

Update

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE

January 2024



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®]
OF THE COOPERSTOWN AREA

From Your Co-Presidents

2024—It's A New Year & a Busy One

Happy New Year to you all! We hope that 2024 brings you joy, good health, and a renewed commitment to the League. Goodness knows, it will be a busy year. Between now and the November election, there are six elections scheduled—the Cherry Valley-Springfield School District will hold a capital project special vote on February 13; local villages elections are on March 19; the presidential primary election is April 2; local school board elections and the school budget vote is May 21; the New York Primary is scheduled for June 25; and the general election is November 5.

We're going to do our best to keep local citizens up to date on all the procedures, deadlines, and dates concerning the elections. You can be part of this important work. Make a New Year's resolution to attend the voters service meeting on January 11 at 5:30 p.m. Voters Service is your best opportunity to help citizens navigate elections.

Students Inside Albany, the LWVNY Education Foundation's wonderful program provides an opportunity for students to learn about the nuts and bolts of making democracy work at the state legislature. Check out the details in this *Update* and spread the word amongst any young people you know who might be interested.

Before the holiday season began, our League had two letters published in the *Oneonta Daily Star*—one about our efforts to register inmates in the county jail to vote and another about the new process for setting up the annual county budget. We've reprinted excerpts from both in

this issue.

We both want to encourage you all to attend the LWVNY spring training sessions. These one-day events are the perfect opportunity to learn more about the League and to learn new skills and to gain in-depth insight into important League issues. Those of us who have attended the sessions in the past agree that it is stimulating and fun. We'll be sending out more details on the training issues as we learn more about the topics. The closest ones to us are Cortland (March 16) and Albany (March 23).

We hope your check and membership renewal form have already been mailed or will be soon. Our strength is in our numbers and there's much work to be done in the upcoming months so we really need you now more than ever.

We understand that all work and no play is no fun. So while you have your calendar out, mark down January 28 from 2-4. It's our annual Winter Doldrums Party. We hope to see you there.



Co-presidents Kristin Pullyblank (left) and Maureen Murray (right).

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maureen".

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kristin".

MAUREEN MURRAY & KRISTIN PULLYBLANK,
CO-PRESIDENTS

Coming Up

January 11	Voter Service Meeting, 5:30 p.m., Clark Sports Center Community Room. See story inside on page 3.		to be eligible to vote in the two New York State primaries.
January 28	Winter Doldrums Party, 2-4 p.m. Home of Karen and Bill Streck. Details on page 2.	March 16	LWVNY Regional Training Workshops, Cortland, 10-4 p.m.
January 31	RENEW Your League Membership!! LWVCA Dues are DUE today!!!	March 18	Last Day to register to vote before the April 2 Presidential Primary.
February 7	LWV Cooperstown Board Meeting via Zoom; 5:30 p.m.	March 19	Village Elections. The village of Cooperstown elections will be held at the Cooperstown Fire Hall, 24 Chestnut St. Polls open from noon to 9 p.m.
February 13	LWVCA Program Planning meeting, 5:30-7p.m. Via Zoom.	March 23	LWVNY Regional Training Workshops, Albany, 10-4 p.m.
February 13	Cherry Valley-Springfield School District Capital Project Special vote. Noon-8p.m.	April 2	Presidential Primary. Polls open 6 a.m.-9 p.m.
February 14	Last day to change your party enrollment		

Take Action on January 28! Defeat the Winter Blahs

The Issue: Winter!!!!!!

Background: In 1986 the League of Women Voters of the Cooperstown Area decided it had had ENOUGH! Winter was wonderful when the sun was shining on sparkling, newly fallen snow, but for heaven's sake, those days of gray and slush and rain mixed with snow, and not enough snow to ski, or snowshoe or sled—all of the fun stuff—were hard to bear. League members back in 1986 decided that we must take action. The League (a powerful organization, we believe, but not all-powerful) could do little about the weather. But we could try to keep spirits bright.

Action: An action plan—"Save Us from the Winter Blahs!"—was established. The idea was simple enough: food, friends, and beverages should cheer up even the grumpiest of souls. Adding in a silent auction could also increase the holdings in our coffers. An auction was easy and had the potential for a high return on our efforts. The Winter Doldrums Party was born.

Through good times and the darkest times—when are membership numbers hovered in the high 20s (typical for winter, wouldn't you say?)—the annual Winter Doldrums party



An Elegant Dessert—one of the auction items at the Winter Doldrums Party

endured. Doldrums came to mean a bright light during gray winters for members—especially those new to the League—and supporters.

Update: Winter is still with us, but we have found that joining together to fight against its effects has worked for 38 years. The LWVCA board hopes you will help us continue supporting this action against the winter blues.

