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# INSIDE THE LEAGUE

## From the Co-Presidents

### Prepare, Organize, Mobilize

2024 is a pivotal year for the League of Women Voters of NYC as we aim to greatly increase voter turnout and civic participation and engagement. New York City will have two special elections: presidential, state and federal primaries, and a general election with the NY State Equal Rights Amendment on the ballot for passage. New Yorkers will be inundated with election dates, deadlines, and candidate and ballot information, so it's critical that we prepare, organize, and mobilize non-partisan, trusted information and events.

#### We're excited to share some of our key activities which include:

- Voter and Civic Engagement Workshops: Host informative workshops to empower the community with knowledge about the election process and the power of your vote
- Volunteer Expansion: Offer our volunteer network a range of activities, from voter registration drives to targeted Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) efforts in underserved communities
- Academic Collaborations: Instill a sense of civic responsibility and enthusiasm for the democratic process among young people by expanding partnerships with local high schools and colleges
- Technology Integration: Leverage social media and user-friendly online resources to ensure election and voter information are easily accessible to all

Your time, energy, and financial support are critical to ensure that LWWNYC remains an influential force in promoting informed and active citizenship. Our work continues until all New Yorkers are part of the civic process and we've provided them with the reliable resources and information they need to make their voices heard—to **Vote Louder**. As we prepare, organize, and mobilize for the opportunities in 2024, we thank you for your commitment to a vibrant democracy.

Warm regards,

**Kai Rosenthal**  
president@lwnyc.org

**Deborah Brodheim**  
co-president@lwnyc.org

## A Call for Volunteers

By Stacey Lesser, LWWNYC Member

A new and busy year is upon us. 2024 promises to be a year of important decisions in the world of elections, voting, voters, and voter education. With that in mind we're calling upon our members and supporters to join us in the work ahead to help us keep our democracy working. This year there are local and citywide elections as well as State and National Elections—lots to talk to people about.

If you've ever volunteered before or never volunteered but considered it, or never even considered it, this is the moment. If you're wondering, "How can I help?"—here are some of the areas where help is needed:

**Help us register voters:** we'll be post carding, texting, and calling to get out the vote and we need your help.

**Help us educate voters:** we make Civics Education presentations at local high schools, colleges, community-based and corporate organizations and we need you to join our Speakers Bureau to get out the word (*see page 3*).

**Join us in meeting with Elected Officials:** we advocate for issues important to the League and to voters in New York City.

**Join members of the League's Development Committee:** we contact sources of funding to help keep our efforts financed.

Have other ideas? They're welcome! Let us know what's on your mind and let's work together to make it happen.

Finally, if you don't know what to do, give us a call at 212-725-3541 and we'll be happy to chat.

## What exactly does the League of Women Voters Do? — Answering the Call

By Deb Brodheim, LWVNYC Co-President

Federal elections take place on the first Tuesday in November every even-numbered year, and in New York City, municipal elections take place every odd-numbered year. Party primaries and special elections take place in the spring (and sometimes summer) prior. But answering New Yorkers' questions about their government and how to make their voices heard is an all-year-round effort.

During election season, especially when the polls are open, the League's staff and volunteers answer our League phones, logging voter questions and complaints which are compiled and used for testimony to the Board of Elections. But sometimes our fellow New Yorkers simply need a little extra help navigating the process of voter registration.

Recently, one of our volunteers answered a call from an older woman in Harlem who was eager to register to vote, having moved to NYC since the last election. She had called the Board of Elections and was preparing to visit their office in lower Manhattan with copies of her identification. Although it is now possible to change your address by registering to vote through the new Board of Elections E-Register website, she suffers from macular degeneration and finds it difficult to use a computer—we offered to get back to her with some easier options. Upon looking up her address, our volunteer saw that the caller lived 2 short blocks from the Harry Belafonte 115th Street Library and called them to confirm that they had Voter Registration forms on hand, and that the staff were more than happy to assist patrons in completing their forms. With that information in hand, our volunteer called back the eager voter to let her know that she could easily complete her registration at her neighborhood library.



