

FY 2023 ANNUAL REPORT AND PLAN FOR FY 2024-2025

Contents

1. LWVSCDE Annual Report – FY 2022-2023	2
Report from the Executive Board	2
FY2023 Program Plan and Accomplishments.....	2
Membership Committee FY2023 Annual Report.....	3
Social Policy Committee FY2023 Annual Report.....	4
Voter Services Committee FY2023 Annual Report.....	5
Website/Social Media FY 2023 Annual Report	7
2. Plan and Program for FY 2024-2025.....	8
Board and Committee Members for FY 2024-2025	8
Approved Budget for FY2024-2025	9
Approved Program for FY2024	10

1. LWVSCDE ANNUAL REPORT – FY 2022-2023

Report from the Executive Board

Submitted by **Martha Rothenberg, Secretary, LWVSCDE**

LWVSCDE held its June 2022 annual meeting in the shadow of COVID, and with gaps in Board leadership. Operating as a coalition, the Board bravely persevered, making the most of limited resources, continuing to build membership, meeting or exceeding many of our FY2023 program goals, embracing new opportunities, and basically keeping the lights on.

We also exhausted several of our most seasoned directors but have engaged new talent and energy for the coming 2-year term and the 2024 election year that looms large. Kudos to everyone who gave their dedication, vision, time, sweat, and tears (no blood) to help us get here. In particular, thanks to the FY 2022-2023 Board.

Executive Board:

- Pat Petchel, Treasurer
- Martha Rothenberg, Secretary

Board Directors:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ▪ Janet Ambrose, Chair, Social Policy Committee | ▪ Pat Newcomb, Membership Committee Co-Chair |
| ▪ Sue Claire Harper, Director At Large | ▪ Judy Parkins, Voter Services Committee Co-Chair |
| ▪ Marge LaFond, Director At Large | ▪ Rain Tyler, Webmaster |
| ▪ Jane Lord, Press Liaison | ▪ Jan Willis, Membership Committee Co-Chair |

FY2023 Program Plan and Accomplishments

The reports from each of our committees provide details into activities aimed at accomplishing the objectives of our program plan. Following is a brief summary of the work.

Item 1: Support the 2022-2024 LWVUS “Campaign for Making Democracy Work.”

Public Education on Social Issues: Janet Ambrose announced in May that she will be stepping down from her role as Chair of the Social Policy Committee. We are searching for a replacement. Working allies such as the American Association of University Women (AAUW) and the Southern Delaware Alliance for Racial Justice (SDARJ), committee members educated the public on health care access and availability, affordable housing/homelessness, early childhood education, parole/probation system reforms, ending debtors’ prison, racial injustice, and white supremacy.

2023 Youth Voter Services Project: We obtained a \$500 grant from LWVUS to enhance our Youth Voter Services, targeting three schools in underserved western Sussex for a pilot project: Laurel, Seaford, and Woodbridge. This grant opportunity spurred us to develop new ideas that energized Voter Services, strengthened our partnership with DelTech, and gave us new ways to reach out to Western Sussex.

2022 Candidate Forums: Lisa Welle Malone contacted candidates in six Sussex County races to set up candidate forums. Lisa coordinated a well-received forum between RD20 candidates Stell Parker Selby and Dallas Wingate, moderated by Janet Ambrose. The forum was a model of respectful, and well-informed exchange between candidates in opposing parties, who found some common ground and demonstrated the ability to disagree without demonizing one another.

Candidate Forum Education Project: Lisa encountered some unexpected challenges coordinating the Candidate Forums. This inspired her to develop a plan to educate Sussex’s political entities on the

League's critical role in the electoral process and the importance of VOTE411 program as a tool to serve those running for office as well as the voting public.

Item 2: Build and Strengthen Our League

2.a Grow Membership to Pre-COVID Strength — and Keep Growing.

2b. Reach Out to Diverse Groups for Potential New Members and Synergies.