What's Next? First, mark your calendar for Sunday, January 28, from 2-4 p.m. Next, think of an item you might donate to the Silent Auction. To date we have an elegant dessert (the winner can choose between a raspberry cream-filled decadent chocolate cake or frozen lemon meringue a gluten-free dessert), artwork by Tracy Helgeson, Karen Katz jewelry, two hours of personal training with Carina Franck, a beautiful jade plant, and more!

So please join us at the home of Karen and Bill Streck, 4 Lakeview Drive, Cooperstown. Bring your spouse or a guest, but space is limited so you must RSVP by January 22. (Contact Deb Dalton (607-437-5761 or ddalton@stny.rr.com). And let Deb know if you have an item to add to the auction and come prepared to bid on some wonderful items. See you then. We can beat the BLAHS!

PATTY MacLEISH

Students Inside Albany Program is Open for 2024

Students Inside Albany (SIA) brings together students from across the state to Albany to get a first-hand education about state government. The program is designed to increase high school students' awareness of their responsibility in representative government and provide information about the tools necessary for meeting that responsibility. The League of Women Voters of New York State Education Foundation, Inc. sponsors one delegate from each League in New York. Local Leagues have the option of funding additional students and the LWVCA has sponsored two students for the last few years. This year the conference will be held from May 19-24.

While at the conference students from across the state will join their peers in a hands-on learning experience about how state government works. They will participate in a series of interactive lectures on topics such as the state budget process, the role of lobbyists in the legislative process, citizen rights to access government information, and media in politics. While in Albany, the students will have an opportunity to tour the state's Capitol. The highlight for many of the students, including our local SIA delegates, is the opportunity to shadow their Senators and their Assemblymember for an afternoon attending session on the Chamber floors.

Maria Kaltenbach, LWVCA SIA coordinator, notes that our League covers all expenses for the students, but students must arrange transportation to Albany. Maria explains that all students who attend high schools surrounding Cooperstown or students who are home-schooled and

live in one of these school districts are invited to apply for SIA. The qualifying school districts are: Cherry Valley-Springfield Central School District; Cooperstown Central School District; Edmeston Central School; Laurens Central School; Milford Central School; Richfield Springs Central School District; Schenectady Central School District; and Worcester Central School District.

"We strongly encourage all students from this area to apply. It is a truly unique opportunity, to learn more about state government and to meet other students from across the state," says Maria. If you have questions about the program visit our website, LWVCooperstownArea.org.

November New Member Coffee



The new member coffee at Stagecoach Cafe in November. From left are three of our new members: Elva Manee, Bonnie McGuire Jones, Martha Membrino, Membership Chair Deb Dalton, and Co-President Maureen Murray. New members Lisa Roberts, Shelby MacLeish, and Deb Taylor were also at the gathering.

Help Make Democracy Work in Otsego County

Voters Service Meeting

Are you interested in helping to make democracy in our community? The first step to making a difference is to join the League's Voters Service committee and begin the planning for 2024 elections. The committee's first meeting is January 11, 2024, from 5:30-7 p.m. at the Clark Sports Center. If you are interested, but can't attend please email Hudi Podolsky (hudi.podolsky@gmail.com).

Attend, even if you are not certain how deeply involved you may want to be. We will have jobs that range from one-offs (helping with voter registration for a day) to taking responsibility for handling our electronic voter guide VOTE411, to helping with our website and social media during the election season. The work is very rewarding and we will train you to take on any of the roles. If you had a New Year's resolution to being more involved in the League, then come to the meeting on January 11. You may participate via Zoom. (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86195557825?pwd=SmFvbCt-0S0UOQ0w2OGF5WEhFRXAwdz09> Meeting ID: 861 9555 7825 Passcode: 336365)

If you can't make that date, let Hudi know you are interested and she'll get you started.

Get ready for Election Day 2024 Now!

The time is NOW to begin to prepare! Looking at the calendar, Election Day 2024—November 5—seems like almost a year away, but the time to prepare begins now. New York State has a closed primary which means that only registered

members of the a party may vote in the primary. To put it plainly: if you wish to vote in the presidential primary on April 2 or the state primary on June 28, you must register to vote as a member of a party that has a candidate in the primary. For example, if you are a member of the Democratic Party, you may vote in the Democratic Party Primary. If you are registered as "Unaffiliated" you may not vote in the primary unless you enroll in a party by February 14, 2024. That's how a closed primary system works. Check your registration status at <https://voterlookup.elections.ny.gov/>.

