



## **President's Letter**

One of the key features of an authoritarian government is the suppression of dissent. Initially, the Trump administration focused on using financial threats to suppress free speech.

The new approach is to threaten to revoke the citizenship of naturalized citizens, people who had immigrated to the U.S. and successfully earned U.S. citizenship. Normally, denaturalization is reserved for people that have committed serious crimes, but technically, anyone that made a “material misrepresentation” during their citizenship application can have their citizenship revoked. When the government that is trying to deport a person also defines what is a “material misrepresentation”, the possibilities for abuse are endless.

While it is difficult and time-consuming to denaturalize someone, the goal is not to strip a person’s citizenship. The goal is to chill free speech. Why protest against illegal or unethical policies and put a target on your back? It’s safer to stay quiet.

Which is why our League will continue to lead protests. We need to defend the people who cannot afford to protest and protect the rights of us all.

Cheryl Nechamen  
President

## **Voter Services Report**

In June and July, our League staffed voter registration tables at two Schenectady Greenmarkets, the Kids' Arts Festival, the Juneteenth celebration in Central Park and Schenectady's Summernight music event.

And, we hosted a rally on Thursday, July 17 at Collins Park in Scotia, part of a nationwide effort to honor the late Congressman John Lewis: "Good Trouble Lives On." Well over 200 people showed up with signs, some with noisemakers and all with enthusiasm. Attendees lined up on both sides of Mohawk Avenue waving their signs and encouraging honking from passing cars (they were richly rewarded); they came back to our tent to hear speakers from NAACP, UniteNY and the First United Methodist Church. League members then led a march across the Western Gateway Bridge from Scotia to Schenectady and back again.

#### **Results:**

New member inquiries; a front-page article in Saturday's Schenectady Gazette; and happy people stopping at our table at Sunday's Greenmarket asking, 'Was that you?!' and saying, 'Thank you!'

#### **Question:**

Did we register a lot of voters at these events? Answer: Very few. Follow-up question: Isn't that the point? Answer: No, not really.

Our League's mission may start with registration, but we're here for the long haul. Our charge includes giving people clear-eyed, factual and non-partisan information, explaining why voting counts and the effect their vote has on their communities. When we hold candidate forums, voters can see (and hear and question) would-be officeholders' policies and goals, and post-election, have the knowledge to take politicians to task if they fall short.

Because, despite a pervasive air of skepticism about government, voters want to know their vote matters; they want to know what's at stake; and they want to be heard. At our tables and our forums, we give people information; at our rallies, we give people a platform to voice their concerns. Together, that gives people hope, and hope is energizing.

Kudos to rally Cheryl, Ellen, Janet, Susan, Elaine, Bill, Nancy, Bill, Tina and everyone who planned, plotted and ensured the safety of all rallygoers.

Joan Fucillo  
Voter Services

We recently lost the chance to work with a local faith group, because we didn't have anyone to staff the event. Let's not let another opportunity slip by! Use the link to sign up for voter registration.

**SIGN up to Volunteer:**

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1zuACCSUOtyySXyAJmKMm2v1tWHcCwQX7IPDqVHSAa8s/edit?gid=0#gid=0>

**Citizenship Mentoring Group  
Volunteer Training on Tuesday, August 12**

Have you ever been curious about the process and preparation for US Citizenship?  
Are you interested in helping an immigrant or refugee become a citizen of the United States? We need YOU!

The citizenship interview, which includes a civics, reading, and writing exam plus a review of the citizenship application, requires an enormous amount of information, practice, a basic knowledge of English, and the self-confidence to pursue this big step. LWVSC's Citizenship Mentoring Group has been helping to prepare applicants for their interviews since 2017.

We are in need of trained tutors who can meet with a student(s) one-on-one to help them

get ready. We will be holding a volunteer tutor training on **August 12 from 2:00 - 4:00 at the Karen B. Johnson Library in Schenectady in the Swanker Board Room (2nd floor).**

The training will cover the citizenship process, the information needed to pass the exams and interview, the materials that we use for this preparation, plus basic information such as where and when to meet your student. If you are just interested in learning more about US citizenship but don't want to commit to tutoring, you are more than welcome to attend. However, we do make this training a **requirement** if you are hoping to work with a student for this preparation.

If you would like to sign up for the training, have any questions, or need more information, please contact me at [lwvschenectady@gmail.com](mailto:lwvschenectady@gmail.com).