2c. Encourage members to participate by helping them fit their talents, interests, and availability to the work to be done.

At the end of January 2020 – six weeks before lockdown – total LWVSCDE membership was 137. Membership dipped significantly during lockdown but has been rebuilding steadily, and as of the end of May 2023, total membership is up to 132. We have restarted our Fun Lunches, alternating with evening Happy Hours to encourage members with jobs to participate.

We continue to explore ways to expand LWVSCDE diversity, both in our membership and in the populations we strive to reach. In 2022 we had a table at the Lewes Juneteenth celebration and Hispanic Heritage Day in Milton. **Ida Rowe** has taken on the responsibility of getting LWVSCDE representation at public events. Under her leadership, our increased visibility is yielding inquiries from prospective members. In the coming year we need a focused effort to identify entry points to diverse communities, such as La Esperanza, the Haitian Coalition, the Nanticoke tribe, and the Southern Delaware Alliance for Racial Justice. We need also consider other aspects of diversity, including age and ability, as well as economic and cultural.

2d. Focus on action — what needs doing *now*.

2e. Develop a strategic direction — Five-year horizon and beyond.

2f. Develop and sustain League leadership through practical experience and mentoring.

In FY2023, we made partial progress against these objectives, but much remains to be done. We've done a good job of focusing on the present and have begun our work to rebuild the League as it stood before COVID. But in FY2024, we need to redouble our efforts in those areas and incorporate them into an overarching Strategic Plan. In the early months of FY2024, the League will meet again to define a comprehensive programmatic approach that defines and directs our work at the strategic, tactical, and operational levels. We continue to find new reservoirs of energy, purpose, and enthusiasm; as we enter a new fiscal year and face the major challenges of the 2024 elections, we need that fuel more than ever.

This is a reminder to all our members: When it comes to making change in the world, there's no "them." There's just us.

Membership Committee FY2023 Annual Report
Submitted by Pat Newcomb and Jan Willis, Co-Chairs

LWV of Sussex County, Delaware, projects to end our FY2023 Program Year with 132 Active Members. This puts us only 6 members short of our high of 138 in 2019.

Over the past 12 months (since 7/1/2022) we have welcomed the following 28 **NEW** members:

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| ▪ Catherine Balsley | ▪ Tom Irvine* |
| ▪ Toni Barrett | ▪ Maureen Keeney |
| ▪ Dianna Benaknin | ▪ Jacqueline Lawson |
| ▪ Jacqueline Brisco | ▪ Denise Mueller |
| ▪ Katy Burke | ▪ Angela Pierce |

- Christine Cary
- Samantha Coveleski
- Kathy Dickman
- Mary Douglas
- Lisa Drotter
- Shirley Edwards
- Jennifer Gant
- Susan Goudy
- Diana and Javid Hakakian
- Gaile Poggi
- Jean Rial
- Laura Riese
- Theresa Simon
- Georgette Stafford
- Chris Noonan Sturm
- Susan Ward
- Marjorie Wuestner

*joined 6/25 but not counted in FY2022

Many of our new members have jumped into active roles in the work of the League, particularly in the areas of high school voter registration, voter education (including VOTE411.org), and issue education and advocacy. Also, as our Voter Services and issue advocacy activities return to more in-person encounters, we are happy to report an uptick in member renewals and, more importantly, committee involvement. The work of the League takes many forms.

With the help of both new and experienced members, we are completing a revised version of our new member orientation called “League 101;” this will be followed by “League 102,” which describes how the League develops policy positions at the State and Local levels. During the coming 12 months, we also will focus on using the wealth of our current members’ expertise through a dedicated mentor/member network project.

Finally, as pandemic concerns continued to ease, we returned to offering monthly social gatherings: Fun Lunches and Happy Hours. Social events continue to be one of the most effective ways to get newer members involved and engaged in the work of the League.