## Portrait of a Legacy: Ruth Cohen

By Stacey Lesser and Laurie Pauker

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank and honor Ruth Cohen for her generous bequest to the League of Women Voters of New York City. Ruth was the epitome of the ideals and values of the League. Born in New York and a lifelong resident, Ruth graduated from Queens College in 1949. Later in life, she went on to get her MS in speech pathology, an MBA from Long Island University, and a PhD in art in 1997.

Supporting organizations that contribute to the betterment of others was central to Ruth. She felt there was much work to be done to repair what was broken in the world and she gave to and held memberships in a wide array of groups—with particular focus on institutions that safeguard the environment, elevate the arts, seek to heal, feed and clothe the hungry and homeless, and in general help those in need. Above all, Ruth cared about organizations that educate and advocate for equality, democracy, and justice.



An avid consumer of news, Ruth cared deeply about what was happening in the world and the policy choices of elected officials. She believed in the importance of voting and an informed electorate, which is why she chose to join and financially support the League of Women Voters of New York. Based on information from LWVNY, she would write to local and state officials on public policy issues that mattered most to her.

Making an indelible mark on this world was critical to Ruth. While she made giving to charity an almost daily occurrence, she wanted to ensure that she could continue to support the organizations and causes that she felt deeply about when she could no longer write those regular checks. And so Ruth incorporated a bequest in her will to the League of Women Voters of New York so their work could go on and, in so doing, so could she.

# Speakers Bureau Gets Louder

By Diane Burrows, Voter & Information Services Committee Co-Chair

The LWVNYC Speakers Bureau is preparing for an active election season. Last year we partnered with colleges, high schools, parent groups, faith organizations, returning citizen organizations, and community groups to share information and engage voters. We are recruiting League members who are confident public speakers to help our outreach to even more than the 50 groups we presented to last year. These presentations are appropriate for high school students and adults. They are all interactive and run approximately 20-30 minutes, including Q&A time. For more information, please contact Diane Burrows at [speakers@lwnyc.org](mailto:speakers@lwnyc.org)

Here are some of the presentations we are prepared to offer any group in NYC this election cycle:

***The Three Pillars of Civic Engagement:*** This presentation discusses the three pillars of civic engagement: Voting, Lobbying and Advocacy, and Community Involvement. The objective of this presentation is to encourage everyone to use their voice to affect change in our own communities; whether the person is eligible to vote or not, we all can be involved.

***Who Makes NYC Run?:*** This presentation explains the roles and responsibilities of all the elected officials here in NYC. The objective of this presentation is to demonstrate how powerful your voice is when you participate and vote locally.

***Creating a Voting Action Plan / How to Be a New New York Voter:*** This presentation walks the participants through the process of voting, arranged chronologically from voter registration all the way through completing the ballot. The objective of this presentation is to demystify the process of voting so it is accessible to all eligible voters. "How to Be a New New York Voter" presents the same information as "Creating a Voting Action Plan" but targets first-time voters.

***The History of Voting and How People Made It Happen:*** This presentation focuses on the hard work of many suffragists throughout history who led the efforts to finally enact the Constitutional amendments that expanded voting rights in the United States. The objective of this presentation is to show that the work is not yet complete, and it will take many more activists to accomplish full enfranchisement.

***Voter Registration Training:*** The purpose of this presentation is to prepare participants to organize their own voter registration drives in their communities and to participate in LWVNYC voter registration events. The objective of this presentation is to communicate that everyone can get involved and successfully manage a voter registration drive.

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## Legacy Gifts: Play a Lasting Part In the Future of Democracy

By Laurie Pauker, Vice President of Development

The League depends on the sustained support of friends like you. As VP of Development, I'm hoping that you'll consider making it part of your legacy.

