



The League of Women Voters of New York State
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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS *of New York State*

State Board Updates **May 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)

- Select and submit your state **League DEI Task Force Representative** by **May 30** – see article below
- Register for **state Council meeting by June 5** – Council will be held on **June 11 at 7:00 pm** by Zoom
- **LWVUS Convention** is still scheduled as a virtual meeting for June 25-27, 2020 – see article below
- Submit your **Local League Update forms (attached)** for new officers and board members **by June 30**
- 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

With a sigh of relief, perhaps some trepidation, and a deep breath, many of you are emerging from stay-at-home restrictions to a different way of interacting in the public sphere. Masks, marking off that social distance and then washing hands more than ever before will be with us for a long time. In NYC, where I am, emerging mid-June sounds so far off, but things are looking better. Stay safe, be smart and stick with the League, we have a busy month ahead. I hope you are not ZOOMED OUT, because the June calendar is packed with very important League gatherings:

Thursday, June 11, 7PM LWVNY Council: Presidents, please make sure you have your delegates registered or asked for proxies. Email Laura@lwvny.org with the names of your delegates to receive the zoom invitation when the time gets closer. We must pass a budget for the LWVNY and we will have time for a look ahead from state leaders in advocacy and education, highlighting the November Election.

Tuesday, June 16, 7PM LWVUS Convention Prep: I will hold a zoom meeting with all delegates from New York State Leagues to review proposed Program, Bylaws, Budget and processes for the 54th Biennial LWVUS Convention. This meeting is highly recommended for first time delegates: Questions will be answered. Please email Laura@lwvny.org with your delegates for LWVUS Convention so they can join this prep meeting. Register your delegates to attend the LWVUS at: <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/council-convention/convention-2020-registration>.

Thursday, June 25, 6:30-9:00PM, [54th LWVUS Biennial Convention](#): LWVUS sponsored pre-Convention talk and conversation. Virtual Plenary training included.

Friday, June 26, 3:00-8:00PM, [54th LWVUS Biennial Convention](#); breaks are part of the schedule

Saturday, June 27, 3:00-8:00PM, – [54th LWVUS Biennial Convention](#); breaks are part of the schedule
The LWVUS convention links will take you to information about the slate of Nominations for LWVUS officers and board members, budget, proposed Program and any changes being offered to the Bylaws.

After all of this I am sure you will be ZOOMED OUT and ready for a long safe July 4, Holiday.

State Office: Laura Ladd Bierman, Laura@lwny.org

2020 State Council

The 2020 State Council meeting will be held on **June 11, at 7:00 pm**, on Zoom. Each local League is entitled to the number of delegates based on their membership numbers. To register, email Laura@lwny.org by June 5 and tell her who will be attending the Zoom Council meeting and attach the completed proxy form for delegates not attending but wishing to have someone vote by proxy for them. The 2020 Council Kit is attached. In the Kit, the proposed state League budget is presented which must be approved at the Council meeting. Also in the Kit are reports from the various leaders and committee chairs holding state portfolios. During the Council meeting, the state board members will present their direction for the state League in the coming year. Local Leagues may submit Directions to the Board on the 2nd page of the Council Notice and Proxy Form (attached).

Local League Updates

Most local Leagues are now holding their annual meetings and electing officers and board members for the coming year. Please complete and return the attached Local League Update form by June 30 to inform the state League as to your new leaders and their contact information. This information is crucial to our creating the group email lists used by the state League to communicate with local League leaders. **PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS FORM ASAP.**

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.



Don't forget that you can honor Leagues leaders with an engraved plaque at the state office. With a \$200 donation (through League or your Education Funds), we will engrave the wording you choose, send you a certificate with that wording to present to the honoree, and engrave the wording on a plaque hanging in the state office. More information is attached.

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

Advocacy Efforts

This month the League joined Let NY Vote coalition in releasing a package of legislative priority reforms for voting during COVID-19. The coalition has recommended a voter protection package that would codify the streamlining and expansion of absentee voting into law. The package also recommends additional ways to make it easier to receive, cast and count an absentee ballot.

