration totals in New York City. Although there was an uptick in registrations compared to 2016 in January and February, since then, the number of new registrations have dropped drastically. The Deputy Mayor’s Democracy office has asked the League to assist in their advocacy on a bill to allow NYC to implement its online voter registration portal. This portal was created over a year ago but has not been released because the NYCBOE has said they feel they need legislative action from the state to implement the program.
We have done action alerts on this issue this year and plan to share the materials from the Democracy office once they are completed. The Democracy office is also planning a remote day of action some time next week that we will help to support.

Absentee Ballot Lawsuit
LWVNYS joined the LWVUS on a federal lawsuit brought by the Campaign Legal Center as an additional plaintiff to ensure absentee voters have the opportunity to cure their ballots for the remaining 2020 election cycle. The complaint asks the state of New York to create a cure method for voters whose ballots are rejected for a signature-related issue, including forgotten signatures or a mismatch signature. We are trying to assist the CLC in finding additional individual plaintiffs who may experience a similar concern over the signature match even when there is not a pandemic. The LWVUS and CLC hope to have the lawsuit resolved in time for the general election.

Absentee Voting Survey
The League’s absentee voting survey received responses from 1,575 voters representing 53 counties across the state. The survey asked voters about their experience voting absentee during COVID-19 including how they learned about the new absentee provisions, how they chose to apply for their absentee ballot, the average time it took to receive their ballot, and any problems they encountered. Our full report will be out later this month.

Letter Regarding Redistricting Commission Gender and Racial Diversity
The June the League sent a letter to legislative leaders and appointed members of New York's first Independent Redistricting Commission calling on them to prioritize gender and racial diversity when selecting the remaining two Commission members. Currently, only one woman has been nominated to serve on the 10-member Commission. In addition to gender diversity, the League supported NALEO Educational Fund and the LatinoJustice PRLDEF in their call for greater Latinx representation on the Commission. LatinoJustice PRLDEF has cited that more than 20% of the state's population are Latinx yet no Latinx members have been appointed. Although census counts have been delayed, the New York State Independent Redistricting Commission is required by the state constitution to release its proposed maps in September of 2021. In order to fulfill this mandate, the remaining two commissioners must be appointed in a timely manner.

Joint Legislative Hearing on Redistricting
This week we testified at a joint hearing on New York States first independent redistricting commission process. We presented comments on the need for transparency and accountability in the redistricting process as well as the need for support for the commission so it can be effective. Our good government partners also testified, Common Cause called for constitutional amendments to reform the process, and Citizens Union agrees with our position that at this point we should not be seeking to amend the process the voters approved in 2014 but instead try to make sure the it is allowed to work as intended. The earliest any amendment can be effective is January 1, 2022.

Remote Census Conference
The New York Counts 2020 coalition held a remote conference this week. The webinars included a panel on redistricting which Jennifer participated in. The conference was promoted through our weekly email and on our social media.

Get Out the Count Census Ambassador Training
In June the League held a remote training on how to conduct census outreach while social distancing led by Hillary Medina-Loveless of the Leadership Conference, and Meeta Anand of New York Immigration Coalition. The a one-hour training covered how to communicate the importance of the census and engage your network into this important work. We had 117 members register, and around 85 participate. The training Powerpoint and links to the recording were sent after the meeting. A recording of the webinar can be found here.
**Good Government Work**

The League signed onto a letter urging a review of the Governor’s indefinite executive authority during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. After the letter was released, several news articles came out that exaggerated our position on this issue. We received several emails from concerned members especially in the Western part of the state, who felt that we were asking to curtail the Governor’s power too soon. We issued a statement to our members clarifying our position related to transparency in government, government accountability, and ethics. We also reminded our members that whether or not we agreed with the actions of the Governor has taken over the last 3 months, no elected official should have autonomous power over the state that can be extended indefinitely without any sort of checks and balances in place.