Social Policy Committee FY2023 Annual Report **Submitted by Janet Ambrose, Co-Chair**

Sixteen League members have been engaged in the activities of the Social Policy Committee this year, and five committee meetings were held. Members participating on this committee were *Janet Ambrose and Susan Donges, Co-chairs, as well as Dianna Benaknin, Christine Cary, Penny Deiner, Kathy Dickman, Zita Dresner, Lynda Dunham, Cristi Gillean, Sue Claire Harper, Marge LaFond, Jane Lord, Judy Mellen, Ida Rowe, Vicky Sessoms, Carol Somers, Chris Sturm, and Carmel Walters.*

The group studied the following topics:

- Health Care Access and Availability
- Affordable Housing/Homelessness
- Early Childhood Education
- Parole/Probation System Reforms
- Fines/Fees: Ending Debtors’ Prison
- Racial Injustice/White Supremacy Issues

Activities the group members engaged in included the following:

- Presentation to the committee by Nancy Kassner about the Campaign to End Debtors’ Prison in Delaware.

- Invited presentation by AAUW featuring Madeleine Bayard of RODEL on Early Childhood issues and needs in Delaware.
- Invitation to members for participation in Town Hall on parole/probation reform measures, sponsored by SDARJ.
- Updates on legislative activities regarding education reforms by Penny Deiner, LWVDE Advocacy Corps member and Cristi Gillean
- Updates on measures to address homelessness, including the initiation of a pallet village for transitional housing of the homeless in Georgetown.
- Initiation of research on how health care needs are addressed in Sussex County by current providers.

We invite all LWVSC members to join this group in addressing the many pressing issues of Social Policy impacting our community.

Voter Services Committee FY2023 Annual Report Submitted by Judy Parkins, Chair

Voter Services Subcommittees	Chair	Co-Chair
Candidate Forum	Lisa Malone	Vacant
Civics Training	Pending	
Constitution Day	Michele Warch	Vacant
GOTV	Vacant	Vacant
High School Registration	Lynette Brown	Joan Flaherty
National Voter Registration Day	Michele Warch	Vacant
Underserved Communities	Vacant	Vacant
VOTE411	Judy Parkins	Vacant

A big THANK YOU to the Voter Services volunteers who made all of this happen. We couldn't do it without you, and we are so grateful for your time and commitment to free and fair elections. *Emily Blair, Lyn Brown, Maria Cordonnier, Penny Diener, Lynda Durham, Joan Flaherty, Ann Freeman, Christi Gillian, Mary Lee Jenkins, Rosalind Johnson, Connie Jones, Beth Kopicki, Denise Mueller, Jeannie Rial, Martha Rothenberg, Ida Rowe, Dinah Sapunarich, Chris Noonan Sturm, Carol Villa, Carmel Walters, and Michele Warch.*

We began the year with a look at the LWVDE 2023 Priorities:

- VOTE411 and school board elections
- 2024 election preparation, including:
 - ♦ promoting early voting
 - ♦ improving access for voters with disabilities
 - ♦ encouraging young voters to vote
 - ♦ providing voting access for incarcerated yet eligible to vote (especially those in pre-trial status)
- Vote by mail / no-excuse absentee voting
- Same-day registration
- Support open primaries
- Support ranked-choice voting.

VOTE411: We were successful with VOTE411 in the September 2022 primary with 13 candidates and, in the November general election with 27 candidates:

- **Sussex, State Senate — 88% response:** 8 candidates running in 3 competitive races with 7 candidates responding. One candidate did not respond.
- **Sussex, State House — 75% response:** 12 candidates in 5 competitive races with 9 responding. Two candidates did not respond.
- **Sussex, Local — 88% response:** 8 candidates running in 3 competitive races with 7 candidates responding. One candidate did not respond.

We also made calls for the May 2023 School Board election. In 2022 the VOTE411 website had 18,513 users and 17,454 new users. Only 0.43% of visitors left the site after visiting one page. We made significant gains in getting VOTE411 information to youth voters during 2023 High School Registration Drives with the 2023 Youth Voter Registration Grant, at a 2022 Candidate Forum, and at several festivals and events. State Board member Jane Lord posted an excellent letter to the *Coastal Point* editor on the School Board Elections.

