

# UPDATE

ISSUE 2022, NO. 2, SPRING

PO BOX 426, COOPERSTOWN, NY 13326

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## COMING UP

- April 18: Nominating petitions due for local school board elections.*
- April 20, 6 pm: LWV Cooperstown Annual Meeting, Clark Sports Center.*
- April 21, 7-9 pm: Love Your Oneonta League Campaign Kick-off, Atrium of the Foothills Performing Arts Center in Oneonta.*
- April 26, 7 pm: Statewide concurrence meeting on election administration. Clark Sports Center, 7-9 pm Read more on page 2.*
- May 17: School Board Elections and Budget votes.*
- June 18-26: Early Voting for NY State Primary Election*
- June 28: Primary Election.*

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Nicole & Brandon Greene  
 Jessica Salerno  
 September Schechter

*From Our Co-Presidents*

## Endings and Beginnings

The year is winding down for the League, but April is proving to be a busy month for us. Our fiscal year may be changing ending, but as you will read, much of this newsletter is all about new beginnings and all the anticipation and activity that beginning brings.

Our annual meeting on April 20 will be the League's first in-person meeting since our Program Planning meeting in February 2020! (What a great new beginning!) We look forward to seeing you there. The center section of this newsletter includes our annual report, which outlines our activities for the past year and plans for the upcoming year. We think it's a pretty impressive report and hope you will read it closely and maybe even discover some activities that are of interest to you. Details about the meeting are on the following page.

The very next evening will be the kick-off event for the Love Your Oneonta League (LYOL) program. You should have received an email describing the project, but if not, you can check it out on our web site ([www.lwvcooperstownarea.org](http://www.lwvcooperstownarea.org)). Our board did its best to decide how to move forward after the LWV Oneonta Area approached us with the idea of merging. Many of you helped us through the Conversation Circles that we held in the fall. Your input and thoughtfulness were key to the plan that was developed. The state League hopped on board with a substantial grant and the Oneonta League embraced the idea. We all felt that Otsego County needs to continue to have two Leagues and we think we have a good solution. Read about the upcoming program on the following page and learn more about how you can get involved and what our plans are going forward in this newsletter and in the annual report. We want especially to thank the LYOL committee members Maureen Murray, Stephanie Bauer and Roz Thomas for their work putting the plan together, Tom Pullyblank for organizing and leading our Conversation Circles that helped our League develop a plan, the LWV of New York for agreeing to help our two Leagues carry it out through a very generous grant, and the LWV Oneonta Area

Peg Odell, who has headed up the Communications Committee for the past year, Sydney Sheehan, who served as Membership Chair, and Lynne Mebust, who was our Annual Meeting organizer are leaving the board. The League can only work when we have leaders. We appreciate the time they gave to our League.



*Liane Hirabayashi & Patty MacLeish*

*Liane Hirabayashi & Patty MacLeish*

## Annual Meeting, April 20, 2022! We're Getting Together in Person!

The League of Women Voters of the Cooperstown Area will hold its annual meeting on Wednesday, April 20, at 6 pm at the Community Room at the Clark Sports Center. A potluck dinner will be followed by our business meeting as well as a review of the past year's activities and our plans for the upcoming year.

Plan to bring your own beverage and place setting and a dish to share. Members with last names beginning A-I should bring a main dish; J-P, a salad; and Q-Z a dessert. Please also bring a copy of the annual report, mailed with this issue of Update, or download it from our website.

We look forward to being together once again and seeing all of you in person.

## Love Your Oneonta League On April 26

When the LWV of the Oneonta Area approached the LWV Cooperstown last year to consider merging the two Leagues, our board was lukewarm to the idea. On the one hand, if the LWVO were to disband, Otsego County would suffer without an active League presence in Oneonta. On the other hand, some felt that the two Leagues served different audiences. What to do? As you may recall, last fall we held a series of Conversation Circles, ably led by Tom Pullyblank, to consider our League's future and what a possible merger might mean. About three dozen members participated and the conclusion was that perhaps there is another answer. The LWV Cooperstown formed a committee—Maureen Murray, Stephanie Bauer and Roz Thomas—to consider solutions. Before long, the LWV of New York State was on board and LWV Oneonta members and local citizens were stepping up. The result was Love Your Oneonta League, a plan whereby our League would help the Oneonta League rebuild and revitalize. LWWNYS provided a \$1,000 grant and our LYOL committee with its Oneonta counterparts planned a recruitment event. A few weeks ago, the committee sent our membership a short video about the plan. (If you missed it, please go to our web page and check it out.)

