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# INSIDE THE LEAGUE

## From the Co-Presidents

Dear League Community,

Thank you for all your work and support in 2025! More than **1,000** League of Women Voters NYC volunteers reached over **150,000** New Yorkers last year! Some of the highlights included:

- 107,000 people sought information on the 2025 ballot proposals from the League’s website
- 16,000 New Yorkers engaged in-person through 225 outreach events
- 14,000 conversations were started on Constitution Day 2025 while distributing free US Constitutions
- 5,100 viewed our Constitution Conversation with Heidi Schreck and Ally Coll
- 4,100 followed our social media
- 3,400 NYC voters in low turnout districts received personalized election and voting postcards



But our work is far from complete. In the year ahead we must continue to register voters, share clear and trusted non-partisan election and voting information, expand our civic explainers, monitor the city government, take positions on issues, engage with new voters, and have our voices heard. Democracy depends on informed, engaged people like you.

NYC has a primary in June, and a general election in November—and the outreach begins now. **We invite, and need, you to be a part of this work.** Whether you join as a member, volunteer at an event, serve on an issue committee, or share the importance of civic engagement with your community, your support makes a difference.

We look forward to working together in the coming year, expanding civic participation across New York City, and strengthening our democracy

Thank you.

**Kai Rosenthal**  
president@lwwnyc.org

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

# Continuing our Constitution Conversations

By Barb Ettington, LWVNYC Board Member

The League of Women Voters of the City of New York invites you to join the conversation about what the U.S. Constitution means to you. Through dialogue and action, we defend democracy together.

As we enter the 250th Anniversary Year of our country, we encourage everyone to take a look at this document, signed in 1787, that still shapes our nation and our daily lives. Its first three words—"We the People"—remind us that our democracy depends on all of us.

Thanks to our media partners, BronxNet and WABC-7, the League is re-introducing the recording of Heidi Schreck—playwright of the award-winning Broadway show *What the Constitution Means to Me*—and Ally Coll, Associate Professor of Law at CUNY School of Law, as they spoke with young people about what the Constitution means today. The League offers three ways to join the conversation:

**1) Schools:** Get ready for Civics Week! Submit a request for our Speakers Bureau to present "The Constitution and Voting." This one-class presentation provides an interactive historical journey. A teacher's curriculum is provided. A request form is found on our website under "Volunteer" (<https://form.jotform.com/lwvnyc/fy26-event-request-form>)

**2) Community Groups:** Gather your family, friends, colleagues, and neighbors to host a one-hour *Constitution Conversation*. Download the community

version of the video along with the facilitator's guidelines. They can be found on our [lwvnyc.org](http://lwvnyc.org) website in the menu under *Take Action/Constitution Conversation*. The video includes Heidi Schreck and Ally Coll as they chat about what is in the Constitution and ask what Constitutional Rights you think impact your daily lives. It inspires conversation. Facilitate your group on your own or invite a League member to join you.

**3) View and Share:** Watch Heidi Schreck and Ally Coll's full conversation and share with your contacts. Visit the League's youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYtOMXwcq6Y>

Join the League's annual Constitution Day outreach—sign up today: <https://form.jotform.com/lwvnyc/volunteer-interest-form>



## The Constitution and Voting: New Speakers Bureau Program

By Diane Burrows, LWVNYC Speakers Bureau Chair

This Constitutional crisis has made it necessary for the Speakers Bureau to adjust our educational programming. Using the materials created by the "What the Constitution Means to Me" program, we have created a new presentation entitled "The Constitution and Voting." Each participant receives their own copy of the Constitution. We highlight the Preamble, the first three Articles and the relevant Amendments to inform participants how activists throughout history have challenged our government to increase citizens' access to the vote. As with all our other presentations, our mission continues to encourage

and educate people to use their own voices and power to save democracy.

In addition, we have increased the number of League members who now serve the Speakers Bureau. This has allowed us to increase our presence in communities all over NYC promoting voter information and civics education.

