

League of Women Voters of the Cooperstown Area Officers and Members of the Board 2024-2025

Co-presidents: Christina Bourgeois and Kristin Pullyblank

Treasurer: Susan Newman **Secretary:** Laura Wetzel

Board Members

Communications: Patty MacLeish

Membership: Deb Dalton

Nominating Committee: Laura Wetzel

Voters Service: Anna Gaeta

Youth Engagement: Hudi Podolsky

At Large: Aviva Schneider, Gretchen Sorin, Roe DiBona

Off-Board:

Students Inside Albany:

Maria Kaltenbach

Co-Presidents Report

Kristin Pullyblank and Christina Bourgeois

As we reflect on the last year, we are truly grateful for the dedicated and talented LWVCA membership and Board. As you will see inside this report, our League was extremely active in two areas: the 2024 election season Get Out the Vote campaign and our reinvigorated Observer Corps. Both of these activities are core parts of LWV's mission. Learn more about what we accomplished on the following pages.

We also want to thank everyone for their patience as we have introduced the new dues structure. In the past, local Leagues collected dues and sent portions (known as per member payments or PMPs) on to the state and national Leagues. With the new system, everyone joins or renews on a common form, and the dues are split between the three levels: 20% to the local League, 47% to the state League and 33% to LWVUS. The 20% that will come to our local leagues is much better than the 12% that we received in the past! We are fortunate, as well, to have a membership that makes generous financial contributions, so we will have sufficient assets to cover the uncertainty of our dues income for the upcoming year.

The Board has made a commitment to hold at least four all-member programs throughout the year. These include a summer/fall gathering (more to come on that!), our annual Winter Doldrums Party, Program Planning, and the Annual Meeting. In addition, we anticipate that the coming year will bring plenty of opportunity for activism. As we write this message, we are hoping that we will have many members join us on May 6 for LWVNY's Advocacy Day at the State Capitol. It's a wonderful opportunity to share time with League members from throughout the state and spread the League's message and priorities to our state leaders. We will pass information about these opportunities along to you through our "Just Three Things" e-mail blasts. We do hope you will take note of them. But you can also stay informed by connect-

ing with LWVNY. (See the Communications on page 4 to learn more about how you can stay connected to local League happenings).

The LWVNY and our League decided earlier this year that the Love Your Oneonta League project, which began in Spring 2022, had reached an end. There simply were not enough Oneonta League members who were willing to take on leadership roles. We thank Maureen Murray, Stephanie Bauer, the LWV New York State, and past and current members of our Board and the LWV Oneonta who worked to try to keep the LWV Oneonta going. And we welcome members from Oneonta who have joined our League.

Our slate of candidates for the 2025-2027 term includes four new and one continuing Board members. See the Nominating Committee Report (page 3) for more information.

This year's annual meeting will include a short business meeting where membership will vote on bylaw changes, the budget, and the new Board. However, we would also like to use this time for open conversation as well as to learn from some guest speakers about how changes from the new federal administration are affecting us at the local level and highlight potential areas for action. We hope you are able to join us!

In solidarity,
Christina and Kristin



Left: Member David Strogatz and co-president Kristin Pullyblank at the 2025 Winter Doldrums Party.

Below: Co-president Christina Bourgeois with Hudi Podolsky at the League's table at the Cooperstown Elementary School Crayon Carnival.



Donations to the LWV for 2024 -2025

Gifts from LWV Members \$1,778.75

Anne & Richard Blabey
Carol & Jack Cooper
Deb & Jim Dalton
Leila & Philip Durkin
Leslie Friedman
Anna Gaeta
Nancy Herman

Cindy Levene & Charles Egan
Patty & Bruce MacLeish
Lynne & Kai Mebust
Susanna Membrino
Paul Mendelsohn & Else Funk
Maureen Murray
Susan & Chuck Newman

Hudi Podolsky & Jay Bosley
Nancy Potter & David Pearlman
Sydney Scalici
September & Paul Schecter
Aviva Schneider & Peter Regan
Jaye Shelby
Judy Steiner

Karen & Bill Streck
Ellen Tillapaugh
Sydney Waller
Pam Washburn
Laura & Todd Wetzel
Lucille Wiggins
Nadene & Keith Willcox

Gifts From LWVCA members to the LWVNY Education Fund \$1,110.00

Stephanie & Michael Bauer

Sheri Eurick

Melinda Hardin & Lou Allstadt

Gifts to the LWVCA through the Mohawk Valley Gives \$1,085.00

Community Foundation of Otsego
County
Deb Dalton*
Sandy DeRosa*

Melinda Hardin*
Nancy Herman*
Jeff Katz
Carol Krause-Nealis

Patty & Bruce MacLeish*
Shelby MacLeish*
Maureen Murray*
Susan Newman*

Kristin Pullyblank*
September Schecter*
Laura Tansy Wetzel*

*LWVCA member

PROPOSED BUDGET July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026

Assets (as of April 30, 2025)	
Checking Account	\$4,337.68
LWVNY Education Foundation	\$2,729.76
CD Balance (Wayne Bank, USNY Bank)	\$3,701.11
TOTAL ASSETS	\$9,430.87

