

THE VOICE



Newsletter for the LWVLC Spring 2026 Edition

Edited by: Erika Hofgesang

A Note from Erika Hofgesang, Director-at-Large:

When “Politics” Hit Home

Last Valentine’s Day was the happiest day of my entire life.

It wasn’t my wedding or graduation, but the day my husband finally became an American citizen. It was also the day I found the League of Women Voters.

My husband and I met ten years ago while studying in London, England. I was taking an immersive communications course and he, a native Englishman, was studying to become a veterinarian. We dated long distance, married long distance, and the rest is history.

Unprecedented history, that is.

When most people would be picking table linens and florals, we were putting a down payment on an immigration lawyer in NYC. Our case was simple and uncomplicated, but it was 2019 and hundreds of executive actions related to immigration were muddying the waters. Experts were confused. The courts were confused. Policymakers were confused. And similarly confused applicants were encouraged to pay thousands of dollars for immigration lawyers to help ensure their petitions were filed correctly. (continued on page 2 and 3)

We navigated the system, a pandemic, a permanent resident visa, and a whole new presidency before finding ourselves facing a second Trump presidential term just as we hoped to secure my husband's citizenship.

On Valentine's Day 2025 my husband and I arrived at the courthouse in New Haven with our friends and family in tow. The legislative chaos ran so deep that not even our lawyer was certain we'd be permitted into the ceremony due to a federal clerical error.

Spoiler alert: we were on the list! As we sat in the courtroom surrounded by other nervous families, a woman in purple made her way to the front and greeted us warmly. She explained she was a volunteer with the League of Women Voters and that after the ceremony concluded, our naturalized friends and family would be permitted to register to vote in federal, state, and local elections. Remaining nonpartisan, this volunteer stressed the importance of exercising this new constitutional right. She answered questions as she handed out voter registration materials and congratulated each applicant.

In that moment, her genuine kindness struck me, and inspired me to join my local League. In the last year, I've taken on our newsletter and social media, and volunteered alongside a group of people who restore my faith and revitalize my hope for a thriving democracy. I love the open conversations we have, the community events we host, and our focus on voter education.

And as we pass the one-year-mark for my husband's citizenship anniversary and my membership with the League, I find myself troubled by those who still believe their daily lives aren't affected by "politics".

For my little family, every immigration bill is unsettling, and any unexpected federal email is nerve-wracking. My heart dropped when I learned of the [United States Citizenship and Immigration Services \(USCIS\) abrupt voter registration ban](#) in November. Despite decades-long collaboration with local nonpartisan civic groups like The League of Women Voters, the DHS and USCIS now allow "only **government officials** to provide voter registration to new citizens after certain naturalization ceremonies."

In Connecticut, naturalization ceremonies are judicial, so our local leagues are still permitted to volunteer. But I can't stop thinking of all the other places where volunteers have been forced out from doing what they love, and new citizens like my husband may not have access to adequate voter registration services (or a friendly face) on such an important day. (con't)

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I recognize not everyone is confronted as clearly as I am with the ways “politics” affect their daily lives. But just because they don’t see it, or don’t wish to see it, doesn’t mean it isn’t happening around them. How affordable is your town? Your groceries? Your utility bills? Can you drink the tap water? What about the schools? How many students are in each classroom? Can you visit an ER without worrying about the bill?

So many aspects of our lives are influenced by the local, state, and federal systems we’re surrounded by. For many, the challenges we face feel unique to us, scary, and insurmountable. But all is not lost. **Action is the antidote to anxiety**, and getting more deeply involved in “political” systems might offer the opportunity to create change from the inside.

Call it fate, dumb luck or irony, but the happiest day of my life was also one of the most politically charged and I owe a lot to that stranger in the purple shirt.

She probably had no idea how much her presence mattered that morning, or how deeply it would stay with me. But in a room full of nervous families, she showed us what American civic engagement looks like at its best: welcoming and deeply human.

