

# Update

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE

May 2026



## Students Invited to “Make Your Mark” in 2026 Election

A project conceived last fall by Gretchen Sorin and Roe DiBona of the Youth Services Committee has come to fruition with the help of generous gifts and grants. The project, “Make Your Mark,” is a contest to inspire local high school students to explore what voting in free elections means to them.

“This project is designed to get students involved in the electoral process; to get them interested in the importance of voting; to teach them about the individuals who fought for voting rights,” notes Gretchen, “and most importantly, to actively participate in the process of good citizenship.”

Gretchen and Roe successfully pursued grants from the Community Foundation of Otsego County and the League of Women Voters US. The grants will cover the cost of printing promotional posters (at left) and



fund prizes for the students: \$500 for the first-place poster, \$300 for second-place, \$100 for third-place, and four honorable mentions at \$50 each.

This first year will focus on a pilot group of schools: Cooperstown, Springfield-Cherry Valley, Richfield Springs, and Milford. If successful, the plan is to expand the contest to the entire county. Graphic designer Doreen DeNicola donated her time to develop a poster for the contest. The Cooperstown Graduate Program is also a partner and will be the drop off point for the posters and assist with the judging will assist with the distribution of posters and information packets for teachers. Judging will take place during the summer and the posters will be exhibited during the fall prior to the mid-term elections.

## League Annual Meeting May 19

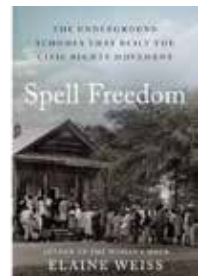
The League of Women Voters of the Cooperstown Area will hold its 51st annual meeting on May 19, 6-8 pm at Cooperstown Co-Works, 6 Doubleday Court, Cooperstown. The guest speaker will be Will Walker, Associate Professor of History at the Cooperstown Graduate Program. He will speak about his current work and how it relates to one of the themes of America’s 250th birthday celebrations—“The Power of Place.” He will relate two “powerful” places in the history of Cooperstown—Council Rock and its relationship to the Revolution and the Haudenosaunee and the rural landscape of the area as recorded by Susan Fenimore Cooper.

The event is a potluck and guests should bring their own place settings and a dish to share. Members with last names beginning A-J should bring a salad or side; K-T bring a main dish; and U-Z, bring a dessert. Find more details at [www.LWVCooperstownArea.org](http://www.LWVCooperstownArea.org).

Members will elect a new co-president and four board members, hear about the League’s work over the past years from the chairs of the various committees, as well as approve the budget and the League’s program for the upcoming year. Join us!

## A Conversation on the “Schools that Built the Civil Rights Movement”

Elaine Weiss will discuss her most recent book, *Spell Freedom The Underground Schools that Built the Civil Rights Movement*, on Thursday, May 28, 2026, at 7 pm at the Cooperstown Village Hall, 22 Main St., Cooperstown. The format will be a conversation between Weiss and League member Gretchen Sorin, Director of SUNY’s Cooperstown Graduate Program.



*Spell Freedom* was long-listed for the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction in 2026. One critic called it an account that “celebrates the dauntless individuals who forced change by establishing more than 900 citizenship and literacy schools for adults in 11 southern states, organizing voter registration drives, and creating agency for primarily poor—often rural—populations.”

In addition to *Spell Freedom*, Weiss, who is a League member, wrote *The Woman’s Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote*. Sorin, the author of *Driving While Black*, directed the PBS documentary film based on the book with Ric Burns. The Race, Equity, and Justice Series of the First Baptist Church of Cooperstown and Green Toad Bookstore are cosponsoring the event, which is free and open to the public.

## Coming Up: Mark your calendar...

### Advocacy Days in Albany

May 5, LWV New York State Advocacy Day at the capital covering all State issue areas and topics including Defending Democracy legislation and Packaging Reduction & Recycling Infrastructure Act (PRRIA). If you would like the opportunity to meet with our local legislators and advocate for League issues contact Patty MacLeish (pmacleish@verizon.net).

