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INSIDE THE LEAGUE

From the Co-Presidents

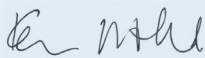
Join A League Issue Committee

While the League is best known for its mission-driven work with elections and voting, we do much more than registering voters and encouraging turnout at election time. Our members and volunteers also work citywide on a diverse range of issues that impact the daily lives of New Yorkers. The League's Issue Committees study, advocate, join coalitions, write memorandums of support, rally and inform on important subjects with the goal of improving New York City.

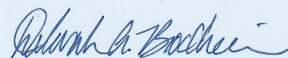
- Criminal Justice Reform Committee helps to implement voting in jails for detainees
- Transportation Committee is working to ensure extra funds be used for transit improvements and not toll rebates
- City Affairs monitors NYC Council Meetings, offers support on positions where LWVNYC and the Council agree, and provides insight to Council staff on how city government runs, to better understand their roles in the political process
- DEI seeks to ensure that League activities represent and empower all voices
- Development works to cultivate our generous supporters and share our mission with like-minded donors and sponsors
- Education Committee addresses such issues as youth civic engagement, media literacy, and artificial intelligence and their effects on NYC students
- Program Committee hosts a monthly talk with an expert on a social or political issue of concern to New Yorkers
- Speakers Bureau offers civics presentations to schools, community-based organizations, and other groups—informing on the importance of voting and other civic subjects
- Voting Reform Committee strives to make voting easier for all and advocates for the League's legislative platform with legislators and other decision makers
And we do register and pre-register hundreds of new voters...
- Voter Services Committee also provides critical election information and encourages New Yorkers to vote through calls, texts, postcards, and handouts

Throughout the year, the League is active and engaged with New York City elections, government, and daily life. We hope that you will join one of our issue committees to help deal with topics that all New Yorkers want addressed.

See you at the next meeting!



Kai Rosenthal
president@lwnyc.org



Deborah Brodheim
co-president@lwnyc.org



Volunteers Needed!

There is so much to be done—voters to register, representatives to visit, helping people learn about their city and how to make their voices heard, rights to fight for, voters to educate. At the League of Women Voters of New York City, we are busy helping people **Vote Louder** and we need your help. Please volunteer to help us. For information contact membership@lwnyc.org

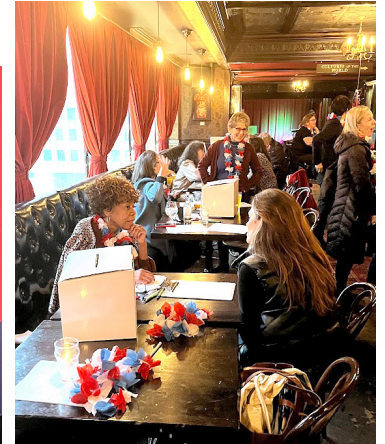
New Volunteers Treated to an Irresistible Evening

By Barb Ettington, LWVNYC Board Director

On March 27th, Leagues across the nation went to the movies. The event, entitled “An Irresistible Evening for Democracy,” was hosted by Alamo Drafthouse in five cities (New York, Austin, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Raleigh), with all League audiences watching “Irresistible,” a political satire produced by Jon Stewart.

While some of the Leagues chose to use this as a fundraising event, the New York City League focused on recruiting new volunteers in Brooklyn. The cost of admission for this event was making a commitment to become a volunteer—plus a small fee of \$10 for the movie and unlimited popcorn. Fifty people attended the evening, and another forty signed up to become volunteers.

Thanks to League volunteer Laurie Pauker for organizing the party—replete with colorful leis, decorations in the bar, and ten outstanding door prizes. And thanks to League volunteers Pat Manning and Sherletta McCaskill for conducting a lively role-playing after the movie to introduce new volunteers to the “art” of tabling in a non-partisan way.