Her kindness reminded me that democracy doesn’t sustain itself. It depends on ordinary people who choose to show up. I hope that someday, on someone else’s important day, I can be the friendly face that reminds them they belong here too.

— **Erika Hofgesang, Director-at-Large**

Opportunities for Involvement

A small way to make a real difference

The League's work happens in steady, practical ways. If you've been wondering how to get involved, here are a few roles that are flexible, meaningful, and supported. Some are occasional. Some are ongoing. All make a difference.



Voter Services

Help voters get the information they need.

Gather candidate information for Vote411, help organize forums or community conversations, support voter registration drives, and assist with event logistics. This role can be hands-on during election season or occasional throughout the year.

If you care about informed participation and like practical, behind-the-scenes work, this is a meaningful place to plug in.

Events & Programs

Create civic hospitality.

Support gatherings like Steeped in Story, Stirred to Action and the Legislative Breakfast. Help shape the experience, welcome guests, or think through the details that make a community event feel warm and purposeful.



Town Ambassador

Be our local connector.

Stay in light touch with your town's Registrars or clerk, help gather candidate information for Vote411, and keep us posted on civic happenings. A few emails each season can go a long way.

Opportunities for Involvement

Membership & Outreach

Help people find their place.

Welcome new members, follow up after events, or connect someone to a role that fits their interests. If you enjoy thoughtful conversation and gentle follow-up, this work is deeply impactful.



Director-at-Large

Join the board. Help guide the work.

Commit to attending our monthly board meetings on the first Wednesday of each month at 9:30 a.m., either at the Litchfield Community Center or on Zoom. Directors at Large contribute ideas, help shape priorities, and support the League's overall direction.

We've defended democracy for
106 YEARS



We're not stopping now. **LWV** LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CONNECTICUT

Advocacy Awareness

Stay curious and help us stay informed.

Track a local or state issue the League is following and share clear, nonpartisan updates with the group. No megaphone required, just clarity and care.

Do any of these roles pique your interest?

Are you looking to get more involved in 2026?

Reach out to
charlottejv@gmail.com

Upcoming Events

Register for upcoming events and find more information at <https://litchfieldlww.org/upcoming>.

Spring Tea & Scholarship Fundraiser

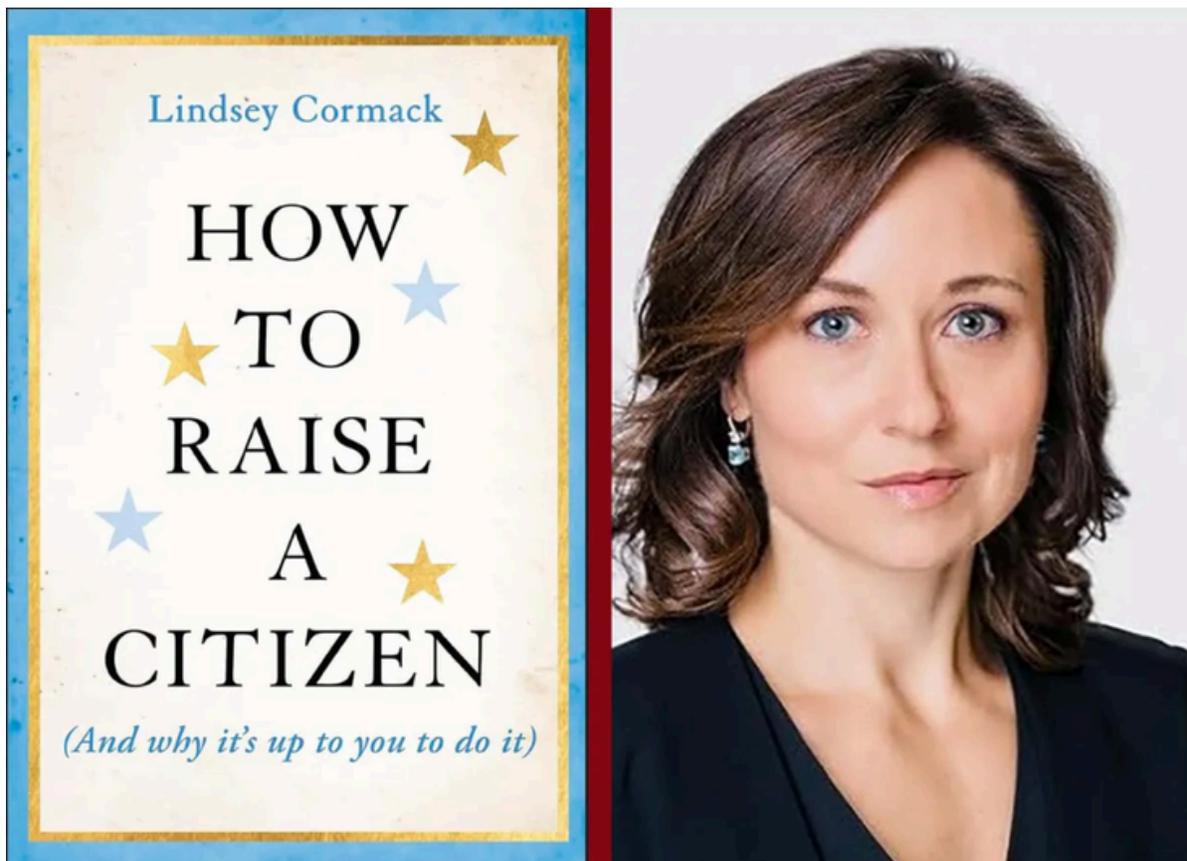
Saturday, April 25th at 3-4:30pm, Christ Church in Bethlehem

