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INSIDE THE LEAGUE

From the Co-Presidents

As we approach the June primary season, we are committed to increasing civic participation in New York City. We are expanding our outreach during this year of local elections, building new partnerships across the five boroughs, sharing civic engagement information with schools and community organizations, and ensuring that all New Yorkers have their voices heard. We ask you to help us make a difference by *re-engaging*—as a volunteer, an active member of the League, a participant on our Issue Committees, and a voice for your community. **Visit our new website** to discover more about our activities, share your ideas of civic engagement, and help create a positive impact on our city. Join our mailing list to receive our Weekly Digest and learn about specific opportunities to become involved.



Civic Engagement Commission (CEC) Participatory Budgeting Launch in the Bronx: Danielle Mowry, LWVNYC PB Coordinator, Deb Brodheim, Drashti Brahmbhatt, PB Project Management Director at CEC, and Kai Rosenthal

This spring let's renew our commitment to local democracy and work together to make NYC a better place for all. We hope to see you in the community and especially at the polls.

Kai Rosenthal
president@lwnyc.org

Deborah Brodheim
co-president@lwnyc.org

What Can We Do About Low Voter Turnout?

A Conversation with Jaime Anno of the Campaign Finance Board

By Diane Burrows, LWVNYC Board Director

Voter registration in New York City is consistently at about 90%, but as we all know, voter turnout, especially for local elections, is dismal. During a conversation with Jaime Anno of The Campaign Finance Board, she highlighted several important stumbling blocks to voting based on the voter analysis report of 2020.

Her research revealed that one of the lowest voter turnout groups are the unaffiliated voters. These voters choose not to be a member of any political party, therefore no candidates contact them. They receive no mailings, emails, or phone calls from candidates, so they are often unaware of the candidates, issues, or even the elections themselves. They do receive information from NYC Votes and the Board of Elections, however. LWVNYC targets these voters with our postcard campaigns, but we need to further address this issue.

New voters and new citizens confront the same issue. Since they have never voted before, the candidates do not reach out to them. One possible way to address this concern is to connect with citizenship classes across the city to provide voter education and engagement for these new voters.

Jaime Anno also discovered that long commutes to work negatively impact voter turnout. We can address this by advocating for "Early Voting Centers" so voters can vote anywhere in the city. It is possible that the new "Wrong Church" Law, which ensures the counting of ballots cast by qualified voters at incorrect polling places but in the correct county, might improve this situation, but Jaime will wait for the data before reaching any conclusions.

2023 Tribute Awards: LWVNYC Honors Women Leaders for Efforts to Encourage New Yorkers to Vote

The League of Women Voters of the City of New York met for a celebratory breakfast on March 16, 2023, and honored three New York women who have made a difference in civic engagement in NYC. The League's Co-Presidents, Kai Rosenthal and Deborah Brodheim, presented the 2023 "Distinguished Service Awards" in front of 150 guests in Manhattan.



Celia Moreno, Social Impact Lead of Lyft, was honored for spearheading work to expand their "LyftUp Voting Access Program," one of many civic engagement initiatives she leads to help strengthen and revitalize New York City communities.

Shirleen Allicot, Co-Anchor of WABC-TV's Eyewitness News this Morning and Eyewitness News at Noon, served

as host of the event and moderated a discussion with the three honorees. Questions from the audience focused on their personal motivations for the promotion of voting and voting rights, being at the forefront of their professions, and the work that they do.

Keia Clarke, Chief Executive Officer of New York Liberty, was honored for elevating women's basketball to new heights and bringing the team and new fans back to NYC after the long pandemic. Her team and staff show passion and enthusiasm on the court and in their initiatives to encourage New Yorkers to vote.

Sarah LaFleur, Founder and CEO of M.M.LaFleur, was honored for demonstrating her passion for New York by opening retail stores during the pandemic while pivoting to create fashion for the changing workplace. M.M.LaFleur initiated innovative programs to empower citizens to vote and encourage candidates to run for public office.

Elizabeth Holtzman also added remarks; using the story of her first election, which she won by 635 votes, as evidence that every vote counts. Ms. Holtzman served in the United States House of Representatives from New York's 16th Congressional district from 1973 to 1981, was the Kings County District Attorney from 1982 to 1989, and the 40th Comptroller of New York City from 1990 to 1993.

