

# IMMIGRATION IN THE UNITED STATES TODAY

*How did we get here? Where are we going?*

Presented by  
Jose Hernandez

Monday, March 25, 7 pm

at

COMSEWOGUE LIBRARY

170 Terryville Road

Port Jefferson Station

631-928-1212

See pages 7-8 for article about

New York State LWV recommendations about budget 2024

PRESIDENT'S PAGE – On March 25, at 7 pm at the Comsewogue Library, we will be discussing the issue of immigration to the United States. We are pleased to have Jose Hernandez as our speaker. He is an Honorary Member of our League, and provides Spanish translations for our publications. More than 86 million people legally entered the United States between 1783 and 2019. The legal structures under which they came has changed radically over that time; early immigration to the country was primarily European, driven by forces including religious and political persecution, crop failure, and the expanding frontiers of the American west.

It has recently been elevated to a top concern for the public amid recent record encounters of asylum seekers at the U.S. Mexico border who, like displaced persons all over the world, are looking for safety, as well as migrants who are looking for more opportunity.

Some communities are welcoming immigrants, seeing them as sources of demographic, economic, and civic vitality. Legal immigration, both temporary and permanent, has rebounded from the decline that began in 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic and the Trump administration's restrictive policies and rhetoric. In fiscal year (FY) 2023, the State Department issued 10.4 million temporary visas for tourists, international students, and others, up from 8.7 million in FY 2019. Inside the United States, the 969,000 immigrants who became citizens in FY 2022, after spending years as lawful permanent residents (LPRs, or green-card holders), represented the largest naturalization total since FY 2008.

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#### OUR MEETING ON LAND USE PLANNING AND THE FOOD SUPPLY

On February 26, we met with August Ruckdeschel (Augie), from Suffolk County Cooperative Extension to learn about ways that local government, through its planning powers, contributes to health. and nutrition. The children and adults in the United States have the highest rate of obesity in the world. While many families live in food deserts, where there are few opportunities for obtaining healthy food, many also live in food swamps, where the food that is available is not nutritious and even harmful. Good food has become very important for all children, but especially for those whose families are not able to provide it.

To make sure there is land that can be farmed to provide the food we need, local units of government purchase and care for open space, especially through the Farmland Development Rights program, which purchases the development rights from a potential farmer, who is then able to keep his land at a reasonable tax rate and can, and must, use the land for agricultural purposes. Food Policy Councils, such as the one in Suffolk, with the members appointed by the Legislature, actively provide community education about nutrition, farming and gardening and advocates for planning for walkability, fresh food accessibility, water quality protection, and limitation of fast food restaurants, unhealthful food, and cigarette sales near schools. Data and

statistics about the county's agricultural system are available in the USDA Food Environment Atlas and its Food and Nutrition Services.

Augie also spoke of the plans to create "Energy Hubs" which will provide education and out-reach to residents and small businesses in the Long Island region with a focus on underserved communities, helping people learn about ways to reduce their energy use and transition to clean energy for heating, cooling and powering their homes, buildings, and transportation. In addition, The Hubs hope to hire local residents as "Navigators" to work in their communities to identify barriers to reducing energy use and help remove those barriers.

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#### LWV-US CONVENTION COMING SOON

LWV US will be holding its annual convention in Washington, D.C. from June 25 to 27. We are entitled to send delegates who are League members. If you would like to attend (with the cost paid by the League) please let me know. Nancy Marr (631 793-2124)

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VOTE 411.org will be published and made available before the election. It will show your candidates, voting location, and answers to our questions from candidates. Please help us by submitting questions that we can send to candidates running in Brookhaven. (The candidates will be US Congressional and Senatorial candidates and candidates for NYS Senate and Assembly.)

Contact Carol Gavin ([tabbygavin@yahoo.com](mailto:tabbygavin@yahoo.com)) if you can help.

The New York Presidential Primary will be on April 2, with the deadline for requesting a mail-in Ballot on March 23 (or April 1 if you request it in person). On June 25, the Primary election for Congressional and State candidates will be held (deadline for requesting a mail-in ballot is June 15 (or in person by June 24).

