



## President's Letter

### Letter from the President

Dear LWVSC Members,

Happy New Year to all! I hope your holidays were bright, happy and healthy, and that you were able to celebrate as you wished. As everyone does at this time of year, I've been thinking of the year ahead and what it has in store for all of us. I'm thinking of two very important "leftovers" – the Equal Rights Amendment and the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act.

It has been 98 years since the ERA was first introduced in Congress, and it was finally ratified by the required 38 states one year ago. This long-overdue amendment to the Constitution would guarantee equal legal rights for all American citizens *regardless of sex*. The previous administration prevented the National Archivist from certifying the ERA, but there are current lawsuits pending to allow for certification. We need many more sponsors in the House and more sponsors in the Senate to support this amendment, however. According to the World Population Review for 2021, there are 97 men for every 100 women. There is growing representation of women in local, state and national government, and the number of women CEO's of *Fortune 500* companies broke the all-time record high in 2021. With numbers like these, lawmakers have no reason to delay.

The Voting Rights Act became law in 1965 and was used to protect voters from all forms of voter suppression. It has been reauthorized 5 times since then to keep it from expiring. Once a bi-partisan effort, this Act is now sadly subject to partisan politics. Nineteen states have issued new laws restricting access to voting, and there have been considerable efforts amongst the general population to undermine the electoral system itself. We are not moving forward in this area but backward; the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act needs to be taken up by Congress as soon as possible in 2022.

The League of Women Voters supports both the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment and the expansion and passage of the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act. We've got our work cut out for us!

In League,

Ann Hatke

## Department of Good News

LWV Schenectady County is very pleased to announce a recent gift of \$2,500 for our Educational Fund. We are grateful to LWV members Stephanie and Stephen Schechter for this generous donation that will allow us to expand our efforts on educational programs and activities.

We thank all members who continue to contribute to our League, especially during this difficult past year. It continues to be true – we couldn't do it without you.

## Other Local League News

Albany County League members were active in organizing a November 12 rally and press conference with other voter-rights advocates, to urge Senator Schumer to do everything in his power to pass the Freedom to Vote Act. Rally attendees signed a letter to Schumer asking him to prioritize passage of the Act, concluding "Senators must do everything in their power to pass the Freedom to Vote Act, and let nothing, including the outdated Jim Crow era filibuster, stand in the way. "Senator Schumer's Deputy State Director, Steve Mann, was at the rally and promised to personally deliver the letter to Senator Schumer.

LWV of Saratoga invited Perry Grossman, Senior Staff Attorney of the Voting Rights Project of the New York Civil Liberties Union, for a discussion of voter suppression. New York State, a progressive leader on social issues, has been behind the curve regarding voting rights and policies. Despite some forward movement in recent years, New York still has some way to go toward solving inequities in voting and becoming the kind of national leader it aspires to be.

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”**

## OUR LEAGUE GOT INTO THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT!



The Schenectady County Historical Society has a longstanding tradition of inviting organizations to decorate and display Christmas trees for the holiday season. Its Annual Festival of Trees is a great community event, resulting in a wide array of beautifully decorated trees that as many as 1,000 visitors are able to enjoy during the holiday season. The success of the event enables the Society to fund many important projects throughout the year, so when the LWVSC received an invitation this year from the Historical Society to decorate a tree for the Society's Annual Festival of Trees, we were delighted to join in the fun! Not only were we able to help support the Society, but we were able to (and certainly did!) take advantage of the opportunity to share our message in a very special way.

Our tree was decorated with American flags, "I voted" buttons, and festive paper decorations created

by our own Ann Hatke encouraging visitors to vote, and to join our organization. Membership application forms and details about our work were included in our display. We thought all our members would enjoy seeing our latest effort to participate in a community activity, and at the same time further our mission to encourage everyone to vote! We hope that you, our members, will volunteer and offer more great ideas to advance the League's work in the coming year. Happy 2022!

Respectfully submitted,  
Ann Hatke and Pauline Kinsella

## LWVNYS DIVERSITY AND EQUITY AND INCLUSION TASK FORCE

I want to begin by announcing the next educational opportunity for those interested in helping, both yourselves and our organization, to continue to grow in the implementation of DEI. Many members even noted in submitted workshop responses and surveys that skills to become more effective listeners was important!

Thus, beginning January along with your other New Year's Resolutions, please look forward to joining us in a 21-DAY BETTER LISTENING CHALLENGE©. It is open to all members of LWVNYS. Info will be forthcoming shortly to allow for pre-register. In the meantime, mark your calendar to sign-in and begin the Challenge as of Sunday, January 2, 2022.

But let us first ask the question... what does listening have to do with implementing DEI? You have heard it said numerous times already... groups can be diverse but diverse groups are not inherently inclusive. What then is the special sauce that allows the practice of inclusion?

First, it is coming to an understanding of inclusion as behavior. It is not just a convenient label but rather, a word that implies actions moving toward a certain direction. As we learned in the October workshops, part of the recipe for authentic inclusion is using the language of "transformational conversation." Doing so is an example of a mindful, intentional action that helps to create an inclusive environment.

Another part of the sauce is engaging from the perspective of curiosity! If feelings or observations are revealed in conversation or in meetings, the best immediate response is not denial or defensiveness but rather, in the spirit of "allyship" to ask, "can you tell me more."

