

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF BROOKHAVEN

# THE VOTER

MAY 2020

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**PRESIDENT'S -PAGE**—One of the messages from the NYS League is asking us to urge our local and federal governments to take whatever steps are necessary to protect our ability to vote. Our League has been working on informing the public about changes in the voting system before us. Our article in the *Times Beacon Record*, printed April 30, spells out the steps taken by Governor Cuomo to make voting easier during the pandemic (see page 4). We were pleased that the article was printed by the Suffolk County Women's Bar and distributed to all its members. Bellport.com (our local online newspaper, which is now printing an update on the corona virus situation every day) printed the article, and then went to the LWV website and printed its information about the change of date for town and local elections to September 15. But there have been changes since that article was written, and printed. The presidential primary was cancelled at the request of the NYS Board of Elections Commission., partly because of the health concern and partly because Biden was the only candidate still in the running. When it was challenged, U. S. District Court Judge Analisa Torres ruled that the presidential primary must take place on June 23. She judged that there was enough time to make sure it could be carried out safely, and that all the qualifying candidates should have the right to garner delegates who could influence the party platform, vote on party governance issues, pressure the eventual nominee on matters of personnel or policy, and react to unexpected developments at the Convention. The Board of Elections has entered an appeal, so we don't know yet whether the primary will include the presidential candidates or just those for state and congressional positions.

Our Annual Meeting, which has always been held at the end of June, will have to be held with some form of virtual meeting. We will be sending out information later this month (Annual Report, Nominating Committee Report, Treasurer's Report) and will be considering what other ways we might be able to communicate. The Nominating Committee is looking for a new treasurer, due to our loss of Sue Kinsey, and would welcome new Board members (would you be interested? let me know) The Board of the Suffolk LWV would also welcome new board members (could be a one-year appointment). It would be great to have one or two members from Brookhaven.

**A LOSS FOR THE COMMUNITY—GEORGE REHN**

George Rehn, a certified public accountant from East Setauket, and a longtime supporter of the League, passed away earlier this month. Dan Berger of the Rotary Club said, about George, "He spoke truth, was fair to all, sought to build goodwill and tried to benefit all in what he did." George did the books for many many nonprofits, was a leader of Rotary for many years, and was helpful to many community organizations, especially in the Three Villages but throughout the town. Many people will miss him.

*ALL OUR THANKS TO THESE VOLUNTEERS WHO REGISTERED AND  
INFORMED VOTERS*

*AND REPRESENTED OUR LEAGUE AT LIBRARIES, COLLEGES,  
SCHOOLS, OR BROOKHAVEN TOWN EVENTS*

*AND SPECIAL THANKS TO JUDI AND MARILYN AND LINDA  
WHO ORGANIZED IT*

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Janet Sklar

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# Making Democracy Work: Voting Changes for June 23 Primaries

Printed in Times Beacon Record April 30

By Nancy Marr

Because of New York State's identity as the current U.S. "Epicenter" of the COVID-19 pandemic, Gov. Andrew Cuomo on March 7 issued Executive Order 2020, declaring a State disaster for the State of New York, which gives him the power to modify any statute, local law, ordinance, order, rule or regulation if necessary to assist or aid in coping with such disaster.

An Executive Order, issued on April 24, requires that every voter who is in active or inactive status and is eligible to vote in the primary elections on June 23 shall be sent an absentee ballot application with a postage paid return option.

Earlier, Gov. Cuomo had announced that he was cancelling the April 28 presidential primary and postponing it to June 23. Then on April 27 the NYS Board of Elections (BOE) canceled the June 23 presidential primary amid pandemic concerns, which means that Bernie Sanders will not appear on the ballot in the state and Joe Biden, the presumptive nominee, will get all the 274 pledged delegates.

Gov. Cuomo had added a provision to the state budget earlier this month that allowed the BOE to remove candidates from the ballot if they had dropped out of the race; if Biden were the only nominee left, the BOE could then cancel the election.

The election on June 23, 2020, thus will combine the state and congressional primaries (the special elections that were scheduled for June 23 will be postponed to the General Election on Nov. 3, 2020). In order to vote in a primary, you must have registered in the party holding the election by Feb. 14, 2020. To be sure that you are registered in a party, visit [www.voterlookup.elections.ny.gov](http://www.voterlookup.elections.ny.gov). To find out which primary candidates will be on your ballot, check [www.Vote411.org](http://www.Vote411.org).