NOTE: You may request a mail-in voter application for any election without excuse

FOR ANY QUESTION ABOUT OUR ELECTIONS, GO TO <https://elections.ny.gov>

#### LWV STUDENT DAY AT THE LEGISLATURE

On April 19, our League and the League of the Hamptons, Shelter Island and the North Fork will be at the Riverhead Legislative Building with students from local high schools in a program sponsored by the Suffolk County Legislature. It will feature 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. They will consider a sample law that could be drafted, lobby for and against it, and vote. It is an opportunity for the students to meeting students from other schools, and learn about how government works. League members may come and watch.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BIPARTISAN BORDER BILL THAT WAS NOT CONSIDERED IN 2023 BY THE RECENT CONGRESS

A new poll, taken by the Wall Street Journal on March 7 by Michelle Hickman and Aaron Zitmer found that Americans support tougher border security but 79% also support pathways to citizenship for longtime immigrants living in the country if they pass a background check, suggesting that voters crave a blueprint for compromise. The agreement reached this year by Sens. James Lankford, R-Okla., Chris Murphy, D-Conn., and Kyrsten Sinema, I-Ariz. was the most aggressive border security and migration overhaul bill in decades. It would have raised the standard to get asylum, sent away those who didn't qualify and expedited cases for those who did. But the leadership in the House of Representatives did not consider it, so it was never passed.

The bill proposed changing the asylum system to have asylum officers hand down most decisions in months, while making it very difficult for migrants to appeal to immigration courts, which take longer to investigate cases and make decisions (which caused criticism by some).

It would Increase immigrant “diversity visas” for those immigrants who come from nations that are underrepresented among recently arrived immigrants.

It would free up unused Trump-era border wall money for new barrier construction.

It makes no substantive changes to the presidential authority to grant humanitarian parole, which currently allows as many as 30,000 people from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela to enter the U.S. by plane each month. They are vetted and required to have sponsors in the U.S. and, through “humanitarian parole”, they are provided protection from deportation and have work permits for two years.

It directs the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to impose a Title 42-like expulsion authority, “summarily removing” asylum-seekers from the United States when Border Patrol apprehends 3,600 or more people per day between ports of entry.( Encounters have crossed that threshold in 34 of the Biden administration’s first 36 months.) It is not clear whether Mexico would agree to take back expelled migrants across the land border but Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) does not have the capacity to carry out aerial deportations on this scale to countries beyond Mexico.

The Border Emergency Authority would “sunset,” or automatically be repealed, after three years.

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For more information about immigration, look for  
CENTER FOR IMMIGRATION STUDIES - <https://cis.org>  
AND CATO INSTITUTE -<https://cato.org>

## NOTES ON U.S. IMMIGRATION

Between 1880 and 1930, more than 27 million immigrants arrived, mainly from Europe and Canada. This peak immigration period—the last major wave prior to the current era—also led to new restrictions. As the gold rush ended, animosity toward Chinese laborers and other immigrants surged, leading to a series of racially restrictive immigration laws. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 halted immigration of Chinese laborers for ten years, barred Chinese naturalization, and provided for the deportation of unauthorized Chinese immigrants.

In 1917 the Immigration Act prohibited immigration from a newly drawn "Asiatic barred zone" covering most of South and Southeast Asia and nearly the entire Middle East. The Immigration Act of 1924 (also known as the Johnson-Reed Act) established the national-origins quota system, which set a ceiling on the number of immigrants allowed from each country, highly preferencing those from Northern and Western Europe. The 1924 law included no provisions for immigration from South and Central America or Mexico.

In 1940, Congress passed the Alien Registration Act that forced noncitizens to register with the federal government, provide fingerprints, and notify the government in the event of an address change. Under these conditions, and just two months after the United States entered into World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, establishing concentration and detention camps for Japanese and Germans inside the United States.