On April 21 from 7-9 at the Atrium at the Foothills Center in Oneonta the LWV Oneonta and the LWV of Cooperstown will host an informational meeting and member recruitment event for LWV Oneonta. Meg Kennedy, vice chair of the Otsego County board of Representatives, and Adrienne Martini, county representative for District 12, will discuss how they decided to run for office and how individuals can improve democracy at the local level. "We hope Cooperstown members will attend and help serve as recruiters for the League—greeting people and explaining why they are in League," Maureen says. "We are going to need help from our membership if this project is going to succeed. Coming to the event is an easy and fun way to start."

Your presence will be an important first step to making this project a success. The committee will be looking for members to help in other ways, too. Short term, they are looking for people to volunteer to make treats for the gathering. Long term, LWV Cooperstown members will be needed to mentor new members of the Oneonta League. Read more on our web page.

Two different communities, two vital Leagues—it's what Otsego County and our local governments need. There's more information on our website or contact Maureen at [LYOL@LWVCooperstownArea.org](mailto:LYOL@LWVCooperstownArea.org).

## Election Administration Reform in New York State Consensus

Do you know how elections are administered in New York State? Election administration, that is how elections are carried out and who carries them out, has been prominent in the news since the 2020 election. But what happens in New York State? The LWWNY has been considering the issue and has prepared a study guide for members. On April 26, at 7:00 pm the LWWNY will host a Zoom consensus meeting on the topic. The meeting is open to all members whose Leagues are not holding their own consensus meetings or those who cannot attend their local League meetings. The LWV of Cooperstown is hoping to hold its own meeting on election administration that same night, but because we wanted as many of our members to experience this important concurrence, we want you to know that you may participate via Zoom from home. Alternatively, you may come to the Clark Sports Center where we will gather as a group to watch the LWWNY's Zoom meeting presentation together and then hold our consensus meeting. We are awaiting final confirmation from a guest facilitator to help us through the consensus questions.

Please arrive at 6:45 so we will be all set to go when the meeting starts. We ask that you RSVP if you are planning to attend ([newsletter@LWVCooperstownArea.org](mailto:newsletter@LWVCooperstownArea.org)) so we can contact you if there are any last minute changes. If you which to participate from home, you will also have to register in advance with the State League. (See box at right.)

### Make a Difference: Become Part of the Solution on Election Administration in NY State

**What:** LWWNY's consensus on Election Administration

**When:** April 26, 7 pm.

**Where:** You choose—Zoom at home or join other League members at the Clark Sports Center Community Room to watch the presentation together.

**How:** register online at <https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZcrf-uGrrjlvGdEGPa3nKgrBcBP2Ap141VW0n>

**Prepare:** Read the article on this page and then visit the LWWNY website for the complete Study Guide.

Concurrence and consensus meetings are an important part of the League experience. This issue of how elections in the U.S. are managed has been a national concern since the 2020 election. The League wants to make certain it has a position in place to support or oppose legislation that might be introduced in Albany. What is decided at this meeting and at League meetings throughout the state will lead to the development of an updated League position on this issue.

The subject is fascinating. Consider this: As of February 2022, there are 12,982,819 registered voters in New York State. The Democratic Party accounts for 6,472,096 of registered voters. The next largest group with 2,984,900 voters are those who mark “no party” on their registration forms. Republicans make up 2,848,894 of registered voters, followed by the Working Families party (162,988) and “Other” (49,253). (Those who mark “Other” are allowed to write in a party affiliation on their registration forms.) Why then, you might ask, are elections administered by appointees of the two “major” parties? Why are election administrators answerable only to their parties?

You will need to prepare a little if you want to participate fully. The materials for the study are available at the LWVNY website (<https://lwwny.org/league-studies/#election>) and we have included below the proposed new positions. We will be deciding that evening whether or not we agree with the statements found below also on the question of whether incarcerated individuals should have the right to vote. The full study guide provides background and an explanation of these proposed positions. Remember, the material may seem a little dense, but you aren't expected to be an expert on the topic; you just need to be introduced to it.

