

**Letter from the President - July 2024**

**President's Letter**

Good news- New York's Equal Rights Amendment is back on the ballot! The ERA was scheduled to be a proposed amendment to the State Constitution on the ballot for this November. A lawsuit to remove the amendment from the ballot charged that the State Legislature had not followed proper procedure- they had failed to get an opinion from the State Attorney General at least 20 days before voting. A court in Rochester ruled that the procedure was flawed and removed the amendment from the ballot.

The Appellate Division overturned that ruling so the ERA is back on the ballot (it turns out that over a dozen amendments have used the same flawed procedure and the amendments all made it onto the ballot).

Currently, New York's Constitution prohibits discrimination based on race or religion. The ERA would greatly expand protection by prohibiting discrimination based on ethnicity, national origin, disability, age and sex, including reproductive health care.

So don't forget to turn your ballot over on Election Day and vote on the ERA.

*Cheryl Nechamen*  
*President*



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## City of Schenectady Independence Day Celebration

Join us on Thursday, July 4, 2024, at 10 a.m., on the steps of Schenectady City Hall, for the first annual reading of the Declaration of Independence in Schenectady. Mayor Gary McCarthy, Councilwomen Doreen Ditoro and Carmel Patrick, Councilman Joseph Mancini, Police Chief Eric Clifford, and Fire Chief Donald Mareno will read portions of this foundational document of U.S. history, the reason behind our July 4th celebrations.

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## Voter Services Report

My first report as voter services chair is about serendipity and connections.

Several days before the Juneteenth Festival in Schenectady's Central Park, I visited NYS League headquarters to pick up the new NY Equal Rights Amendment flyers for our Voter Registration tables. I was talking with Erica Smitka, Acting Executive Director of the state League, about funding sources for our League's Early Voting Billboard Project, when I walked Mary-Kate Owens, Albany League president, and her friend Amy, also from Albany. Mary-Kate and Amy loved the idea of billboards touting early voting and suggested that we work together and try to get the four Leagues to rent billboards as a group (and perhaps get a discount). We also discussed fundraising ideas. I sent Mary-Kate the pricing from Lamar, which Ellen Daviero had researched, and will follow up with our potential partners.

Set-up time for the Juneteenth Festival began with sun and ended in a downpour. Fortunately, Anita Sanchez and her husband, George, had brought a tent. Sandra McGarraugh and Anita saw that the table next to ours didn't have any kind of cover, and George offered to get them one. In the end, our neighbors found a closer source, but the offer led to a conversation with Richard Harris, president of 100 Black Men of the Capital District. At its heart, 100 Black Men is a youth-mentoring organization, but they also advocate for families and neighborhoods—and they register voters. We hope to work with 100 Black Men at future events.

The results: When our second shift ended, Ann Hatke and I tallied one new voter registered; one request for an application to join the League; and two requests for help finding out whether someone's voter registration is still valid. About ten people learned about the NY ERA and took flyers with them.

Other results: I had gone to Albany, worrying about my carbon footprint, and thinking I should have printed the flyers myself. As it turned out, an opportunity was waiting. Sandra, Anita, and George's kind offer to the people at the next table started a relationship that we can build on. While it's not guaranteed, often when we offer to lend a hand, or even just show up, we find ourselves in the right place at the right time.

Joan Fucillo  
Voter Services Chair

## Registering Voters: The Art of Tabling

One of the League’s most effective ways to get out the vote is to table. It’s funny to think of “table” as a verb, as in “I tabled at the Greenmarket the other day.”

Tabling is an art. It’s a science. It’s a highly effective form of action.

What is tabling, exactly? It’s sitting behind a table on a folding chair—or, better, standing in front of the table—and engaging with passersby. I’ve found by far the most effective way to do this is to put it in the form of a question: *Do you plan to vote in November? or Are you concerned about the rights of women? or the sixty-four-thousand dollar question: “Are you registered to vote?”*

Interestingly, I’ve found that the younger the person is, the less likely they are to be registered, or even planning to vote. Sometimes I want to give these young folks a good stern lecture—don’t they know about the suffragettes, for heaven’s sake?

But it’s better, of course, to have a conversation. Ask what their concerns are. Why don’t they think voting matters? Do they care about LGBTQ issues? Or are they concerned about local issues like the lack of public transportation, or school funding?

This is how we get out the vote, one conversation at a time. We gather around a table.

Once you’ve gotten your prey to slow their stride past your table, you’ve got them. For about eight precious seconds. Use them to make a few succinct points (“This election is vitally important...”) If they’re willing to fill out a voter registration form, help them navigate the densely-printed, hard-to-read form.

- Make sure they put their county (not the state) in the address section
- Make sure they choose a political party, or check “no party”
- Make sure they sign and date it

And before they make their escape, be sure to stick a piece of paper in their hand. A LWV membership form, an extra voter registration form, or info on early voting dates and times.

I joined the League of Women Voters especially because we can table at all sorts of places, like schools, that would not allow a partisan organization. The League has a presence at a wide range of venues—colleges, farmer’s markets, the Kids’ Art Festival, Juneteenth celebrations, in front of grocery stores and YMCAs and food pantries.

If you haven’t participated already, consider signing up for a shift. You’ll have a partner to work with, and shifts are usually two hours. There are many tabling opportunities coming up, especially in September, which is Voter Registration Month.

It’s never been more important to get out the vote. Join us around the table.

Anita Sanchez

<i>President</i>	<i>Cheryl Nechamen</i>
<i>Vice President</i>	<i>Joan Fucillo</i>
<i>Voter Services Chair</i>	<i>Joan Fucillo</i>
<i>Secretary</i>	<i>Heide Westergaard</i>
<i>Bulletin Editor</i>	<i>Nicole Salamone</i>

Mission Statement: The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan organization. We encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government. We work to increase the understanding of major public policy issues and influence public policy through education and advocacy.

**“Empowering Voters, Defending Democracy”**



**Welcome New Members:**

Elaine Troy

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 Our League goals are to educate citizens about government and public policy, encourage citizen participation in elections, and influence public policy relating to issues we’ve studied. Membership makes working on our goals possible.



**Membership for July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025**

Return to: LWV of Schenectady County, P.O. Box 9135, Schenectady, NY 12309

***New or Renewing Members Please Confirm This Contact Information***

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$60 Individual \_\_\_\_\_ \$85 Household \_\_\_\_\_ No Fee Full-time student

Additional support for the League, dues plus \$10 contribution (\$70 or \$95 – circle one)

Confidential arrangements for special payment or partial assistance can be made. Contact Connie Young at 518-393-7061 with questions about dues or payments. Dues and contributions are not tax deductible.

I am sending my membership dues payment, but please consider me an **INACTIVE** member.



**ACTIVE MEMBERS:** The League depends upon the work of its members, even if for just a short task.

Please check any areas that interest you. We appreciate your help.

**Register Voters** \_\_\_\_\_ **Candidate Forums** \_\_\_\_\_ **Get Out the Vote** \_\_\_\_\_

**Citizenship Mentoring Group** \_\_\_\_\_ **Environment** \_\_\_\_\_ **Students Inside Albany** \_\_\_\_\_

**Observer Corps** \_\_\_\_\_ **Judicial** \_\_\_\_\_ **Health** \_\_\_\_\_ **Membership** \_\_\_\_\_

**Facebook** \_\_\_\_\_ **Website Work** \_\_\_\_\_ **Other Technical Skills (Describe)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Other areas of interest** \_\_\_\_\_