During World War II, President Roosevelt re-launched the Bracero Program. It was similar to the temporary-worker programs of 1917 and 1922 that allowed for the entry of 50,000 to 80,000 Mexican laborers. It gave farmers, who faced severe labor scarcity and wage controls during the war, access to Mexican laborers under certain conditions. Along with a minimum wage standard and housing protections, the program also established terms of return for Mexican workers, who would labor in agriculture while Americans were employed in war industries or serving in the military. Some U.S. farmers hired lower-cost illegal immigrant workers, and many farmers abused bracero workers. Between 1942 and 1964, the Bracero Program facilitated roughly 4.5 million Mexican agricultural workers' legal entry until 1947 when the Bracero Program ended, leaving many illegal immigrants who were arrested and returned to the border to obtain temporary work visas, a process that eventually morphed into a re-vamped Bracero Program.

Historically, the United States was a refuge for displaced persons and those fleeing persecution. However, the 1920s immigration laws did not allow exceptions to the quotas for refugees.

In 1924, The federal government, concerned about an increase in illegal migration, used the Labor Appropriation Act to take the loose cadre of border guards and create the Border Patrol. President Eisenhower initiated a border crackdown in the mid-50's, which apprehended over a million illegal entrants at the Southwest border.

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The postwar revelation of the Holocaust shamed the United States for its pre-war anti-refugee policy and generated political support for the passage of the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 and the Refugee Relief Act of 1953. These two pieces of legislation helped facilitate the post-war immigration of refugees.

Two decades later, the tide slowly started to turn. In 1943, the Chinese Exclusion Act was repealed after more than 60 years. The 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act continued the national-origins quota system but for the first time allocated a quota for Asian countries. A new philosophy guiding immigration eventually took hold as part of the nation's civil-rights movement, and the resulting Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments of 1965 (the Hart-Cellar Act) repealed the national-origins quota system and replaced it with a seven-category preference system based primarily on family unification and the skills of immigrants.

In 1996, the passage of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) gave border agents a choice on how to deal with the aliens, either removing without a removal order from a judge, or placing them in regular removal proceedings in immigration court. By 1914 the nature of the migrants had changed from single adults to mothers with children, which created a need for family detention centers to expedite the removal of adults with children. Following many court cases protecting the rights of children, there have been many issues concerning separation and care of children in custody.

Following 9/11 in 2001, the government in 2002 created the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) created ICE by merging the investigative and interior enforcement elements of the U.S. Customs Service. The national security force (ICE) led to increased scrutiny and sometimes targeting of immigrant communities. Shortly after 9/11, more than 1,000 foreign nationals deemed potential threats were arrested. DHS created the U.S. Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology (US-VISIT) program to collect biometrics from all foreign nationals entering the country.

Other expanded enforcement activities included the Secure Fence Act of 2006, which directed D.H.S. to establish a system of technology and at least 700 miles of barriers at the nearly 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexico border. Meanwhile, I.C.E. increasingly worked and deputized local law enforcement agents to drive up arrests of unauthorized immigrants, reaching a record high of 320,000 arrests.

Aggressive immigration enforcement, especially with children's cases, drew pushback from immigrant-rights advocates, leading to various kinds of "sanctuary" policies restricting state and local police from cooperating with I.C.E. in places such as California, the Chicago area, and New York City.

Recently many lawmakers have made multiple attempts to enact comprehensive immigration legislation that traded increased enforcement for paths by which unauthorized immigrants could gain legal status and eventual citizenship, but most have failed to become laws. With Republicans increasingly focused solely on prioritizing enforcement and Democrats motivated chiefly by legalization, hopes of reaching a legislative grand bargain have faded. Even legal immigration has become a point of increasing political contention, representing a turning point from the

longstanding bipartisan consensus that illegal immigration should be discouraged but that legal immigration benefits the country.

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This article will be printed in the *Times Beacon Record*

## Making Democracy Work- League Lobbying NYS Elected Officials

by Lisa Scott

Every year the League of Women Voters of New York State provides members with key information on issues of interest to us. The 2024-2025 state budget is currently under debate in the NYS Legislature and Local Leagues are asked to lobby our state Senators and Assembly Members on pre-budget issues before late March since the budget deadline is April 1. The non-budget stand-alone bills are considered in committees and on floors during session in late Apr. and the Legislative session ends on June 1.

In 2024 we are concentrating pre-budget on funding for county boards of elections, election reforms, funding for the public campaign finance board, an expansion of the bottle bill, education financing and fair pay for home care. Post-budget, we will focus on LWV priority issues relating to good government, criminal justice reform, rural issues, healthcare, women's issues, and environmental issues.

