

# Update

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS<sup>®</sup>  
OF THE COOPERSTOWN AREA

September 2023

*From Your Co-Presidents*

## A Busy Fall Ahead. Can We Count on You?

**W**hew! Did the summer months go by fast or what? Your board managed to disregard all the temptations of summer in Cooperstown and have been busy—busy and productive—throughout the past few months.

We started out in June when both of us, along with Cristina Bourgeois, were delegates to the biennial LWVNY convention. LWVCA member Stephanie Bauer, team leader of the “Love Your Oneonta League” project, attended as the LWV Oneonta delegate. It’s been many years since LWVVO has sent a delegate to convention, and its presence at convention is only one indication of the progress being made in revitalizing that League. Our League and Oneonta shared the Lighting the Way Award for the Love Your Oneonta League project!

All four of us were inspired by the work of the Leagues from around the State. We were apprised of some of the issues that the LWVNY is addressing this year, particularly the work around the NYS Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).

We’ve had some changes to our Board. Hudi Podolsky, who was elected to the Board in April and has been a member of LWVCA since 2018, will chair the Voters Service Committee. Tom Pullyblank, who has served on the board since 2018, is departing the Board to focus on the Reducing Polarization Project. (Read more on page 2.)

With the coming of Fall, we’re entering the League’s busiest season. Just take a look at our calendar below. We will be hosting “Welcome Home Cooperstown,” a monthly gathering

to greet newcomers to our community. Later in the month are National the Voter Registration Day and Mohawk Valley Gives. On October 7, the League will be at the Cooperstown Rotary Fall Fling, registering voters and distributing voting information.

Although no date has been set, we do anticipate holding candidates’ debates for town and county elections. Check your emails for details about these events and please respond to emails inviting you to participate in this worthy work.

These are only some of the opportunities in the League that await your participation. Why not dive in and get your feet wet? There’s much to do, and we need you. Time commitments are generally flexible—give us an hour or take a deeper dive into League work. But please consider sharing your time and talents with the League. Specific details about upcoming projects and events are found in the articles throughout this Update.

*Maureen*

*Kristin*

Maureen Murray & Kristin Pullyblank, Co-presidents



Local delegates to the LWVNY 2023 Convention—Stephanie Bauer, LWVVO team leader; Kristin Pullyblank, co-president, LWVCA; and Christina Bourgeois, LWVCA Natural Resources Chair. LWVCA co-president, Maureen Murray, also a delegate, took the photo.

### Coming Up

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|----------------|--|
| Sept. 5        | Welcome Home Cooperstown. The League is hosting this monthly welcome event from 5:30-7 at the Cooperstown Village Hall.            |
| Sept. 6        | LWV Cooperstown Board Meeting, 5:30.   |
| Sept. 13       | Training for National Voter Registration Day, 25 Lake St., Cooperstown, 2 pm.  |
| Sept. 19       | National Voter Registration Day. See page 3.   |
| Sept. 20       | Mohawk Valley Gives. Make your pledge to the LWV of the Cooperstown Area.  |
| Oct. 5         | Reducing Polarization Conversation Circle Session 1, 6-8 pm, Oneonta First Presbyterian Church, 381 Main St., Oneonta. See page 2. |
| Oct. 7         | Rotary Fall Fling at the Clark Sports Center.  |
| Oct. 19        | Reducing Polarization Conversation Circle Session 2, 6-8 pm.   |
| Oct. 28        | Last Day to Register to vote.  |
| Oct. 28-Nov. 5 | Early Voting Days.   |

## Be Part of Mohawk Valley Gives

**O**n September 20, 2023, thanks to the efforts of the Community Foundation of Otsego County, non-profits in the county, including the LWV of the Cooperstown Area, will be participating in Mohawk Valley Gives 2023. This 24-hour community-wide giving day will benefit non-profit organizations serving the region. The Day of Giving will be promoted throughout the area; the public (that’s you!) will be encouraged to visit the Mohawk Valley Gives website ([www.givemv.org](http://www.givemv.org)) and choose which local non-profits to support. Put League of Women Voters in the “search” box and make your donation. You know how important the League is to our community, and with Mohawk Valley Gives, you will help our League carry out our important work like candidates’ debates, voter registration drives, and VOTE411.



# Can We Talk? Join Our Conversations on Political Polarization

Polarization remains one of the most intractable problems in American political life. Whether Democrat or Republican, conservative or progressive, Americans seem to be more insulated than ever from people with whom we disagree.

For the next year, up to and through the 2024 general election, the LWV Cooperstown and the LWV Oneonta are joining together to encourage citizens to engage in a series of “circle conversations” specifically designed to bring the community together and end this isolation.

“Circle conversations are designed to bring people together to listen to one another,” says League member Tom Pullyblank, a mediator, pastor, and former instructor at SUNY Oneonta who is facilitating the conversations. “Circle conversations are not debates and certainly not arguments, both of which are all too common in today’s political climate.”