Candidate Forums: Chair Lisa Malone organized several Candidate Forums only to have all but one cancel in November 2022. The Candidate Forum for House Representative District 20 was well attended and expertly run. The Board approved Lisa’s proposal for *Candidate Forum Presentation 101* to be presented to local political parties in Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 to encourage participation in candidate forums, improve understanding of why the League sponsors forums, and encourage new membership in the League.

Voter Registration: Co-Chairs Lyn Brown and Joan Flaherty held voter registration training in April 2023. The presentation was recorded and is available for use throughout the year for subsequent training of new members. Ten Voter Registration Bags were prepared for our voter registration events, giving each volunteer all the information and supplies needed to have a successful event. We used printed QR codes so students could access and complete surveys on their concerns and requested that each high school include the code in the final student newsletter. Nine high schools participated in events held in April, May, and June: Cape Henlopen, Indian River, Laurel Senior, Milford Senior, Seaford, Sussex Academy, Sussex Technical, and Woodbridge. As of this report, 71 students completed the survey, 63 registered to vote, and 108 requested GOTV information. A final report will be presented in June.

2023 Youth Voter Services Project: We obtained a \$500 grant from LWVUS to build out our Youth Voter Services, targeting three schools in underserved western Sussex for a pilot project: Laurel, Seaford, and Woodbridge. Partnering with DelTech’s Human Services program, we are creating a social media campaign comprising a group of short videos for YouTube, Facebook/Instagram, and TikTok. The campaign promotes VOTE411 and uses the tagline “Unmute Yourself!” to encourage young voters to use their power. We have created VOTE411 posters using the “Unmute Yourself!” slogan. We printed new VOTE411 business cards and “I Registered” VOTE411 stickers. We created a poster comparing voting turnout of people under 25 with those 65 and older, with the tagline “Who do you want deciding your future?” We also have a new poster with the LWV nonpartisanship statement writ large; we will be pushing this info throughout the next 2 years. We have new purple wristbands with the VOTE411 logo and the “Unmute Yourself!” slogan. We have built online surveys for each school to encourage people to let us know what issues they are most concerned about. The surveys can be accessed using a QRC displayed on a table easel. And we are presenting Beth Kopicki’s “Why Vote?” presentation at social studies classes in our target schools; so far, we’ve hit three classes at Seaford HS and are scheduled for two more at Laurel.

We would love to have you join us in any capacity. Reach out to Sue Clair Harper, Membership, or Judy Parkins, Voter Services for details. League participation is rewarding and results-driven. **Volunteering**

is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in. (*source: Dr. Syed Muhammad Zeeshan Hussain Almashhadi*)

Website/Social Media FY 2023 Annual Report **Submitted by Rain Tyler, Webmaster**

I have served as webmaster for the League of Women Voters of Sussex County for the past six years. It has been a learning experience, particularly as I worked on the transition to the current MyLO platform during my first year. The website has served us well over the years as we use it to communicate the accomplishments of our members who are educating the public on voting, legislation, environmental concerns, and social policy issues. Through the website, we attempt to keep our membership informed about upcoming League events and community events of interest to League members. Similarly, we utilize social media, mainly Facebook, but sometimes Twitter and Instagram, to spread the word.

Our website is public and can be viewed by anyone. This is important because we provide up-to-date voter information for the public on the website. Additionally, we want people to be able to view our site on the internet and learn about the LWV. We have one page that is private, the Members Only page for which you must log-in to view. It contains a member roster, board member contact information, a link to the advocacy corps legislation list, board minutes, etc.

I update the website regularly in an attempt to keep the information it provides current. Revisions are frequent. During the past year, 34 articles were posted on the website, 33 League events, and 36 community events. We now can promote articles that appear on the LWVDE and LWVUS websites to our front page. We also had 109 posts on Facebook, some reaching over 150 people.