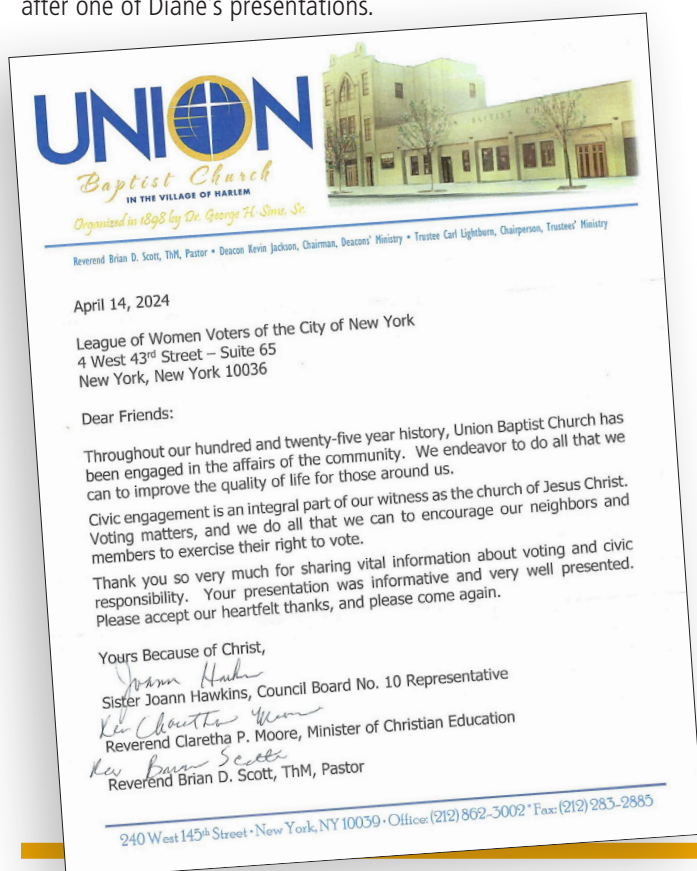
LWVNYC event organizers and volunteers (L to R): Barb Ettington, Kai Rosenthal, Sherletta McCaskill, Laurie Pauker, Pat Manning, Deb Brodheim, and Cathy Gray



The Positive Impact of the Speakers Bureau

The LWN NYC Speakers Bureau, part of the Voter Information & Services Committee and headed by Diane Burrows, has been busy carrying out their mission—partnering with colleges, high schools, parent groups, faith organizations, returning citizen organizations, and community groups to share information and engage voters.

Here is a letter the League received from a grateful partner after one of Diane's presentations.



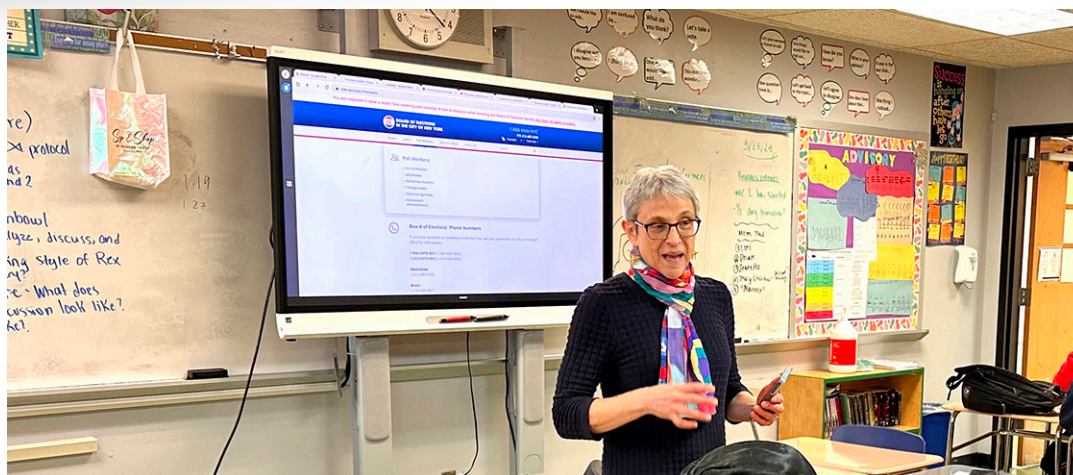
LWN NYC and UBE Partnership Kicks Off Pilot Program

