

# 1922-2022

## ONE HUNDRED YEARS

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**Altamont**

**Rensselaerville**

**Knox**

**Berne**

**Voorheesville**

**Green Island**

**Westerlo**

**Ravena**

**Menands**

**Coeymans**

**Village of Colonie**

**New Scotland**

**Watervliet**

**Cohoes**

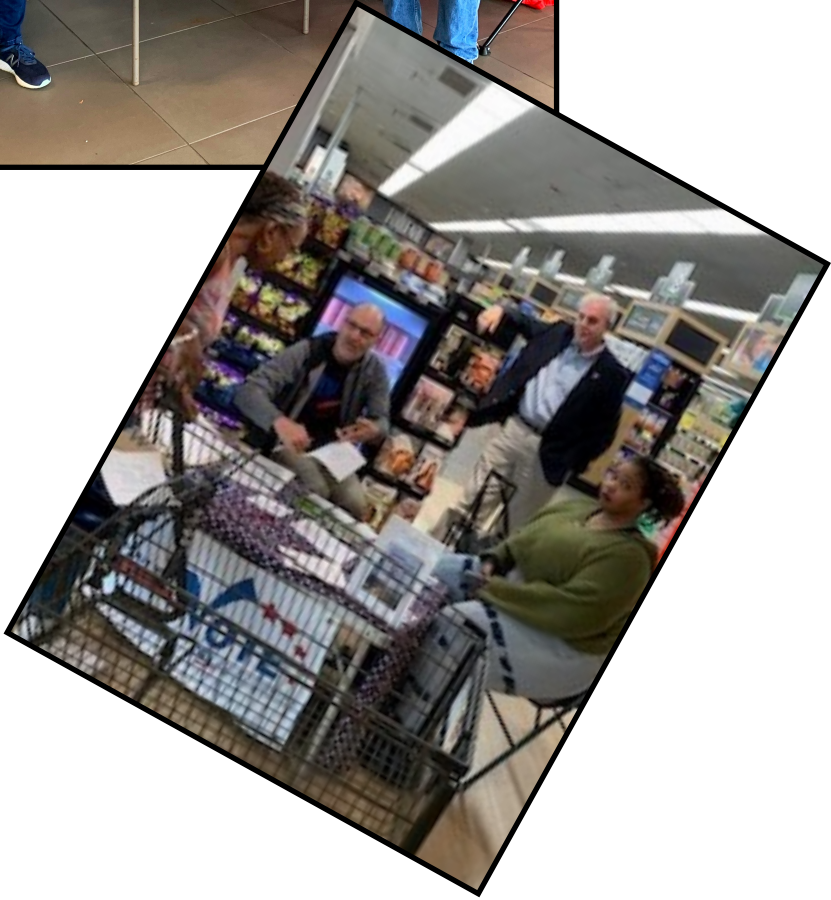
**Bethlehem**

**Guilderland**

**Town of Colonie**

**Albany**















**League of Women Voters**  
**of Albany County**

**1922-2022**

## **MISSION OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ALBANY COUNTY**

The League of Women Voters of Albany County, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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## **Timeline**

Some of the involvement and actions of the League of Women Voters of Albany County (LWVAC / Albany League) over these 100 years.

- 1920      The national League of Women Voters is formed.
- 1922      Albany County League is established, focused on voters service and informing the public on political questions.
- 1925      LWVAC conducts a “Permanent Personal (Voter) Registration” drive.
- 1930      The Albany League advocates for a County Health Unit and for the Woman Juror Bill.
- 1932      LWVAC works for a County Reorganization bill and investigates vice conditions in Albany.

1937      LWWAC members create maps of housing, health and playgrounds highlighting areas of high juvenile delinquency and poor health.

Members support slum clearance and low-income housing; legal protection and benefits for women, children, workers, consumers and minorities.

1939      The Albany League supports the proposed State Constitution.

1943      LWWAC engages in a study and in publicity campaigns for Dumbarton Oaks and the United Nations Charter.

1948      “Albany Know Your Schools Committee” within the LWWAC undertakes a study of the schools, printing the findings in a booklet and promoting the proposals.

- 1951      The Albany League creates a weekly radio series: "Spotlight on Government" and a 7 episode educational TV program on League topics.
- 1952      Albany is one of the cities throughout the country to conduct "Citizens View of '52" forums, discussing issues of the presidential campaign prior to party conventions, promoted and covered by LIFE Magazine.
- 1955      The Albany League publishes "Spotlight on Albany County" — the first description of the administrative setup of Albany County ever made.
- 1956      League members create a TV series on "Individual Liberties".