Income/Revenue	Proposed
Memberships - \$60 x 80 members x 20%	\$960.00
Contributions to LWVCA	\$2,400.00
Fundraising (Direct Mail, Grants, Events, most goes to EF)	\$1,500.00
TOTAL REVENUE	\$4,860.00

Expenditures	Proposed
Operating Costs --zoom account)	\$325.00
Board and Administrative Committees	\$750.00
Delegates (meetings, conventions etc)	\$900.00
Financial Support to US and NYS League (PMP)	\$4,392.00
Communications (postage, printing, website)	\$1,565.00
Educational Activities (\$1625 of this will come from EF)	\$1,950.00
Position Support	\$450.00
Transfer to Education Fund (from EF income)	\$1,500.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$11,832.00

	Total Revenue	Total Expenditures	Net
	\$4,860.00	\$11,832.00	(\$6,972.00)
Budget Transfers			
From Reserves in Checking Account and CD		\$5,347.00	
From Reserves in Education Fund		\$1,625.00	
Total Budget Transfers		\$6,972.00	\$0.00

Financial Report

Susan Newman, Treasurer

Please review our budget for 2025-2026. The primary issue that made budgeting difficult this year was the League's Transformation project and the new system of collecting dues. For this year only, we need to budget for payments that are due to LWVNY and LWVUS for our per member payments that were collected between February 2024 and January 2025. Beginning in February 2025, all new members and renewing members will use the new dues system. There will no longer be household memberships. Members will be asked to "pay what you can" with a minimum of \$20 and a suggested dues of \$75. Our League will receive 20% of all dues collected (\$15 for each member who pays the minimum.) We prepared the budget with the assumption that our members who could would pay at the level of last year, \$60. After our first year in the new system, we will be able to budget more precisely. The detailed budget is available at www.LWVCooperstownArea.org. Contact president@LWVCooperstownArea.org, if you have questions.

Bylaws Changes

Item 1 and Item 2 of this year's bylaws changes relate to the changes that needed to be made so that our bylaws will be in compliance with the changes related to the League Transformation.

ITEM 1. The first three articles of every League's bylaws



Cooperstown Elementary School's Tavar McQueen with League member Mary Tedesco at the Crayon Carnival. Our League participated in the annual school event for the first time in 2025, engaging students and parents and bringing our message into the wider community.

must match the first three articles of the LWVUS. The League's Transformation program changes how dues are collected. Items being deleted are ~~struck through~~. The new language is in **bold**. [Please note: The LWVUS does include an anomaly in Article 3, Sect. 3, *Types of membership*. (4). The definition of student remains in the bylaws but there are no longer student memberships.]

Article I Name. The name of this organization shall be League of Women Voters of the Cooperstown Area, hereinafter referred to in these bylaws as LWVCA.

Article II Purposes and Policies.

Sec. 1. Purposes. The purposes of the LWVCA are to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government and to act on selected governmental issues.

Sec. 2. Policies. The policies of the LWVCA are

1). Political Policy. The League shall not support or oppose any political party or any candidate.

2). Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Policy. The League is fully committed to ensure compliance—in principle and in practice—with LWVUS' Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy.

Article III Membership

Sec. 1. Eligibility. Any person who subscribes to the purposes and policy of the LWVUS shall be eligible for membership.

Sec. 2. Types of Membership.

A. Voting Members. Persons at least 16 years of age who join the League shall be voting members of local Leagues, state Leagues and of the LWVUS; (1) those who live within an area of a local League may join that League or any other local League; (2) those who reside outside the area of any local League may join a local League or shall be state members-at-large; (3) those who have been members of the League for 50 years or more shall be life members excused from the payment of dues; (4) Those who are students are defined as individuals enrolled either as full or part time with an accredited institution.

B. Associate Members. All others who join the League shall be associate members.

ITEM 2. These changes were made to align the bylaws of the LWVCA with the new dues system.

~~ARTICLE VI: Financial Administration Section 2. Dues: Annual dues-~~

shall be payable before February 1. Any member who fails to pay dues before February 1 shall be dropped from the membership rolls. The amount of annual dues shall be proposed by the Board of Directors to the membership at a general meeting. Notification of a proposed change in annual dues shall be mailed to all members four weeks prior to a general meeting. **All members shall pay membership dues following LWVUS policy except those exempted from paying dues [in Article III]. Members who fail to renew within the period specified by LWVUS will be removed from the roster.**

Item 3. The LWVCA Board is suggesting the following changes to set the number of Board members and to allow for greater flexibility when more leaders are needed to carry out our program.

