

# Update

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF THE COOPERSTOWN AREA

Summer 2022

## LWVCA Annual Meeting 2022

The League of Women Voters had its first in-person annual meeting on April 21, 2022. Thirty-eight members were in attendance, and we were all very happy to once again be together and speak with each other face-to-face.

At the meeting members said farewell to Liane Hirabayashi who is leaving her role as Co-president. We thanked members Lynne Mebust, Sydney Sheehan, and Peg Odell, who are leaving the board.

Maureen Murray was elected Co-president and will serve a two-year term along with Patty MacLeish. (LWVCA Co-presidents serve for two years on a staggered basis.)

Members at the meeting also approved continuing all our current positions and, acting on the results of

our 2022 Program Planning meeting, to work locally to support LWVUS's "Making Democracy Work" campaign. The campaign focuses on voting rights, campaign finance reform, redistricting and improving elections. (Learn

more about Making Democracy Work at <https://www.lwv.org/making-democracy-workr>). Members at Program Planning had other issues they wished to consider, and the board decided that we would discuss these at our annual meeting. As a result, members were asked to choose a topic and commit to the task. The consensus at annual meeting was to work on a plan to study ways of decreasing polarization in our community. Check out the plan to carry out the project on this page—"League Embarks on Reducing Polarization Project."



Above: Anne Walker, LWVCA Students Inside Albany winner, and Bruce MacLeish at annual meeting.

### Coming Up

**07/20:** Voter Services Committee meeting via Zoom at 6 PM. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83895673196>

**08/03:** LWVCA Board Meeting. 6 p.m.

**08/13-08/21:** Early voting for primary elections.

**08/ 23:** Primary election congressional & state senate candidates. NY State Fair. Join the LWVNY registering voters at the Fair. See page 4.

**09/07:** LWVCA Board Meeting. 6 p.m.

**09/13** Reducing Polarization Project The first conversation based on Ezra Klein's *Why We're Polarized*. See story at right.

**09/20:** National Voter Registration Day.

**10/05:** LWVCA Board Meeting.6 p.m..

**10/08:** Fall Fling. Help us register voters and distribute voting information. See page 4.

**10/14** Last day to register for November election.

### LWV Oneonta News: Watch This Space!

The resurgence of the LWV of the Oneonta Area is off to a great start, thanks to the support of the LWVCA. The League is attracting new members and putting them right to work alongside experienced volunteers on our ambitious slate of voter registration activities. More to come in future *Updates*.

Steve Londner, LWV Oneonta



### Election Season Begins

New Yorkers voted in the first of two (That's right, two!) primaries on June 28. In Otsego County, that election was held to select the Democratic and Republican Parties' candidates for Governor and Lieutenant Governor.

There are two primaries because of the New York State's Independent Redistricting Committee's inability to arrive at new district lines. At the second primary on August 23, voters will select our area's congressional candidates. And finally in November, voters will elect statewide officials, including governor and members of Congress as well as some local officials.

Our League is already at work to help voters register and learn about the candidates who are running. The League's electronic voters guide, VOTE411, featured the candidates running for those offices. (Most of the candidates responded to the League's request for participation in VOTE411; Harry Wilson, Alison Esposito and Diane Reyna, did not.)

The LWVCA will also be working to help register voters. We will be participating in the Rotary's Fall Fling, where we will be registering voters and distributing information about ballot issues, including an important environmental bond issue. We will be planning other registration events as well.

On July 20, the Voters Service Committee will hold its first meeting of the election season. The 6p.m. Zoom meeting will focus on registration, Get Out The Vote (GOTV) activities, VOTE411 and candidates forums. See the calendar at left or [www.LWVCooperstownArea.org](http://www.LWVCooperstownArea.org) for the Zoom link.

### League Embarks on Reducing Polarization Project

Can we reduce polarization? Our League wants to give it a try. At our annual meeting in April, this topic was a major concern among members and it was selected as the number one priority for additional local League programming.

The objective of the reducing polarization

## Join Us!

If you are receiving this newsletter, then you are a member of our League. Thank you for being part of this organization that we care about so much! As we begin our year as Co-presidents however, we have a favor to ask. Could you do just one more thing for the League? LWVNY President Judie Gorenstein made a plea in her message to members in the state League's recent newsletter "Our members are our greatest asset...Without you we cannot accomplish all we need to do to empower voters and protect our democracy [but] I am asking each member to try to do a little more, whether it be joining a committee of your local League, sharing an idea, making a donation, or letting everyone you know know that you are a member of the LWV, what we do, and asking them to join."