By Roberta Todd, UBE

The Union of Black Episcopalians (UBE) New York Chapter established a committee to create a diocese-wide high school voter registration program. Chapter members were aware that not enough people who are eligible to vote actually vote, and studies have shown that preregistration of youth, prior to their eligibility to vote at 18, has a positive impact on their voting.

Last summer the committee partnered with the League of Women Voters (LWV) for their expertise and sent announcements to over 200 churches and organizations of the diocese. Fifteen churches joined the project from NYC (Manhattan and The Bronx), Westchester County, and Hudson Valley. Diane Burrows, Co-Chair of the LWN NYC Voter Information & Services Committee, guided the committee through the process for contacting schools, and developed a slide deck for a presentation, as well as prepping for the sessions in high schools. Also, she introduced Pat Manning, a LWN NYC board member heading the "Bronx Bombers," to participants from the Bronx.

The most challenging aspect of this project is contacting schools to schedule sessions. A few of our members have joined the Bronx Bombers at high schools, and one church, through a personal contact, conducted sessions at a neighborhood school. Several are finalizing dates with the schools. So far, we have reached over 100 Students. The plan is to conduct sessions through this semester and schedule sessions in the early fall.



Diane Burrows conducting a civics presentation

Celebrate the Start of Our 105th Year with a Founders Day Tour of the New York Public Library



Photo by Susan B. Glattstein

On June 5th at 5:00 pm, the League of Women Voters will celebrate our 105th anniversary with a special journey to the New York Public Library.

Join this special docent-led journey through New York City's iconic 42nd Street Main Branch as we visit the Treasures Exhibit, hear the history of the library, and get an exclusive glimpse at the manuscripts of noted suffragists. Our thanks to Nina Liebman, League Member, for opening up the secrets of the library for us. After the tour, we will all gather at the League's office at 4 West 43rd Street, 6th floor, to raise a toast to 105! Light refreshments will be served.

There is no cost for members and their guests, but RSVP is required. For others, a suggested donation of \$10 is welcome. Register at [Eventbrite](#).

It Takes a Village

By Suzanne Surbeck

This spring is bringing warmer weather, flowers, and numerous organizations to help people participate in democracy. Many are partners with the League, joining together to build a village of civic engagement.

One such organization is the clothing company, M.M.LaFleur. Known for elegant styling for working women, through their



Sarah LaFleur

#ReadytoRun program they loan clothing to women running for office. Sarah LaFleur, the company's founder and CEO, was honored at the League's 2023 Tribute Awards for opening stores during the pandemic, as well as for the organization's commitment to women's participation in the world of politics.

Another prominent partner with the League is the New York Historical Society, which has invited the League to register voters at their monthly *History After Dark* pay-what-you-will evenings. League volunteer Bess Steiger recently covered a Friday evening shift and had this to say:

"The Society had set up our table with a banner for us in a central location," she said. "The people who did pass by and spoke to us were pleased we were there."

"It's a pleasant place to be – it's indoors so weather is not an issue – and you can take advantage of seeing the exhibits."

Regardless of location, the League and its partners are constantly building democracy's village for the people of New York.



Photo by Hubert Steed/PBbase

New Program Gives High School Students a Voice

By David Brooks, LWWNYC Member

The LWWNYC is piloting a Civics Ambassador Program, with the ambition of giving students the tools to inspire their peers to become more civically engaged.

We recently finished our first successful project in this pilot. During Civics Week in NYC, members of the League partnered with David Edelman, Social Studies Teacher at Union Square Academy of Health Sciences (USAHS) in Manhattan, and his students in the Civics Club. The objective was to pre-register and register students to vote. New York is among approximately half the states in the country that allow students to pre-register to vote at age 16 or 17, yet the percentage of students who actually pre-register in NYC is well under 10%.

