

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF LITCHFIELD COUNTY

THE VOICE



Newsletter for the LWVLC Summer 2025 Edition

Edited by: Erika Hofgesang

A Note from our President Denise Butwill:

Hello League Members,

What a great Annual Meeting we had! I share the excitement of my fellow board members about the growth our club and board are experiencing. I think our new Vice President Charlotte's remarks truly hit the nail on the head—you can read her comments in this issue.

Our core mission remains: to encourage informed participation in our government. To that end, we are:

- **Exploring a program promoting the reading of the U.S. Constitution,**
- **Populating VOTE411 with information for our local municipal elections,**
- **Conducting a study on Regional School Boards, with a focus on how board members are elected**
- **Organizing our ever-popular Legislative Breakfast.**

On a more fun and educational note, we're looking forward to the local production of "Rebel with a Red Shawl", a play written by our very own Patti Hamaguchi. This fundraiser celebrates the roots of the suffrage movement—Susan B. Anthony is the "Rebel with the Red Shawl."



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The upcoming municipal elections promise to be eventful. There will be a contest for Litchfield First Selectperson and a possible primary in Goshen for the same position. We'll need your help to ensure races in your towns are included in VOTE411 and to determine which candidate debates make the most sense to host.

Enjoy these hazy, hot days of summer. It's important for each of us to take time for rest and rejuvenation—even as we stay informed and engaged.

Democracy is NOT a Spectator Sport.

— Denise Butwill, LWVLC President

YOUR 25-26 LWVLC BOARD



Denise Butwill, President



**Charlotte Jones Voiklis,
Vice President**



**Kris Durante,
Recording Secretary**



**Diane Ryan, Hospitality &
Corresponding Secretary**



Erin Strouse, Scholarship



**Marie Pettibone,
Data Collection & Email**



**Erika Hofgesang,
The Voice Newsletter**



**Patti Hamaguchi,
Website & Play**

**We have open
positions!**

**If you're interested
in becoming a
Member-at-Large,
please reach out!**

Upcoming Events

Democracy in Your Hands Series | June – October 2025

Five trainings in five key topics, outlining how Leagues can activate and mobilize their communities in this rapidly changing political environment. Find the upcoming agenda and more information on each session at events.lwv.org.

Region 20 Study Group

Details to be announced.

Voter Registration Drives

Saturday, August 23, 10am - 1pm

New Student's Day - Voter Registration

Atrium at the Naugatuck Valley Community College

Wednesday, September 17, 11am - 1pm

Constitution Day - Voter Registration

Cafe West at the Naugatuck Valley Community College

Rebel with a Red Shawl / 250 CT programming

Details to be announced.

2026 Annual Legislative Breakfast

Details to be announced.



Opportunities for Involvement

Vote 411 Town Ambassador: Help us determine the races happening in your town! We have all materials prepared, and are looking for someone to complete outreach. Please reach out to Denise if you are Interested

Vote 411: We're also looking for one person to coordinate the population of 411. Using a prepared list, you would contact members to help get VOTE411 populated for this fall's municipal elections. Please reach out to Denise if you are Interested!



Vote 411



Renewal Reminder!

Anyone that joined the League more than a year ago is due to renew their membership.

Starting in January we went to rolling membership, rather than everyone expiring on June 30th. Log into the LWV portal to check on your expiration date, or to renew your membership. If you would rather renew by check there are directions on our website.



● Voter Registration Volunteers

Our first two Voter Registration Drives are scheduled! If you would like to volunteer to work one of these dates, let Denise know!

Saturday, August 23, 10am - 1pm
New Student's Day - Voter Registration
Atrium at the Naugatuck Valley Community College

Wednesday, September 17, 11am - 1pm
Constitution Day - Voter Registration
Cafe West at the Naugatuck Valley Community College

Past Event Recaps

LWV Federal Judiciary Study

After a year of work, study, and input, the League's Statement of Position on the Federal Judiciary, was announced by the national board, June 2025. The goals were:

- To develop a LWV position on the Federal Judiciary as an essential component of US democracy.
- Address concerns and clarifying judicial accountability, transparency, independence, and ethics.

To download the full study, copy and paste the following link:

<https://www.lwv.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/LWVUS%20POSITION%20ON%20THE%20FEDERAL%20JUDICIARY.%20Final.pdf>

Steeped in Story, Stirred to Action:

In April we held a spring tea to support the LWVLC Education Fund, which provides scholarships to Litchfield County high school seniors.

Our own Charlotte Jones Voiklis—author and granddaughter of local author Madeleine L'Engle—was joined in conversation with Erin Strouse, our Scholarship Committee Chair.

