

# LWW LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS<sup>®</sup> OF SCHENECTADY COUNTY

## BULLETIN

June 2020

### President's Letter

Dear LWWSC Members,

Like many of you, I'm rejoicing to see our region begin the small, safe steps to "re-open." It almost seems like a coincidence that this comes now, as we begin to open our windows, put away our warm clothes, and look forward to the summer months. What we've learned about the COVID-19 virus will stay with us, though, and we'll continue to use our masks and follow the rules of social distancing.

The term "social distancing" is used in the physical sense; we keep our distance from others to keep them and us safe. In many ways, this can bring many of us closer. I've been thinking about this in relation to our local League. Even though we don't get to see each other as often as we might like, we can still communicate in very satisfying ways.

As you know, LWWSC has monthly board meetings for discussing new business, following up on developing plans, coming to consensus on issues, and talking about ideas for events and activities, both for our membership and the community. YOU are always welcome to attend these meetings. If you'd like to attend, here's the information to do so:

- Meetings are held the second Wednesday of every month at 3:00 pm (this sometimes varies during the summer months). **Next meeting: June 10**
- Right now we are holding meetings by Zoom, so if you would like to attend, please let me know so that I can send you an email invitation with a password to join the meeting. You can also attend a Zoom meeting by phone. When it's safe to do so, we can return to having our meetings "in real life"!

As always, if you have an issue or an idea that you'd like the League to consider, just let me know and it can be added to our meeting agenda.

Additionally, we are always looking for suggestions for topical public forums or panels with speaker(s). If you have a good idea that would be of interest to the community, let us know! And remember, our Bulletin is our forum – consider offering a pertinent article that caught your eye, thoughts on a good book, or a memory about earlier days of our League. Your items can be sent to Helen MacDonald, our Bulletin editor extraordinaire.

Let's stay close, stay in touch, and be in League...

Ann Hatke  
[ash.lwvsc@gmail.com](mailto:ash.lwvsc@gmail.com)

**A puzzling way to while away 10 minutes:**

*The New Yorker* magazine is famous for their covers. The magazine has a section on their website that allows you to put puzzles of their covers together electronically. There are 3 levels of difficulty, you can change the size of the puzzle pieces, and even time yourself.

**Caution: may be addictive. See [www.newyorker.com/jigsaw](http://www.newyorker.com/jigsaw) and have fun!**

## GOOD GOTV NEWS!

We are very pleased to report that the NYS League of Women Voters has approved the mini-grant application recently submitted by our Schenectady County League in collaboration with the Albany and Rensselaer County Leagues to fund GET OUT THE VOTE ads to be placed on CDTA buses for the period 9/3/20 to 11/3/20. The State League has agreed to underwrite the cost of ten CDTA bus ads in the three counties, primarily in the cities of Schenectady, Albany and Troy, where there is the greatest population density in the Capital Region. In more good news, and in an effort to further expand our GOTV message, the three County Leagues have each approved a supplemental expenditure to enable us to increase the number of bus ads from 10 to 15, which will significantly improve the visibility of our efforts.

We are also working with the Saratoga County League to utilize an ad design that our sister league is using for GOTV t-shirts and intends to use for lawn signs. This will further expand the exposure of consistent attention-getting GOTV messaging by the Capital Region Leagues

We are grateful to the County Leagues in our region, and to the State League, for their enthusiastic collaboration on this important initiative!

Pauline Kinsella



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”**

## Voter Services Report

The procedure for school budget votes and school board elections has changed this year, yet another result of COVID-19. According to Governor Cuomo's executive order, every resident will receive an absentee ballot. There will not be any in-person voting for school elections.

There may be a very short turn-around time to return your ballot by the deadline of June 9. If you think your ballot may not arrive at the school district in time, call your school district office to see if there is a dropbox at one of your schools.

A number of school districts have competitive elections for school board this year, probably due to Governor Cuomo's executive order allowing candidates to self-nominate. (Who would have thought that a simpler ballot access process would induce more people to run for office?! Other than the League of Women Voters, of course.)