### **Study Guide Election Administration Reform Proposed Position**

The League of Women Voters of New York State believes that a more accountable, transparent, and professional state election administration would improve voter access and confidence in our elections. We believe that achieving these goals will require changes to the state constitution.

#### **I. State Election Administration**

- The League believes that New York State should create the position of chief election official in charge of election administration. This position could be combined with that of the Secretary of State or be a new statewide elected position with a fixed term. Any candidate for this office should not have been an elected official or a party official for some time prior to their election and could not run for any other elected office or party position during the term of office or for some time after the term ends. Ideally, the position should be nonpartisan.
- The chief election official should establish uniform statewide rules on voter registration, election administration and ballot access under state election law, and serve as an oversight authority to safeguard compliance of local election officials with these rules. The office should administer the statewide voter registration database, assist local election officials by providing training, and oversee the process of testing and certifying voting equipment.
- The chief election official should ensure accountability and transparency in state and local election operations by holding scheduled open meetings, maintaining accuracy and timeliness in election results reporting, and directing local election officials to hold public meetings and maintain correct and up-to-date public information on local election office websites and social media.

#### **II. Local Election Administration**

- The League believes that local elections should be administered by a local election official appointed by the local elected governing body with a fixed term of office and removable for cause by either the appointing body or the chief state election official. This local election official should not have been a state or local elected official or party official for some time prior to their appointment. Appointment of the local election official should be done through a public merit-based process and the position should have standardized annual training requirements.
- There should be staffing and salary standards for employees of the local election office which include the local election official as a full-time employee. Adequate state funding should be provided to counties to hire and train professional staff. All vacancies should be publicly advertised and hiring should be merit based. All election administration staff should have standardized annual training requirements.

#### **III. Local and State Boards**

- The League of Women Voters believes that a bipartisan or multi-party state Board could provide certification of state election results and possibly other functions. Appointments to the Board could be made by the Governor alone or in combination with the legislative leaders, and/or the legislature, in a transparent and public process. The chief state election official could remove members of the Board for cause.
- The League believes that a bipartisan or multi-party local Board could be established to provide certification of local election results and possibly other functions such as qualifying voters. Appointments to the Board could be made by the local election official in a transparent and public process, subject to approval of local elected governing body. The local election official could remove members of the Board for cause. Members could also be removed by the state chief election official for cause.

## Thank You, Liane

Leadership is what sustains organizations. A group may have many enthusiastic members who believe in the work of the cause, but without leaders, nothing can be accomplished. Our League has been fortunate these past tumultuous years to have had the advantage of a good leader— Liane Hirabayashi. Liane was co-president with Julie Sorensen when Covid began in March 2020. In the early, tense days of the pandemic the work of the League seemed less important than the threat to the lives of our friends, families, and neighbors, but we knew our work had to continue. After all, our country was in the midst of its decennial census and a presidential election was in full swing.

Thank goodness our League had Liane to show us the way forward. She had the experience and skills that we needed to continue our work. She understood Zoom and held our (the League's, that is) hand while we stepped into that new world of virtual meetings and virtual candidates' forums, a world which now is so commonplace.

Liane is also a valuable member of the board of the Friends of the Village Library. Following the murder of George Floyd and the nation's questioning of racism, the Friends conceived a series, "Looking in the Mirror: Cooperstown Confronts Racism." She immediately recognized the link between the League's goal of improving its outreach to diverse groups and "Looking in the Mirror." She connected the dots and suggested we co-sponsor the program.

We all looked on proudly when last May on a rainy Sunday at the Otsego County she participated in the Otsego Rally for Solidarity with Asian Americans, relating the history of her family fate during the Japanese Internment during World War II. Speaking that day she said, "...be a good citizen and stand up for what you believe in. In the face of manifest injustice, silence is compliance."\*

Without her foresight and her certainty for our success, we would have faced those difficult years with tentativeness. Her leadership brought us success in difficult times. Although she is leaving her role as co-president, we are pleased that she will continue her leadership through as part of the Love Your Oneonta League project. With Liane's involvement, we know it, too, will be a success.

Patty MacLeish

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### Officers & Board of Directors 2022-2023

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