1958      Forty organizations join together with the LWWAC in successfully presenting statements before the County Board of Supervisors asking for the creation of a Mental Health Board in Albany County.

League members create another TV series on water conservation.

1959      Eleanor Roosevelt, an early League member, speaks to the community on her recent trip to Russia.

1961      LWWAC organizes a house to house campaign — Libraries for Albany County Knocking (LACK) — to develop a Colonie Town Library, with 45 groups joining to form the Colonie Library Association.

Redistricting of the City of Albany wards is achieved using the League's plan.

LWWNYS lobbies for a NYS Court Reform amendment that passes with the support of LWWAC.

1967 LWWAC supports and assists with the formation of Albany County Opportunities, Inc, a private community action agency.

Albany League provides a series of articles for the NAACP on “Practical Politics”.

Statewide Permanent Personal Registration is adopted — the League of NYS’ greatest legislative triumph to date.

LWWAC advocates for a County Legislature to replace the Board of Supervisors.

1970 The League of Women Voters of Albany County fights for a referendum for an elected school board for the City of Albany. After a successful court case and the defeat of nullifying legislation (the “Corning School Bill”), the League accomplishes its goal

1971 LWWAC spearheads the formation of a Citizens' Committee for a County Executive and a charter form of government for Albany County, develops a successful campaign to create an elected County Executive position, and obtains 17,000 names on a petition to get this on the ballot. It gets on the ballot and passes

.

1972-74 A testament to LWWAC efforts, the Albany County Charter is enacted together with reform of the County Legislature.

1974-76 As a member of the Coalition for Effective Code Enforcement in the City of Albany, LWWAC is active in improving the City's code enforcement procedures.

LWWAC participates in the welfare Lay Advocate program.

LWWAC organizes the election of two tenant representatives to the Board of the Albany Housing Authority.

1976-78 Through the advocacy of LWVNYS and with the support of the LWVAC, a constitutional Judicial Reform Amendment was passed by the electorate, capping more than 20 years of LWV support for the appointment of judges.

The LWVAC, within the Coalition for Effective Code Enforcement in Albany, effects many positive results: the City adopts a Certificate of Occupancy ordinance, appoints a Director of Code Enforcement, and hires and trains new inspectors.

LWVAC participates in Albany's Bi-centennial Celebration in Washington Park, registering 400 voters at the League booth.

1978-80 LWVAC updates and publishes a new "This is Albany County" booklet describing county and municipal governments and distributes the booklet to Albany County residents.

The preservation of the Pine Bush becomes a local study and action item within the League, with a slide presentation on the preservation created.

LWVAC also organizes Car Care Clinics to promote the conservation and efficient use of fuel.

1980-84 For the first time, the League hosts a reception for new United State citizens and provides information on voting and registration. This becomes a monthly naturalization voter registration activity reflecting the LWVAC mission of voter service and education.

Community forums are sponsored on Health Care and Domestic Violence, and a study of the Albany County courts is completed as part of the Albany County Court Coalition.

The Observer Corps is organized for the Albany County Legislature, the Common Council and for the Colonie, Guilderland, and Bethlehem Town Boards.

- 1986-87 A project monitoring the City of Albany Common Council is completed, and the report results in extensive press coverage. League members begin a two-year monitoring of the Albany County Legislature.

The Albany League obtains a \$15,000 grant from the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation to publish the book **Household Hazards--a Guide to Detoxifying Your Home**, which is written by League members. Ten thousand copies are distributed statewide.

After a study of the Albany City School Board, LWVAC members come to a consensus, publicize recommended changes and begin active lobbying.

A Human Needs Survey in Albany County is conducted as part of a National League study on "Meeting Basic Human Needs."

Subsequently, the League is a founding member of the Child Care Coalition of the Capital District. A Day Care Committee is formed within the League.

1988-90 The LWVAC committee on "Meeting Basic Human Needs" writes a five-day teaching program on hunger in the United States, which is taught at Bethlehem Central, Albany and Guilderland High Schools by League members.

A local coalition forms to make City of Albany citizens aware of the School Board election and the issues involved.

After local study of methods of reduction of solid waste, the four Capital District Leagues come to an agreement (consensus) resulting in a position statement known as the Four-County Waste Position.