We typically run a Candidate Forum for candidates running for the Schenectady City School District Board of Education. Since that won't be possible this year, we have asked each of the six candidates running for three seats to answer a set of questions. We will post their responses on our website at <http://www.lwvschenectady.org/> by June 3.

*Cheryl Nechamen*  
*Voter Services Chair*

### Time to VOTE!

In early June, you will receive your ballot for the LWVSC annual vote on the proposed 2020-21 budget, the slate of officers, and the local program. You will also receive copies of these three items for review. We will send your ballot and review materials by USPS if you don't use email. Please remember to vote on this important LWVSC business.

President	Ann Hatke
Vice-President	Jude Rabig
Secretary	Heide Westergaard
Bulletin Editor	Helen MacDonald

## **With Naturalizations on Hold, Potential New Voters Sit on Sidelines – May 28, 2020**

Elizabeth Hernandez moved to the United States from Mexico almost 30 years ago and was days away from becoming an American citizen when her March 15 naturalization ceremony was canceled as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. "It made me sad," said Hernandez, who lives in New Mexico. She hadn't thought much about becoming a citizen until this year because of the upcoming election. "I want to vote for a president who will improve the country."

Hernandez is one of hundreds of thousands of people who were scheduled to become naturalized this year. But naturalization ceremonies have been on hold during the coronavirus pandemic in this election year. An estimated 860,000 people were set to become citizens — with many also expected to become first-time voters. The crimp in the pipeline of new citizens is one of a series of [unexpected challenges](#) that could reshape the electorate ahead of the November general election. About a quarter of naturalized citizens live in Texas, Florida, Pennsylvania and Georgia, all potentially key states in the fall election, [according to data](#) from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Immigration advocates want the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to offer virtual naturalization ceremonies. "It's not unprecedented and it is an option," said Diego Iñiguez-López of the National Partnership for New Americans. In a statement, USCIS officials said there are requirements mandated by Congress that make it "logistically difficult for USCIS to administer naturalization oaths virtually or telephonically." In a subsequent statement, the agency said it has never conducted a virtual naturalization ceremony. USCIS, which depends on fees levied on immigrants, is in the midst of a funding crisis and reportedly said it may have [to furlough part of its workforce](#).

The newly naturalized "represent rising numbers of new American voters that have the power to sway the outcome of the upcoming presidential elections, midterm elections and governorships and state legislatures," Iñiguez-López said. One out of every 10 eligible voters in the U.S. will be a naturalized citizen in 2020, said Mark Hugo Lopez of the Pew Research Center. He said new citizens who are Asian and Latino are more likely to turn out to vote, key demographics in this year's election. "Most people who make the decision to become a citizen are oftentimes also somewhat more engaged than others in terms of wanting to get involved," Lopez said.

The temporary freeze in naturalization ceremonies has stymied the organizations that work to naturalize immigrants such as Hernandez and register them to vote after they take the oath of citizenship. "It makes you very proud to be an American – and proud that you can be there on the spot to register them to vote at that moment after they are duly sworn in," said Annie Johnson Benifield of the Houston chapter of the League of Women Voters. Benifield said she's able to register about 90% of the people in these ceremonies that day, far higher than any other voter registration event. The Houston area was scheduled to have 16 naturalization ceremonies in 2020.

"We have no idea how they are going to start structuring and scheduling them for the rest of the year," said Benifield, who hopes government officials come up with a plan soon that allows immigrants to become citizens safely and register to vote.

Anita Lopez for National Public Radio – <http://www.npr.org>

## Legislature Returns to Pass COVID-19 Legislation

This week the Assembly and Senate re-convened session to pass legislation related to the COVID-19 pandemic including clarifying future regulations related to COVID-19 vaccination administration, granting assistance for small businesses, and protecting renters.

Last Friday, the League had issued a joint statement with the Let NY Vote coalition urging the legislature to take up a slate of voting reforms. The legislature only took up one of our recommended bills, [A10516A\(Simotas\)/S8130B \(Myrie\)](#), a bill to allow voters to electronically apply to vote absentee for the November election and to allow voters to deliver their ballots on the same day as the election for the primary and general election.