In partnership with David Edelman, we coached the students on how to promote and manage a successful voter registration drive. The Ambassadors paired off to directly address students in their classrooms, and raised the profile of their drive through social media and presentations they created. The drive was a success—students tripled the number of registrations over prior years.

We have other plans for future Civics Ambassadors, including:

- Managing a student survey to inform us on how to motivate civic engagement
- Collecting pledges to vote on Election Day
- Giving Democracy 101 presentations, training students in the three pillars of civic engagement

Additional schools in the pipeline include Harry Truman High School (Bronx), Sunset Park High School (Brooklyn), and the Bronx Civics Scholars at Hostos Community College (Bronx).

Thanks to Diane Burrows, Pat Manning, and Molly Ford of The Civics Center for their support.

We are currently seeking volunteers to help us bring this exciting program to life. If you'd be interested in participating, please reach out to David Brooks at studentoutreach@lwnyc.org.



David Brooks (far right) and David Edelman (4th from right) with some of the Civics Ambassadors

"I can certainly say that being a part of the League of Women Voters, as a High School student, was an amazing way to reach out to the youth about voting. Moving forward I certainly seek to work with my teachers and classmates at school to help increase the percentage of Pre-Registered voting in New York City."

— Nicolas Reyes, USAHS
Student Participant

"Participating in the program made me feel truly empowered, it helped me not only understand that I have a voice but for the first time I utilized that voice and got people to register to vote."

— Noble Otoo Mensah, USAHS
Student Participant



Slides from a student-made presentation

A Century of Women's Suffrage Flows Through Aoife O'Donovan's 'All My Friends'

By Hilary Saunders

Aoife O'Donovan maintains she's not a political songwriter. Not intentionally, or outwardly, anyway. Sitting outside on her balcony in Central Florida, O'Donovan considers an artist's public role in political matters. "I would say I'm very civically engaged, but ... it's something that I've always considered to be part of my private life, my personal life," she says.

Her new record, *All My Friends*, is not necessarily overtly political, but it certainly deals in politics. The album serves as a tribute to the U.S. Constitution's 19th Amendment, which a century ago outlawed voter discrimination based on gender, thereby granting women the right to vote. Throughout the nine-track LP, O'Donovan honors this history through excerpts of original texts, personal narratives, and a choice cover of Bob Dylan's "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll."

All My Friends came together thanks to two major commissions. In 2020, before the pandemic hit, the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra asked her to write music for a performance commemorating the centennial of the 19th Amendment, which was ratified on Aug. 26, 1920. The second commission came from the FreshGrass Foundation (*No Depression's* nonprofit publisher), enabling O'Donovan to write three more songs and record the entire project, which also features chamber orchestra The Knights, brass quartet The Westerlies, and the San Francisco Girls' Chorus, whose members range between 12–18 years old.

"It was not that I was sitting there one day and was like, 'You know, I really want to write a record about suffrage and about women's rights,'" O'Donovan recalls with a laugh. But the OPO gave her immense freedom to explore the topic without many musical restrictions or narrative guidelines.

A book called *The Women's Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote* by Elaine Weiss introduced O'Donovan to historical figures like Carrie Chapman Catt, one of the leading activists for women's suffrage in the early 20th century, both as a real person and a vivid character. "She was a total badass," O'Donovan says, adding that there was a timeless feel to her speeches and letters.

