LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF SCHENECTADY COUNTY

President's Letter

By the time you read this, election season will be almost over. We may not know the full results for days, or weeks. For sure, there will be a lot to process.

Today's politics is heated. And concerned citizens often ask local League members what the national League is doing to ensure that our rights are preserved, and that everyone who is eligible to vote can do so. To help us out when someone asks that question, Janet Hollocher has contributed a piece about LWVUS's work for voting rights, including litigation against the laws and executive orders that could undermine them. We thank the national League for this vital work because, truthfully, this is not a battle that local Leagues or a state League can take on. That work needs an organization like LWVUS, which speaks for the fifty states and 800 individual Leagues throughout the country. In turn, LWVUS could not exist without the local Leagues.

Everyone has a role to play. Our roles are equally important.

National has a big picture view of the issues; but it relies on local Leagues, the boots on the ground, to put together a cohesive strategy in service of democracy. Local Leagues serve the communities we live in. In our League capacity, we bring information (and snacks) to schools, churches, festivals, green markets, food pantries, and the occasional honk-and-wave. We encourage everyone we meet to tell us what they think, and they know we will listen. We discuss voter registration, voting rights, and whatever legislation is coming down the pike. We are nonpartisan, respectful, eager to engage and open to learning. We may not agree, but we gain trust. Trust is essential, agreement is not, because we're in this together.

The national League needs our grassroots efforts, as do the state Leagues, caucuses, and other regional groups. Local Leagues need their efforts. For example, our state's Rural

Caucus has shared invaluable information about hospital closures, maternal health deserts, and the lack of services for very young children with disabilities. We need each other's wisdom and experience because we are in this together.

We may not know the election outcomes as soon as we'd like. But we do know this: our entire League is one amazing team. Whatever the election results, we have a lot to be proud of and a lot to celebrate.

Joan Fucillo
President



How the National LWV is Fighting for Democracy in the Courts

While LWV Schenectady serves voters at the local level, our national League is working mostly behind the scenes to defend and extend democracy through litigation in the courts.

LWVUS and Leagues around the country have been going to court to challenge unnecessary restrictions on voters and voting. A recent decision has special meaning for LWV Schenectady, which has a record of supporting voter registration for new citizens.

Voter registration for new citizens at naturalization ceremonies -– Success!

On October 15, 2026, a federal district court removed a barrier to LWV and other nonpartisan civic groups reaching and engaging new citizens at naturalization ceremonies.

LWV Schenectady had actively supported new citizens' voter registration at naturalization ceremonies until August 2025, when USCIS (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services) issued a rule "abruptly and without factual basis" (LWV.org) that hampered the League

from registering new citizens to vote.

USCIS is a federal agency, not to be confused with the non-profit USCRI (U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants) which assists new residents who have come from other countries.

In **League of Women Voters v. USCIS, "Defending Civic Engagement Groups Against Restrictions on Voter Registration at Naturalization Ceremonies"**, the LWVUS and the National Council of Jewish Women, Greater New Orleans Section, were plaintiffs, represented in court by the nonpartisan Campaign Legal Center.

LWV sued for violation of first amendment rights and failure to obey the Administrative Procedure Act of 1946, which "requires federal agencies to follow clearly defined and transparent procedures when adopting new policies" (LWV.org).

The October 2026 ruling by a federal district judge permanently blocked the USCIS rule. Thanks to this successful court case, the USCIS rule no longer prevents the League from offering voter information and registration at naturalization ceremonies, although other obstacles may remain.

This case is one of many by Leagues throughout the U.S. supporting democracy. For more information on LWV's legal activities, see the **LWVUS website**.

Information for this article came from the **League of Women Voters of the U.S**. and from the **Campaign Legal Center**.

Janet Hollocher
Treasurer



OPINION

A4 SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2026

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THE DAILY GAZETTE FAMILY OF NEWSPAPERS

EDITORIAL

State needs to codify approval of signs for blind

When local government officials have the chance to make their community safer and more accessible for people with disabilities, we can all agree they should do it, right?

So it's difficult to understand why one local community, as reported in The Gazette on Friday, is making it difficult for one legally blind resident to have a street sign erected on a busy road near his home warning drivers about the presence of a blind person. If a "Watch for the Blind" sign would help disabled individuals enjoy their community and stay safe, why not put one up?

The best answer is that communities don't want to create a situation where they're held liable if a blind person is struck by a vehicle.

If a local government puts up no signs, it might have less liability than if it puts up signs, which might create an expectation of legal responsibility if someone is injured.