Check out the website. If you are new, there is information about the League on the “About” page. Learn about our policies and positions on issues. Read about our mission and our diversity-equity-inclusion policy. I encourage everyone, new and old, to view the front page regularly for the latest events and articles. Stay on top of what your league is up to!

I think it is time for fresh eyes to take over the Website and our social media accounts. Someone who will bring a new and different perspective. Someone to eventually move us onto the next platform in the coming years. If you are interested in getting involved with the website, let Martha or I know. I will be happy to mentor anyone who would like to become a webmaster. You don’t need website experience. You just need to like to spend time on the computer, enjoy writing and editing, like messing with graphics, and love learning new things. In the meantime, I will continue to post articles, events, etc. to the current website.

2. PLAN AND PROGRAM FOR FY 2024-2025

Per the LWVSCDE Bylaws, members gather each year to adopt a local Program and plan goals for the upcoming year and how to achieve those goals. In odd-numbered years, we vote on a new slate of Board members, who are identified by a Nominating Committee. We also elect a new Nominating Committee to identify Board candidates for the subsequent 2-year term.

Board and Committee Members for FY 2024-2025

At the June 12, 2023, meeting, membership elected the following Board Officers and Directors, as well as the Nominating Committee for the coming 2-year term:

Board Officers

- President: Martha Rothenberg
- Secretary: Annie Freeman
- Treasurer: Pat Petchel

Additional Directors

- Sue Claire Harper: Chair, Membership Committee
- Jack Young: Chair, Observer Corps
- Judy Parkins: Chair, Voter Services Committee
- Chelsea Wootten: Chair, Communications / Technology
- Jane Lord: Press Liaison
- Samantha (Sam) Coveleski, Webmaster / Technology Director [Proposed; to be approved at July 10, 2023, Board meeting]

Nominating Committee

- Chair: Sue Claire Harper
- Member: Shari Frankfurt
- Member: Vicki Sessoms

Jack Young has stepped up to Chair our Observer Corps, helping to reinvigorate this crucial committee. Through impartial observation and reporting, the Corps educates Sussex County citizens and provides transparency into government activities—essential elements in empowering voters and defending democracy.

We are also restructuring our Communications Committee to encompass both internal and external communications and supporting technology. Chelsea Wootten, brings experience in marketing to the role of Chair.

Note that we do not have a Vice President. In addition, we are lacking a Chair for the Social Policy Committee and a Webmaster, who are traditionally named as Directors. These vacancies can all be filled by a vote by the seated Board in the coming term.

Approved Budget for FY2024-2025
Prepared by Patricia Petchel, Treasurer

Statement of Financial Condition

Table 1 shows our situation for the end of May 2023 and for comparison's sake the end of May 2022. We are down around \$1,000 from this time last year. Donations were down a bit this this past year, which may account for some of the drop, and there was also a slight drop in membership. Luckily, our membership numbers are starting to move up again and that will help. **Table 2** shows the status of our restricted grant from LWVUS.

Table 1. Statement of Financial Condition, 5/31/2023

Assets	5/31/2023	5/31/2022
Current Assets		
WSFS Checking	\$12,614.71	\$13,866.90
Accounts Receivable		
WSFS Savings	\$1,505.23	\$1,503.72
Education Fund		
TOTAL ASSETS	\$14,119.94	\$15,370.62
Liabilities & Net Assets		
Current Liabilities		
Accounts Payable	\$5.00	\$0.00
Total Current Liabilities	\$5.00	\$0.00
Board Restricted Net Assets		\$15,370.62
Grant/Donation Restricted Net Assets	\$103.61	\$15,370.62
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$14,011.33	\$15,370.62
Total Net Assets	\$14,114.94	\$15,370.62
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$14,119.94	\$15,370.62