Buy a ticket to enjoy tea, treats, and conversation with professor Lindsey Cormack, author of "How to Raise a Citizen". Proceeds support the scholarships awarded to Litchfield County high school seniors through our Education Fund.

LWVLC Annual Meeting

Wed, June 3rd at 6:30pm, The Litchfield Community Center

All members are welcome! We will review the year and take a look at future programs and initiatives. We are also looking for donations of cheese, crackers, cookies, or chocolates.



Past Event Recaps

2026 Legislative Breakfast

In February we hosted another successful Legislative Breakfast at Camp Coch. We were thrilled at the turnout and conversation, with more than fifty visitors asking legislators questions that ranged from the safety of our election process in CT, to affordable daycare, to taxes, and more. Thank you to Senators Stephen Harding and Paul Honig, and Representatives John Piscopo, Karen Reddington-Hughes, and Maria Horn for their participation and thoughtful answers. Special thanks to our moderator Christine Horrigan and our Hospitality Coordinator Diane Ryan for keeping us fed and informed!



2026 Legislative Breakfast



Our Visit to SUFFS the Musical

In January, our Vice President Charlotte organized a trip to The Bushnell to see Tony-award-winning SUFFS the musical. Our League members and friends enjoyed the fun, historically accurate performance and a discussion with co-producer Ari Conte afterwards. Thank you to Ari and Charlotte for organizing!



Community Constitution Reading

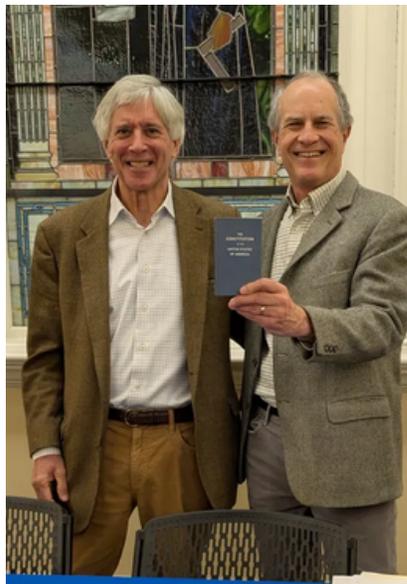
**The United States
Constitution**
**A COMMUNITY READ
AND CONVERSATION**

250 Ben A. Solnit
Richard Quay

**WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3
6:30 M**
LITCHFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY
TEA AND COOKIE RECEPTION TO FOLLOW

REGISTER WITH LHS AT
WWW.LITCHFIELDHISTORICALSOCIETY.ORG/

LITCHFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY
LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS'
OF LITCHFIELD COUNTY



In December 2025 we partnered with the Litchfield Historical Society to host a community reading and conversation centered on the US Constitution.