**Voter Services: Judie Gorenstein, judieL728@aol.com**

I am pleased to report that majority of local leagues, ILOs and Mals have completed the voter service survey for the June 23, 2020 primary. In fact, there are only five leagues who have not yet responded. The number of responses attests to the good working relationships local and state leagues have. I think this is in part due to the liaison contacts that have been established with members of the LWVNY’s voter service committee and leagues. As expected, COVID pandemic and us being in PAUSE resulted in many changes in and cancellations of voter registration drives, candidate forums and GOTV.

In summary, as anticipated many leagues had to cancel their voter registration drives and in person candidate forums. Some leagues did try to register voters virtually with many more thinking of ways to do it this summer and fall. As expected many of our leagues met the challenge of planning and holding virtual forums. In fact 15 leagues held successful virtual candidate forums, got great visibility and learned that more voters were able to attend virtual forums than in person forums. Theses leagues will be sending us a write up of these for our toolkits so that we can learn from one another and leagues who have not yet done them can in the future. Again as anticipated, GOTV was even more challenging that in past years, but many leagues were creative using all tools available to them, from newspapers and radio to all forms of social media, from flyers distributed to recipients of school lunches and food banks to distribution of registration forms at protest rallies, from letters to the editors to videos and webinar and much more. The really good news is that leagues have already begun planning for this summer and fall. Many are editing or personalizing what other leagues have successfully done which were presented at the June 2 Zoom meeting, GOTV while Socially distancing. Also as anticipated VOTE 411 had greater participation than in past primary seasons. In this time of social distancing, VOTE 411 is more important than ever and leagues have been advertising and promoting it more.

What was different than anticipated, is that the surveys indicated far less questions and comments to leagues about absentee ballot process. This may in part due to person completing survey was not aware of some of the problems. We know that voters who may have had their ballots rejected, were never made aware of it and therefore not able to correct problem which is why LWVNY joined in the Absentee Voter litigation. Hopefully this litigation will not interfere with the good working relationship most of our leagues have with their county BOE.

As anticipated, most of our leagues (24) did have contact with their BOE before the June primary. I believe of the five that responded they did not, some of these might have been because the ILO in the county was the one in contact and disseminating the information to local leagues.) What was surprising was surveys reported that BOE webpages had accurate information, that most sent out postcards with correct information and when wrong, sent out second post card, and that Early Voting in most places went smoothly. Over the past several months with all the changes and confusion of when primaries would be held, if people could vote absentee, where polling sites and how many would be available for EV and then on Primary Day, there was anticipation of many problems. In fact, there were major problems in some counties like NYC and Westchester but perhaps in many more there were not. If true, this is good news.
What we do know is that the next months will be busy planning for the registration, education, and GOTV for the upcoming elections. Leagues will be urged to contact their BOE and arrange for a meeting to offer suggestions and support. The voter service committee will be revising a survey for leagues to answer after they complete this visit. The voter service committee will also be compiling materials for the tool kits on Voter Registration, Candidate Forums, and Get Out The Vote. We will be contacting our assigned leagues to find out how else we can help them in this time of uncertainty and what should be focus of next VS zoom webinar? In these uncertain, frequently changing times, one thing is certain: The LWVNYS and local leagues will be working together to fulfill our mission of registering, educating, and getting out the vote. (Details from surveys are attached separately)

General Election November 3, 2020
   Early Voting October 24 - November 1
   Deadline for Voter Registration October 9 in person and postmarked
   Application for Absentee Ballot October 27 postmarked; November 2 in person

**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI): Regina Tillman, rmt370@gmail.com and Crystal Joseph, campus@lwvnyc.org**

**DEI in Practice: Youth Civics, Education and Social Equity**

During the past month, I had the honor of participating in the LWVUS national-based learning lab which focused on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). The training was filled with information that could assist local leagues in both training and teaching on social equity in the 21st Century. Each module used practical resources and common-language conversations about everyday racial inequities to think about the ways our league could understand difference and be more inclusive of others. A recurring theme, throughout the training, was that social equity is an intentional practice and it begins with much internal reflection and outward support, to challenge conventional thinking. Similarly, the [New York City Youth Civics Initiative](#) through coalition building, is challenging members of the Generation Z demographic and using various media platforms, socially relevant and culturally responsive tools to both introduce and maintain a strong and active voter base. In a two-day training, the NYCYCI has shared the ways in which their generation are both committed to being politically involved and protecting their right to vote. Through the lens of social justice and transformation, Petty, Zimmerman and Leach (2017) maintain that we connect to our greater purpose when we are (1) refueling and replenishing, (2) are skilled in the transference of positive energies and (3) create synergy. These characteristics were evident in the panel discussion led by the civics initiative. Through service-learning projects, students of all ethnicities and backgrounds (1) research an issue, (2) craft and action plan, (3) create an execution strategy and (4) reflect on their advocacy efforts. With regards to closing the divide on equity, the generation uses powerful storyboards, journalism and videos to emphasize the necessity of protecting the vote.