Although we were pleased that this bill was passed, the League had hoped to see additional protections for voters voting via absentee ballot, as well as options for braille and large print absentee ballots. The coalition had also urged passage of a bill to allow New York City to activate their online registration website that has already been created.

You can hear more about the need for these additional reforms on the WAMC News Podcast.

Most are speculating the legislature will not return until later in the year. The coalition will continue to work to highlight the need for these reforms and to see protections put in place for absentee voters before the June primary.

*from May 29*

## African American Women and the Nineteenth Amendment

by Sharon Harley

African American women, though often overlooked in the history of woman suffrage, engaged in significant reform efforts and political activism leading to and following the ratification in 1920 of the Nineteenth Amendment, which barred states from denying American women the right to vote on the basis of their sex. They had as much—or more—at stake in the struggle as white women. From the earliest years of the suffrage movement, Black women worked side by side with white suffragists. By the late nineteenth century, however, as the suffrage movement splintered over the issue of race in the years after the Civil War, Black women formed their own organizations to continue their efforts to secure and protect the rights of all women, and men.



The US women's rights movement was closely allied with the antislavery movement, and before the Civil War Black and white abolitionists and suffragists joined together in common cause. During the antebellum period, a small cohort of formerly enslaved and free Black women, including [Sojourner Truth](#), [Harriet Tubman](#), [Maria W. Stewart](#), Henrietta Purvis, Harriet Forten Purvis, Sarah Remond, and [Mary Ann Shadd Cary](#), were active in women's rights circles. They were joined in their advocacy of women's rights and suffrage by prominent Black men, including [Frederick Douglass](#), Charles Lenox Remond, and [Robert Purvis](#), and worked in collaboration with white abolitionists and women's rights activists, including William Lloyd Garrison, [Elizabeth Cady Stanton](#), and [Susan B. Anthony](#).<sup>[1]</sup>

Following the [1848 women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York](#), prominent free Black women abolitionists and suffragists attended, spoke, and assumed leadership positions at multiple women's rights gatherings throughout the 1850s and 1860s. In 1851, former slave Sojourner Truth delivered her famous "Ain't I a Woman" speech at the national women's rights convention in Akron, [Ohio](#). Sarah Remond and her brother Charles won wide acclaim for their pro-woman suffrage speeches at the 1858 National Woman's Rights Convention in New York City.<sup>[2]</sup> With the end of the Civil War, arguments for woman suffrage became entwined with debates over the rights of former slaves and the meaning of citizenship. Sisters Margaretta Forten and Harriet Forten Purvis, who helped to establish the interracial Philadelphia Suffrage Association in 1866, and other Black women were active in the new American Equal Rights Association (AERA), an organization formed by former abolitionists and women's rights advocates that endorsed both women's and Black men's right to vote.

But with the proposal of the Fifteenth Amendment, which would enfranchise Black men but not women, interracial and mixed-gender coalitions began to deteriorate. Suffragists had to choose between insisting on universal rights or accepting the priority of Black male suffrage. The split in the suffrage movement over the Fifteenth Amendment prompted Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony to sever ties with the AERA and form the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), which promoted universal suffrage, insisting that Black men should not receive the vote before white women. Stanton and Anthony's racist remarks about Black men evoked intense anger on the part of



Black suffragists, including long-time allies Frederick Douglass and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper. As a result, Harper supported the Fifteenth Amendment—this from a fiercely independent woman who believed women were equal, indeed, superior to men in their level of productivity; men were talkers, while women were doers.<sup>[4]</sup> Harper joined the new American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), which supported both Black suffrage and woman suffrage and took a state-by-state approach to securing women's right to vote. As Harper proclaimed in her closing remarks at the 1873 AWSA convention, “much as white women need the ballot, colored women need it more.”<sup>[5]</sup> As many whites, including some white female suffragists, publicly denounced Black male suffrage, Black women incorporated Black male suffrage as an important component of their suffrage goals.