Thank you for Ben and Richard for your knowledge and expertise! We appreciate you both!

YOUR 25-26 LWVLC BOARD



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Vice President**



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**Erika Hofgesang,
Newsletter & Social Media**



**Patti Hamaguchi,
Website & Play**

**We have open
positions!**

**If you're interested in
taking on a role,
please reach out to
LWVofLC@gmail.com**

“It Wasn’t That Long Ago…”

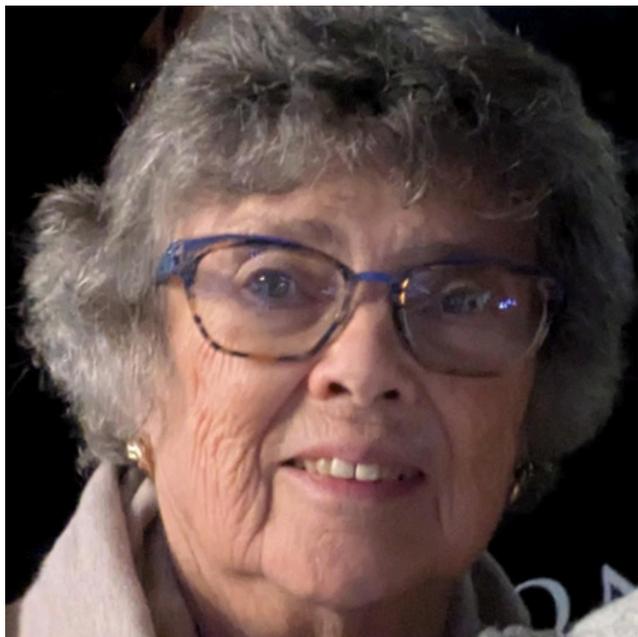
One of the interesting aspects of our local League is the age diversity amongst our members. We are multi-generational with folks in their 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s and beyond! At a recent meeting, our longstanding members shared that many of the rights and privileges we enjoy today (and even take for granted) didn't exist in their adolescence and adulthood.

We were inspired to **invite members to share their “it wasn’t that long ago when..” stories** to pay homage to the hard-fought and hard-won progress.

Vote Today, Shape Tomorrow!

“It’s hard to believe now when we see women in Congress and women running for president, but I remember when Bella Abzug ran for office in 1970. Her campaign slogan was “This woman's place is in the House—the House of Representatives”. At the time there were 11 women in the House, now there are 125.

It is not uncommon now to see women in the armed services but in 1972 my sister was discharged from the Marines because she got married!



While working for a major brokerage firm I was tasked with obtaining insurance licenses for our sales force. Imagine my shock when several southern states told me married women would need permission from their husbands.

And it was not too long ago when abortions were performed in kitchens. Roe passed in 1973, and it is already being rolled back. We must be vigilant and protect our hard-won rights. — **Patricia Donovan**

Don’t miss a minute of the action

All 2025 debates and forums were streamed live on Youtube and are publicly available on our channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@LWVofLC/streams>

Newsletter Feedback

We value your feedback! Please send any comments, suggestions, or contributions for the next newsletter to Erika at ehofgesang@yahoo.com or our club email, LWVofLC@gmail.com

Follow us

Website: <https://litchfieldlww.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LitchfieldLWV/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/lwvoflc/>

View our League Google Calendar, perhaps add it to your own calendar

<https://calendar.google.com/calendar/u/0?cid=bHd2b2ZsY0BnbWFpC5jb20>

About Us

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization dedicated to encouraging informed and active participation in government.

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