Our pre-budget lobbying requests include:

Elections and Good Government: Keeping \$114.5M to support the NYS Public Campaign Finance Program and \$8.1M to support the Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government, and add \$10M in funds directed to County Boards of Elections, \$4.5M to implement the Doctor John L. Flateau Voting and Elections Database and Academic Center of New York Act and \$51,000 for a voter list maintenance organization like ERIC.

Environment: include the Bigger Better Bottle Bill (S237/A6353) in their one house budgets as well as in the final budget.

Education Financing: We strongly oppose Governor Hochul's recent decision to alter the formula that is used to distribute aid to school districts. The changes made in her proposed budget will significantly reduce foundation aid to nearly half of all school districts in the state. The Executive altered both the Consumer Price Index methodology and the policy of reducing aid to no district year to year. As a result, nearly half of school districts will be forced to reduce their 2024-25 school budgets or raise local taxes. They will have no time for planning if the budget is not finalized until the end of March 2024. We are asking that the Governor amend her proposal and reinstate full funding to our schools and that the Senate and Assembly do not include this change in their one house budgets.

## MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK, continued

Healthcare: We ask that Legislators reject Governor Hochul's proposal to cut \$2.55 an hour from home care workers in the consumer directed personal assistance program (CDPAP) and pass the Fair Pay for Home Care Act (S3189/A8821) in the budget.

Other League lobbying later this spring will focus on Elections and Good Government, including:

Ethics and Campaign Finance Reform – Public Campaign Finance Board: The League strongly supports the \$114.5M allocated for the Public Campaign Finance Board.

This year is the first opportunity for New York to demonstrate a commitment to campaign finance reform and reducing the influence of big money in politics. During the 2022 election, the 200 biggest donors outspent over 200,000 small donors in state races. This groundbreaking state program will ensure that New Yorkers' voices are heard throughout the political process. The funding for this program included in the Executive Budget will ensure that it can help level the playing field, amplify the voices of small donors, and reduce the impact of wealthy special interest groups in New York. We urge the Legislature to include the full \$114.5M in the Senate and Assembly one house budgets.

Funding to County Boards of Election:

Elections are often the last item on the list when it comes to county budgets and many county boards operate with limited resources. The League urges the Legislature to seriously consider the cost of new election improvements when introducing their proposed budgets and to consider setting up a yearly fund specifically for implementing election reforms at the local level.

The League was glad to see that funds were specifically allocated for local boards of elections to invest in new electronic pollbooks (\$14.7 M), to cover the cost of absentee and early vote by mail ballot postage (\$7.7M). However, there are still limited funds available for educating voters, poll worker training, staffing, and the establishment of new sites to comply with current mandates. It is not possible for boards to continue to expand voting access without funds devoted to these measures. We ask that a minimum of an additional \$10M in funding be allocated to county boards of elections so that they may make the upgrades necessary and hire the staff necessary to effectively run our elections in 2024. This is consistent with the bipartisan proposal submitted by election commissioners across New York State.

**All voters should consider discussing the above issues with your NYS Assembly and Senate representatives. Educate yourself, your voice matters.**

*Lisa Scott is president of the League of Women Voters of Suffolk County a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. For more information, visit <https://my.lwv.org/new-york/suffolk-county>.*



## UPCOMING CALENDAR

### MARCH

|          |           |  |
|----------|-----------|--|
| March 20 | Wednesday | LWV Suffolk County Board Meeting, 9:30 on zoom         |
| March 25 | Monday    | LWV Meeting on Immigration at Comsewogue Library, 7 pm |

### APRIL

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|----------|-----------|---|
| April 2  | Tuesday   | LWV Brookhaven Board Meeting, 9:30 on zoom  |
| April 17 | Wednesday | LWV Suffolk County Board Meeting, 9:30 on zoom  |
| April 19 | Friday    | Students at the Legislature, Riverhead County Center, 8:45-12:45<br>(see description, page 3) |

Members are invited to attend the local or county Board meetings. To find out the zoom link, call Nancy Marr (631) 793-2124 or (631) 730-6556.