Right now, state law protects communities by making the local decision to erect signs optional

As much as we usually hate to add to New York state's already Byzantine structure of laws and mandates, this is a neglected area that needs

Voters have the power ... if they decide to use it

BY JOAN FUCILLO
For Gazette Opinion

GUEST COLUMN

People running for elected office are looking for a job; people running for re-election are looking to keep their job.

But some current and would-be officials don't treat it that way.

Serious job seekers show up on time for their interviews, present their qualifications, and are civil to the people who might hire them.

They do not claim the interviewer is biased or refuse to answer questions they don't like. They respect everyone involved in the hiring process because they want a job.

A recent Gazette editorial, "Government Boards must put public above political, personal animosity," described several local government meetings where elected officials "bicker[ed], call[ed] each other names and refuse[d] to cooperate with one another," "causing government business to grind to a halt."

In other words, these officials set aside their obligations to their constituents in favor of scoring points against each other.

This past Sunday, another Gazette editorial called out candidates for ducking debates.

Why is this allowed to happen?

The current political climate encourages confrontation over civil discussion.

Anger can be an effective tactic — it gets people excited, creates engagement. Sometimes, candidates are applauded for "pre-refusing" to cooperate with their potential co-workers.

It's a show, but it only works if that's what we want.

Do we?

Voters have the right to question and to get thoughtful responses from candidates for office, especially at the local level, where voters see the direct effect of local officials' actions or inactions in office.

Are the streets safe, are the parks and libraries maintained, is the water safe to drink, do heavy rains always cause flooding?

Voters do not need to know every detail of an elected official's job to have a voice. They can open their eyes and look around. If they don't like what they see, they can speak up. And they can vote.

Yet too many candidates avoid discussion of the issues (and constituents' concerns) by hand-picking their events.

No debates. No forums. No public interactions with constituents who are not supporters. No open meetings. And no chance for voters to ask questions.

Voters: Let's expect better from our candidates.

Again, candidates for office want a job and are asking voters to hire them. If they are hired, voters' tax dollars will pay their salaries.

Voters do not need to know every detail of an elected official's job to have a voice. They can open their eyes and look around. If they don't like what they see, they can speak up. And they can vote.

When community members are engaged in local issues, the streets get plowed, the potholes get filled, the health department is properly staffed — the list goes on.

And if that doesn't bring the results your community needs? Well, no one is entitled to elected office, and winning an election doesn't guarantee the next one.

Local contests are often decided by just a few votes. When it comes to our communities, voting is our superpower.

Politicians count votes; voters count results.

...

Joan Fucillo is president of the League of Women Voters of Schenectady County.

Voters have the power ... if they decide to use it

Daily Gazette, Saturday, Oct. 10, 2026

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Connie Young, center, with granddaughter Kayla Lynch, left, and daughter Catherine Emery, right.

Niskayuna resident leads League of Women Voters' youth initiative

- **By Miles J. Reed**, Daily Gazette Oct 2, 2026

NISKAYUNA – At 87, Connie Young is still fighting the good fight.

For four decades, Young has poured herself into voter education with the Schenectady County League of Women Voters.

She's not done yet.

"If our country doesn't vote, we don't have a country," she said matter-of-factly.

Starting this fall, Young is nudging her advocacy work into the digital age with a reboot of the League's "Take Me To Vote" initiative for elementary school students in the county.

The program is a friendly competition between the county's various elementary schools, intended to encourage students to go to the polls with an adult and participate in the electoral process. The schools with the greatest participation levels are recognized with plaques or certificates for their achievements.

But Take Me To Vote has languished since the COVID-19 pandemic due to limits on outsiders' involvement in schools, especially during the heights of illness, Young said. Even with the easing of restrictions in recent years, the initiative hasn't fully rebounded, she said.

This year, though, Young hopes to reenergize the program by using QR codes to tabulate student involvement.

At every polling place, students will be able to scan a code that produces a list of schools countywide. They just have to click on their school to be counted. No more paper slips to be stamped and placed in envelopes, all to be counted by hand later by League volunteers.

"Many people were needed," Young said. "Now, only one."

All systems go

The League partially rolled out the QR-code system last election, but it wasn't fully embraced or understood, Young said. This year, she's encouraged by the buy-in from

school administrators throughout the county.

“I’ve talked to all the superintendents,” said Young, who’s been the program’s organizer since starting it in 2004. “They all seem to be very enthusiastic.”

The main thrust of the program is to familiarize young students – our future voters – with the electoral process and to inspire them to stay involved for life, said Young, a longtime resident of the Old Niskayuna neighborhood.