[Click here to watch the event on our YouTube Channel.](#)



Kai Rosenthal, Keia Clarke, Sarah LaFleur, Shirleen Allicot, Celia Moreno, and Deb Brodheim at March Tribute Breakfast



[Click here to see more photos from the 2023 Tribute Awards Breakfast.](#)

Where Are They Now?

A group of our Intern-Alumni respond to the question: How has your internship with the LWVNYC enabled you to be civically engaged with your community?

Anjali Joshi-Dave

The internship I was able to take part in during the summer of 2022 with the League of Women Voters of the City of New York helped me build upon my research, teamwork, and marketing skills, and further the experience I have had within civics itself. At The University of Toronto, I am an executive of the Vote from Abroad Club, which helps Americans in Canada vote in American elections. With the skills I have learned through my summer internship, I have been able to improve our club events, club meetings, and outreach strategies. Furthermore, the experience I had as an intern continues to inspire me to work hard to help Americans across my campus vote from Canada. I reminisce fondly upon my time as a LWVNYC intern, and I am grateful to have been able to work with a team that inspires and encourages me.

Gabrielle Mazza

Through my time at the League of Women Voters, I was able to build on skills, including leadership and communication, that I continue to use throughout my college career. Being able to

help my community within New York City with different projects through the League has inspired me to continue to work on projects through campus organizations that connect me with surrounding communities. One such project I am participating in involves sustainability on my campus. This organization focuses on collaboration and connection within the student body to help create engagement for sustainability-related topics on campus.

Lucy Hafitz

My summer internship with the League inspired me to get involved in the civic sphere on campus at the University of Michigan. I worked as a UMICH Votes Fellow this Fall, registering students and Ann Arbor residents for the Midterm Election, promoting political involvement and interaction with our democratic system. I also worked as a pollster on election day, which was an incredibly exciting and meaningful experience. I am grateful to the League and the women I worked with over the summer because they showed me the importance of civic engagement, and I hope to continue to promote the same message to others!

The ABC's of RCV

By Diane Burrows and Laura Quigg, Voter Services Committee

We first used Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) in 2021, during the New York City primary elections. We will use it again for the 2023 City Council primaries.

Ranked Choice Voting offers the opportunity to be strategic and rank up to five candidates who we believe can “do the job” and represent us and our community. Always remember, we are still casting a single vote, but we are ranking our choices.

RCV allows your ballot to “stay on the table” longer. If Candidate B, your first choice does not win enough first-choice votes, they will be eliminated from the ballot. But, because you chose a second-choice candidate, your ballot moves over to their “pile”. Your ballot is still in play!

Ranked Choice Voting helps eliminate “vote splitting”. Vote splitting is when there are two or more candidates on the traditional primary ballot who have very similar platforms and positions, but we can only vote for one of them.

With RCV, when votes are counted, if a candidate receives 50% plus one vote from all voters’ first choices, that candidate wins the election. However, if no candidate earns 50% plus one vote, then the counting continues. The candidate who received the least amount of first-choice votes is eliminated and that candidate’s “pile of ballots” gets distributed to the voters’ second choices. Then the next candidate who has the lowest total votes gets eliminated and their “pile of ballots” gets distributed to the voters’ next choice. The process continues until there are only two candidates left. The winner is the candidate with the most votes at the end of the process.

Obviously, this process takes longer than a traditional election. We need to be patient and allow the process to unfold so everyone’s voice is heard.

For more info, check out the video from NYC Votes:

<https://www.nycvotes.org/how-to-vote/ranked-choice-voting/>

International Women's Day

By Suzanne Surbeck

The many triumphs of women were celebrated on March 8, 2023, with **International Women's Day**. Nowhere have there been more advances for women than in the workplace. Today's workforce is almost 50% women, including the Vice President of the United States.

International Women's Day has been acknowledged since the early 1900s. Fifteen thousand women marched through New York City demanding better pay in 1908. The first International Women's Day was finally celebrated in 1911 after the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire drew attention to working women in the United States. IWD was finally honored by the United Nations in 1975.



How Does the City Council Help Make NYC Run?

By Diane Burrows, LWN NYC Board Director

The City Council exercises legislative power in New York City and has the power to approve or reject the annual budget and all land use decisions. The Council must approve the heads of certain agencies including the Board of Health, Board of Elections, and the Tax Commission. Each Council person must provide assistance to their constituents, including helping them secure city services and providing a platform for residents to express their opinions and concerns. They also interact with the Community Boards that intersect their districts.