The committee on international relations conducts a study, attends League Day at the United Nations and strengthens ties to the Great Decisions Program.

- 1990-92 The League continues to educate the public with informational meetings: the Governor's Town Meeting on Health Care; Environmental Forums at the State Museum; and Mental Illness Awareness.

The Albany County League joins with nearby Leagues to underwrite WMHT's airing of 'Listening to America' with Bill Moyers.

The Hunger and Poverty in the United States curriculum, written by a LWVAC committee, is made available to schools across NYS by Newsweek magazine's Education Program. This curriculum, and the Household Hazards publication, receive the Publication Award from the NYS League.

1992-93 The League leads a coalition of civic, business and neighborhood groups backing reform of the Albany County charter. In 1993, voters approve the new charter concluding the League's 20 year campaign to bring accountability to the structure of county government.

1993-94 LWVAC joins the celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the LWVNYS in 1994.

New studies are commenced on the Barge Canal and regionalization in the Capital District. The League receives a grant from LWVUS Education Fund to organize a town forum on health care reform in 1994 with participation by major media -- all local TV channels. The forum is held in WMHT studios during prime time.

1995-96 The Emerging Democracies Project, supported by a grant from the LWVUS Education Fund, hosts two women from Russia and Ukraine and creates a program focusing on women's health, economic and legal issues.

LWVAC hosts a reception for Albany County elected officials to afford League members an opportunity to meet them.

- 1996-97 Nationally, the League of Women Voters adopts a “Making Democracy Work” initiative. As part of this venture, the Albany League works for campaign finance reform at all three levels of government.

In October 1996, LWVAC holds a “Power The Vote” town meeting at Albany High School to engage voters and focus attention on 1996 election campaign issues. The project brings together Albany organizations to work on nonpartisan voter registration, education, and a ‘get out the vote’ effort. Before an audience of over 200 people, a panel, including Lieutenant Governor Betsy McCaughey Ross and State Comptroller Carl McCall, discuss why voting participation matters.

“Power the Vote” draws attention to the issues of polling place accessibility for per-

sons with a disability and the importance of encouraging the youth vote.

1997-98 The Albany County League hosts an educational forum as part of the Education Equity Reform Project organized by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity.

As part of the Capital District Tobacco-Free coalition, LWVAC successfully supports a city ordinance to restrict tobacco advertising near where children congregate.

1999-2001 The League continues its focus on campaign finance reform and on promoting accessible and reliable voting and election procedures. The Fair Campaign Practices Committee of the Capital Region – a coalition comprised of the Leagues of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady counties with the Capital Region Chapter of the Interfaith Alliance of NYS – recruits and trains a Hearing Pool to hear complaints of unfair campaign practices by candidates for elective office in the region.

The Committee mails its fair campaign pledge and notification of the complaint process to all candidates for office.

The League participates in "Tackling Racism in Albany County (TRAC)"-a collaboration of organizations and individuals representing diverse constituencies in Albany County -- initiating a countywide project to discuss the issue of racism in the community.

2002-03 The Campaign for Fiscal Equity and LWWAC hosts a community discussion at Albany High School to address civic education in the New York public schools.

The League also maintains a presence at meetings and public hearings of the county's redistricting commission.

The Albany League participates in programming with the Capital Region Civil Liberties Union on civil rights, in the wake of the passage of the USA Patriot Act and other legislation addressing homeland security.

2003-05 LWWAC educational programs include financing education, foreign affairs (Iraq and Afghanistan), civil liberties and the USA Patriot Act, civil protest and civil rights violations, Women's Health Care and hospital mergers.

As a result of the passage of the Help America Vote Act in 2002, NYS was required to replace the obsolete lever voting machines. Beginning in 2004, the LWWNYS and local league members work at all governmental levels to educate the public and elected officials about the choices and to advocate for the optical scan voting machines.

2005-07 The LWVAC convenes a public program on world affairs as part of *The People Speak* grassroots initiative.

The 2007 Annual Meeting honors lifetime (50 year) members, with special tributes to Bea Herman, Lorena Abrams and Natalie Dorkin.

2007-09 LWVAC organizes meetings to inform members about the newly introduced “Project Sunlight” intended to promote transparency in government.

LWVAC holds a reception for Albany County legislators prior to the monthly County Legislature meeting.