“With children, things they learn at an early age stick with them,” said Young, who is a mother of four, a grandmother and, most recently, a great-grandmother.

“We remember and we get excited about things that happen when we’re small,” she said. “In the teenage years, things are busy at a personal level and I think focusing on this group [elementary students] is a good thing.”
“Our idea is if children are comfortable going to polling places and [learning] how to vote for the five years that they’re in elementary school, when they get to be adults, they’ll know how to go and vote,” Young said.

Find the original article here.



Hillside principal Dr. Fasciglione looks on as Mr. Neely's 5th graders participate in a civics lesson.

It's a mindset that rings true to Principal Shireen Fasciglione at Hillside Elementary School in Niskayuna, where the students have regularly ranked among the county's most active in terms of going to the polls.

In the two decades since the inception of Take Me To Vote, Hillside staffers and students have become increasingly engaged with the program and the election process in general, said Fasciglione, the school's top administrator for 25 years now.

"We have noticed an increase in participation or at least an increase in excitement on the part of the kids," she said.

In the fall and spring election seasons, Hillside's teachers incorporate the subject into the

regular curriculum, said Fasciglione, one of the biggest boosters of the League's Take Me To Vote effort since the start.

"I think it's a nice opportunity to teach kids about our civic duty of voting and participating in government," she said.

A few days before Election Day, the students are reminded to participate. It instills a sense of responsibility, Fasciglione said.

"'Oh, I've been told by my teacher I should go and vote with my parents,'" she said.

In the springtime, Hillside staffers start talking about elections again, this time for the upcoming school budget vote and school board elections. Shortly before that election day, they hold their own mock election to engage the kids.

"We might vote on our favorite ice cream flavor so everybody K-5 will vote," Fasciglione said.

The results are then tallied and a note is sent home to share the results of the students' voting.

"We send a little notice home that says, 'We voted today. Will you vote tomorrow?'" Fasciglione said.

Focused on the issues

"And of course we never say how parents should vote; we just encourage them to go vote," she added.

That kind of nonpartisanship is central to the mission of public schools and also the League of Women Voters, a grassroots nonprofit dedicated to promoting participation in democracy, Connie Young said.

"The teachers as well as the League have to be so careful not to be at all partisan," she emphasized.

Instead of partisanship, the primary focus is on the importance of democracy and why it matters to all of us, said Young, who first voted in a presidential election when she pulled the lever for Richard Nixon in 1960 in his race with John F. Kennedy.

“It is important because politicians make decisions on all parts of your life and you have the ability to at least educate yourself to choose someone who you feel is doing a good job,” she added.

But League advocates have their work cut out for them, especially when it comes to encouraging young Americans to register and vote.

While 4 million Americans turn 18 every year, fewer than 50% register to vote, according to the Civics Center, a California-based nonpartisan nonprofit that advocates for voter registration for young Americans. In New York state, an estimated 38% of 18-year-olds are registered to vote, compared with 78% of voters 45 and older – a common scenario in all states described as “the registration gap,” according to the Civics Center.

Despite this, the work goes on, advocates say, and for good reason. Young voters are a large segment of the electorate that can have a major impact on elections, according to the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, a non-partisan research organization based on Tufts University outside Boston.

Close to 50 million young Americans ages 18-29 are eligible to cast ballots this fall, including more than 8 million newly eligible voters since the 2024 election, according to the organization.

With such a vast pool of prospective voters, the League’s efforts to encourage young voters is well worth the effort, said Joan Fucillo, president of the Schenectady County League of Women Voters.

“The stickers and the contest element among the schools is an incentive, but the larger effect is in seeing their friends and neighbors gathered at the polls, community values in action,” Fucillo said. “Children who grow up among voters are more likely to vote and to have an interest in the wellbeing of their communities, which is essential for a healthy society."



Linda Allen of the Rensselaer County LWV and Cheryl Nechamen prepare for a forum.

Voter Services Report

Candidate Information

We have information about local candidates either from candidate forums or from Q & A on our website at https://my.lwv.org/new-york/schenectady-county/voting.

Questions and answers for Niskayuna and Rotterdam candidates are posted under **Niskayuna and Rotterdam Questions**.

Candidate forums for Scotia/Glenville and Schenectady are posted on our **YouTube** channel at https://www.youtube.com/@LWVSchenectady/videos.

Urge your friends and family to vote!!

