



## **2021-2022 PROGRAM**

The LWVW is committed to the principles of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). We commit to evaluating all activities with a DEI "lens," meaning with regard to how that event or process is perceived by a variety of communities, voices, and perspectives. We will look for, and strive to eliminate, the presence of barriers that prevent the project/event/policy from being equitable or inclusive of everyone.

### **VOTER SERVICE**

Prepare, publish and distribute nonpartisan information on registration, voting, candidates, ballot issues and elections with consideration of diversity, equity and inclusion best practices. In all endeavors, collect data to evaluate our programs.

### **OUTLOOK FOR WORK**

1. Coordinate, conduct, and/or review voter registration actions and provide education services when requested.
2. Increase GOTV (Get Out The Vote) efforts county wide and through local leagues.
3. Work with Westchester Board of Elections to publicize and facilitate election law reforms and any other changes to voting made necessary by COVID19.
4. Educate regarding election law referenda on the November ballot.
5. Plan and sponsor candidate events for countywide offices. Make adjustments to virtual meetings as necessary for COVID19 response.
6. Coordinate gathering of candidate night information by local Leagues for inclusion in the *Voter's Guide* and *vote411.org*.
7. Utilize and promote the *Vote411.org* website as an on-line service for voters in Westchester County for the Primary Elections and in the General Election.
8. Coordinate efforts to gather race and candidate information for vote411; administer County Vote411 account; and prepare and distribute the printed *Voters Guide*.
9. Coordinate League participation at Naturalization Court to welcome and distribute voter information to new citizens.
10. Continue as a liaison to, and support for, the Fair Campaign Practices Committee for Westchester County.
11. Continue development of existing voter education programs designed for the public's enhancement of civic understanding and participation.
12. Coordinate with LWVNY and LWVUS efforts on redistricting reform as well as with our own redistricting committee.
13. Use data and analytics to be more strategic in our planning for voter registration, GOTV and candidate events.

## **ISSUES**

The order of the following items does not denote priority and thus leaves the League (LWVW) the flexibility to act as situations warrant.

### **I. COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

#### **A. BUDGET**

Review, analyze, and take action on the Westchester County budget as a fundamental tool for implementing County government policy with particular emphasis on League positions.

#### **OUTLOOK FOR WORK**

1. Search for and monitor progress on the recommendations we have made in past budget statements.
2. Continue to monitor the budget adoption process, with emphasis on the interaction between the executive and legislative branches of County government.
3. Urge improvements in the format of the County operating and capital budgets to ensure a better understanding by the general public.
4. Critically examine both the operating and capital budgets as soon as they are available, enlisting all available avenues of information gathering, with continuing attention to estimated revenue streams, such as sales tax forecasts, and paying particular attention to funding of pension costs and union contract settlements. Focus on the impact of proposed allocations on existing government programs and services on which the LWVW has particular positions. These would include, but would not be limited to, our support of fair and affordable housing; our particular concern for the work done by the Board of Elections; and our continuing encouragement of County support of essential human services, the environment, and infrastructure.

#### **B. EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE BRANCHES**

Monitor and take action on the operation of the Westchester County Government with particular attention to all matters that affect issues with which LWVW is concerned, financial matters, the election process and the items listed below.

#### **OUTLOOK FOR WORK**

1. In collaboration with the Voter Service committee, help educate voters on where and how to vote, make recommendations for modernization of the voting systems. Review and act on relevant LWVNY positions, including that which would prevent Elections Commissioners from simultaneously serving as heads of their respective political parties. Discuss with the Board of Elections issues and possible problems in relation to voting reform.
2. Support redistricting processes and enforceable standards that promote fair and effective representation at all levels of government with maximum opportunity for public participation. Take an active role, in collaboration with LWVUS, LWVNY, and LWVW Voter Service, regarding redistricting measures that would preserve municipal boundaries, standards of compactness, and contiguity that would be consistent with federal requirements for population equality, with consideration of diversity, equity, and inclusion best practices.
3. Work to promote county-wide revaluation, supporting those municipalities and

communities that have been undertaking reassessments and urge others to do the same. Educate the public on the many merits of regularly updating property tax assessments in order to achieve a more transparent and equitable system.