I have never thought more about the importance of defending democracy and the right to vote than I do now. We are living in uncertain times, and organizations like the League of Women Voters are perhaps more important than they've ever been. So, I am grateful for the League today, and I am immensely grateful for the people who left legacy gifts before me to assure that LWVNYC, now 104 years old, would live to keep the fight going for as long as it needs to.

We all have an opportunity to think about how our estate plans could make a lasting impact on the city, the people, and the causes that we value. With as little as *one sentence* added to your will, you can become the League's partner in defending democracy for years to come.

Gifts of this kind come in all sizes—regardless of the size of your estate. A gift can be in cash, it can be appreciated stock or assets, an insurance policy or real estate. These gifts allow you to streamline the distribution of your property, minimize administrative costs and possibly reduce taxes. And importantly, they help you continue to help an organization that does so much for so many people.

We want to offer any help that you may need as you consider including the League in your estate plans. Please take a moment to guard all that you love by making a will today or letting us know that you've named the League in an existing will.

We are so thankful for your support of the League of Women Voters of the City of New York.

# Development Committee Recap of the 2023 Year-End Appeal and Exciting Initiatives Ahead

By Laurie Pauker, Vice President of Development

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you for contributing to the success of the 2023 Year-End Appeal, making it a historic moment for the League. Your dedication, from writing letters to making phone calls and reaching out to friends, family, and colleagues, played a crucial role in spreading the word about our achievements in 2023 and gearing up for the vital 2024 election cycle. Above all, thank you for your generous contributions to the LWVNYC—your support makes everything we do possible.

Looking ahead, we are thrilled to share some exciting initiatives:

## Business and Politics Panel at EY:

In February, we are focused on a program to introduce the League’s corporate volunteerism services to corporate and social responsibility leaders. Thanks to our Advisory Board Member, Molly John of EY (Ernst & Young LLP), we are proud to co-host a panel discussion on Business and Politics to be held at EY headquarters. This event will feature another Advisory Board member, Kathryn Wylde, CEO of the Partnership for New York City, as moderator for a distinguished panel to include:

- **John D. Hallmark**, Political & Legislative Leader at EY; financial regulation services expert
- **Jeffery C. Mays**, Metro desk reporter for politics at *The New York Times*

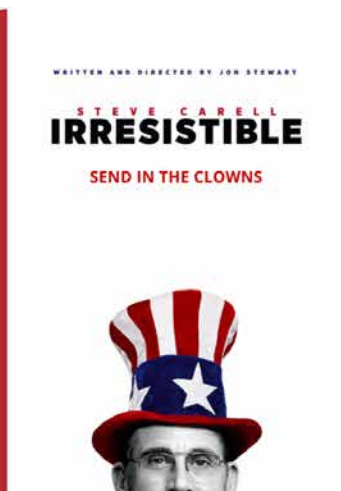
- **Marissa Shorenstein**, Chief External Affairs for BSE Global; communications and government affairs expert
- **Howard Wolfson**, Education Lead at Bloomberg Philanthropies; former presidential campaign advisor and NYC Deputy Mayor

## “Irresistible” Screening on March 27:

In March, we are joining forces with Alamo Drafthouse Cinema and League of Women Voters from Los Angeles, Chicago, and Austin for a groundbreaking event. We will simultaneously screen Jon Stewart’s political satire movie, “**Irresistible**,” targeting Gen Z and millennials. This innovative initiative aims to recruit volunteers to meet the unprecedented demand for League events in 2024.

## Founders’ Day Celebration on June 5:

Save the date for Founders’ Day on June 5, where we will host a special **Founders in History Tour** (alternate name: **Women’s Suffrage in History Tour**) at the New York Public Library’s 42nd Street flagship location. Led by the League’s own Nina Liebman, this exclusive tour will showcase rarely seen works, including manuscripts like the second known printing of the Declaration of Independence by Mary Katherine Goddard; a handwritten draft of Mary Wollstonecraft’s “**A Vindication of the Rights of Woman**,” postcards to Susan B. Anthony from US senators concerning the 19th Amendment, and other rare documents.