To join the Speakers Bureau, please contact Diane Burrows at [speakers@lwvnyc.org](mailto:speakers@lwvnyc.org)

# Historical Books: A Window for Ourselves

By Suzanne Surbeck, LWVNYC Volunteer

One of the things I love to do is curl up with a favorite historical book on a cold winter night. They are a window into the past, present, and future, helping us understand where we came from and what road we are taking for the future.

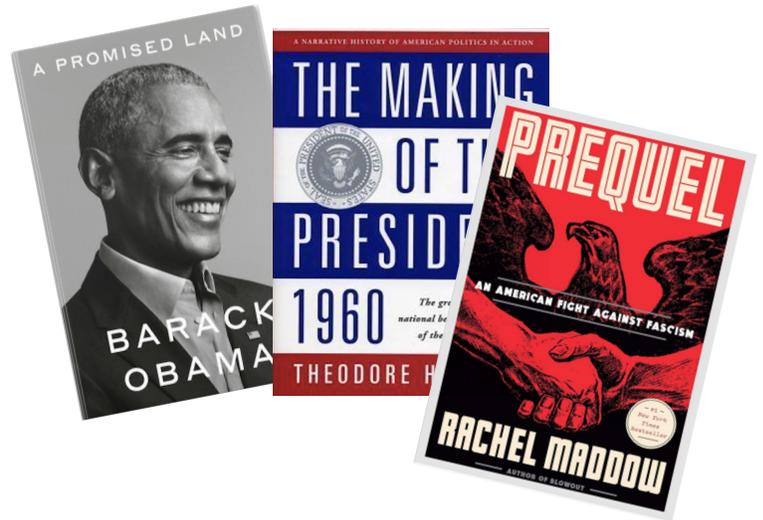
One of my favorites is *The Making of the President 1960* by Theodore H. White. In it he describes in great detail the Kennedy and Nixon campaigns, their successes and failures. He pays particular attention to the rise of television in political campaigns as demonstrated by their debates.

Another favorite of mine is the Barack Obama autobiography *A Promised Land*. In this candid memoir, he describes how difficult it is to be president. He writes about the battle to get the Affordable Care Act passed into law including making some significant compromises. The book was well received and was listed on year-end lists including in The New York Times, The Washington Post, and The Guardian.

A final favorite is *Prequel: An American Fight Against Fascism* by MS NOW Anchor Rachel Maddow. In it she describes the rise of fascism in the early 20th century, and how a group of

dedicated public servants and private citizens worked to stop the right wing from an alliance with European fascists. She devotes a good deal of space on Philip Johnson, the world-renowned architect and his involvement with American fascism.

Do you have a favorite historical/political book? Please let us know and we'll share a list of favorites in an upcoming edition.



## Hot off the Press! Updated *Land Use* Civic Explainer

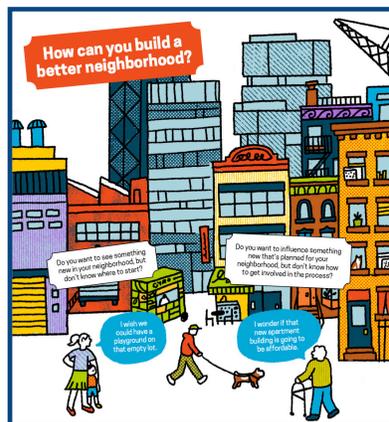
### “How Can You Build a Better Neighborhood?”

- Do you want to see something new in your neighborhood, but don't know where to start?
- Do you want to influence something new that's planned for your neighborhood, but don't know who to get involved in the process?

New Yorkers talk about housing all the time! With the recent ballot proposals, the process for developing Affordable Housing has been updated in our city Charter—and so have our handouts.

“*Land Use*” is the term used for what happens on each parcel of land in our city.

Find the League's updated Civic Explainer, “*How Can You Build a Better Neighborhood?*” to see the many ways you can get involved. To download it from our website, go to: **Take Action/Civic Explainers**—Available in English, Spanish, and Simplified Chinese.