4. Assess any moves to consolidate municipalities and/or municipal services, applying the LWVNY criteria of 2009.
5. Lend support to items recommended in 2013, but not legislatively adopted, by the Charter Revision Commission on which we reached consensus. This includes the appointment, rather than the election, of the County Clerk.
6. Follow the progress of Playland's overall development, including contracts.
7. Monitor County environmental initiatives that impact our air quality, energy use, land use, waste management, and water quality.

### **C. HOUSING AND LAND USE**

Evaluate and take action on land use, with particular emphasis on the development of housing of all types in collaboration with the Environmental Committee. This includes a renewed emphasis on participation with local Leagues.

#### **OUTLOOK FOR WORK**

1. Although future development in Housing and Land Use is uncertain within the County (as this is being written), every effort will be made to become current on projects in various phases of development prior to cessation due to the Coronavirus pandemic, with updates provided, as in the past.
2. Track the County's 2019 Housing Needs Assessment and its analytical use by the Housing Opportunity Commission, with particular attention to encouraging development that affirmatively furthers fair housing (AFFH) throughout Westchester.
3. Beyond the Court-approved final closure of the Consent Decree/Housing Settlement Agreement of 2010, advocate for further development of fair and affordable housing. Identify all income groups by for-profit and not-for-profit developers at a level comparable to that of the years in the County prior to the Federal lawsuit.
4. In conjunction with the LWVW's County Budget Committee, continue to advocate for increased support of staffing in the County's Planning Department, so that such programs as Community Development Block Grants funding and Section 8 voucher support are adequately provided for despite the many other demands made on that department.
5. Encourage more engagement of local boards and agencies dealing with land use and housing.
6. Continue to access the progress of the Board of Legislators Labor & Housing Committee and Housing Opportunity Commission.

### **II. ENVIRONMENT**

Urgently promote an environment beneficial to life through the wise management of natural resources in the public interest by recognizing the interrelationships of air quality, energy, land use, waste management and protection of water resources.

#### **OUTLOOK FOR WORK**

1. Further develop the new Committee on the Environment to:

- a. Work with LWVNY to declare a climate emergency and lobby for legislation to further mitigation efforts.
  - b. Support municipal efforts to reduce their emissions via public educational campaigns and workshops.
  - c. Work with youth to help them in their environmental outreach efforts.
2. Through the LWVW annual County budget review process, promote the care, acquisition and preservation of open space by the County that will not compete with land for fair and affordable housing.
3. Monitor and take action on any proposals that impact stormwater and wastewater treatment and management.
4. Promote public education on environmental issues with emphasis on water quality, stormwater and wastewater treatment and management including septic systems and on renewable energy.
5. Take action on climate change, paying special attention to: greenhouse gas emissions; alternative energy resources and conservation; electric cars, buses and charging stations; building codes; an effective countywide septic management plan; Indian Point Nuclear Plant decommissioning; the siting, safety and expansion of pipelines and compressor stations; the Westchester County Airport; Playland; Army Corps of Engineers Hudson River storm barrier project; and US Coast Guard regulation of barges parked in the Hudson.
6. Support measures to improve environmental management and legislation by county government.
7. Monitor meetings of the Board of Legislature's committees in relation to the environment.
8. Promote environmentally and economically sound food scrap collection, recycling and composting in Westchester County.
9. Promote accessibility to the Internet, especially to underserved communities as well as safety issues in siting towers.

### **III. WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S ISSUES**

Monitor and take action on issues concerning women's and children's development, health, safety and welfare in coordination with LWVNY.

#### **OUTLOOK FOR WORK**

1. Support initiatives aimed toward improving women's and children's access to healthcare and safety measures in cooperation with other organizations and coalitions dedicated to these goals, including gun control regulations and measures to counteract human trafficking, sexual abuse and harassment.
2. Support efforts at the county level to implement the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), as adopted by the County Board of Legislators on May 19, 2020. The Westchester Human Rights Commission has been tasked with this but needs a coalition of women's advocates to assist in implementation.
3. Work in coordination with the county budget review to examine funding for programs promoting women's and children's health and safety issues, with particular emphasis on funding libraries, after-school programs, health clinics and day-care services.