LWVAC promotes natural resources and environment topics focused on “shrinking our carbon footprint”, emphasizing eating locally. A “Greening our Albany County municipalities” study is approved at the 2008 annual meeting.

City of Albany LWW members continue to press for public access TV capacity, testifying multiple times and working with the Common Council.

2009-11 LWWAC advocates for local government consolidation, and addresses Albany City landfill issues and climate change at a legislative breakfast with NYS Assembly and Senate representatives.

Study committees convened on solid waste, “Greening of Albany County”, local government/regional consolidation and public access TV in Albany. The discussion group, Great Issues, formerly Great Decisions, continues monthly meetings.

Voter Service activities continue as the “bedrock” of League nonpartisan service and education to the residents of Albany County, including candidates forums, voter registration in many locations and monthly registration for new citizens at the Federal District Court in Albany.

2011-12 LWWAC calls for county legislators to reconsider plans to build a new county nursing home.

Pursuant to a contract with the Albany Housing Authority, LWWAC continues to supervise the biennial election of tenant representatives (commissioners); a new process of mailed ballots is successful as over 800 residents vote in the election, a substantial increase from the previous on-site elections the League managed.

Voter Services to the municipalities in the County include naturalization ceremonies at the federal and county courthouses and working with LWWNYS to introduce and implement a "Vote411" electronic voters' guide. In 2012, Vote411 has a record 92% candidate participation rate.

2013-15 The League formally adopts a policy which states “there shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the League on the basis of economic position, gender, race, ability, age, sexual preference, creed, or national origin.”

Local League programs during this time include:

- Albany County Charter Review
- study and monitoring proposals for landfills in Albany, based on the Four-County solid waste position;
- study and monitoring proposals for environmental, public safety and health impacts associated with transportation of crude oil shipments into the Port of Albany;
- activities related to the LWV Consolidation study of 2010, including revising “Know Albany County,”
- advocacy for shared services and government consolidation, and
- continued monitoring of long term care options and issues in Albany County.

2015-16 Together with the Leagues of Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady Counties, the LWVAC withdraws from participation in "Fair Campaign Practices for the Capital Region, Inc.," which the Leagues no longer believe can be effective. Political campaigns are increasingly influenced by Political Action Committees (PACs) over which candidates have no control; also a decline in complaints and in candidates' willingness to sign pledges to conduct fair campaigns works to its detriment.

The League provides voter registration forms and assistance at local food pantries on National Voter Registration Day in September 2015.

Albany County LWV opposes county charter revisions which would have given decision making for potential downsizing of the Legislature to the Legislature itself. Voters overwhelmingly reject the proposed change.

2016-18 In conjunction with the formation of a new study committee to explore NYS civics education requirements, the LWVAC commits to contact every secondary school in the county annually, to provide a voter registration drive in the school or supply materials and training for schools to hold their own registration drives.

The LWVAC Great Decisions Group self-selects into two groups: one meeting in the morning (Martha Kennedy) and the other in the afternoon (Judith Wing) beginning February 2016.

The Albany County League commences a review of its positions on:

- downsizing the County Legislature,
- replacing the obsolete coroner system with a medical examiner, and
- supporting the creation of a non-partisan, independent and inclusive reapportionment commission to permanently reform how county legislative districts are drawn.

LWVAC continues study of the LWV Ohio juvenile justice position, in consideration of raising the age of criminal responsibility from 16 to 18 years old in NYS. LWVAC participated and joins LWVNYS in a concurrence to “Raise the Age”, a nation-wide effort to prevent youth incarceration in adult prisons.

LWVAC, Saratoga, Schenectady and Rensselaer LWVs, and LWVNYS join with Siena College and Musicians of Ma’alwyck and the NYS Archives Partnership, in a program-concert for “A Declaration of Sentiments” in March to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s birth.

LWVAC gives a presentation in April entitled “Endangered Species: The Future of Journalism”, a program presented in successful collaboration with the Women’s Press Club of NYS.

The League provides strong support to those attending the Women’s March.

With LWW Rensselaer County, at the East Greenbush library, LWWAC presents a panel discussion on "Death With Dignity" which was followed by both the Albany and Rensselaer Leagues coming to a concurrence (agreement) with the LWW Utah's Consensus on the issue.

League members participate in raising public consciousness about the 3R's - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle - at the first low-to-no waste event held by the City of Albany at the riverfront.

The LWWAC joins a large coalition of groups to help finally pass a county styro-foam ban which prohibits the use of styro-foam food packages for all restaurants and food service organizations.