Table 2. Status of Restricted Grants and Donations, 5/31/2023

Restricted Grants and Donations	Beg Bal	May Beg Bal	Monthly Activity	May End Bal
Youth Voter Registration Project	\$375.00	\$103.61	\$0.00	\$103.61
Totals		\$103.61	\$0.00	\$103.61

Projected Revenues, Expenses, and Net Income (Losses)

Table 3 shows the assumptions about member dues that we used to make the budget projections in **Table 4**. We assume that the Per Member Payment (PMP) of dues remains at \$60 and that the PMPs we make to the US League remain at \$32 and to the state at \$11.00. Note that our local chapter retains only \$17 per member. Therefore, it takes the payments of approximately 140 members to cover our local league's basic operating costs. As of the end of May 2023 we had 132 members. We covered the remainder of operating expenses with funds received from donations and unrestricted net assets. So, we greatly appreciate your donations. If your budget doesn't allow for any monetary donations, the donation of your time is also welcome.

Table 3. Allocation of Member Dues among Local, State and US Leagues

How PMP is Allocated to LWVUS, LWVDE, and LWVSCDE	
PMP Paid to LWVSCDE	\$60
Paid to LWVUS	\$32
Paid to LWVDE	\$11
Amount Retained by LWVSCDE	\$17

Table 4: Projected Budgets, FY 2023 through FY 2025

Budget Projections	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
Projected Revenue	\$9,300.00	\$9,585.00	\$9,940.00
Projected Expenses	\$9,515.00	\$9,806.00	\$9,940.00
Projected Income (Loss)	(\$215.00)	(\$221.00)	(\$449.50)
N.B. Revenue Projections based on the current Per Member Payment (PMP) of \$60.00 and some donations and grants Expense Projections based upon assumptions of unchanged PMPs			

Approved Program for FY2024

Our local program is derived from the LWVUS and LWVDE Programs, but reflects the following conditions unique to Sussex:

- All politics is local: LWVSCDE serves Sussex County. Our work must reflect Sussex issues and values, while remaining consistent with the Principles of the LWV of the US.
- The 2024 election looms large.
- We are still rebuilding; we need to set priorities and leverage limited resources.

We selected what we deem the top-priority program issues from LWVUS and LWVDE, based on these considerations.

LWVUS Program Issues

- **Nonpartisanship:** LWV is Proud to be Nonpartisan. We do not support or oppose candidates or political parties at any level of government. We work on vital issues of concern to our members and the public. We envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge, and the confidence to participate.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI):** In 2020, LWVUS elevated DEI to equal importance with Nonpartisanship. The LWVUS DEI “Lens” asks us to look at how our programs, activities, or products are perceived by the variety of communities and perspectives that reside in Sussex, and what barriers might prevent us from being equitable or inclusive to everyone. It asks us to consider: Who is involved in the process? Who will be impacted? What are the intended and unintended outcomes? Does this align with our vision for an equitable and inclusive organization? What changes could be made to make this more equitable?

LWVDE Program Issues

- **Citizen’s Right to Vote:** Protect the right of all citizens to vote. Encourage all citizens to vote.
- **Voter Representation / Electoral Systems:** Support electoral systems at each level of government that encourage participation, are verifiable and auditable, and enhance representation for all voters.

LWVSCDE Program Issues

- **Build** on the foundation laid down by our Voter Services, Social Policy, Membership, Observer Corps, and Communications Committees.
- **Rebuild** the Observer Corps, an essential service to Sussex legislators and citizens.
- **Revitalize** the Communications Committee, coordinating essential technology such as website and social media support.
- **Strengthen** and promote the League’s legacy and value as a historically nonpartisan organization.
- **Deepen** our understanding of Sussex issues and our advocacy for Sussex residents.
- **Educate** Sussex voters on Election 2024 and the use of VOTE411.
- **Educate** candidates and parties on the value of VOTE411 questionnaires and neutral, nonpartisan forums.
- **Get Out the Vote (GOTV)** vigorously!
- *Develop and engage LWVSCDE Membership, ever mindful of our commitment to DEI.*