Initially, in October and November this year, participants will gather for a structured series of discussions based on readings, lectures and other media. The initiative to reduce polarization will resume in late winter/early spring of 2024, with film screenings and discussions, follow-up conversations after the presidential debates, and more targeted circle conversations addressing themes in national, state, and local politics.

“Many people across the political spectrum are asking, ‘What can be done? How can we reduce polarization in the nation, in our communities and in our families?’ One answer,” Pullyblank adds, “is to listen to each other, to hear and, possibly, accept the beliefs and feelings of people who are different from us. At the very least, circle conversations give us a chance to practice living with those with whom we disagree.”

All members of the community are welcome to participate. The four Fall sessions will be held on October 5 and 19 and November 2 and 16 from 6-8 pm at the Oneonta First Presbyterian Church, 381 Main Street, Oneonta.

The first session will focus on “Media” and the second topic is “Money”; the last two sessions will explore the interplay between Democrats and Republicans. Participants will be given a list of readings and recordings to prepare for each session. The League is actively seeking people from every spectrum of the community—conservatives, moderates, progressives—to join the conversation. To register, or if you have any questions, please contact Tom Pullyblank at [lwvcircle@gmail.com](mailto:lwvcircle@gmail.com).

**“At the very least, circle conversations give us a chance to practice living with those with whom we disagree.”**

## LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS<sup>®</sup> OF THE ONEONTA AREA

Stephanie Bauer, Team Leader for the LWV Oneonta, was in Albany in June for the LWVNY State Convention to accept two awards on behalf of the LWV of Oneonta. LWVO was honored with the Audrey Price Memorial Membership



Oneonta’s Mayor Mark Drnek stopped by the LWVO’s table at the city’s Welcome Home Event. Stephanie Bauer (in cap) looks on as LWVO member Zach McKinney asks the Mayor questions from the citizenship test.

Award for outstanding membership growth in small leagues. Since April, membership has grown from a low of 2 in 2022 to a healthy 24 members. The Oneonta League also shared the Lighting the Way Award with the LWV of Cooperstown for their joint efforts in revitalizing the Oneonta League with the Love Your Oneonta League project.

On August 12, a number of Oneonta members participated in Oneonta’s Welcome Home Block Party. Mayor Mark Drnek was among the first to visit the League’s table. All told, about 50 people (including longtime members Lucille Wigans and Paul Conroy) came to the League table to learn about League membership, the upcoming elections, recycling, VOTE411, and the Reducing Polarization series that is beginning in October. Helping at the event were League members Janet Sutta, Bette Wagner, Sarah Peterson, Zach McKinney, Jeri Wachter, and Joe Stillman.

On September 19, LWVO will be participating in the National Voter Registration Day at SUNY Oneonta. Volunteers are needed from noon to 6 to help register SUNY students, staff, and faculty.

### Dues Are Due!

A friendly reminder that the LWVO’s membership renewal campaign is underway now. A copy of the dues notice is enclosed. Please return it as soon as possible.

The League in Oneonta is once again an important force in our community. Let’s not lose our momentum! Thanks!

Stephanie Bauer, Team Leader, LWV Oneonta

# Will You Be Set for the Voting Booth on Election Day?

Are you registered to vote? Are you sure? Have you changed your name or moved since the last time you voted? Do you want to change your party designation? Has someone in your household reached voting age? Are you sure you're ready for election day? No worries, National Voter Registration Day is coming up on Tuesday, September 19, and the LWV of Cooperstown is joining other organizations like the NBA, the American Library Association, Rock the Vote, and many more from across the country who will work to make sure that every voter is ready for Election Day, November 7, 2023.

The League will have voter registration tables at the Village Library of Cooperstown, the Grand Union in Hartwick Seminary, and the Cherry Valley Bookstore (81 Alden Street) from noon to 6. League members will be on hand to answer

## 2023 Voters Guide

The LWVNY Voters Guide for 2023 Part I is chock full of information about the ins and outs of voting in NY State. Voter Guide Part II outlines the issues on the ballot. We will be distributing the Voters Guides throughout the area before the general election in November. The guide is also available on the LWVNY website; click on the Voting 2023 link (<https://lwvny.org/>).



## We Need You to Help Defend Democracy in Our Community

You can make a difference in our democracy. Give the League one afternoon and you will be on your way to making democracy work here in our community. Help the League register voters and learn about the issues in the upcoming elections. We need people for a variety of jobs from disseminating information about the elections to planning and assisting in candidates' forums. First, join the Voters Service Committee and learn about the many opportunities. Some jobs require just a few hours of your time and others are more involved (although we think you'll find the work is so important that you may want to be more involved). Here's how you can help:

- Join the Voters Service Committee and help plan strategies for candidates' forums, VOTE411, and tableing events.
- Volunteer to help at candidates' debates. Some tasks are simple (greeters and timekeepers) and others require more training. You pick the level of commitment, and we'll provide the training.
- Put your computer skills to use by helping with VOTE411. VOTE411 is the League's electronic voters guide used by voters throughout the state.