Join our Housing Committee to be part of the League's work on issues that impact all New Yorkers. For more information, email: [president@lwnyc.org](mailto:president@lwnyc.org), or complete the volunteer form: <https://form.jotform.com/lwnyc/volunteer-interest-form>

## Finding Grants that Fund

Grants are a vital resource for nonprofit organizations, and on December 11, 2025, one dozen people attended the League’s free and hybrid Grant Writing Workshop.

Our thanks to Shelly Warwick for sharing her expertise with us. Shelly presented an overview of how grants work, including the preparations required, resources available to seek funders that align with the organization’s vision, and the process of applying. After years of securing grants, Shelly shared her insights for a successful journey. She explained that the writer needs to tell a story to the potential funder of why the funds are needed, and why this organization is best suited to address the need. This story needs to be told clearly—through the narrative, the budget, the team members, and any attachments shared.



Shelly Warwick, pictured farthest right, presented the Grant writing workshop held at the League’s office

One of her many tips was to remember that because of the volume of applicants, funders are quick to reject an application if the requirements are not followed to a “T”—so attention to detail is critical.

Shelly is a long-time volunteer with the League, bringing her background in academia to help with many special projects and development. Through her Master of Library Science and PhD in Information Policy, her research has focused on intellectual property, information ethics, and health literacy.

Shelly is preparing to provide future workshops that will focus more in-depth on single aspects of grant writing.

If you are new to grant writing, or have grant experience to share, join us as we brainstorm on possible funding opportunities. Contact Barb Ettington at [boarddirector3@lwnyc.org](mailto:boarddirector3@lwnyc.org)

## A “New” Year, a Year of “New”s

By Kristen Young, LWNYC Communications Committee Member

As the new year brings a surplus of “new”s to New Yorkers everywhere, I am beyond excited to step into my own “new” and begin working with the League of Women Voters of New York City. Though my introduction may not come with an inauguration or a subway trip to City Hall, it comes with just as much excitement and optimism for what’s ahead in the coming year.

For those whom I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting, my name is Kristen Young, and I will be joining Stacey Lesser in assisting with the Communications Committee. Prior to moving to New York, I was fortunate enough to work with the League of Women Voters of Boulder County, where I supported the public relations and communications team in advancing social media initiatives and boosting community engagement.

Upon moving to New York, I quickly learned two things: first, that moving while living in a walk-up building is not for the weak; and second, that I wanted to get involved with the New York chapter of the League of Women Voters. My short time with the League has already exceeded expectations, showcasing the incredible community this chapter offers. If my early meetings with Stacey and other League members are any indication of what’s to come, I believe 2026 will be filled with many favorite “new”s.



Grant Writing Group

## Engage with Our League

### LWVNYC's Lunch with the League

On September 9, the Program Committee's Lunch with the League subject was "Is Our Constitution at Risk?" The featured speaker was Susan Herman, the inaugural Ruth Bader Ginsburg Professor of Law at Brooklyn Law School. She served as General Counsel to the American Civil Liberties Union and held the title of President of the ACLU from October 2008 to January 2021.



Also on that day, it was announced that after many years as Chair of the Program Committee, Joanna Leefer was stepping away from that role, and the League took time to thank Joanna for her dedication and incredible accomplishments.

On October 7, in advance of the housing-related ballot proposals on the November ballot, Lunch with the League hosted presentations by members of the NYC Campaign Finance Board and Brigid Bergen, Senior Reporter, WNYC.

November's Lunch with the League addressed the legal status of immigration and the rules governing ICE. It featured Donna Lieberman, Executive Director of the New York Civil Liberties Union and founder of the NYCLU's Reproductive Rights Project.

The next **Lunch with the League** is on Tuesday, February 24<sup>th</sup>. The theme is "Celebrating Leadership and Breaking Barriers" and features guest speaker Keechant Sewell, Senior VP of Security and Guest Experience for the New York Mets, and former NYPD Commissioner.