Election Day November 3

Many thanks to the League members who have distributed Get Out the Vote ("VOTE") signs around our county. On the day following Election Day, **please collect all of the signs you placed** and let Pauline Kinsella know when and where she can collect them for future election seasons. Send Pauline an email using: lwvschenectady@gmail.com .



Cheryl Nechamen

Voter Services

Videos of Candidate Forums

Schenectady Candidate Forum

Scotia-Glenville Candidate Forums

We have questions and answers for the towns of Niskayuna and Rotterdam instead of candidate forums.

Niskayuna questions and answers.

Rotterdam questions and answers.



Liz Yanoff, Voter Services – Forums

Mark Your Calendar

Mark Your Calendar

- **Tuesday, November 3:** General Election Day
- **Wednesday, November 11 at 3 pm**: LWVSC Board Meeting at the Sycamore Collaborative, 837-839 Albany Street, between Craig and Hamlin Streets. Please bring along to donate: canned foods (with easy-open tabs), snack packs of fruit, granola bars and other energy bars, single serve juices and other drinks, and/or personal hygiene products.
- **Sunday, November 18 at 6 pm:** New Member Gathering at Johanna's home, 2029 Lexington Parkway. RSVP by November 17 by email to lwvschenectady@gmail.com.

LWVSC Board Meeting at Sycamore Collaborative

Our next Board meeting is on Wednesday, November 11, at 3pm, at Sycamore Collaborative, located at 837-839 Albany St., between Craig and Hamlin Streets.



The buildings are not marked. No. 837 is the offices (white building). We'll meet in No. 839, the pantry (red brick). A parking area is between the two buildings.



Please bring along to donate: canned foods (with easy-open tabs); snack packs of fruit; granola bars and other energy bars; single-serve juices and other drinks; and personal hygiene products.



Membership

The Schenectady County League of Women Voters would like to welcome our new member, Emily Miller - WELCOME!

Membership is hosting a social gathering to meet our new members and learn what the league has to offer and how you can get involved. Our hope is to host two of these a year. **Our first one is on Wednesday November 18, from 6pm-7:30 pm at Johanna's home, 2029 Lexington Parkway**. Please email Ellen Daviero using lwvschenectady@gmail.com to RSVP by November 16.

Membership updating: if you have received an email from me, Ellen Daviero, about

needing to update your membership and would like help, please email me and I would be happy to help! My contact information is lwvschenectady@gmail.com .

GOTV

Update on our new tool to - Get Out The Vote

A brief backstory: The State League joined with NYCET(The New York Engagement Table), and with this partnership we have access to VAN (Voter Activation Network) providing us with information from voting rolls. It is an online database from public voting rolls.

Working with Monica (a specialist who is working with the state league to help counties across the state to use the database), league member Anne Gray and I used VAN to create voter lists. We created lists of voters in each town/city in our county that voted in the 2024 election but did not vote in the local 2025 election. We sent out a total of 5349 texts. We worked together to create a text message and sent this text to those voters on Wednesday, October 21 at noon, three days before early voting.

In the text message we included a link for voter services, and we will be able to track how many people clicked on the link for voter information. The cost was .04 cents per text, leaving us enough money to reply to the texts at a cost of .02 cents. The NY State League is providing $250.00 to each league that would like to use this system this year. We are grateful for the opportunity to be able to participate in the program and the expertise of all involved.

Below is a sample of the text we sent.

Voters Name,

GOT VOTING QUESTIONS?

Check your Registration, Early and Election Day poll sites, and Sample Ballot here: https://lwvny.gthru.io/LLRPg9s?t=PxZ0bgE

Important Deadlines:

✅**Sat, Oct 24 - Deadline to request an Early Mail Ballot by mail. First Day of Early Voting in-person.**

✅**Sun, Nov 1 - Last day of in-person early voting**

✅**Mon, Nov 2 - Last day to request a ballot in person at your Board of Elections**

✅**Tue, Nov 3 - Election Day. Last Day to return your ballot. Ask the post office to manually postmark your mail ballot. Or bring your mail ballot to any polling location in your county during polling hours, or to your local Board of Elections office.**

See you at the polls! League of Women Voters of Schenectady County
Stop to end

If you have GOTV or membership-related questions, feel free to reach out to Ellen Daviero using lwvschenectady@gmail.com .

Ellen Daviero
Membership

Mission Statement

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan citizen activist organization that operates at the local, state, and national level. We influence public policy through education and advocacy. We never support or oppose any political party or candidate.

“Empowering Voters, Defending Democracy”

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Voter Services Chair: Cheryl Nechamen,
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