Inmate Voting, a Personal Account

The most moving experience of the 2023 election for me was my visit to the county jail where I helped three inmates (30% of the census at the time) register and complete their applications for absentee ballots which I delivered to the Board of Elections. I began by thanking each of them for taking their responsibility as citizens seriously and I reminded them that even if they were incarcerated they still had rights and responsibilities. One inmate, well into middle age, told me that he had never voted before. The men may have signed up to register just to have something to do, but once they began, they clearly took it seriously and each made it clear that it was meaningful to them to see that they were not forgotten. Lt. Calhoun was gracious in setting this visit up for me, and I will certainly continue this program.

HUDI PODOLSKY

Letters to the editor a "Clear" Budget and Inmate Voting

An excerpt from a letter printed in the Nov. 9 edition of The Daily Star. Read the full letter here: www.thedailystar.com/opinion/letters_to_the_editor/in-your-opinion-lww-works-with-inmates-on-voting-rights/article_9f2fc36c-8f9a-11ee-aafe-ab41f70e5a68.html

The League of Women Voters of Cooperstown and the League of Women Voters of Oneonta congratulate the Otsego County Board of Representatives and County Administrator Steve Wilson on the implementation of a new open budget process using "ClearGov" software. Governmental budgets are often dense and difficult to understand and not available for review until public hearings. This new software opens up the often-complex budget process to the general public and is easy to follow.

By using ClearGov, county administrators and staff have produced a publicly available Budget Book for Otsego County citizens. As the budget develops, citizens can review and evaluate the budget and send comments on budget items to their specific representatives.

[T]his new process... is transparent, promotes the public's interaction, and is a demonstration of "open government" and citizen participation.

We encourage all Otsego County citizens to review the draft budget. (Go to www.otsegocounty.com; click on County Budgets and then the 2024 Tentative Budget.)

An excerpt from a letter printed in the Nov. 30 edition of The Daily Star. Read the full letter here: www.thedailystar.com/opinion/letters_to_the_editor/in-your-opinion-lww-works-with-inmates-on-voting-rights/article_9f2fc36c-8f9a-11ee-aafe-ab41f70e5a68.html

Under New York law, individuals detained in jail are entitled to vote unless they have been convicted of a felony. Felons may not vote in New York state while they are incarcerated, but they regain their right to vote when they are released. New voting rights legislation passed in New York in 2023 helps ensure that incarcerated persons are aware of their rights. They will soon be our neighbors again, and their experience in jail may well impact their future interactions with us.

Although many counties do not actively support voting in jails, here in Otsego County, jail staff allowed us to visit the jail and help interested individuals complete their voter registration forms and absentee ballot applications.

Participating in voting, a basic act of citizenship, may be a first step towards feeling like part of the community. We can't know what these individuals' experience of incarceration is, but we can know that for a few minutes they saw themselves as citizens whose voices still mattered to their community.

Read Hudi Podolsky's account of registering voters at the Otsego County jail, above.

Renew Your Membership Today

Happy New Year! Thank you to all our members who have renewed their membership for 2024. If you haven't already renewed (there are still a few of you out there!), please take a minute to do so now. Remember, the LWV of the Cooperstown Area has a pay-what-you-can policy. Our League believes that the cost of membership should not be a deterrent to joining or renewing.

I must report an accurate count of our membership by January 31, 2024. So renew today. Simply go to our website, LWVCooperstownArea.org, download the 2024 membership form and return it to LWVCA, PO Box 426, Cooperstown, NY 13326.

If you need another reason to renew, come to our annual Winter Doldrums Party on January 28 (see story page 2). It's a lovely afternoon of conversation, camaraderie and food.

DEB DALTON, MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

Program Planning

Whether you are a long-time member or brand new to the League, we hope you will join us for Program Planning from 5:30-7 on February 13 via Zoom. It's your opportunity to let League leaders know which issues are most import-

ant to you. After the meeting, we will report our decisions to LWVUS and our comments will be considered at the LWVUS 2024 convention in June. Look for more information in our regular emails to you in late January.

Regional Workshops

The LWVNY will hold its biennial regional workshops in March. The closest workshops to us are Cortland on March 18 and Albany on March 23. These workshops focus on how to become more involved in the issues related to League work. The topics are great! The general morning session is "The Wild Ride: Get Ready for the 2024 Election Season!" Some of the other workshops include "Making Your Voice Heard," "Engaging College Students," and "Training the Public on Determining Mis- and Dis-information."

The registration fee is \$25 and includes lunch. Our League will cover registration fees and we will organize carpooling. Please let us know if you are interested (*showing interest does NOT constitute a commitment to attend*). Contact Maureen Murray (coopmurray@msn.com) so we can organize registration and carpooling.

These meetings are always energizing and informative. Let us know as soon as possible if you wish to attend.

Officers & Board of Directors 2023-2024

Board Members

Treasurer: Susan Newman, suchasshn@gmail.com

Secretary: Laura Wetzel, ltanswetz@gmail.com, 847-650-9235

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