There are 51 City Council members in NYC, each representing about 160,000 residents. The City Council elects a Speaker to lead them.

Council members receive funding to maintain an office. Serving as a Council member is a full-time position, and they are not permitted to earn income from any other source.

Council members are elected to a four-year term, except during the years affected by reapportionment following a census, when the terms are two years long. The Council election of 2021 and this coming election of 2023 both entitle members to two-year terms.

You can learn who represents you in the City Council here: mygovnyc.org

You can find out what your council person is doing by checking out their website at: council.nyc.gov

Experiencing Civic Engagement Firsthand: Students Inside Albany

By Sonja Aibel and Joanna Zhu

This week we attended the League's Students Inside Albany (SIA) conference. We were able to learn about how government works, how citizen lobbying can shape public policy, and how we can become more civically involved.

We think that Students Inside Albany is an incredible program that we would highly recommend to our peers. The experience allowed us to meet with students throughout the state who are passionate about learning about the government. We were able to bond and develop lasting friendships. One of the most fascinating aspects of the conference was gaining insight into the inner workings of the capitol. Our interactions with Assembly Members and Senators helped us to realize how willing they are to listen to the voices of their constituents, and that they care about the needs of the people. This experience profoundly shifted our perspectives from perceiving government officials as distant to recognizing their genuine desire to listen and engage with us.

Joanna: My experience with Senator John Liu was amazing as we share many things in common: being Asian, from the same district, and from Bronx Science. I learned about the bill that deals with pushing schools to include Asian American history in the curriculum and I was especially inspired by that and want to be a part of the action.

Sonja: I was able to shadow both of my state representatives and learn about what got them into government. It was fascinating to hear from Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon about her focus on accessibility, and exciting to talk with Senator Zellnor Myrie, a graduate of my high school in Brooklyn. Ultimately, I learned so much about government and how I can civically engage in the future through this experience.



Joanna Zhu and Senator John Liu



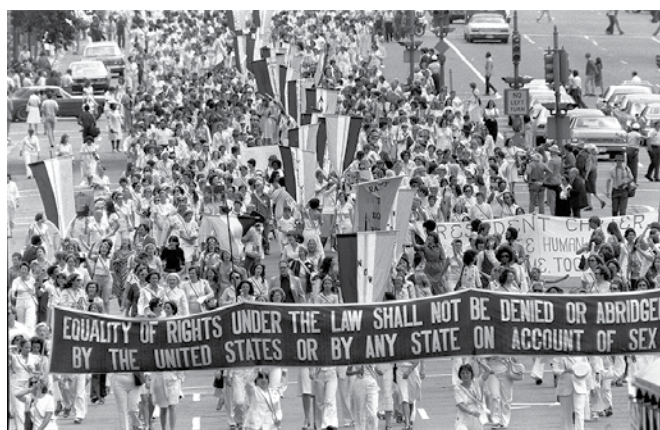
Sonja Aibel and Senator Zellnor Myrie

The On-going Saga of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)

By Deborah McEvilly

According to Wikipedia, the Equal Rights Amendment is a proposed amendment to the United States Constitution designed to guarantee equal legal rights for all American citizens regardless of sex.

That sounds great right? The issue is it has never been passed. The ERA was first introduced in 1923 at the First Woman's Rights Convention in Saratoga Springs, NY and, in the 100 years since, the United States Congress has never had enough votes to pass it.



AP Photo

As a result, women are not making as much as their male co-workers for doing the same jobs, are denied a myriad of other benefits they should have access to, and corporations are delighted to reap the rewards.

The whys of this story are complex—the politics and committee issues that have blocked the passage are countless. Why can't women get this passed? Do we even still need it? What does the road ahead hold for passage?

We at the League of Women Voters of NYC feel this is a story worth considering thoughtfully, so watch these pages in upcoming issues for answers to these and many other questions.



LWVNYC Committee Updates

Please feel free to email the Committees if you're interested in learning more and/or would like to get involved.

THE NEW CITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE!

Susie Gomes and Tavonia Davis, Co-Chairs

cityaffairs@lwnyc.org

Are you interested in what our City Council is doing?
Do you want to be engaged with our City Council?
Do you want to help the League establish a strong connection to the City Council?

