



Hello, LWVSC Friends,

**Letter from the President - April 2024**

## **The Equal Rights Amendment to the NYS Constitution Needs Your Help**

After attending the “Equal Rights for All New Yorkers” campaign kick-off last week sponsored by the Albany, Rensselaer, and Schenectady Leagues, I came away both excited and worried. Although the wording of the Equal Right Amendment might make perfect sense to us, it certainly doesn’t to others. First, I wanted to give you a brief summary of the Amendment from LWVNYS:

**“Our state constitution does not protect all of us.**

Our New York State Constitution is wholly inadequate when it comes to ensuring equality. We need a constitution with broad protections for every New Yorker. The current New York State Constitution fails to prohibit discrimination against groups who have been historically targeted, including those with disabilities, LGBTQI+ individuals, immigrants, women, and pregnant people. We must pass an equal rights amendment worthy of the 21st century that protects us all.

### **The NYS Equal Rights Amendment.**

The good news is we are already on the path to expanding equal protection for all New Yorkers. In 2022 and 2023, the legislature passed a state constitutional amendment that creates new protections in our constitution against discrimination based on a person’s ethnicity, national origin, disability, age, and sex — including sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy and pregnancy outcomes, and reproductive health care and autonomy. Because the constitutional amendment passed twice in the legislature, the public will have the opportunity to vote on the measure in 2024.”

**However, organizations and individuals who do not want to see the Equal Rights Amendment passed in NY are already hard at work to convince voters to say NO on November 5. How can we combat that as League members?**

Erica Smitka, Deputy Director of LWVNYS, has some advice:

“This is tricky. Ultimately, we don’t really want to to engage with the opposition. Similar to mis/dis-information, anything done to interact with the opposition boosts their message in some way. If folks ask, we can acknowledge that.....opposition comes in many forms and then pivot back to why it’s important we pass this amendment...that will protect the rights of all New Yorkers. It’s our job to lean into the facts and the values behind the campaign we are running.”

Let’s plan to have our answers ready, without trying to point out flawed arguments that only work to multiply the misinformation. During the next months until November, we’ll be providing as much information on the ERA as we can. Thanks for your help!

In League, Ann Hatke, President

**Proposed Leaders of LWV of Schenectady County 2024/2025**

<b>President</b>	<b>Cheryl Nechamen</b>	<b>2026</b>
<b>Vice President</b>	<b>Joan Fucillo</b>	<b>2026</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Judy Middelkoop</b>	<b>2025</b>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Heide Westergard</b>	<b>2025</b>
Inside Albany	Maxine Brisport	2025
Voter Services	Joan Fucillo	2026
Forums	Sandra McGarraugh	2025
Niskayuna	Heide Westergard/Liz Yanoff	2025
Scotia/Glenville	Connie Young/Ellen Daviero	2025
Rotterdam	Cindy Weissend /Sandra McGarraugh	2025
Schenectady	Peggy King/Julia Holcomb	2025
Vote 411	open	
Voter Registration	Connie Young/Mary Jane Shave Vicki Hoshko/Ellen Daviero	2025
Get Out the Vote	Pauline Kinsella/Ellen Daviero Sandra McGarraugh	2025
Bulletin	Nicole Salamone	2025
Advocacy/Lobbying	Open	
Nominating Committee	Sally Knutson	2025
	Johanna Petersen/Mary Pritchard	2025
	Connie Young	2025
	Carmel Patrick	2025
Membership	Connie Young/Johanna Petersen	2025
	Vicki Hoshko/Carmel Patrick	2025
Community Outreach		
Membership Events	Karen Bradley/Ellen Daviero	2025
Mail Chimp	Judy Middelkoop	2025
Facebook	Anita Sanchez	2025

Website	Judy Middelkoop/Barbara Vivier	2025
Observer Corps	LWV Membership	2025
At Large Board Members	Cathy Lewis/Kate Rose	2025
	Angela Dixon, Cynthia Engel, Judith Rightmyer	2025
Citizen’s Police Review Board Representative	Bill Nechamen	2025
CPRB Alternate	Megan Haessig	2025
Committees		
Environment	Nancy Tudor	2026
Citizenship	Ann Hatke	2026



**Save the Date**  
**Tuesday, June 11**

**Annual June Dinner**  
**Turf Tavern - Scotia**

Save the date: Thursday, April 18

The Four-League Environment Committee and LWVNYS will be presenting an online program on Thursday, April 18 at 7:00 pm. The title of this presentation is: Carbon Neutral NY: Where are we NOW?

This should be an excellent program on what NY is currently doing to fight the effects of climate change. The speaker will be Blair Horner, the Executive Director of NYPIRG (NY Public Interest Research Group).