4. Support and alert members to childcare initiatives to improve availability and quality of services with particular concern for the disabled.
5. Act as a liaison between public officials and the LWVW and remain informed on proposed or contemplated legislation. Lobby legislators as appropriate.

#### **IV. HEALTH CARE**

Gather and disseminate information, as needed, about the structure, functions and initiatives at the county, state and national levels of our health care system. Track the progress of key legislative bills, with action alerts in accordance with League positions. Maintain contact with the groups working to improve health care and make recommendations in regard to cooperating with such groups to co-sponsor their events.

#### **OUTLOOK FOR WORK**

1. Promote single-payer, universal health care and grassroots public awareness of its benefits. Hold public forums, lobby lawmakers in Albany, write op-ed article and letters-to-the-editor, collect signatures on petitions, make presentations to community groups and work together with the Campaign for New York Health, advocating for the New York Health single-payer bill.
2. Monitor a number of health care concerns such as: the allocation of medical resources to underserved areas, health promotion and disease prevention, school-based health services, women's health issues such as women's rights for freedom of choice, cuts to the Tobacco Control Program, end-of-life issues, pain management, long-term care and prescription drug expenses.
3. Work to implement the provisions of the newly approved LWNYS Update of our positions on Healthcare and Healthcare Financing, which call for separation of health insurance from employment, safe staffing, affordable universal access, equity, an expanded definition of essential care services, and long-term care.

#### **V. DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION**

LWVW is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to the organization's current and future success in engaging all individuals, households, communities, and policy makers in creating a more perfect democracy.

There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, gender identity, ethnicity, race, native or indigenous origin, age, generation, sexual orientation, culture, religion, belief system, marital status, parental status, socioeconomic status, language, accent, ability status, mental health, educational level or background, geography, nationality, work style, work experience, job role function, thinking style, personality type, physical appearance, political perspective or affiliation and/or any other characteristic that can be identified as recognizing or illustrating diversity

#### **OUTLOOK FOR WORK**

1. Develop and implement a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion learning journey, from a variety of resources, for county and local League board members. DEI programs can be made available to the membership as deemed appropriate.

2. Develop a DEI Plan of Action:
  - a. Coordinate, conduct, and engage in conversations to become familiar with issues affecting communities of color; multilingual communities; multicultural communities; disabled persons; non-gender persons; multi-generations; and others if decided.
  - b. Once issues are identified, advocate for solutions to disparities.
  - c. Utilize LWVUS, LWNYS, and other resources.
3. Normalize conversations about all DEI communities, sponsoring and hosting educational programs and discussions, and speaking out about issues as they arise. Strive to build community relationships and collaborate with other community organizations.
4. Transform membership of LWVW to be more representative of the Westchester County general population.
  - a. Analyze Westchester County demographics, County Census 2020 data; voter registration and election turnout metrics
  - b. After analysis, determine people, organizations, groups to target.
  - c. Develop networking strategies in order to build relationships.
  - d. Encourage all LWVW Board members to forge relationships by inviting diverse peoples to informal meetings (ie, a Zoom or in-person coffee, or a phone chat) to actively listen and learn about them, share your experiences, talk about LWVW advocacies and programs, and determine if there is opportunity for collaboration. Make introductions to local leagues' Membership Chairs.

## **VI. YOUTH CORPS**

The League of Women Voters of Westchester Youth Corps encourages youth to become active and informed participants in government and to ensure that young adult voices are heard. The Youth Corps is inviting young adults and high school students to participate in its new 2021 Action Plan.

## **OUTLOOK FOR WORK**

1. Run Voter Registration drives at local college campuses and high schools.
2. Run Get Out the Vote educational and promotional drives.
3. Organize LWVW “chapters” on local college campuses.
4. Boost social media messaging on important and emerging issues.
5. Sponsor Running and Winning and explore involvement in other similar programs.
6. Sponsor student(s) to attend the LWNYS’s Students Inside Albany program.
7. Join other LWVW committees: County Government; Environment; and Voter Service.
8. Coordinate with other youth groups across the state for relevant opportunities as part of the burgeoning state NYICI (New York Youth Civics Initiative) program.