We are looking for energized, curious individuals ready to help make a difference and make a connection to the New York City Council. We want to identify key areas of focus based on the City Council agenda and the League's priorities. We want to attend City Council meetings—learn what they are doing and meet committee heads. We want to be a liaison between the Council and the League's committees—help our committees be stronger for the people of New York City.

If you are interested in joining the committee for our next meeting, please email Susie Gomes at cityaffairs@lwnyc.org

PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Joanna Leefer, Chair

programs@lwnyc.org

The League's Program Committee is committed to presenting a series of high-profile speakers for the 2023 *Lunch with the League* series. Each speaker addresses an important social or political issue affecting New Yorkers.

The 2023 lineup includes:

- Manuel Castro, Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA), who addressed the challenges of housing the more than 3.2 million asylum seekers entering New York City. (January)
- Carolyn Maloney, U.S. Representative of New York's 12th Congressional District for 10 years, who spoke about her crusade to develop and pass bills impacting women. This includes the recently passed New York State Equal Rights Amendment. (March, Women's History Month)
- A discussion of the need for more civics education in the classroom to inform students of their rights and duties as U.S. citizens. (April)
- Dr. Cheryl Kunis, internal medicine specialist, warned of the gradual shift of health care providers from person-oriented service to profit-making resources for large corporate equity firms. (May)

The League of Women Voters of NYC programs are scheduled monthly excluding June-August. The committee welcomes suggestions on topics and speakers from League members. Please send suggestions to programs@lwnyc.org.

VOTER SERVICES COMMITTEE

Laura Quigg, Gerry Russo, and Diane Burrows, Co-Chairs

voter.services@lwnyc.org

The Voter Services Committee continues to enhance our partnerships with community organizations around the city. We are working closely with LiveOnNY, colleges, community groups, and libraries around the city to provide access to voter information and education with a focus on underserved communities. We have several events on the calendar leading up to the June Primary and we welcome volunteers to join us at these events. Watch for the emails and sign up. Contact Gerry Russo at voter.services@lwnyc.org

Our Speakers Bureau is on the road!

We are presenting our Civics for Adults programs in person around the city. We have also presented on FaceBook Live. Our most popular presentation is "Civics for Adults", an overview of the three pillars of Civic Engagement: voting, lobbying and advocacy, and community involvement. Our other popular programs include "Voting", a chronological look at the process of voting from registration to how to scan your ballot and use Ranked Choice Voting and "Who Makes NYC Run" which explains the roles and responsibilities of our city elected officials. We welcome volunteers who enjoy public speaking and want to share these presentations around the city. Contact Diane Burrows at speakers@lwnyc.org to join us.



VOTING REFORM COMMITTEE

Bella Wang, Chair

voting.reform@lwnyc.org

The Voting Reform Committee is hard at work reaching out to state legislators to advocate on behalf of the League. This year, we are focusing our outreach on ensuring funding for automatic voter registration, reforming the Board of Elections, restarting the process on same-day voter registration and no-excuse absentee voting, and improving voter access in jails. We are collaborating with the League's Committee on Criminal Justice Reform on our meetings, to be a force multiplier presence in the State Senate and Assembly.

Upcoming Events

Please contact admin@lwnyc.org to confirm meeting dates!
For more information on Committees and Events, please visit www.lwnyc.org

June 12; 6:00pm: LWN NYC Annual Meeting (via Zoom)

June 21; 12:00pm to 2:00pm: Celebrate Founders' Day with LWN NYC!

On Wednesday, **June 21st**, the League is commemorating our Founders' Day with a visit to our founders – via a trolley tour at Woodlawn Cemetery and Conservancy.

Click [HERE](#) for more info and to RSVP.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- City Affairs Committee: check the website calendar for upcoming meetings and subcommittee meetings
- Committee for Criminal Justice Reform: check the website calendar for upcoming meetings and subcommittee meetings
- Education Committee: 2nd Wed. of the month; 5:00–6:30pm
- Voting Reform Initiative Committee: check the website calendar for upcoming meetings
- Voter Services Committee: 3rd Wed. of the month; 6:00–7:30pm

• **DEMOCRACY IS NOT A SPECTATOR SPORT** •

Our new website is now live!

Please visit www.lwnyc.org and join our mailing list to receive our Weekly Digest of League activities, events, and volunteer opportunities!

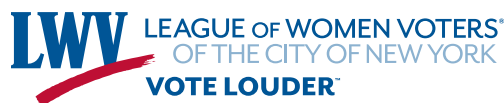
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