We couldn't agree more.

We know that many members join the because they support our work, and that support is essential to our success. Our hope for this year is that more of our members will also support our work by giving the League a few hours of your time. Time, we know, is a very precious commodity, but we believe you will find that time you give the League will be well spent.

We are trying something new on our website: a page where you can see what League volunteer activities are available. You know what talents you have to share—or maybe you would like to learn a new skill—and how much time you can give. Volunteer opportunities will be listed by types (registering voters, Get Out The Vote, writing), amount of time you can give (an occasional afternoon, two hours a month), level of commitment (a helper, a leader, a "let-me-feel-it out" learner). We'll try to explain the scope and the time commitment is for each job we post.

All we are asking is that you think about whether you might have a little more time for the League. Who knows, you might get hooked on an issue and find you've changed from an occasional afternoon, "let-me-feel-it-out" learner to a passionate League leader.

Please join us—sign up to register voters at Fall Fling, participate in the reducing polarization project, or help our new Youth Director, September Schecter, in her work. We know how good it feels to register a voter or explain an issue to a voter or speak out in support of an issue. We want you to feel the same way. The volunteer page will launch in late July and will announce its "go-live" date via email.

We were both fortunate to be your virtual delegates to the LWVUS convention in Denver in June. There were many interesting sessions, which were recorded and will be available to all members soon. Delegates voted to approve new concurrences on health care, criminal justice, and digital equity. We were most excited about the digital equity position. Leagues will now have a powerful tool to influence policy that will assure everyone has good, reliable, affordable internet access. It was not a recommended item, but Kathy Stein, LWVNY board member, and other Leagues made a super effort to have it first consider by the delegates and then approved. More information will be coming from the state League on these topics.

In closing, we wish to finish our first column as co-presidents by recommending that you read another. Ted Protrikus, editor of the print papers *The Freeman's Journal* and *Hometown Oneonta* and the online AllOtsego.com wrote in his weekly column, on June 23 ("The Primary Thing:Vote," <https://www.allotsego.com/commentary-the-importance-of-the-primary-election/>), about the upcoming primaries and how we got there.

At the end of his column, Ted noted,

June 28, then, is an important voting day, as will be August 23. Elsewhere in this week's paper, we have a story about the great work of the Cooperstown and Oneonta area League(s) of Women Voters and their on-line, easy-to-navigate election guide. They're doing what they can to demystify a voting process that Albany seems bound-and-determined to keep as cloudy and obfuscated as possible (despite noble press releases pledging more fairness in state elections). Please take a look, and we'll see you at the polls!

We are fortunate in Otsego County to have two local newspapers, *The Freeman's Journal* and *The Daily Star*. Local news outlets provide information that you won't find on cable TV or in the *New York Times*. (We're pretty sure the *Times* won't tout the usefulness of VOTE411.) If you aren't a subscriber to one or, better yet, both of our local papers, subscribe today. Our success depends on their success.

Patty MacLeish and Maureen Murray, Co-Presidents

project is twofold: 1) to educate participants about the history, nature, and consequences of political polarization, and 2) to help participants engage in activities that will help reduce political polarization on local, state, and national levels.

The project will begin with a book discussion of Ezra Klein's *Why We're Polarized*. (The book is available at the Village Library of Cooperstown.) After reading the book, the group will participate in two or three conversations based on Klein's book. These conversations will be completed before the November 2022 midterm election. Reading and conversation will continue on a monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly basis, as decided upon by the group. Based on the needs and energy of participants, we plan to continue through the 2024 presidential election.

After the reading and discussions, participants will be encouraged to engage in events, activities or research either organized by the League or sponsored by other organizations to reduce polarization.

The project is open to all members of the League and their families and friends. If you are interested in participating or have a question, please email Tom at [tompullyblank@gmail.com](mailto:tompullyblank@gmail.com). Check out our website for complete information on the readings and possible activities.