Black women, however, did become members of both woman suffrage groups—the Stanton and Anthony–led NWSA and the [Lucy Stone](#) and [Julia Ward Howe](#)–led AWSA. Hattie Purvis was a delegate to the NWSA (as well as a member of the executive committee of the Pennsylvania State Suffrage Association). Among the prominent African American reformers and suffragists who joined the AWSA were Charlotte Forten and Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin, a member of the [Massachusetts](#) Woman Suffrage Association.<sup>[6]</sup>

Black women attended and spoke out at political and religious meetings and public rallies. Their enthusiasm and political engagement within and outside suffrage campaigns was particularly concerning to whites in the post-emancipation South.<sup>[7]</sup> The suffrage work of Charlotte (“Lottie”) Rollin shows the long history of African American women's political activism outside the Northeast and beyond women's rights conferences and organizations.

In 1866, a year before chairing the inaugural meeting of the [South Carolina](#) Woman's Rights Association, Rollin courageously proclaimed her support for universal suffrage at a meeting of the South Carolina House of Representatives. In 1870, she was the elected secretary of the South Carolina Woman's Rights Association, an affiliate of the AWSA. Rollin, along with her sisters Frances and Louisa and other local women, figured prominently in Reconstruction politics and woman suffrage campaigns at the local and national levels in the early 1870s. South Carolina's African American woman suffrage advocates were encouraged by African American men. In certain 1870 South Carolina district elections, Black election officials encouraged Black women to vote—an action the Rollins sisters and some other African American women were already assuming (or attempting) on their own.<sup>[8]</sup> In 1871, pioneer suffragist, newspaper editor, and first female law school student at Howard University Mary Ann Shadd Cary, with several other women, attempted, unsuccessfully, to register to vote in [Washington, DC](#). This failure notwithstanding, they insisted upon and secured an official signed affidavit recognizing that they had attempted to vote.<sup>[9]</sup> In certain 1870 South Carolina district elections, Black election officials encouraged Black women to vote—an action the Rollins sisters and some other African American women were already assuming (or attempting) on their own.<sup>[8]</sup> In 1871, pioneer suffragist, newspaper editor, and first female law school student at Howard University Mary Ann Shadd Cary, with several other women, attempted, unsuccessfully, to register to vote in [Washington, DC](#).

*Sharon Harley is associate professor and former chair of the African American Studies Department at the University of Maryland, College Park.*

*Excerpted from an article in a National Park Service publication*

## Voters with Disabilities

This week, LWVNY presented an on-line training with discussion on empowering Voters with Disabilities. Helen Charland of Disability Rights NY, and Kevin Greenstein led the discussion. It is the goal of Self Advocates of New York State, SANYS, to enfranchise all voters in New York State, and Helen Charland noted that only a judge can deem a person ineligible to vote, a proceeding outside of guardianship determinations.

The Developmental Disabilities Planning Council will offer grants to help LWV chapters develop programs to help meet the need for education and advocacy for voters with disabilities.

LWV Schenectady looks forward to further details, because, as Kevin Greenstein stated, "By getting involved, we can all make a difference."

Submitted by Cindy Weissend

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, 2020 - June 30, 2021**

**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 \_\_\_\_\_ \$20 Full time HS 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 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.

Judicial \_\_\_\_\_ Health \_\_\_\_\_ Observer Corps \_\_\_\_\_ Fund Raising \_\_\_\_\_

Citizenship Mentoring Group \_\_\_\_\_ Environment \_\_\_\_\_ Education \_\_\_\_\_

**Voter Services:** Register Voters \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate Forums \_\_\_\_\_ Voter Information \_\_\_\_\_

**Computer Skills:** Graphics/Layout \_\_\_\_\_ Data Bases \_\_\_\_\_ Website Work \_\_\_\_\_

Facebook \_\_\_\_\_ Electronic Publicity \_\_\_\_\_ Other Technical Skill(Describe) \_\_\_\_\_