Brigid Bergen, Senior Reporter, WNYC



LWVNYC Co-Presidents Kai Rosenthal and Deborah Brodheim with Speaker Susan Herman, center

If you're interested in joining the Lunch with the League Committee to plan future events, please contact [office@lwvnyc.org](mailto:office@lwvnyc.org)



# 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](https://lwnyc.org) for more information about all our Committees.

## CITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

By Susie Gomes, Chair

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

The City Affairs Committee has focused its efforts in the past two years at the City Council and 2026 will see a continuation of our efforts. There are 51 Members of the City Council and 40 committees. We have a new Speaker at the Council this year—Speaker Julie Menin, District 8, was unanimously elected by the Council on January 7th.

This year the City Affairs Committee will focus our efforts on 5 of these 40 committees:

- Early Childhood Education
- Finance
- Government Operations, State and Federal Legislation
- Land Use
- Women and Gender Equality

All of these committees are ones for which the League has stated positions. That means we can support, testify, and advocate for substantive issues that may arise in these committees. In this way, the League is doing everything we can to help New Yorkers across the City in many aspects of their lives, beyond the voting booth.

If you are interested in becoming part of our committee and/or seeing how we can enhance our neighbors' lives, please reach out to Susie Gomes [cityaffairs@lwnyc.org](mailto:cityaffairs@lwnyc.org)

## EDUCATION COMMITTEE

By Nancy Seng, Committee Member

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

As part of the Education Committee's work in promoting youth civic engagement, we partnered with **Press Pass NYC** (<https://presspassnyc.org>), a local non-profit that helps NYC public schools in under-resourced communities start and sustain student publications. LWVNYC summer intern, Grace Koch, Jane Hatterer, Education Committee Chair, and I worked with Press Pass NYC on their election resource guide and companion workshop. Grace made suggestions to improve the "How to Cover the 2025 Elections Guide" from a student journalist perspective. Their updated election guide included links to our League's Civic Education resources.

Press Pass NYC is currently working with 44 schools and contributing to **Journalism for All**, CUNY's newly launched yearlong journalism curriculum for NYC schools. **Journalism For All** supports the NYC City Council's resolution calling on the NYC Public Schools to provide support for student newspapers in every high school.

The Education Committee also continues its partnership with the statewide coalition **Democracy Ready NY** (<https://www.democracyreadyny.org>). Jane and Nancy are working on the AI and Media Literacy Committee to advance AI, Media, and Digital literacy. Mary Jenkins will serve on the Civics Committee and its work to strengthen hands-on civic learning like the **Seal of Civic Readiness**.

As a member of the CivxNow AI Work Group and EDSAFE AI Alliance Task Force, Jane Hatterer helped author the recently released **States of the Union-Rebuilding American Civics for a Digital Republic**, a project of iCivics and the EDSAFE AI Alliance, published by **CivxNow** (<https://civxnow.org>). Co-authored by leaders in the K-12 education system, the report is a call to action for state and local leaders to renew civic education for the age of AI and equip students with the requisite skills, knowledge, and civic/ethical mindsets to understand, use, and create with AI in ways that strengthen trust and civic engagement.

Our most recent activities and plans:

- We were happy to join fellow league and Democracy Ready NY members at the recent Generation Citizen Civics Day as Community Advisors.
- Democracy Ready NY plans include participation in the upcoming **Civic Learning Week**, (March 9-13) that promotes local and national civic education by engaging K-12 students, educators, and communities in activities like voter registration, discussions on democracy, and events with local officials to foster youth voice and participation in government.
- We will also participate as Civic Partners with Mikva Challenge's upcoming **Project NYC Soapbox**.

Stay tuned for updates on the committee's related work at the intersection of Media/AI/News Literacy and Civic Education.