## Prepping for Dinner Out

by Maureen Fitzgerald Murray, Co-President  
LWVCA

My dinner reservation is in 15 minutes. I'm dressed. I've got my purse, credit card, phone, and car keys. The houselights are out. I seem good to go. But wait, where's my tote bag with my empty food containers?

No, I'm not nuts. Rather, I like to think I'm setting a trend and maybe helping our environment.

The LWV of the Cooperstown Area has a long history of paying attention to recycling and related issues. An early (1990) project saw the League partnering with the Otsego County Conservation Association (OCCA) to promote recycling to the public. The collection of tons of recycled items proved that individuals would modify their behavior in order to help the environment.

Almost thirty years later, in 2019, League member Melinda Hardin initiated a new project. And soon the League, along with OCCA, Otsego 2000, The Otsego Land Trust, and local businessperson Natalie Wrubleski of The Champagne Hippie, were working to add a fourth R to "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle"—Refuse."

Anticipating a new NYS law banning plastic bags in stores, League members visited 48 local merchants and restaurants, conducting

## Looking back: Title IX at 50

by Ellen Tillapaugh

*No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.*

TITLE IX OF THE EDUCATION AMENDMENTS OF 1972 ENACTED INTO LAW JUNE 23, 1972

I was playing tennis with someone recently who asked if I had played when I was growing up. I replied yes, and he asked if I had played for my high school tennis team. He was the same age as I, and of course, had played on his tennis team in high school. Our experiences, however, were quite different.

We have just celebrated the 50th anniversary of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 which passed a year before I graduated from Cooperstown High School. At a time when there seem to be so many steps backwards in women's rights, I know first hand that the Title IX legislation has been a critical success in leveling the playing field for young girls. And decades of sports programs for girls created the pathway to this Spring's equal pay settlement awarded to the US women's soccer team.

What was it like growing up in our community, pre-Title IX? It involved watching your brothers participate in organized sports – T-Ball, Little League, and school athletics. Girls were not allowed to participate.

At Cooperstown, 7th grade girls would purchase a blue “romper” uniform to wear in gym class and use for school sports. There certainly wasn't athletic wear available. It

wasn't until 1971 that CCS girls were “allowed” to wear pants to school; prior to that, only dresses and skirts were acceptable. Those rompers were purchased about 3 sizes larger than needed in 7th grade so we could “grow into them” and not have to spend money on another one before graduation.

Until 1969, Cooperstown High School was on Chestnut Street where the Cooper Lane Apartments are located today. It was an old school with only one gymnasium and the boys had first priority to use the space. In the winter time for basketball season, we girls had to quickly change into our rompers, throw on a winter coat, run out the back door of the school, and hop on a school bus that took us to the old Clark Gymnasium in Cooper Park. We would run into the gym and up the stairs and play about 15 minutes of basketball. Then it was back out to the school bus for the return trip to school where we quickly change into our dresses for the next class period.

Basketball for girls consisted of 6 players, 3 guards and 3 forwards, with guards not able to cross the center line, and only forwards allowed to shoot. One can assume it was considered too exhausting for girls to run a

full court. Girls soccer was in its infancy. We didn't have matches; we had “play dates.”

The sport I really wanted to play was tennis, and Billie Jean King was my role model. There was a boys tennis team at CCS at the time, but none for girls. CCS was a small rural school, but those of us who enjoyed sports knew about the Title IX legislation being proposed. In early 1972, I went with a friend to speak to the principal about the proposed legislation. Title IX would not pass until that June, but the principal, to his credit, spoke to the tennis coach. My friend and I were allowed to try out that spring for the tennis team. I can't say the coach was welcoming and walking on the court for a varsity team tryout in my junior year was daunting. Eventually, rather than sitting on a bench or being subjected to what I would call “unpleasantness,” I left the team.

One year later, my idol, Billie Jean King, 29 years old, beat 55-year-old Bobby Riggs. And, thirty years after that famous Battle of the Sexes tennis match at the Houston Astrodome, my own daughter played on the Section III Championship Tennis Team for CCS.

*League member Ellen Tillapaugh is past president of the LWVCA and recently began her third term as Mayor of Cooperstown.*

brief face-to-face surveys on reducing or eliminating the use of plastics and non-recyclable or non-compostable materials. The survey revealed many facts, which were reported in this newsletter. One of the questions in the survey was whether restaurants would allow customers to bring their own takeaway containers. There was a solid “yes” from respondents, but they noted, few customers had done that yet.