Albany County League celebrates Black History month at the College of St. Rose, with guest speakers including Nell Stokes, member, poet and playwright; Paul Stewart, founder of the Underground History project, and Dr. Risa Fausette of St. Rose

addressing the topic of surviving oppression and adversity in the United States.

LWVAC celebrates Women's Equality Day, August 26, with information table displays at 17 libraries and the Colonie Town Hall, providing forms for voter registration, absentee ballot forms, and the LWVNYS' pamphlet "Facts for Voters".

The LWVAC reaffirms its commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion as a central policy of the League.

For the first time, the LWVAC engages with the Humanities NY book discussion grant program, selecting the Votes for Women course and laying the foundation for continued participation in future years.

2018-20 In 2018, the Albany County League, as part of the One Person One Vote Coalition, is instrumental in passing legislation for transparent, participatory and equitable processes for redistricting in response to three decades of lawsuits filed against the county under the Federal Voting Rights Act.

For the first time, the LWVAC engages with the Humanities NY book discussion grant program, selecting the Votes for Women course and laying the foundation for continued participation in future years.

As part of National Voter Registration Day activities, the League joined with a coalition of community, civic, and college organizations to provide temporarily incarcerated individuals in local jails with opportunities to register to vote and to vote by absentee if eligible. The Coalition's mission was to educate as well as register people.

The LWV's Vote411.org nonpartisan website provides information to voters on registration and candidate information. Seventy-five candidates in Albany County provide information to be posted. Flyers (10,000) and ads are distributed throughout the County alerting voters to new voting procedures.

LWVAC celebrates the LWVUS 99th Birthday and holds "A Conversation with Ken Screven" touching on Black History, research on ancestry, and black journalists, in conjunction with the Howe Branch of the Albany Public Library.

Despite Covid-19 restrictions on in-person activity, the League works with the Coalition to reach all areas of the County to promote an accurate and complete count of all persons, the basis for equitable redistricting at the state and local levels.

The Albany League continues to partner with the federal courts and the US Citizenship and Immigration Services by providing registration forms and voting information to new citizens, although no longer in person.

2020-22 LWWAC re-examines its 2014 position on reducing the county legislature size, and abandoned that position In light of the potential negative impact that downsizing could have on minority and community representation.

Aiming to achieve the greatest participation in the decennial census count, the League continues to promote and assist in the 2020 census outreach to all jurisdictions in Albany County,

LWWAC advocates in support of land, air, and water resources proposals that prioritize the health and safety of residents.

With the NYS Legislature passing major voting reforms at the beginning of 2019, the Albany League holds an educational session with B'nai Shalom to inform voters about early voting, the use of the new poll books, and the other reforms being implemented.

While COVID-19 impacts the League's actions, forcing a move from in-person events to online meetings, LWVAC also expands its reach through virtual meetings. Doing so allows more people to attend and provides recordings for those who could not otherwise attend.

COVID-19 also increases our geographic obligations as Albany County naturalization "ceremonies" expand to cover 18 counties, and LWVAC prepares over 3,000 information packets provided to new citizens to allow and encourage them to register to vote.



## Recollections



### **Gail Volk**

*I think of the 100th anniversary of the LWVNYS celebrated by the LWVAC on November 13, 2019. As our historian, Aimee really thought it was important to make sure to commemorate this day by having a celebratory event. But given that date was only a few weeks away, how could we make that happen? As a new member of the Board, I decided to help her. The result was a fun and well attended event that was thrown together in about 3 weeks! While I enjoyed getting to know and work with Aimee and our dear friend, Stephen Winters, the best part was that everyone who attended seemed to have a great time!*

*And at the Naturalization Ceremony: My mom was visiting several years ago on one of the days I was scheduled to help at a voter registration information event for new citizens at the Federal Courthouse. After the welcoming and distribution of voter registration information, she walked into the courthouse and took a seat at the back of the room. While looking around the room, she kept thinking about her parents who left the*

*pogroms of Eastern Europe in search of a home free from persecution, and how important it was for them to become new citizens.*

*I'd attended these events many times before, but having my Mom there, witnessing how she was moved to tears during the ceremony, will stick with me forever. To find herself at the age of 90 in a similar courtroom filled with people from all over the world, about to take the oath of allegiance, was just overwhelming. And for me, watching her was a memory that I treasure.*