Article IV: League Leadership Section I. Number, Manner of Selection and Term of Office.

When circumstances permit, the League may elect leadership as follows:

a). The Board of Directors shall consist of the officers of the League, the elected directors, **The elected Board shall select the appointed directors. The appointed directors shall not exceed the number of elected directors. The total number of Directors and Officers serving on the Board shall not exceed 12, unless a need is identified to expand the board number. not exceeding in number the elected directors.** Elected directors will serve a term of two years or until their successors have been elected and qualified. The terms of office for appointed directors shall be one year and shall expire at the conclusion of the next Annual Meeting following their appointment.

Nominating Committee Report *Laura Wetzel*

Slate of Officers & Directors, all two-year Terms 2025-2027

Nominees Officers:

Co-President: Hudi Podolsky

Treasurer: Kristin Pullyblank

Nominees Directors:

Roe DiBona

Martha Membrino,

Tracy Roberts

Gretchen Sorin

Laura Wetzel.

Preparing for the Future

In April 2025, the Board implemented a new strategy to assure the readiness of Board members to fill the rotation to assume the role of co-president. The plan and was voted upon to become a policy. It creates the expectation the co-president role will be selected from the rotation of Board members. We hope it will allow for flexibility and preparation to assume the role. At this date, we have a committed candidate for co-president for 2026. We are now working on an on boarding program for new Board members which will aid them in better preparing to join the Board and meet the expectations

Program Planning 2025

Kristin Pullyblank & Christina Bourgeois

Our recommended LWVCA Program for the 2025-2026 year, voted on by the membership that was present at the Program Planning meeting, include the following local positions:

1. Making Democracy Work with a focus on Voter Services

Welcome to Our New Members*

Penny Bellinger	Ilse Funk	Polly Messenger
Ava Calhoun	Patricia Hanft	Merle Myerson
Carol Cooper	Khalie Hoy	Betty Tash
Jack Cooper	Linda Hudyncia	Jaye Shelby
Doreen Del Rosario	Pat Kennedy	Emma Green Smith
Roe DiBona	Polly Kennedy	Judy Steiner
Sheri Eurick	Fran C.R.King	Lizabeth Uhrig
Mary Farmer	Elias MacLeish	Christine Whyte
Cathy Fasanelli	Sandra Manley	Lucille Wiggan
George Fasanelli	Joe Membrino	Sarah Wilcox *since
Leslie Friedman	Paul Mendelsohn	January 2024

and Voter Education

2. Increase participation in government
3. Natural Resources – Reduce use of plastic
4. Continue to support SIA and youth services.

Our League did not recommend any changes to LWVNYS positions. If you would like to recommend further additions to the local Program for consideration at the 2026 program meeting, you may raise these at the Annual Meeting.

Membership

Deb Dalton

This past year has been noteworthy in both the number of new members and the zeal and energy old and new members have brought to our League in participation and input.

We gained 23 new members and now stand at 114! We have welcomed two Oneonta members to our League and just recently a member from Fort Plain – our reach is wide!

Fifty-two people attended this year's Doldrums party, which is always a celebratory and delicious annual event. Our silent auction, a mainstay of the event, garnered \$776. Thanks to all who donated and placed bids!

New League system of renewing. An important part of the League's ongoing "Transformation" process—has been fairly seamless, and we are grateful to Patty MacLeish, a board member who also serves as the Transformation Lead on the LWVNYS Board helping to make it so. While the new system makes economic sense (more funds directed to our local League than previously), there are some aspects to the new system that make it less personal. Membership Chair is now alerted by email when members renew or join. But, this does not allow for personal notes or preferences to be expressed.

Voter Service 2025

Hudi Podolsky

This voter services team has had an amazing season! We participated in 18 events and spoke with over 2,300 potential voters. Seven of those events targeted college students at SUNY Oneonta, the Cooperstown Graduate Program, and SUNY Delhi. In all, Aviva Schneider and her team of LWV volunteers and student volunteers contacted more than 780 people on campuses, the majority of them first time voters. We:

- helped people register on line and on paper and apply for absentee and early vote-by-mail ballots,
- advised people about early in person voting;
- shared VOTE411 information with them; and
- reminded them to turn their ballots over and vote for .Prop 1;
- encouraged them to be voter advocates and answered a dizzying array of their questions.



Aviva Schneider, Meg Meyerson, and Maureen Murray distributing voting information at Bassett Hospital. We thank Bassett Healthcare for allowing us to have this tabling event. It was the first time the League has held a get out the vote event at the hospital.