Please register in advance at this link: <http://tinyurl.com/carbonneutralny>



<i>President</i>	<i>Ann Hatke</i>
<i>Vice President</i>	<i>OPEN</i>
<i>Secretary</i>	<i>Heide Westergaard</i>
<i>Bulletin Editor</i>	<i>Nicole Salamone</i>

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”*



**Welcome New Members:**  
Florence and John Carnahan

## **League of Women Voters of Schenectady County** **Proposed Local Program 2024-2025**

### **Justice and the Law**

Support improvements to the local criminal justice system by:

- \* Monitoring and strengthening the Probation and Parole procedures, with an emphasis on rehabilitation and supportive services with programs such as the Ex-Offender Re-Entry Program in Schenectady County
- \* Facilitating the implementation of alternative courts (problem solving courts) in Schenectady County and promoting collaborations to support them
- \* Monitoring the juvenile justice system including Family Court and promoting community-based rehabilitation
- \* Supporting restorative justice programs such as the Center for Community Justice
- \* Improving accessibility to police complaint procedure
- \* Improving Mental Health Crisis Intervention
- \* Supporting the Schenectady Police Reform **efforts**
- \* Support the monitoring of the Schenectady County Jail, including complaint resolution, public health measures, transparency, and greater oversight of day-to-day conditions
- \* **Maintaining a presence in the Schenectady County Jail for the purpose of registering eligible voters and encouraging them to vote**

### **Local Government**

- \* Monitor activities of county governmental units, including town boards, the Schenectady City Council and the Schenectady County Legislature, monitor activities of other quasi- governmental units, public authorities and agencies such as Schenectady Municipal Housing Authority, Metroplex, IDAs and Planning Boards monitor activities of elected public Boards of Education
- \* Evaluate opportunities for inter-municipal cooperation and examine options for the consolidation of governmental services in Schenectady County

### **Children at Risk**

- \* Collaborate with other organizations to identify the needs of children, including physical and mental health, in Schenectady County, facilitate programs on their behalf and educate the community about their needs and challenges; increase child and adolescent mental health services
- \* Study early childhood education and care-giving needs in Schenectady County from a policy and financing perspective
- \* **Study** coordination between child service agencies, **such as Department of Social Services, Family Court, Schools, and Charitable Organizations with a goal of seeing if networking among these agencies is helpful**
- \* Encourage the availability and affordability of day care services for young children

### **Local Education**

- \* Monitor local initiatives related to schools and promote and advocate for adequate and equitable funding for all school districts so the students can reach their potential
- \* Ensure school districts are adequately prepared and staffed for virtual education
- \* Address disparities exposed by **the need for (REMOVE)** virtual education

- \* Advocate for and support the strengthening of programs that improve the capacity, quality, and speed of connectivity
- \* Advocate for and support equitable access to technology and technology education and closing technology gaps in rural and low income communities
- \* Bolster public schools' ability to respond to needs of students
- \* Ensure that all school districts in Schenectady County are actively seeking to hire teachers of color
- \* Develop initiatives to bolster student attendance and retention
- \* Support the annual LWVNYS's Students Inside Albany program and continue to fund at least one student's participation in the program

### **Environmental Issues**

Advocate for and support the protection of environmental resources, land, water and air in Schenectady County

- \* Advocate for and support energy conservation and development of renewable energy alternatives
- \* Advocate for and support solid waste management programs that promote Reduce, Reuse, and

### **Recycling in the City and County**

- \* Promote understanding of the global climate emergency and support efforts to mitigate its effects

### **Health Services**

- \* Educate and advocate for national/state/local health care reform that provides quality physical and mental health care for all citizens
- \* Encourage and support countywide comprehensive health care planning and access, equity, and safety in health care
- \* Monitor the availability of services for the homeless including homeless veterans

### **Citizens Right to Vote - Making Democracy Work**

- \* Advocate for and support local government transparency
- \* Advocate for and support the registration of new voters
- \* Provide voter information and education during voter registration drives, tabling events, new citizen naturalization ceremonies, county jail visits, and other LWVSC activities \*Provide current voter information on LWVSC website and on social media
- \* Advocate for and support improving local, state, and national elections
- \* Maintain a cordial relationship with the Commissioners of the Schenectady County Board of Elections and meet with them on a regular basis

\*Advocate for, support, and provide voting education to children at the elementary, middle and high school levels

\* Maintain the Citizenship Mentoring Group program that helps prepare immigrants for the US Citizenship Exam, including providing new voter information in the curriculum, and attending Naturalization Ceremonies when possible to register new citizens

*Proposed February 2024*

*PLEASE NOTE: All text in red is new for 202402025*

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 JULY 1, 2023 – JUNE 30, 2024**

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 \_\_\_\_\_ No Fee Full-time 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 518-393-7061 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.

**ACTIVE MEMBERS:** The League depends upon the work of its members, even if for just a short task. Please check any areas that interest you. We appreciate your help.

Register Voters \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate Forums \_\_\_\_\_ Get Out the Vote \_\_\_\_\_

Citizenship Mentoring Group \_\_\_\_\_ Environment \_\_\_\_\_ Students Inside Albany \_\_\_\_\_

Observer Corps \_\_\_\_\_ Judicial \_\_\_\_\_ Health \_\_\_\_\_ Membership \_\_\_\_\_

Facebook \_\_\_\_\_ Website Work \_\_\_\_\_ Other Technical Skills (Describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Other areas of interest \_\_\_\_\_