Contact Hudi Podolsky ([hudi.podolsky@gmail.com](mailto:hudi.podolsky@gmail.com)) or LWVO team leader Stephanie Bauer ([stephanie.bauer93@gmail.com](mailto:stephanie.bauer93@gmail.com)) and let them know you want to help make democracy work.

questions and assist with forms. The LWV Oneonta will be registering students at the SUNY Oneonta and Hartwick College campuses. If you can't make these events, visit [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org), the League of Women Voters one-stop shop for voters.

The first step in being ready to vote is, of course, being registered to vote, and voter registration is the primary focus of National Voter Registration Day. However, the League also feels that September 19 serves another important purpose for all citizens, even those who are registered—it's a reminder to make sure you are good-to-go on election day. Think of it as an annual check-up on your voting status. Go to [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org). Chose whether you want to register or verify your voting information, answer a few questions and you're on your way.

No matter how or when you register, be sure to complete your registration in time for Election Day, Tuesday, November 7. Here are the important deadlines:

- **Online registration:** 10 days before Election Day—October 28
- **Register by mail:** forms must be received by October 28, 10 days before Election Day. Please allow time for mailing or deliver your form to the County Board of Elections (140 County Hwy 33, Cooperstown).
- **In-person registration:** 10 days before Election Day, October 28. Register in-person at the County Board of Elections (140 County Hwy 33, Cooperstown).



In its 2022 and 2023 sessions, the New York State Legislature approved amending the state constitution to assure equal rights for all New York citizens. Having the amendment approved in two consecutive sessions means that the Equal Rights amendment will be on the ballot in 2024.

The current state constitution is wholly inadequate when it comes to ensuring equality. It fails to prevent discrimination based on a person's ethnicity, national origin, disability, age, and sex — including sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy and pregnancy outcomes, and reproductive health care and autonomy.

This discrimination affects the lives and well being of many citizens in our community. An amendment to the constitution assuring equal rights for all citizens will be on the ballot in 2024. Can you help spread the word? We need members from the LWV Cooperstown Area and the LWV Oneonta to work in support of passage of this amendment. Can you step up? We'd welcome someone who would take a leadership role from each League, but if "worker bee" is the level of your commitment, we would like to hear from you, too. Contact Maureen Murray 607-547-2853; [coopmurray@msn.com](mailto:coopmurray@msn.com).

## Help Wanted

We need you! Whether you want to become actively involved in the League or only have a few hours to spare once a month or twice a year, there's a job for you in the League. Here are some of our needs:

### Register Voters

- National Voter Registration Day, September 19. We need volunteers to register voters from noon to 6 at the Cherry Valley Bookstore and Grand Union.
- We're planning other Get Out the Vote events all through the fall, including the Rotary Fall Fling on October 7.
- Attend a voter registration training session on September 13 at 2 pm at Martha Membrino's house, 25 Lake Street. Contact Hudi Podolsky (hudi.podolsky@gmail.com), if you plan to attend.

### Want to learn a new skill or share a skill?

- Help maintain our website. Some computer skills are necessary, but it's easy to learn. Contact Patty MacLeish, pmacleish@verizon.net.
- Do you like photography? Are you an expert in environmental issues? Can you design flyers and pamphlets? If you have a talent you would like to share, let us know. Contact membership chair Deb Dalton (ddalton@stny.rr.com), and she will put you in touch with the right person to get you started.

## Leagues Sponsor Students' Albany Trip



LWVCA's Students Inside Albany 2023 Delegates Olivia Lowenguth (l) and Maeve Robinson (r) with Senator Peter Oberacker (51st District) and LWV Oneonta's Delegate Zachary Grygiel at the Capitol.

Photo courtesy Senator Peter Oberacker

### Officers & Board of Directors 2022-2023

#### Board Members

**Treasurer:** Susan Newman, suchasshn@gmail.com; 607-435-6460

**Secretary:** Laura Wetzell, ltanswetz@gmail.com, 847-650-9235

**Voters Service:** Hudi Podolsky, hudi.podolsky@gmail.com

**Membership:** Deb Dalton: ddalton@stny.rr.com, 607-437-5761

**Environment/Natural Resources:** Christina Bourgeois: retiredcb2019@gmail.com; 607-544-4072

**Newsletter/Communications:** Patty MacLeish, pmacleish@verizon.net; 401-835-0162

**Youth Programs:** September Schecter, sann8042@gmail.com; 443-974-2403

**Co-presidents:** Maureen Murray, 607-547-2853; coopmurray@msn.com and Kristin Pullyblank, 607-437-7526; kpullyblank@gmail.com

#### Off-Board:

**Students Inside Albany:** Maria Kaltenbach: margirlic@yahoo.com; 315-525-5410

#### Reducing Polarization Project:

Tom Pullyblank: tompullyblank@gmail.com; 607-282-2183

**LWV Oneonta Team Leader:** Stephanie Bauer:

stephanie.bauer93@gmail.com; 607-376-1822

Contact: Newsletter@LWVCooperstownArea.org;

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www.LWVCooperstownArea.org