# The Power of Voting – A Story of Two Elections

By Suzanne Surbeck

There is no act more important than voting. This cornerstone of our democracy has often changed the course of history, for good and bad.

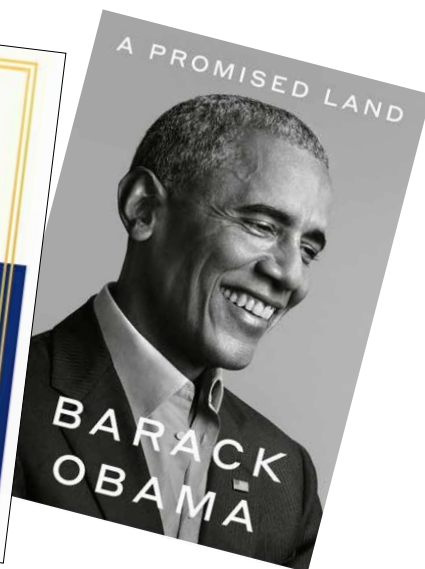
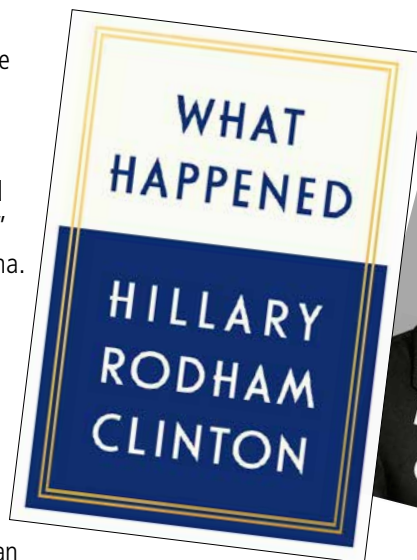
The importance of voting or not voting and the effect it had on them is a theme of two major books, “What Happened” by Hillary Clinton and “A Promised Land” by Barack Obama.

## Hillary Clinton writes about the days after the 2016 campaign:

“Since November, more than two dozen women—of all ages, but mostly in their twenties—had approached me in restaurants, theaters, and stores to apologize for not voting or not doing more to help my campaign. I responded with forced smiles and tight nods. On one occasion, an older woman dragged her adult daughter by the arm to come talk to me and ordered her to apologize for not voting—which she did, head bowed in contrition. I wanted to stare right in her eyes and say, ‘You didn’t vote? How could you not vote?! You abdicated your responsibility as a citizen at the worst possible time! And now you want me to make you feel better?’ Of course, I didn’t say any of that.”

## Barack Obama more happily writes about Election Night 2008:

“...turnout appeared to be shattering records across the country, creating problems in some polling places as voters



waited four to five hours to cast their ballots. Broadcasts from the scenes... showed people more jubilant than frustrated, with seniors in lawn chairs and volunteers passing out refreshments as if they were all at a neighborhood block party.”

How do you want the election to play out? It could be in your hands. **Vote Louder.** And get your friends and family to make their voices heard.



Illustration by Tayra Vionette

# LWVNYC Committee Updates

Please feel free to email the Committees if you're interested in learning more and/or would like to get involved. Visit [lwnyc.org](http://lwnyc.org) for more information about our Committees.

## CITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

By Susie Gomes, Co-Chair

[cityaffairs@lwnyc.org](mailto:cityaffairs@lwnyc.org)

The City Affairs Committee has been busy getting itself up and running these past few months. We have been focused on reviewing the League book **"What Makes New York City Run?"** written by one of our committee members, Adrienne Kivelson. Why the focus on reading and understanding this book? Because it is the key to understanding all that New York City is and does, and who is doing it. Understanding the who and what helps us help our fellow New Yorkers be smarter, savvier, and more engaged with their city officials.