We distributed nearly all 3,000 “Be A Voter With A Plan” forms we printed. We built lasting partnerships with SUNY Oneonta and the Cooperstown Graduate Program (with thanks to Roe DiBona, Aviva Schneider and Gretchen Sorin), the Oneonta NAACP, and other institutions and organizations. We continued our excellent collaboration with the County Board of Elections and greatly appreciate their support. We also had excellent support from Bassett Hospital, where we had a productive table event, and the County Jail where we registered several voters and facilitated the use of absentee ballots.

So many of you contributed directly to this effort. I hope you all feel proud of the work we all did to inform and inspire voters.

Observer Corps

Deb Dalton

The Observer Corps is growing! We recruited new Observers and have successfully appointed Observers to these groups:

Cherry Valley School Board: *Anna Gaeta*

Cooperstown School Board: *Mary Farmer, Sydney Scalici, Karen Streck*

Otsego County Board: *Susan Newman (Susan has just begun her work as the County Observer. We thank Elva Mantee who until recently was serving in this role.)*

Town of Cherry Valley: *Anna Gaeta*

Town of Hartwick: *Hudi Podolosky*

Town of Middlefield: *Maureen Murray, Christina Bourgeois, Sandy deRosa*

Town of Otsego: *Cindy Levene*

Village of Cooperstown: *Patty MacLeish*

Watershed Supervisory Committee: *Bruce MacLeish*

The Observer role has taken on more importance and is making an impact in our local municipalities. Patty MacLeish wrote an article for *The Freeman's Journal* during Sunshine Week featuring the work of the League this effort in the March 27 edition (<https://www.allotsego.com/the-partial-observer-league-of-women-voters-observers-are-shining-a-light-on-democracy/>). *The Freeman's Journal* has asked, and the Observer Corps is considering, ways that we might regularly report on our efforts.

The presence of Observers has affected changes in several areas – spelling out of acronyms, posting agenda and minutes in a timely man-

ner, explanation of need for executive sessions and more. We heartily thank our Observers for this important effort to keep municipalities open and accountable.

Students Inside Albany

Maria Kaltenbach

Students Inside Albany (SIA) is a four-day conference held each spring in Albany bringing together high school students from all corners of New York State to learn more about how state government operates at a four-day conference in Albany. The LWVCA has been sending students to SIA for more than 25 years. The program is funded by the LWVNY Education Foundation and supports one student from each participating League. The cost of the program has increased over the years and this year the total number of students that the LWVNY Education Foundation can host is reduced. As a result, we were only allowed to send one student to the conference, Elias MacLeish of Hartwick, a junior at Cooperstown Central High School will be the 2025 delegate.

Communications

Patty MacLeish

First and foremost, what an election season we had! Hudi and the Voters Service team were everywhere and the Communications team did their best to provide news releases and other materials. A special thank you to Martha Membrino who coordinated the production of this year's “Make a Plan to Vote” handout!

We have had a great relationship with *The Freeman's Journal* who regularly published articles related to election issues on a variety of topics early voting, and our observer corps—number and topics. There were League-written articles published in the *Journal's* “Partial Observer” column on running for office, the fact that voter fraud is virtually non-existent, our Observer Corps, and early and absentee voting.

This year we introduced “Just Three Things,” a short email newsletter, as a way to draw attention to upcoming League events and the latest news from LWV New York State and LWVUS. “Just Three Things” began in August and we sent eight editions as of the end of April. We hope when you receive it or any email from the League, that you will take a minute to review. We also email shorter reminders of upcoming events. We try to keep these to a minimum, but we also want to keep you in touch with what is going on. Let us know if you are not receiving our emails.

Four issues of *Update* have been published since last May. We still produce a print edition of *Update* because our open rate on the e-mailings is less than 50%: by sending a printed version we are assured the it gets to every members home. Back issues of *Update* are available on our website (www.LWVCooperstownArea.org). During the election season and with the change in administration, we have worked hard to keep the website up to date.

The League had several letters to the editor: one congratulating the *Freeman's Journal* for receiving a grant acknowledging the paper's work as a small town paper and another in support of Prop 1, aka the “Equal Rights amendment.” There were letters to the *Daily Star* on the construction on Oneonta's Main Street in November requiring detours for voters trying to get to the polls. After the election, Governor Hochul and the legislature were dragging their feet on setting a special election date for District NY 21 to replace Elise Stefanik. Then President Trump asked that the Congresswoman stay in Congress and withdrew her name for consideration as ambassador to the United Nations.

We also sent a letter to the Village Board in support of the demolition of 217 Main which the Village was hoping to turn into affordable housing.