



Letter from the President – October 2024

President's Letter

This is an exciting and very busy time of year for the League. Now that people are back from summer vacation, they've noticed that there's a presidential election coming up!

The Voter Services Committee has done an amazing job contacting organizations to hold voter registration drives. Lately groups have been contacting us to schedule events. We've held voter registration events in many new venues this year, including Fulton-Montgomery Community College, Schenectady Caribbean Day, I Am Father Festival, Schenectady Historical Society, Central Park Field Day, Hamilton Hill Culture Fest and Middleburgh Public Library. You'll notice in the list that two registration events were in counties other than Schenectady, namely Montgomery County and Schoharie County. Those counties don't have a League of their own- we were happy to help.

We've also been heavily involved in educating the public about Proposition 1, NY's Equal Rights Amendment or ERA with flyers at every voter registration event. We've been asked to give talks to church groups and to GED classes at Schenectady City School District, Schenectady County Jail and the SEAT Center about voting and Proposition 1. Not to mention the panel discussion on Proposition 1 that was held at Union College on September 19th.

Hats off to our hardworking Voter Services Committee: Joan Fucillo, Ellen Daviero, Anita Sanchez, Sandra McGarraugh, Julia Holcomb and Pauline Kinsella!

Cheryl Nechamen



Environment

PBS is offering a free screening of the documentary, **We're All Plastic People Now**, which details the toll plastic is taking on our world. It's in the air. It's in the water. In an era of throw-away ease, plastic has cost us our well-being. It's been found inside our bodies, our colons, our brains, in breast milk and developing wombs. Now, it's even in our hearts.

Watch here, [PBS - We Are All Plastic People Now](#).

Voter Services Committee Report

On Thursday, September 19 our League co-hosted a panel discussion with Union College titled "Proposal One: NY's Equal Rights Amendment," on the proposed amendment to the NY State Constitution. It will be on the ballot this fall.

The amendment would expand the state Constitution's Equal Protection clause, which protects against discrimination based on "race, color, creed, or religion," by adding "ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, and sex, including sexual orientation, gender identity and pregnancy," including "reproductive healthcare and autonomy." Intellectually, we understand that the language seeks to cover all New Yorkers who may face unequal treatment from state and local government because of what they look like, how old they are, whether they have a disability, where they come from, what they look like, who they love, and their decisions about their lives and their futures. It's dry; maybe a bit confusing.

Until you start listening to people whose lives and vocations make them passionate advocates for the amendment's passage. The panelists gave a master class on Prop One, its implications, and its guarantees of freedom and dignity for all New Yorkers. View the proceedings at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHUV39iGLZ0>

A summary:

Dr. Zoe Oxley, chair of the political science department, Union College, discussed the law and touched on the arguments presented by proponents and the opposition. She cautioned that while New York has strong equal protection and human rights laws, these could easily be overturned by a new state legislature or a new governor. With those rights enshrined in the state Constitution, it will be difficult to take away those rights.

Rev. Dr. Martell Spagnolo, an LGBTQ+ minister and Senior Pastor at the First Reformed Church, emphasized the importance of understanding how people's lives are affected by fear and misunderstanding. All people deserve to live their lives in freedom and dignity. He talked about a transgender youth he knew from one of his ministries whose mother had been ostracized by her church for seeking guidance on her child's determination to change genders. Invoking the teachings of his faith, Martell asked, "Who are we to judge?" And invoking the wisdom of his grandmother, added, "you have to fight for your rights" and keep on fighting for as long as it takes.

As Helen Hellmuth, Senior Advocate at Disability Rights NY, noted, a quarter of adults in New York have a disability. People with disabilities often struggle to exercise their rights – including their right to vote. She discussed a study by DRNY and the Brennan Center on accessibility at New York's early voting sites. They assessed 44.5 percent of the early voting sites in New York and found that 94 percent lacked full accessibility.

Nicole Margiasso, Director of Organizing, Planned Parenthood, and Meghan Cenci, an on-campus Planned Parenthood representative, brought the discussion to the source of Prop One: the US Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs*, which overturned the federal right to abortion. Nicole talked about the repercussions of the severe abortion restrictions, including the deaths of women who had to wait it out. She talked about the outside effect the ban has had on people in marginalized communities – particularly on transgender people, who are often scapegoated by those who oppose abortion rights. Meghan talked about being a young woman who wants to be free to choose and to experiment, to determine her own future, on her own terms.

As an attendee, my takeaway was that the amendment addresses people who are often left out or thought of as lesser than – again, because of what they look like, how old they are, whether they have a disability, where they come from, what they look like, who they love, and their decisions about their lives, their families, and their futures – and says that they deserve compassion, freedom, dignity and autonomy.

Joan Fucillo, Voter Services Committee chair

President	Cheryl Nechamen
Vice President	Joan Fucillo
Voter Services Chair	Joan Fucillo
Secretary	Heide Westergaard
Bulletin Editor	Nicole Salamone

Urge Governor Hochul to sign the Climate Change Superfund Act -- a League environmental priority that succeeded this past legislative session.

The Climate Change Superfund Act requires fossil fuel companies that have contributed significantly to New York's greenhouse gas burden to contribute funds to offset the costs New Yorkers are paying to adapt to climate change. The Governor is being lobbied to veto the bill and leave all costs with taxpayers, by a coalition of business, energy and labor organizations. **We need as many people as possible to speak up and counter industry lobbying.**

Please take one or both of these actions to urge Governor Hochul to sign this bill:

> Add your name to [Third Act's online petition](#).

> Call Governor Hochul's office to urge her to sign Climate Change Superfund Act:

1. Call 518-474-8390.
2. Press 1 to leave a message, or 2 to speak to a staff member.
3. Use the following script or your own words: *My name is ____ and I live in ____ . I am calling on Governor Hochul to sign the Climate Change Superfund Act (A3351-B and S2129-B) that our Legislature passed in June. Taxpayers are faced with the costs of repairing the damage done by extreme weather, which grows worse every year. Big fossil fuel companies like Exxon are responsible for much of the climate pollution causing this crisis and they should help pay to repair what they have caused. Please sign the Climate Change Superfund Act. Thank you.*

Save the Date

Holiday Luncheon on December 12th at the Turf Tavern

Arthur Butler, Human Rights Commission, will be our guest speaker

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:

**Erica Lawrence
Nicole Orlofsky
E. Fraser Benzal**

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, 2024 – JUNE 30, 2025

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 _____