The City Affairs Committee had been inactive, but we felt it was time to reactivate it. Why? The mantra of the LWVNYC is **Vote Louder**. And our core belief is *"your voice is loudest locally."* So, we re-established the Committee to ensure that we were in touch with all the goings on in the city, and to make sure our voices would be raised and heard on those issues that are most important to/aligned to our cause—and who better to do that with than the City Council, which is our city's legislative heart and soul.



To celebrate our committee's commitment to our engagement with this important body, we held an Open House for the newly sworn in 2024 City Council members on Thursday, January 18. It was extremely well received, and we were delighted to have 11 council members join us to discuss their goals for 2024 and how the League can help them help their constituents engage in this important election year.

Stay tuned for follow ups from this Open House. If you'd like to become part of this exciting new committee, reach out to Susie Gomes at [cityaffairs@lwnyc.org](mailto:cityaffairs@lwnyc.org).

## PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Joanna Leefer, Chair

[programs@lwnyc.org](mailto:programs@lwnyc.org)

2024 brings more new and challenging social and legislative events that will impact the lives of New Yorkers. The Program Committee has lined up several expert speakers who will inform us of what to expect. Here is our lineup:



**January 16: Stephen Nessen**, Transportation Reporter for the WNYC Newsroom, WNPR, and the Gothamist Newsletter was the speaker at our January meeting. He discussed what to expect from the new Congestion Pricing legislation and how it could affect us.

**February 20: NYC Comptroller Brad Lander** will discuss his plans for the coming year and some of the major challenges of 2024.

**March 12** is still open. This is **Women's History Month**, and we are looking for a speaker who represents women's progress over the years.

**April 16** is still open. Stay tuned for details.

**May 14: NYC Council President Adrienne E. Adams** will address the League. She will discuss how she rose through the ranks of city politics to become the first black woman to be named Speaker of the NYC Council. She will talk to us on some the programs that will be introduced over the coming months.

Follow our weekly bulletins for up-to-date information on Programs and how to attend.

# LWVNYC Committee Updates

## VOTING REFORM COMMITTEE

By Bella Wang, Chair

[voting.reform@lwnyc.org](mailto:voting.reform@lwnyc.org)

Since last fall, the Voting Reform team has been deeply engaged in our study on the timing of New York City elections, as part of the local program set by the League's membership at our Annual Meeting last summer. Our study has been timely, as Governor Hochul recently signed into law new legislation aligning some local elections in New York State to take place on even, rather than odd years, to coincide with our state and federal elections.

Committee members have been working hard to understand potential pros and cons of the issue, including impact on turnout, electorate, candidate experience, and policy outcomes. Since starting our study, we have heard speakers from good governance groups such as Citizens Union and the Brennan Center, as well as academics such as Professor Sarah Anzia from