Lyrically, she integrates some of Catt's texts and phrases throughout *All My Friends*. In the song "America, Come," O'Donovan uses a direct quote from Catt: "What is the democracy for which the world is battling / for which we offer up our man power, woman power, money power, our all?" Elsewhere, she paraphrases and modernizes language in order to keep the stories fresh. In "War Measure," a song sung from the perspective of suffrage supporter President Woodrow

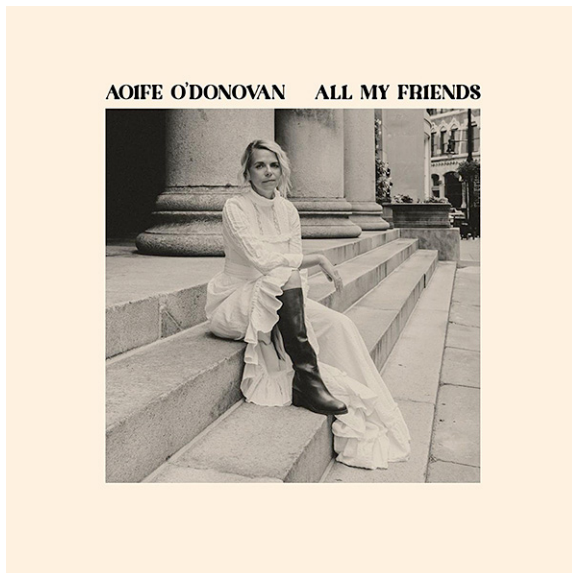
Wilson, O'Donovan coos: "Carrie, I got your missive and I'm with you, girl / I welcome the opportunity to say that I agree: / The time is nigh for your admission to the suffrage."

One of O'Donovan's greatest strengths as a songwriter is her ability to make all kinds of topics personal and relatable. Songs like "Daughters," have deeper resonance now that O'Donovan is a mother herself. "We can't leave the fighting to the daughters of our daughters," she sings, as much to women who serve as characters in the song as to her own 6-year-old.

O'Donovan will perform these songs at select dates and venues throughout the year. Her goal is specifically to partner with local orchestras and youth choirs in order to continue sharing the messages and history of *All My Friends*. She hopes that a project like this will inspire listeners to think about ways they can get more involved in their own communities, to engage with the democratic process that the 19th amendment granted all Americans.

"It's something that's bigger than all of us," she says. "Community is so important, and it's really important to come outside of your home. Come away from your computer. Come away from your little feedback chamber that you're in. Be a part of something. Be a part of your community and volunteer. Just get out there and get involved."

This excerpt was originally published by No Depression — the leading independent source for roots music journalism — and is shared with permission. Learn more and subscribe at nodepression.com.



Sip & Strategize Events Introduce the League's Mission

By Laurie Pauker, Vice President of Development

The Development Committee embarked on a new strategy this year to engage new audiences and potential donors and introduce them to the League's mission. Based on research that pointed to the importance of social connections in generating these new audiences, friends are invited to small gatherings in private homes to promote more dialogue. The gatherings introduce a topic to be discussed and feature a compelling speaker.

Our first gathering focused on New York City's low voter turnout and featured Ruth Messinger, a former political leader in New York City, who shared her insights into the role of elected officials in promoting voting locally. With about 30 people in attendance at my home, the conversations were lively, and provided excellent insight into improving the League's outreach.

The next gathering is scheduled for May 1st and will feature Kate Doran, the League's Board of Elections Specialist, and Jeffery C. Mays, New York Times reporter covering politics, with a focus on New York City Hall.

On May 9th another group will feature Marco DeSena, a professor at Baruch College, on New York City government

and politics. He will lead a discussion of the future of voting in New York City as he shares his insights on how the prospective leaders he teaches are discussing the future of voting.

If you would like to host a Sip & Strategize in your home, contact Laurie Pauker at development@lwnyc.org.



Suffs on Broadway

By Deborah McEvilly

Suffs, the Tony Award-nominated musical currently at the Music Box Theater, tells the story of the fight for women's right to vote. We thought it was more than appropriate to provide our review of the production. So here goes.

The production opens with a rousing song, "Let Mother Vote", sung by Jenn Colella as Carrie Chapman Catt, an old guard suffragist leader who favors a ladylike way of asking for women's right to vote. From this, we understand why the 19th Amendment has not yet been ratified. At the end of the number we are introduced to Alice Paul, the young upstart who thinks she knows better and has come to really get the movement going. One of the many things that we will learn is that the movement does not like the term "Suffragettes"—intended to make them feel like they have no brains and are just being silly women with a silly project that will go away.