I'm trying to change that—and I hope you will join me. I bring my own takeaway containers when I go out to eat, and when I'm finished, I simply take out my own container and slide leftovers into it. Sometimes, if I make eye contact with folks at a nearby table, I promote the procedure. To a person, servers have applauded the routine. It saves their organization a little money and time, which might be good for them.

Are you a good eco-consumer? Bring your own container for takeout. Make a point of letting all restaurants and others know that eco-friendly is your preference.

Perhaps the next time you're eating out, we'll make eye contact when you take out your own container!



Maureen Murray moderated the CCS School Board candidates debate in May.

### League Hosts Candidates Forum for CCS School Board

School Board elections and budget votes are held each May in most New York State communities. For the first time in several years the Cooperstown School Board election was contested and the League held an in-person, 90-minute candidates debate for the two open seats. All three candidates, Alicia Chase, Cody Moore, and Peter Iorizzo, answered question from the audience of about 45 at the May 3rd event. League members Maureen Murray moderated the debate and Anne Brown served as timekeeper.

Voters who couldn't attend the debate were able to learn more about the candidates at VOTE411.org, the League's electronic voters guide. League member Nancy Potter, with help from her daughter Molly Pearlman, coordinated the VOTE411 guide for the Cooperstown League. Thanks to Molly and Nancy, and thanks to all the candidates for participating in VOTE411. Thank you also to the Cooperstown Fire Department for once again featuring VOTE411 on its community sign on Chestnut Street.

## Make a Difference in Election 2022!

Take part in one of the most feel-good activities of the League—helping voters (and potential voters) get to the polls and make informed decision. Here's how:

- Put a VOTE411 sign in your yard.
- Volunteer for a shift at Fall Fling on **October 8**, by registering voters and distributing information about the ballot issues.
- Answer the call to volunteer for National Voter Registration Day on **September 20**.
- Spend the Day at the Great New York State Fair! The NYS League will have a LWV table to get out information about the League and to register people to vote from **August 24-September 5**. We're hoping that a group us can sign up for the same day and time and carpool. There's free admission and free parking. Time slots are 10-2; 2-6; and 6-10. We'll register people to vote, talk to people about the League and hand out informational materials.

Please join us at one of these events. To get a sign or to learn more details about an event, please e-mail [president@LWVCooperstownArea.org](mailto:president@LWVCooperstownArea.org).



## Meet Board Member September Schechter

*September Schechter is the newest member of the LWV of the Cooperstown Area Board of Directors. She just completed her first year as a social studies teacher at Cherry Valley- Springfield High School. She teaches US History, Participation in Government, Economics, College Government and Civics, Women's History, and Geography. An Otsego County native and graduate of Cherry Valley Springfield, September was a histotechnologist before earning her degree in education. She lives in Cherry Valley with her husband Paul, owner of OCX\_Otsego Computer Experts.*

### What attracted you to the League?

I always knew the League existed but it wasn't until I learned about the Students inside Albany program that I really looked at the league. I went to the website and was honestly surprised at the amount of things that the league did as a whole—it was far more extensive than I had realized. I knew that it was an organization that I wanted to support and at least be a member.

### You are new to the board. What made you want to serve as a League leader?

Once I joined, I started to receive emails and information. Then I signed up to go to the LWV New York State training session held this past spring in Albany. I was beyond impressed at the Albany event and knew that I wanted to do more than just support the organization. **You were named our League's first Youth Director. Why did you accept the appointment?**

I am very excited to have been appointed

to the board and to have had board members place a level of trust in me with the appointment of Youth Director. Voter education and registration are two points that I feel very passionate about, and not just within my own classroom. I grew up in a very civically active family, was taught from a young age by my great grandmother the importance of voting especially as a woman. I would like to partner with the County Board of Elections and the Participation in Government teachers from the area to provide a voter education and registration program in each school in Otsego County. As a League, we need to use the resources that are already established, namely teachers, to help ensure that every citizen of our country becomes not just a voter but a active participant in democracy, a global citizen.



September Schechter and her husband, Paul.

PO Box 426, Cooperstown, NY 13326