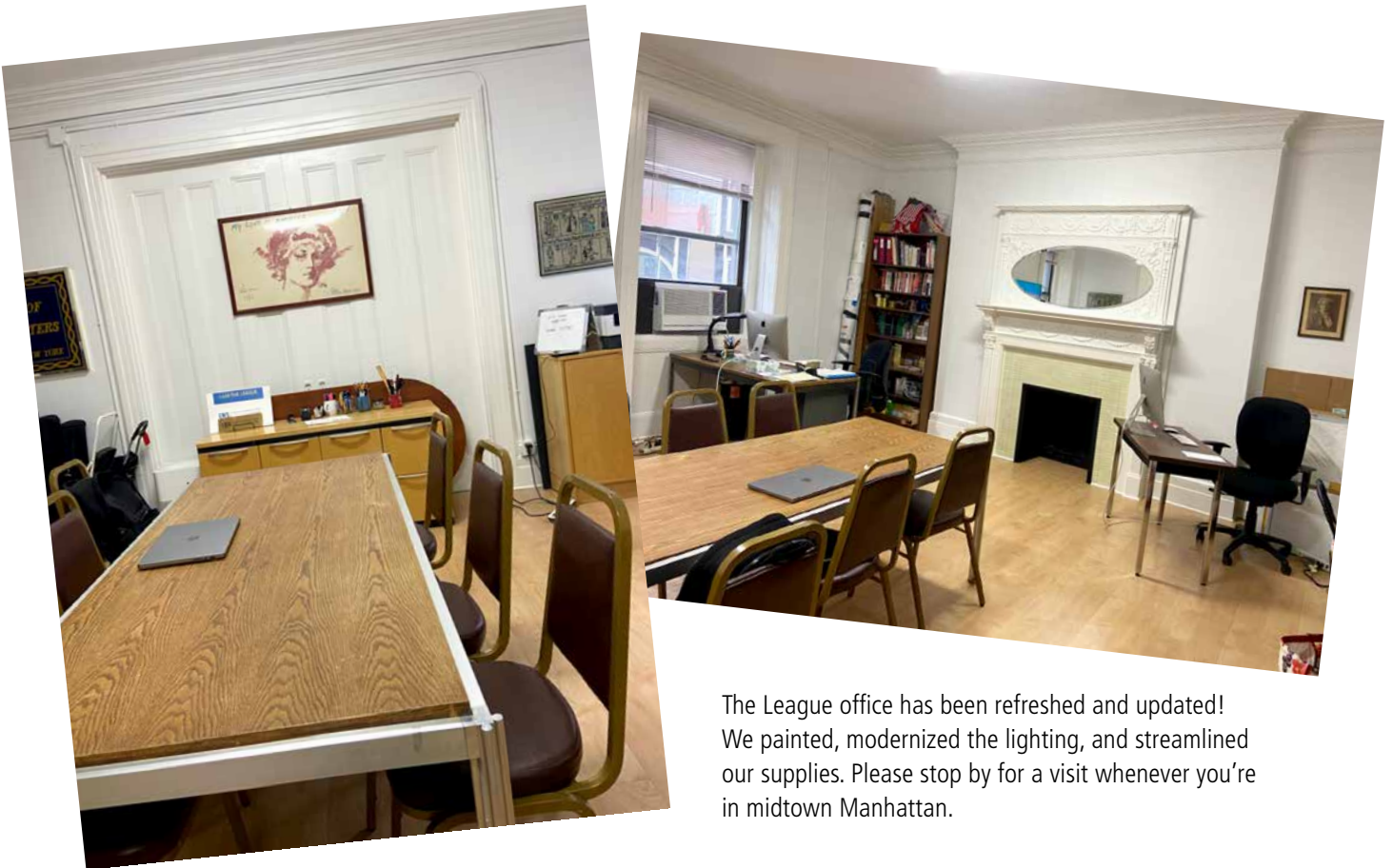
UC Berkeley, who has studied the effects of switching from odd to even years for elections across the country, especially in California. We have also spoken to Leagues from across the country to find out about their experience with making the switch, and if they had ever taken a position on the issue.

We hope to make a recommendation to the League membership about a potential position later this spring, since the new law does not apply to New York City, but future legislation may target a change for city elections.

As we enter into the later stages of our study, the committee will also be engaging in its annual legislative lobbying push! We look forward to advocating for issues such as same-day voter registration, better access to voting in jails, and more transparency in election data.

If you'd like to join us, please contact [voting.reform@lwnyc.org](mailto:voting.reform@lwnyc.org).

## Come See Our Newly Refreshed Office!



The League office has been refreshed and updated! We painted, modernized the lighting, and streamlined our supplies. Please stop by for a visit whenever you're in midtown Manhattan.