And yet another element in the inclusion 'sauce' is active listening. Effective listening acknowledges others and reveals to them that you see them, that you hear them and that you are trying to understand them. Per the developers of this copyrighted 21-Day Challenge, effective listening ranks up there with being considered by social science experts as a healing force, much needed within organizations and communities today.

Within our League, effectively listening to each other as well as to people who join us from historically marginalized and "othered" groups, can aid in retention and engagement because it conveys value and community. Thus, I do hope to see most of you at the 21-Day Better Listening Challenge!

The **LWVNYS DEI Task Force** has been joined by several new members in the past months. Plus, a DEI Task Force Steering Committee has been formed that will allow the team to work on several projects at the same time. League members joining me on this Committee are Crystal Joseph, Task Force Co-Chair (LWVNYS & LWVNYC); Gail Volk (LWV Albany); Linda McKenny (LWV Saratoga); Kathy Meany (LWV Westchester ILO). It is also gratifying to have so many of the previously appointed members carry over into 2022! All our team members are invaluable in their input and the emotional support they render. I thank them all and wish the best of the Holiday Season to them – and as well, to you and your families!

Regina Tillman ([rmt371@live.com](mailto:rmt371@live.com)) and Crystal Joseph, ([campus@lwnyc.org](mailto:campus@lwnyc.org)) Cochairs  
Taken from the State Voter of the LWVNYS

## People Powered Fair Maps

The state redistricting process has been a challenging one – with the unexpected release of the two sets of maps and the hearing dates falling mainly during election season, many Leagues faced a steep learning curve and a busy autumn. With every written testimony, map or comment submitted to the IRC (Independent Redistricting Commission), our local Leagues’ efforts have accumulated into a united front that has been noticed by many.

Below are highlights just a few of our local Leagues’ tremendous efforts to influence redistricting in their areas.

### LWVs of Albany, Saratoga, and Rensselaer

Albany, Saratoga, and Rensselaer were a major part of the Capitol Region’s One Person, One Vote Coalition on redistricting. The Coalition had the capitol region’s Leagues work with The Capital Area Council of Churches, the NAACP, and The Capital District Coalition of Black Trade Unionists to educate the public on State redistricting through public events and community outreach. They’re still working now on educating the public and keeping them aware of the next steps now that the IRC hearings are almost over.

### LWV of the North Country

Throughout the entire redistricting process, the North Country League sent all educational materials from the State League to all of their members, and to a second email list that consisted of “friends” of the League – people and organizations who were not members of the North Country League. Not many people testified at the North Country IRC hearing. However, one of the only people who did testify was someone who was on the “friends of the League” email list, and who had learned more about the 2021 redistricting process from the materials North Country sent them.

### Local Redistricting

Now that the state redistricting process is winding down to a close, the State League has begun to shift our focus to local redistricting. The local redistricting process may look different for a few counties this cycle. A bill (S.5160-B ) that sets solid redistricting standards for all New York counties, was recently signed into law by Governor Hochul. Despite this new, universal standard, all New York counties have varied redistricting processes. Because of this, the State League is currently working on creating guides that explain the individual redistricting process in each New York County. These guides will be sent out to all local Leagues in January.

Additionally, we have been meeting with redistricting professionals and experts from throughout the state. Educational programs on local redistricting will be offered in the near future for all members.

Milly Czerwinski, LWVNYS Organizer, [milly@lwwny.org](mailto:milly@lwwny.org)

Taken from the State Voter

President	Ann Hatke
Vice-President	Jude Rabig
Secretary	Heide Westergaard
Bulletin Editor	Helen MacDonald

January 3, 2022 Submitted via Email to the Commissioners of the Independent Redistricting Commission

We are writing to express our disappointment with the results of today’s public meeting in which you cast five votes each along partisan lines for separate sets of Congressional and legislative maps. The failure of the Commission to collaboratively use the input from public comments and hearings across the State to develop a single set of maps constitutes an abdication of your responsibility as Commissioners.

When New Yorkers voted to approve the Independent Redistricting Commission in 2014, they did so with the hope and expectation that it would act independently of the incumbent legislature and curtail extreme partisan gerrymandering. Today’s failure of the Commission to set aside partisanship and collaborate comes at the expense of New York State residents. This is not inevitable deadlock; it is a dereliction of duty.

Thousands of New Yorkers have participated in the 2021 redistricting process with the belief that their testimonies, comments, and proposed maps would contribute to a united set of maps produced by an Independent Commission. New Yorkers were counting on you in this first-time process to approve one set of maps to be sent to the legislature. Unfortunately, that did not happen.

The next stage of the process will be the legislature voting on implementing legislation for at least one of the submitted plans, without amendment. If either house fails to approve the legislation or the Governor vetoes, then you will be asked to submit a second set of plans. Only if that second plan fails to win approval is the legislature allowed to introduce amendments, which will need to comply with all constitutional standards including the ban on partisan gerrymandering put in by the voters in 2014.

If it is necessary for you to submit an additional plan to the legislature, we hope you will act collaboratively in the best interest of all the voters of this state by submitting a single plan.

Laura Ladd Bierman, Executive Director LWV of New York State  
Betsy Gotbaum, Executive Director, Citizens Union of the City of New York  
John Kaehny, Executive Director Reinvent Albany

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 January 1, 2022 – June 30, 2022**

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 \_\_\_\_\_ \$20 Full time HS 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 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.