**Ann Brandon**

*League member since 1961!*

*In the early '70's our League began working toward an elected County Executive, since Albany did not have an Executive or County Manager. The county attorney, appointed by the 39-member legislature, seemed to be in charge. After adopting this position, we had many public meetings, including a day-long workshop at SUNYA, to educate the public about the issue.*

*We needed to persuade the legislature to appoint a commission to write a charter that could be voted on by the public, so we contacted other organizations to join us in a coalition that we named, "Citizens for County Executive." We organized a petition drive*

*where we collected signatures all over the county, getting 17,000 thousand signatures. That persuaded the legislature to appoint a commission. The result was a charter with a weak executive voted on in November. Even though it was weak, we lobbied for its passage as a first step. It did pass and in later years revisions were passed to strengthen the power of the executive, such as appointing his or her department heads. This experience showed what citizens could do if they organized and worked with like-minded organizations. It was a very exhilarating experience for those of us who worked on it.*



***Britt Westergard***

*For a serotonin boost, nothing beats heading downtown to the courthouse to help register new citizens at a naturalization ceremony. My mother is a naturalized citizen and I can still remember how excited the whole family was at her ceremony. It seemed like a great entry point when someone asked me "what do you want to do" after I joined the league. I dare you to not be moved by the optimism and promise of watching people become US citizens — in fact, I might have gotten a little dust in my eye writing this...*



**Chris Deyss**

*Soon after I joined LWVAC in 1980-81, we had a study committee on after-school care for children, and came to a consensus to support such programs. Out of that League position, a number of Bethlehem, Delmar, members were active in helping establish Schools Out, Inc., which is still a primary before-and-after school program for working parents in this town.*



**Regina Tillman**

*When a volunteer for the coalition on Voter Registration and Education in Jails said after his session... that we were not just registering people to vote, but that we also were sharing our humanity. It brings me to tears each time I recall this statement.*



**Milena Leukhardt**

*As a WWII survivor of the Philippines I learned a great deal from the League and realize that wars are over land not people. That's why Russia is fighting Ukraine now — resources and land!*



**Janice Livingston**

*In the past I was on the board as secretary for presidents Roxy Smith and Ann Brandon. My first LWVAC meeting was in Loudonville at the home of Audrey Price, when my son Bob was 6 months old. The morning Colonie group hired babysitters for the kids. My son Bob, born 1971 and daughter Diane born 1970 and I loved going to LWV meetings as my children got to play with lots of kids and wonderful toys; while I had adult discussions with intelligent people on topics like the United Nations. Eventually I enjoyed being a facilitator for the Colonie morning group.*



**Mary Berry**

*I was so proud to have my son accompany me on voter registration drives at the Albany County Fair in Altamont Fair Grounds in the 1990's. He was pleased to be asked and happy to join me; I was thrilled.*



**Monique J. Roeth**

*Being a member of the League has meant a great deal to me and I will always think of my good friend, Eunice*

*in New Jersey, who convinced me such a long time ago to join her on the way to a meeting! The naturalization service has been provided by the League for many years to all who come to Albany for their swearing-in ceremony, regardless of their county of residence.*



## **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

The early years of the League of Women Voters, founded by the American suffragist, Carrie Chapman Catt, in February 1920 were marred by racism. Chapman and many other suffragists, both Black and white, campaigned hard to win the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Passage by three quarters of the state legislatures is necessary for the ratification of an amendment to the Constitution. Chapman, a brilliant political operative, had no problem pandering to racist politicians in the South if it won passage of the amendment in their state. She went so far as to assert that white supremacy would be strengthened, not weakened by women's suffrage. (*The Woman's Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote* by Elaine Weiss, pp. 132-140.)

After the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was finally ratified in August 1920, the newly formed League of Women Voters spent little time discussing racial issues, including the denial of the vote to Black women and men in the South. The national League left the decision about league membership to state and local leagues. (*The Untold Story of Women of Color in the League of Women Voters* by Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins.)

A review of the timeline herein, and the Albany League's archival materials found in the M.E Grenander Special Collections and Archives at the University at Albany reveals that the New York State and Albany County Leagues joined initiatives to support DEI.