# Highlights of the LWVNYC 2023 Impact Report

## CITY-WIDE GRASS-ROOTS OUTREACH THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

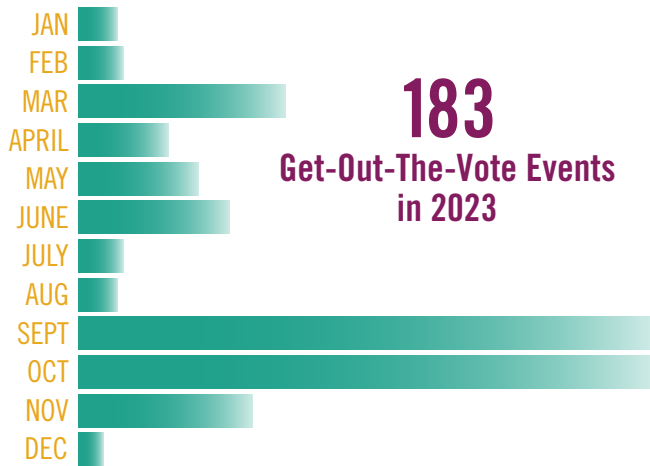
Over 90% of Eligible Voters in New York City are registered.



Only 13% voted in 2023.



The League's focus – *all year long* – is turning registered voters into voters.



**15,000** Reached thru Get-Out-The-Vote Events



**1,231**

Youth reached through League activities in High Schools and Colleges.

The League is also a proud member of the Statewide coalition **Democracy Ready NY Project** – preparing students for civic responsibility.

**2,301**

New Yorkers contributed ideas for **Participatory Budgeting** at workshops, including 43 League-hosted groups. All NYC Residents ages 11+ can develop ideas and vote on how to spend city money. NYC Civic Engagement Commission selected the League to conduct focus groups and outreach in Manhattan.

**496**

New Yorkers attended 25 **League Civics Workshops**

Topics included:

- Building a Voting Plan
- Contacting Elected Officials
- Being Engaged in Community Issues

**225**

Members of the **Returning Citizens Project** – a program for previously incarcerated individuals – attended the League's Civics Workshops.

### EMPOWERED 1,000'S OF NEW YORKERS THROUGH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

**128**

Pages in the League's compact guide to NY City government. **What Makes NYC Run** was used by high school social studies teachers, college government and urban journalism professors, NYC media, legislators, and in the League's Civic Workshops.



# Upcoming Events

Please contact [admin@lwnyc.org](mailto:admin@lwnyc.org) to confirm meeting dates!  
For more information on Events, please visit [www.lwnyc.org](http://www.lwnyc.org)

## COMMITTEE MEETINGS

For information on our committees, visit  
<https://lwnyc.org/our-impact/#issues-committees>

- City Affairs Committee: Contact [cityaffairs@lwnyc.org](mailto:cityaffairs@lwnyc.org)
- Committee for Criminal Justice Reform: Contact [criminaljustice@lwnyc.org](mailto:criminaljustice@lwnyc.org)
- Education Committee: 2nd Wednesday of the month at 5:30.  
Contact [education@lwnyc.org](mailto:education@lwnyc.org) for more information
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee: Contact [dei@lwnyc.org](mailto:dei@lwnyc.org)
- Program Committee: Meets on the first Monday of the month at either 10:30am or 6:00pm to accommodate preferences of committee members.  
Email [programs@lwnyc.org](mailto:programs@lwnyc.org) for more information
- Voter & Information Services Committee: Contact [voting.services@lwnyc.org](mailto:voting.services@lwnyc.org)
- Voting Reform Initiative: Contact [voting.reform@lwnyc.org](mailto:voting.reform@lwnyc.org)

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### Newsletter Staff

Ruth S. Altman  
Susan B. Glattstein  
Stacey Lesser  
Sherletta McCaskill  
Suzanne Surbeck  
Andrea Zuckerman

*Thank you to all of our  
newsletter contributors!*



4 West 43rd Street, Suite 613, New York, NY 10036  
212-725-3541 [admin@lwnyc.org](mailto:admin@lwnyc.org)