Photo by Joan Marcus

At this point, the production takes on the Negro/ Black movement and introduces Ida B Wells, a pioneer of Black journalism, and the political parties that are discriminating against new immigrants. Sound familiar?

So, the movement turns into basically a two-pronged approach. The older women stay in Washington DC and try to use political strategies to influence President Woodrow Wilson, while the younger women go on a whistlestop tour of the states to encourage women to pressure their congressmen to bring the Amendment to the floor for a vote. The rest is history.

The all-female cast is great, and the music helps to tell the story. A special shout out to Shaina Taub as Alice Paul and Nikki M. James as Ida B. Wells. Most of the audience around me left feeling hopeful and optimistic. This is a great play for our times,

and the fact that Hillary Clinton and Malala Yousafzai are among the producers of the show should make us all proud.

We encourage you to go and see **Suffs**, you will leave uplifted.

Intern Corner



I'm **May Rasaw** and I'm an intern here at the League of Women Voters of the City of New York. Being a part of this organization has been a great privilege. During my time with the League I've helped organize the office, answered calls and questions regarding election day voting rules, and assisted at volunteer events.

During the pandemic, I phone banked a bit for the election that year and got interested in political issues. Being able to feel like I'm making a difference while being a part of the LWVNYC is really wonderful.

I'm currently a student at Guttman Community College here in New York City, majoring in Human Services. I hope to become an American Sign Language Interpreter in the future. Throughout my time here in New York, being able to see live theater has been a huge part of who I've become. I hope to one day be able to combine my passion for ASL with theater, it would be an absolute dream.



My name is **Kaitlyn McDonald** and I have been an intern with the League of Women Voters for about 8 months. I am a Political Science major at Manhattan College, and I am also a part of the Voter Engagement Committee on my campus, called Jaspers Vote. I often incorporate my work at the League with my voter engagement work

on campus through tabling and various other events.

Interning with the League has given me more knowledge on voting than I ever thought I could have, exposing me to the importance of voting, amazing resources to utilize, and more. I have participated in multiple events with the League, educating New Yorkers on voting and making sure they are registered to vote.

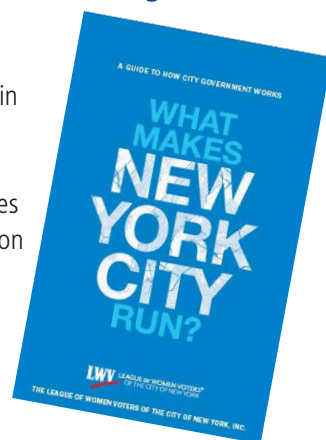
While I am busy juggling school, interning, and committee work, I have found time to volunteer and partake in canvassing for local politicians, and also partake in a few women's empowerment events. I have a strong interest in women's rights, criminal justice reform, and voter education. My internship with the League alongside my higher education career has prepared me to take these interests head-on and run with them to make a difference.

2024 Update Now Available! "What Makes New York City Run?" A Guide to How City Government Works"

Making its debut in April, the newly printed 2024 update of the League's book "What Makes New York City Run?" was issued to all participants of the League's City Affairs Workshop held exclusively for City Council staff.

The two-part Zoom workshop featured Adrienne Kivelson, original author, and Marco DeSena, Baruch professor and the editor for the 2024 update. In part 1, they covered the history of New York City's Charter and changes that have occurred over time resulting in today's city government with the City Council now a principal force in the development of the city's budget. In part 2, they provided a deeper look into the budget and the land use processes, highlighting the City's Council's role.

The book was originally written in 1979 to help New Yorkers make sense of their city's government. After several updates, it continues to provide a wealth of information on the services delivered, city agencies, elected officials, and the role that each can play in advocating to make the city work better.