Be sure to exercise your right to vote. When you receive the absentee ballot application (mailed if you are eligible to vote on June 23), complete it, checking the box for "temporary illness or disability," and return it in the postage paid envelope provided.

If you do not receive the application, and believe you are eligible to vote in the election, contact the BOE, but you can also obtain an application from your local post office, or go to the BOE website <https://suffolkcountyny.gov/Departments/BOE> to find an application that you can complete, copy, and return by mail or email. (The Governor has waived the requirement for a signature for this election.)

When the ballots are finalized, one will be mailed to each voter who has returned an application and is eligible to vote in a primary on June 23. Your completed ballot must be returned in the envelope provided no later than the close of polls on June 23 or postmarked no later than the day before the election.

Regarding future mail-in voting by absentee ballot: The New York State Legislature during the 2019 session passed legislation to remove the specific conditions needed for an absentee ballot. This no-excuse absentee ballot would make it easier to vote. Since it would be a constitutional change, however, it must be passed again by the next legislative session, and then submitted to the electorate in a referendum in 2021. If it passes, it will make permanent the no-excuse absentee ballot that Gov. Cuomo has provided temporarily.

Separately, State Senator Biaggi and Assemblymember Jacobson introduced a bill this year to amend the election law to define "illness" as "the spread or potential spread of any communicable disease, at a time of declaration of a state of emergency ..." This is still in committee, but, if passed, would make it possible to vote by absentee ballot in all elections held in the future during a state of emergency. Stay safe; make your voice heard.

## WILL WE BE RUNNING OUT OF WATER?

Water quality is an ongoing concern of League members. Water quantity, however, is also a concern. Watch the PBS series “H2O, The Molecule that Made Us.” The series reaches back in time to find traces of the beginning of water. Earth is alive because of liquid water and the success of our human story is intimately connected to our relationship with this simple molecule. But the growth of our civilizations and industrial agriculture is threatening a precious resource that may be about to run out. It is shown in three segments—Pulse, Civilizations, and Crisis. Its third segment discusses how science is being deployed to find solutions to the problem. All three segments can now be watched on the PBS website. Another great television program is “Spy in the Wild,” where figures made to look like animals are placed in wild settings and photograph what is there with the cameras hidden in them. The episodes are shown at 8 pm on Wednesdays on Channel 13, with the final one on May 20, but as with H2O, go to the PBS to watch them on your computer. (It sounds uncomfortable but it does work). (Both of these can be seen at various times on Channel 21 and Channel 132 as well.)

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## FINDING YOUR BALLOT ON VOTE411.ORG

The League of Women Voters Education Fund developed [VOTE411.org](https://www.vote411.org) which provides election information for each state. VOTE411 is committed to ensuring voters have the information they need to successfully participate in every election. Whether it's local, state or federal, every election is important to ensuring our laws and policies reflect the values and beliefs of our communities.

By entering your address (no names needed) you will find a personalized guide to all races and candidates on your ballot. Candidates are provided space to answer several issue-based questions developed by the League. Their answers are published as they submit them.

Members of the League of Women Voters throughout Suffolk County have devoted many hours to ensure that all races are listed, and contacted every certified candidate to encourage and facilitate their participation in the listings.

Even if candidates did not choose to reply, their names and party lines are listed on the ballot.

LWV plans to have VOTE411 info live for primaries and the general election in 2020. PLEASE NOTE THAT VOTE411 goes live about 6-8 weeks before an election, depending on the Board of Elections certification of candidates. It is not yet installed for Suffolk County but will be completed on May 15 for the June 23 primary.

Use <https://www.vote411.org> in 2020!

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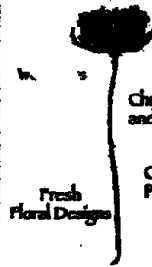
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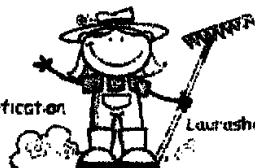
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## MAY EVENTS

Write to your congressman to urge the Federal Government to be sure that our elections are safe and available to all voters, if necessary by absentee ballot.

Stay at home, relax, read, garden, walk, bike, cook and eat. And stay safe.