*(continued on next page)*

# LWVNYC Committee Updates

## NEXTGEN COMMITTEE

By Talia Maile, Co-Chair

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

In the Fall of 2025, the NextGen Committee was formed. The main purpose of this committee is to design events and projects that tackle civic issues relevant to younger generations, spanning from Millennials to Gen Alpha. Through these efforts, we hope to foster greater diversity within the League's membership, not only in terms of age but also gender and ethnicity. Additionally, the NextGen Committee aspires to serve as a pipeline for cultivating future leaders within the organization, ensuring sustained and representative leadership in the years ahead.

To begin our work, the committee undertook a revision of the "Join us" card, used to recruit new members and volunteers at all our events and Voter Registration tables. The updated card now highlights a broad range of topics, including immigration and reproductive rights, reflecting issues that resonate most with these younger generations. Our committee's first event featured a presentation by the esteemed Professor Helen Chang of Hostos, focusing on unconscious biases and the recognition of one's privilege. During this interactive session, participants gained practical insights into empowering the diverse populations LWVNYC serves, and learned strategies to one's own privilege to create opportunities for others.

In November, the committee introduced the MELT ICE event, a training session dedicated to supporting our immigrant neighbors in New York City. Collaborating with Claudia Carrera of Immigrant ARC, attendees learned not only how they can assist in local immigration court hearings, but also what to do if they witness immigration detentions in their own neighborhood. This initiative reinforced the League of Women Voters' unwavering commitment to upholding the right to due process for all individuals.

On January 21st, we hosted "Democracy and Drag," an event that blended entertainment and civic learning. We had a great turnout and many happy winners. The event was emceed by Linda Simpson, "LINDALOVESBINGO" who led us through a lively evening of laughter and prizes.

As we look to the future, the committee is excited to continue our imaginative work with projects and events aimed at voter education and inspiring civic involvement. As we work to create more events, we are focused on our Affinity Month project, integrating the League more fully into citywide celebrations



such as Pride Month, Black History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, and other important occasions. Additionally, plans are developing for a competition to design a "Vote Louder" logo for the NYC League, a project designed to involve more college students and young professionals in civic life and strengthen their connection to the League's mission.

## VOTING REFORM COMMITTEE

By Bella Wang, Chair

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

The Voting Reform Committee has had a busy year. We met with 18 of our state and federal legislators over the course of the year, and were pleased to see the bill to join the cross-state Electronic Registration Information Center signed by Governor Hochul. We also supported one of the NYC ballot propositions related to elections through participation in the Charter Revision Commission process, although unfortunately question number 6 ultimately did not pass at the ballot box.

We're looking forward to engaging with legislators and the government on our continued priorities next year! Watch for the Democracy During Detention Act and same-day voter registration to continue to be at the top of our list."

# Upcoming Events

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

## UPCOMING ELECTIONS

### U.S. House

New York Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, State Comptroller,  
State Senate, State Assembly  
Primary Elections: Jun 23, 2026  
General Election Day: Nov 3, 2026

## 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)
- Criminal Justice Reform Committee: Contact [lindsey.reynolds@live.law.cuny.edu](mailto:lindsey.reynolds@live.law.cuny.edu)
- Communications Committee: Contact [communications@lwnyc.org](mailto:communications@lwnyc.org)
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee: Contact [dei@lwnyc.org](mailto:dei@lwnyc.org)
- Education Committee: Meets the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 5:30pm.  
Contact [education@lwnyc.org](mailto:education@lwnyc.org)
- Housing Committee: Contact [president@lwnyc.org](mailto:president@lwnyc.org)
- Lunch with the League Committee: Contact [office@lwnyc.org](mailto:office@lwnyc.org)
- Membership Committee: Contact [membership@lwnyc.org](mailto:membership@lwnyc.org)
- NextGen Committee: Contact [nextgen@lwnyc.org](mailto:nextgen@lwnyc.org)
- Transportation Committee: Contact [transportation@lwnyc.org](mailto:transportation@lwnyc.org)
- Voter & Information Services Committee: Contact [voter.services@lwnyc.org](mailto:voter.services@lwnyc.org)
- Voting Reform Committee: Contact [voting.reform@lwnyc.org](mailto:voting.reform@lwnyc.org)

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newsletter contributors!*



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