These activities included:

- A map of housing, health and playgrounds highlighting areas of high juvenile delinquency and poor health (1937).
- Working for slum clearance and low-income housing; legal protection and benefits for women, children, workers, consumers and minorities. (1937)
- The Citizens Committee for the Albany Public schools formed as a result of the Know Your Schools Committee "Citizens Committee for Albany Public Schools" (1950)
- Efforts on redistricting of city wards to represent the people of Albany more equitably according to the principle of one man, one vote, including the passage of amendment to the state constitution in 1965.
- Adopting a position opposing school segregation in New York (1964), and to opposition to an anti-

busing bill (1967).

- Supported formation of Albany County Opportunities, Inc., a private community action agency. (1967)
- Provided a series of articles working with the NAACP on “Practical Politics”, a series of voter education articles in The Liberator, a Black newspaper in Albany (1967) .
- As a member of the Coalition for Effective Code Enforcement in the City of Albany, active in improving the City’s code enforcement procedures (1974).
- Participated in Welfare Lay Advocate program (1975-76).
- Organized and administered the election of tenant representatives to the board of the Albany Housing Authority (beginning in 1976).
- Helped found the Child Care Coalition of the Capital District (1986-87).
- Brought together Albany organizations to work on voter registration, education and "get out the vote" efforts, and a “Power The Vote” town meeting at Albany High School, drawing attention to polling place accessibility for persons with a disability and the importance of encouraging the youth vote. (1996)
- Children at Risk Committee met with the Albany

County Commissioner of Social Services to discuss the potential impact of welfare reform on children and with the Albany County Health Commissioner to discuss the importance of local health services for children.

- Participated in “Tackling Racism in Albany County (TRAC)” a countywide project to discuss the issue of racism in the community (2001-02).
- With the Campaign for Fiscal Equity, hosted a community discussion at Albany High School on civics education in the public schools (2002-03).
- Formally adopted a policy of inclusiveness to enhance the operations of the League and inform its practices affirming the League’s commitment to inclusion and diversity and officially recognized the necessity of diverse perspectives for responsible and representative decision-making (2013).

In 2016, anticipating its 100<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary, the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) began a self-examination to ensure that the League remained relevant and vibrant for the next 100 years. The process included input from leagues across the country, interviews with internal and external stakeholders, and the professional expertise of consulting firms. Based on this process of self-reflection and discussion, the League developed the Transformation Roadmap and presented it to League members at

the 2018 National Convention. A critical priority is Building a More Inclusive Culture with a commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

To assist state and local leagues with the DEI endeavor, LWWUS provided a variety of resources.

- The Ruth S. Shur Fellows, a National coaching team supporting League leadership and members, focused its 2018-2020 program on diversity, equity, and inclusion, worked with participating states, including New York, to develop and execute DEI action plans.
- Through grants to state and local leagues to assist them in using DEI approaches, LWWAC received a \$200 grant for a DEI workshop for the Board and Members.
- LWWUS offered a variety of DEI resources including webinars, podcasts, books, and articles on a range of DEI topics.

At the June 2020 Annual Meeting, the LWWAC Board responded to a Direction to the Board citing the racism of the League's past, and the LWWUS policy of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The Board of Directors unanimously agreed on a public apology for the history that included explicit and implicit racism. "As the beneficiaries of the founders' legacy, and as a step toward reparations, we acknowledge and apologize for the betrayals of the past so that we can move toward our goal of

an inclusive LWVAC.”

To put this commitment into action, the LWVAC Board began a process of self-assessment. During the summer of 2020, LWVAC worked to develop an organizational Action Plan to integrate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion into all the LWVAC’s work. In November 2020, the Albany League’s Board completed a DEI self-assessment tool and adopted the Action Plan. A DEI work group of diverse LWVAC members was convened to focus on implementation.

The DEI Work Group, which began meeting (virtually) in January 2021, works to assist LWVAC to view all efforts through a DEI Lens, to review organizational policies and practices, and to offer opportunities for self-learning and reflection. It works with community partners to achieve LWVAC goals. The Educational Events committee revised the Events Planning form to incorporate the DEI lens and to ensure that educational events incorporate DEI principles.

Today, LWVAC continues to engage in a range of activities supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion. Working with community groups, LWVAC sponsored or participated in several events or campaigns, expanding the League’s reach into under-served communities.

Initiated in 2018 with grants from Humanities NY, in partnership with the Albany Public Library, the League sponsors Reading and Discussion Groups which have recently focused on DEI issues.

The League partnered, beginning in the spring of 2019, with a range of community groups, including the NAACP Albany County, Centro Civico, and Capital Area Urban League, to form the One Person, One Vote Coalition to assist with an accurate census count of all residents and pass an equitable redistricting law.