Later in the month the legislature announced it would reconvene session to pass legislation related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The League joined the LetNYVote coalition in issuing recommended election reforms to be taken up while the legislative is in session to correct and expand on the Governor's existing Executive Orders. The bills included:

1. Expanding absentee voting
 - a. Extend expanded definition of illness as a justification for voting absentee through the end of the year. S8015B(Biaggi)/A10271(Blake).
 - b. Permanently permit voters to request an absentee ballot electronically and without a signature requirement. S8130B (Myrie).
2. Providing additional ways to make it easier to receive, cast and count an absentee ballot
Clarifications and safeguards contained in S8367 (Myrie), S8368 (Myrie), S8369 (Myrie) and S8370(Myrie) as well as requiring that absentee ballots be provided with postage paid returns S8004 (Sanders)/A2327 (Dinowitz) and urge the passage of these bills.
3. Requiring the Board of Elections to provide accommodations for voters with disabilities who wish to vote by mail
 - a. Ensuring braille and large print ballots are available.
 - b. Allowing special ballot marking software as well as online and phone assistance
4. Allowing online voter registration for NYC residents
We strongly support New York City's efforts to increase voter registration in this crucial election year by providing an online voter registration site for New York City residents. We urge the Legislature to pass S6463 (Myrie) /A8473 (Blake) which would allow New York City to activate the online registration website it already has created.

Our Deputy Director, Jennifer Wilson, discussed these proposals and the need for additional legislative action related to voting on WAMC Northeast Public radio. A recording of the interviewed can be listened to here: <https://wamcpodcasts.org/podcast/wamc-news-podcast-episode-110/>

At the time of this report, only one piece of recommended legislation was being considered by the legislature. S8130B, a bill that would allow electronic absentee filing requests to be extended to November and allow absentee ballots to be returned on election day. We are continuing to advocate for the above-mentioned legislation.

Voting Updates

At the beginning of May the Governor announced several new Executive Orders related to 2020 elections including the following

- Boards of Elections will include paid return postage for all absentee ballots for the June primary.
- All village & town elections scheduled to be held in March, April, May, or June will be held on September 15, 2020.

- School board/budget elections are scheduled for June 9th and will be held via mail with return postage included. Each district will send out postcard notice which details the date of the election, date of budget hearing, definition of qualified voter, and an absentee ballot.
- The Governor's order also recognizes that absentee ballot requests submitted before his Executive Orders on absentee voting will still be valid without further action by the voter.
- And that Boards of Elections must also make available at their offices a voting system that is accessible for voters wishing to mark their ballot privately and independently.

The League is continuing to inform voters of ongoing changes to the voting process related to COVID-19.

Presidential Primary Update

A case regarding the cancellation of the Presidential Primary was also settled this month. A U.S. District Court Judge ruled all qualifying candidates for the Presidential primary in New York must be reinstated on the ballot. The lawsuit was filed by former presidential candidate Andrew Yang who challenged that the State Board of Elections' decision to cancel the primary violated his rights when his name was removed from New York's primary ballot. The State Board of Elections appealed this decision, but the appeal was denied.

Vote411

The Vote411 guide went live on Wednesday, May 13th. We uploaded a total of 138 primary races with 666 candidates for Assembly, Senate, Judicial Delegate, and Congressional races. 334 of these candidates were Judicial Delegates who we only listed names and party affiliation, 332 of these candidates were asked to complete our ballot guide and approximately 75% have responded at this time. Local Leagues are continuing to work on uploading local races around the state. Encourage the public to go to www.vote411.org to find the races and candidates on their ballot.

Early Voting Poll Sites

New York State counties have submitted their early voting plans for the June primary to the state board of elections. Only one county still needs to declare site hours (Westchester) and New York City is still deciding hours and exact site locations for voters. The State League is beginning to upload these poll sites and hour to our website. There are still a few counties who have not made their sites publicly available, but we will add these sites as soon as the information is public. See the chart with links to the information for each county here:

<https://my.lwv.org/new-york-state/voting-2020-faqs>

Disability Rights NY Webinar on Assisting Voters with Disabilities

This month the League held a webinar for Voter Service Chairs and Presidents on how to support voters with disabilities. The webinar was presented by Helen Charland of Disability Rights New York and Kevin Greenstein, a League member and award winning self-advocate. Helen and Kevin covered a variety of topics including get out the vote, best practices for encouraging people with disabilities to register and vote, and sensitivity training. The presentation is available [here](#) for those interested in hearing from these two fantastic speakers.