May 11, People over Plastics. Empire State Plaza, Con-

course, Conference Rooms 2, 3, and 4, 10am– 4:00 pm. The LWVCA's Natural Resources Committee will join Beyond Plastics to lobby for support of the Packaging Reduction & Recycling Infrastructure Act (PRRIA) in Albany. Email Tracy Roberts (tenicobal@gmail.com) to RSVP and if you are interested in carpooling.

### Students Inside Albany

Two Cooperstown Hugh School students will attend Students Inside Albany (SIA), May 17-20, 2026. Jacob Johnson, a senior, was drawn to SIA because he wants “to learn more about public policy and how it drives meaningful change in the lives of citizens...” Cairn O’Sullivan is a sophomore at Cooperstown. He formed the school’s Model UN Club and successfully recruited both an advisor and fellow students to join the Club at Cooperstown this year.

SIA brings together students from across the state for a hands-on experience to show how state government works. The goal is to increase high school students’ awareness of their

responsibility in representative government and provide information about the tools necessary for meeting that responsibility. Students participate in a series of lectures on topics such as the state budget process, the role of lobbyists in the legislative process, and citizen rights to access government information. They will also tour the state’s Capitol, attend a legislative session and shadow Senators and Assemblymembers.

Through the generosity of its members and supporters, LWV of Cooperstown has been sponsoring SIA students for more than 25 years. Stewart Shops is also a primary supporter of SIA through the LWV of New York State.

### Moderator Training

Voter Services Lead Maureen Murray and Stephanie Bauer will lead a moderator training on Saturday, April 25, from 10 am to 1pm at the Clark Sports Center, 124 County Rd 52, Cooperstown. The training is for seasoned moderators, who might want a refresher, as well as anyone who simply wants to know more about hosting a public event.

“Our ultimate goal is to increase our team of League moderators for candidates events,” notes Maureen. “But we

encourage anyone who would simply like to improve their speaking skills in a public setting will learn from the training.”

We have invited League members from surrounding areas and other community organizations to attend, and we ask that you alert your members to this opportunity.

Maureen notes that attending the training in no way amounts to a commitment to serve as a moderator.

### Meet Susan B. Anthony!

On February 5, 1855, Susan B. Anthony spoke at the First Presbyterian Church on Pioneer Street in Cooperstown. Perhaps you have noticed the historic marker there? (See photo at right). To celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the League has invited Susan B. (as portrayed by the actor Linda McKenney) to return to Cooperstown on Saturday, June 27, from 2-4 pm. The First Presbyterian Church is a most appropriate setting for this presentation focusing on the promoting democracy and the right to vote for all.

Local artist Christine Heller’s sketches of women suffragists from New York State will be exhibited. Other participants will be: Will Walker and Cynthia Falk, Cooperstown historians; Cooperstown Mayor Ellen Tillapaugh; and Jess Lambert and Faith Gay, co-pastors of the Church.



## Coming Up

April 20 Deadline for petitions to run for school board. *This deadline is after our publication date; check our web page, LWVCooperstownArea.org, for details on candidates forums.*

April 24 **Moderator Training**, 10 am to 1pm at the Clark Sports Center, 124 County Rd 52, Cooperstown, N.Y.

May 11 **People over Plastics Advocacy Day**. Empire State Plaza. See details in story above.

May 19 **LWV Cooperstown Area Annual Meeting**, 6-8 pm, Cooperstown Co-works, 6 Doubleday Court

May 19 **School budget** votes in New York State. Check with your local school district for polling hours.

May 28 **Elaine Weiss** author of *Spell Freedom* in conversation with Gretchen Sorin, 7 p.m., Cooperstown Village Hall Ballroom, 22 Main St.

June 13 **Early voting** begins for June Primary Elections.

June 15 **Deadline for “Make Your Mark”** Poster Contest

June 23 Primary Elections, 6-9 p.m.

June 27 **Meet Susan B. Anthony!** First Presbyterian Church, Cooperstown. 2-4 pm. See details above.