The League with the Capital Area Council of Churches and the Rockefeller Institute of Government presented “It Takes a Village”—Addressing Gun Violence in November 2021. Participants included Sheriff Craig Apple of Albany, Dr. Alice Green, Executive Director Center for Law & Justice, and Richard Williams of 518 SNUG , a program aimed at reducing gun violence and death.

A League member, Richard Rifkin, currently co-chairs the New York State Criminal Justice Reform Committee, one of the groups that successfully advocated for Turn on the TAP. Turn on the TAP repealed the ban on tuition assistance for incarcerated New Yorkers. It was passed by the New York State Legislature in spring 2022.

The League continues to identify topics for both Annual

Meetings and other events which will support DEI goals and attract diverse audiences and experts. The LWWAC Bulletin now includes the “DEI Bookshelf” which regularly highlights books for those engaged in self-education.



## **Leaders 1922-2022**

### FOUNDERS

Mrs. Joseph Gavit

Mrs. Edmund Huyck

Mrs. Charles Whitney

### COUNTY CHAIRMEN

Mrs. E.V. Colbert

Mrs. David Newland

Mrs. Herbert Cummings

Miss Ethel Van Benthuyssen

Mrs. H. Jackson Davis

### PRESIDENTS

1938-40 Mrs. Frank Ross

1940-42 Margaret Freeman

1942-46 Zoraida Weeks

1946-47 Mrs. George Kenny

1947-50 Audrey Price

1950-52 Betty Jane Mayersohn  
1952-54 Gladys Newell  
1954-57 Annette Ungerman  
1957-60 Lois Dillon  
1960-62 Maryanna Muntz  
1962-63 Roseanne Mack  
1963-66 Lorena Abrams  
1966-68 Beatrice Herman  
1968-70 Rita Grossman  
1970-72 Carol Wallace  
1972-74 Ann Brandon  
1974-76 Roxy Smith  
1976-78 Marggie Skinner  
1978-80 Phyllis Goldstein  
1980-82 Carol Bullivant  
1982-86 Sally Webb  
1986-88 Susan Richmond  
1988-90 Pat Jukins  
1990-92 Joanne Esposito  
1992-94 Laura Ladd Bierman

1995-1996 Aimee Allaud/Sue Secor  
1996-1999 Karen Bonventre  
1999 - 2001 Carol Saginaw  
2001 - 2003 Melanie Trimble  
2003 - 2005 Courtney Burke  
2005 - 2007 Marggie Skinner/Audrey Kibrick  
2007 - 2009 Lori Keegan-Brady/Maggie Moehringer  
2009 - 2011 Ann Brandon  
2011 - 2012 Mary Berry  
2013 – 2015 Lois Griffin  
2015 – 2016 Paula Philo/Margaret Danes  
2016 – 2018 Margaret Danes  
2018 -- 2022 Patricia Sibilia  
2022 -- current MaryKate Owens

## **Thank You!**

We thank Lorena Abrams, and Aimee Allaud, League Historians, and the members of the League of Women Voters of Albany County for summarizing some of our many accomplishments to create the 100 year timeline. We also thank all of the members who provided their personal recollections, as well as Joanne Shawhan of the LWVAC's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee for the "DEI" section.

## **Editors**

Aimee Allaud, Christine Deyss, MaryKate Owens, Joanne Shawhan, Marggie Skinner and the members of the LWVAC, 2022.

1<sup>st</sup> Printing November 2022

Cover Art by John E. Bartz

Relative size and font represent population  
distribution in Albany County as of the 2020  
census.

Municipality	Population	% of Total
Altamont	1,676	0.50%
Rensselaerville	1,828	0.54%
Knox	2,638	0.78%
Berne	2,693	0.80%
Voorheesville	2,844	0.85%
Green Island	2,945	0.88%
Westerlo	3,197	0.95%
Ravena	3,276	0.97%
Menands	4,557	1.36%
Coeymans	7,276	2.16%
Village of Colonie	7,789	2.32%
New Scotland	9,108	2.71%
Watervliet	10,418	3.10%
Cohoes	18,210	5.42%
Bethlehem	35,056	10.43%
Guilderland	36,875	10.97%
Town of Colonie	85,693	25.49%
Albany	100,142	29.78%











**Empowering Voters.  
Defending Democracy.**

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
Of ALBANY COUNTY**

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