Now available on the League's website in the "**Vote Store**" – this resource can be purchased for \$12.

LWVNYC Committee Updates

Visit lwnyc.org for more information about all our Committees.

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

CITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

By Susie Gomes, Co-Chair

cityaffairs@lwnyc.org

The City Affairs Committee has been getting even busier as we've headed through the first quarter of 2024. After the printing of the updated book, "What Makes New York City Run?", our League's tome on the workings of New York City government, we created a two-day workshop for City Council staff based on this book to help make them even better-versed in their jobs. All participants received a copy of the book prior to the workshops. Fifty-six staff members across 28 district offices enrolled in the workshops which took place on April 9th and 16th. These sessions will be recorded for future viewing opportunities.

The committee also spent the month of April attending numerous budget hearings at the City Council as the council reviewed, committee by committee, the budget released by Mayor Adams. This is an annual process that will result in a finalized budget from both sides by July 1st of this year. The hearings were extremely interesting for both the department heads being questioned as well as the focus of the questioning. It has given our committee ideas about what we can target as issues to raise with the council to help address inequities in city life.

If you have interest in joining the City Affairs Committee, please reach out to Susie Gomes at cityaffairs@lwnyc.org

SPEAKERS BUREAU

Diane Burrows, Chair

speakers@lwnyc.org

The Speakers Bureau Gets Out the Vote!

The mission of the Speakers Bureau is to connect and partner with organizations, schools, colleges, and civic groups all over the city to encourage and educate communities to use their voice and their vote to affect change. We have several trained presenters now which allows us to expand our reach into even more communities in NYC.

We partner with faith organizations like the Union of Black Episcopalians, Union Baptist Church, and All Souls Church. We work with high schools including Central Park East High School, The High School of American Studies at Lehman College, Truman High School, and many others. We collaborate with community organizations like University Settlement and New Lots Library, and senior centers including The Hamilton House.

Our work requires volunteers who feel comfortable speaking to diverse groups of people including high schoolers, new citizens, and senior citizens. We present in a variety of settings including large group luncheons, high school assemblies, classrooms, and meeting halls. If you are interested in joining us as we prepare for the Fall Election Season, please reach out to Diane at speakers@lwnyc.org

VOTING REFORM COMMITTEE

By Bella Wang, Chair

voting.reform@lwnyc.org

The Voting Reform Committee has been hard at work with our two main projects: annual lobbying our legislators as citizen constituents, and wrapping up our study on the timing of local elections. So far, we have held seven meetings with legislators representing New York City in Albany, on topics ranging from the formula underlying state funding for education, to wider access to aggregated election data via public universities, and increased access to the ballot box in jails. We hope to have yet more meetings as the New York legislature's session progresses this spring.

In May, representatives from our committee will also be presenting our recommended position for the City League on aligning local elections to even-numbered years, to coincide with the state and federal election calendars. We ask our chapter members to save the date for May 22, so they can weigh in on our proposed position!

Email Bella at voting.reform@lwnyc.org if you are interested in either of our spring projects.

Upcoming Events

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

Annual Meeting: June 13th
Primary Election Day: June 25th
National Voter Registration Day: September 17th

COMMITTEE MEETINGS

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

- City Affairs Committee: Contact cityaffairs@lwnyc.org
- Committee for Criminal Justice Reform: Contact criminaljustice@lwnyc.org
- Education Committee: 2nd Wednesday of the month at 5:30.
Contact education@lwnyc.org for more information
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee: Contact 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 for more information
- Voter & Information Services Committee: Contact voting.services@lwnyc.org
- Voting Reform Committee: Contact voting.reform@lwnyc.org

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Ruth S. Altman
Susan B. Glattstein
Stacey Lesser
Deborah McEvilly
Suzanne Surbeck
Andrea Zuckerman

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4 West 43rd Street, Suite 613, New York, NY 10036
212-725-3541 office@lwnyc.org