Voter Services: Judie Gorenstein, judieL728@aol.com

Registering, educating and getting out the vote has been a challenge for Leagues throughout the state as well as for LWVNYS. Just keeping up with changes on when and how and who we are voting for in this year's primary has been a monumental task. LWVNYS and local Leagues are working together to maintain our gold standard. Jennifer has done an outstanding job in sending out eblasts when changes occur. Local Leagues have asked for a video to explain how to vote absentee. They also have been asking for a method to send out reminders to vote. Jennifer, with assistance from LWV of Saratoga, created a video on applying for and completing an absentee ballot. LWVNYS webpage is updated regularly. LWVNYS has also purchased a texting service (text Vote NY to 474747) so that voters not only get reminders to vote but real time updates.



Leagues have also been requesting ideas of how to carry out their mission during this pandemic when we are all told to stay home. LWWNYS has compiled an addendum to be used with Road to the Voting Booth and toolkits, "Registering, Educating, and GOTV While Social Distancing." The voter service committee has been in contact with all Leagues encouraging them to share their plans and apply for a mini-grants. Congratulations to all the 14 Leagues, 1 MAL and 3 ILOs who did apply. Many had very detailed and well thought out plans. Thirteen grants were given with most of the grant money being distributed for activities leading up to the general election with the exception of two Leagues who have already received grants. LWV of Westchester ILO has planned and arranged for 3 virtual candidate forums for congressional district races and Westchester DA race. LWV of New Castle has also arranged for a zoom virtual candidate forum. These virtual forums can be prototype for forums this fall if New York if we are still at some level of social distancing. We have also learned that several Leagues who did not apply for grants are holding virtual candidate meetings. We ask that all Leagues who are holding the virtual forums send LWWNYS a description of platforms they used, steps they took in planning and how well it worked.

The activities and plans submitted for the grants as well as descriptions of other virtual candidate forums will be added to the GOTV toolkit. These included purchasing and mailing postcards to voters in low turn-out areas, having banners on the outside of busses with routes in underserved communities and, placing informational flyers with election information in food assistance packages. Many Leagues requested money for lawn signs and instead LWWNYS will be designing signs, purchasing them and having them sent to Leagues who requested them for the general election (others may purchase them at a discounted price).

We are impressed by all the local Leagues are doing to educate voters and GOTV. We have learned that several Leagues who did not apply for the mini-grants are holding virtual candidate forums on free platforms. We have also heard other initiatives Leagues are taking to register, educate and turn out the vote. It is important that Leagues keep their websites up-to-date and continue to work with their county Boards of Elections. As counties are beginning to open up and already are on Level 1, it is important to look at what in the next three weeks we can do to educate and turn out the vote. **We have scheduled a Zoom meeting on June 2 at 7 pm on ways to GOTV While Social Distancing – email Laura@lwwny.org to participate.** We will be sharing ideas as well as brainstorming. If you are interested, please register. Democracy is not a spectator sport and even during PAUSE we are not spectators.

Presidential, Congressional, State and Local Primaries June 23, 2020

Early Voting June 13 - June 21

Deadline for Voter Registration May 29 in person and postmarked

Application for Absentee Ballot June 16 postmarked; June 22 in person

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

As planned since the later part of 2019, the Statewide DEI Task Force is still an immediate goal, albeit one that requires a few tweaks in the face of current concerns. A recently developed DEI planning document includes additional steps that will be taken shortly and that will require input from the local Leagues. I urge local leadership to begin making final queries of their members in this time of a changeover of officers and local Boards, *and to send to me an email with the contact info of your selectee to the Task Force asap, or by **May 30th**.* Look for an individual:

- That is in a leadership position in your League, or on the BOD, who is interested in DEI.
- Which can assist you with providing input to us from your BOD and your membership about DEI.
- And, who may be a nominee to the State's DEI Task Force.

From L WVUS

A decision by the L WVUS Board of Directors has been made to conduct the Convention as a virtual meeting. See more information here: <https://www.lwv.org/2020Convention>

Register to attend the virtual L WVUS Convention here: <https://www.lwv.org/League-management/council-convention/convention-2020-registration>