Ann Hatke  
Citizenship Mentoring Coordinator

### **LWVSC supports "Skip the Stuff" Campaign**

[Discover Schenectady](#) recently announced its participation in the national ***"Skip the Stuff"*** campaign, a voluntary initiative aimed at reducing unnecessary single-use items in takeout and delivery orders while promoting sustainable practices among Schenectady County's

hospitality businesses.

Each year, billions of unused straws, utensils, napkins, condiment packets, and other accessories are included in takeout and delivery orders—only to be thrown away. ***“Skip the Stuff”*** encourages restaurants and hospitality businesses to adopt simple, eco-conscious practices, such as:



- Offering plasticware only upon request for takeout orders
- Providing non-plastic alternatives for straws, stirrers, and utensils
- Limiting the use of individually packaged condiments
- Allowing customers to bring their own mug, thermos, or growler for refills

In collaboration with the Schenectady County Environmental Advisory Council, Discover Schenectady will identify participating businesses as “Sustainability Partners.” Those who join the effort will receive a ***“Skip the Stuff”*** window cling to display at their location and will be featured on the Discover Schenectady website as sustainability leaders in the community.

“We believe the Skip the Stuff program is a great opportunity for Schenectady County businesses to support environmental sustainability and show their customers they care about the community,” said Executive Director of Discover Schenectady Todd Garofano. “The best part is that it’s free to join and offers another way for businesses to promote themselves.”

“This partnership between the Schenectady County Environmental Advisory Council and Discover Schenectady highlights how grassroots action and community engagement can advance sustainability goals,” said Portia Zwicker of the Schenectady County Environmental Advisory Council. “Together, we’re making it easier for local businesses to reduce single-use waste and demonstrate their commitment to environmental stewardship.”

For more information on how to participate, visit [here](#).

Nancy Tudor Chair,  
Environmental Committee

### **NYS 2025 Legislative Session Recap of LWVNY Environmental Efforts**

Despite increasing atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations and climate destabilization as a backdrop, environmental interests were largely snubbed in the 2025 NYS Legislative session that just ended.

Members of the four Capital Region county LWVs lobbied this year for four LWVNY priority environmental bills. Two were ongoing efforts from prior years -- the Packaging Reduction and Recycling Infrastructure Act (PRRIA - S1464/A1749) that requires companies to reduce the amounts of, and remove toxins from, packaging, and also contribute to the cost of managing the packaging waste that remains, and the Bigger Better Bottle Bill (BBB - S5684/A6543) that expands the types of beverages subject to deposit, raises the deposit fee, and increases redemption center revenues. This year advocates also lobbied for two new LWVNY priority bills, the NY Home Energy Affordable Transition Act (NY HEAT S4158/A4870A) that amends NYS law to align utility planning with the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act which requires an end to unsustainable energy provision, and the Climate Education Bill (S2430/A4876) that adds climate topics to NYS curriculum requirements.

The Senate passed PRRIA, and advocates had secured promises from enough Assembly members to expect passage in that body as well, but despite adding the bill to the floor calendar for the last day of session, Speaker Heastie allowed the session to close without bringing the bill up for a vote. BBB and the Climate Education Bill failed to progress in any meaningful way in either house of the legislature. Faced with lack of movement on any important environmental bill, NY HEAT bill sponsors introduced two related bills at the end of session -- the Customer Savings and Reliability Act (S8421/A8889), which represented

an amended version of NY HEAT as a whole, and a separate bill (S8417/A8888) that repealed only the "100 Foot Rule," the requirement that ratepayers across the state cover costs for free gas hook-ups to building owners within 100 feet of a gas utility line. In the end, this small but important carve-out of NY HEAT is the only environmental priority bill that passed through both houses of the NYS Legislature.

Efforts are now underway to urge Gov. Hochul to immediately sign this 100 Foot Rule bill -- it will go into effect providing savings to ratepayers immediately upon signature. Efforts to gain passage of the other LWFNY priority environmental bills will continue into next year. A bright spot: since 2026 will be the second year of the current two-year legislative session, all bills will be able to build upon the progress they made this session. Significantly, PRR1A will be eligible to go straight to the Assembly floor when the 2026 legislative session begins in January. Why not spend the summer bringing this bill up in conversations, and find a few more people to contact Assembly members? It will be a significant treat to see this bill signed into law!

### **LWF Albany County Advocacy Report**

#### **Welcome New Members**

Veronica Cusano  
Kristen Pirro Evans  
Joshua Fitzpatrick  
Miriam Katz  
Diane Moore  
Deborah Strayer  
Karen Wentworth