**DEI in Practice: LWVNYS DEI Taskforce**

Love it when a plan comes together! Just as we were initiating the State-wide DEI Task Force, the LWVUS put out a call for applicants for their DEI grant. The most significant component of the grant was not the funding, however… it was the opportunity to go thru a DEI training course. The course continues the efforts of the LWVUS for the past 3 years to assist Leagues as they expand their individual DEI efforts. This training continues the approach which occurs at three basic levels as described in the course introduction:

- Individual – Examines the fact that for this DEI work to succeed, we each need to examine our relationship to DEI, identify our biases, and understand our diverse dimensions and how to relate to the diverse dimensions of those around us;
- Organizational – Examines barriers to equitable and inclusive participation, opportunities to create a culture of collective leadership, and how Leagues can represent the communities they serve;
• Community – This level examines how Leagues can be equitable and helpful partners to our communities and can share our strengths in a way that uplifts underrepresented voices and acknowledges their value in our Democracy.

The course is billed as being designed to help us to establish the framework and mindset needed to apply a DEI lens to what we do as individuals and to what your League undertakes. Check out the submission above by Crystal Joseph, BOD Member/Youth Services Director, for insight on the benefits of the training as applied to one of the league focus areas, youth. Happily, half of our current Task Force members have received this training as of July through the grant, and the grant funds will support a DEI related workshop for all NYS League members and their communities in the upcoming months.

But why wait!? The LWVUS and the course partner, Leaderosity.org, has just made the course available to ALL LEAGUE MEMBERS at no charge for the next 25 days! Thus, we invite you to get a head start on your own knowledge base as you lead your league to function through the application of a DEI lens. Sign up at this direct link to participate and spread the word to interested members in your chapter: https://www.courses.leaderosity.org/courses/the-equity-journey.

Women’s Suffrage History: Barb Thomas, bkoeppticust@gmail.com and Joan Johnson, jaj62@twcny.rr.com

The Women’s Suffrage Committee is exploring options for celebrations of the 100th anniversary of certification of the 19th Amendment on August 26. If you have photos of significant women’s suffrage locations or historical sites in your communities, please take a photo and send to Laura@lwvny.org. We’d like to make a collage of sites from across New York State. Also, watch for the release of a video conversation among Carrie Chapman Catt, a long time League member and a new, young member on the history of women’s suffrage and the League!

Finally, we are having a Flash Sale of our 100th anniversary buttons – 2 for the price of 1 ($1 plus tax and shipping)! Email Marissa@lwvny.org if you’d like to purchase some for your local League. You can give us a credit card or we can invoice your local League.

From LWVUS

LWVUS Convention was held virtually on June 25-27, 2020. A summary of the actions taken during plenary sessions at LWUS Convention, see the LWVUS website at: https://www.lwv.org/league-management/council-convention/2020-convention-daily-briefing.

Read about the newly elected President, Dr. Deborah Turner’s address here: https://www.lwv.org/about-us/staff-leadership/deborah-turner.

Watch, listen or read about the caucuses and workshops that were held here: https://www.lwv.org/league-management/council-convention/2020-convention-virtual-caucuses-and-info-sessions.

LWVNYS won an award in the category of Strengthening Democracy for its work on early voting last fall. LWVNYC won an award in the category of Storytelling. Their Census Language Project included creation of five videos in five languages by multilingual residents of the United States. Each video shares personal stories about living in the United States with the speakers emphasizing how the census will affect their respective communities. We are so proud that NYS Leagues could shine!