Together we explored the power of books to shape civic imagination, the history of censorship, and how we support the next generation of brave thinkers and readers.





May Day Demonstrations

On May 1st, we marched for justice, dignity, and equity. We joined together on the Litchfield Green to celebrate International Workers' Day and honor the power of workers, immigrants, and communities fighting for justice. The turnout? 110+ local citizens, musicians, and even a few sweet dogs!



Morris Election Support

Denise, Marjorie, Margaret, and Judi met the residents of the Eldridge Senior Housing complex in Morris during the election of a Tenant Commissioner to the Morris Housing Authority. 18 of 19 eligible voters cast ballots.

Congratulations to Debbie Lafreniere on being elected to the position of Tenant Commissioner to the Morris Housing Authority.

Our 2025 Scholarship Winners

Congratulations to the winners of the 2025 League of Women Voters of Litchfield County's Elaine Landau Memorial Scholarship.

Tess Marks and Gabriela Titone are both graduating seniors this year at Housatonic Valley Regional High School, and their essays on "what It means to be an Informed voter" earned them first and second place respectively.

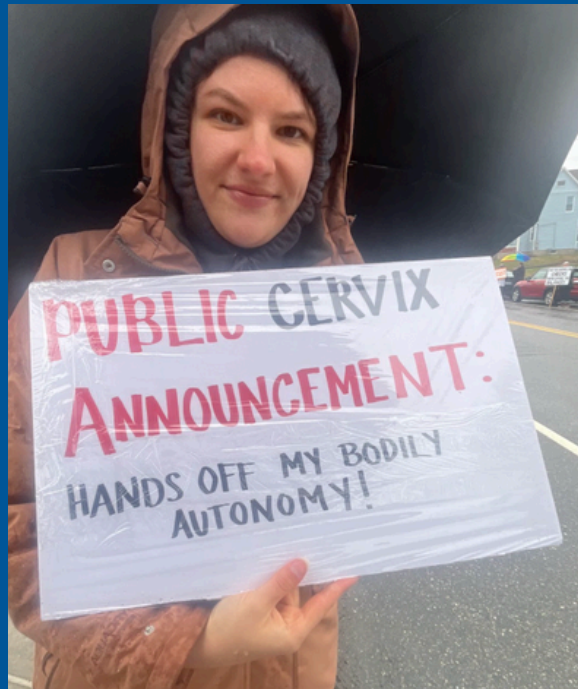
To read their full essays, copy and paste the following link:

<https://litchfieldlww.org/scholarship-program>



Hands off Demonstrations

The Hands Off protests were a series of demonstrations on April 5, 2025 that became the largest one-day, nationwide display of public resistance. There were 1,400 locations across the U.S. drawing up to an estimated three to five million participants nationwide according to the demonstration organizers. The protests involved a coalition of over 150 progressive, labor union, pro-democracy, civil rights, LGBTQ+, and women's rights groups.



WELCOME TO OUR NEW LWVLC MEMBERS

We'd like to extend a warm welcome to our newest members! Since March 1, 2025 we've welcomed Linda Bianowicz, Carolyn Casey, Susan Clarkin, Sunday Fisher, Marcia Fisher, Lynn Fulkerson, Anita Holmes, Colleen Kisselburgh, Mary Madore-Hickey, Joyce Mowrey, Siena Nguyen, Cara Nguyen, MaryAnn Poinelli, Candace Schenk, and more!



Marcia Fowler, Litchfield: I have been a Litchfield resident since 2006. I worked as a Market Manager for Herman Miller, retired in 2024 and am embracing volunteer work. I've been on the Board of the Litchfield Land Trust since 2017 and recently became the President of LLT. I'm also a member of the Litchfield Conservation Commission and a Board member/Adoption Coordinator at Animal Rescue Foundation. I'm looking forward to working with the League!



Danielle Sullo, Oakville: As a lifelong learner, I consider myself an activist. When we know better, we do better. I believe that continuous curiosity and access to knowledge and growth are crucial for a healthy society. I am in my fifteenth year of teaching and am proud of the diversity among my teaching experiences. I began my career as an English instructor at the high school and college level, and following my curiosity, then became certified in Library Media. As an English teacher and school librarian I have had the opportunity to work both in the classroom and within a school-wide capacity. Helping students find and exercise their voice is part of my life's work. With the combination of English and Library certifications, I have taught in rural, urban, and suburban schools, from the level of PreK through college, both public and private. I am now a middle school Humanities teacher at Washington Montessori School and am learning how peace education, grace, and courtesy can be change agents in a society that so desperately needs it. I am so fortunate to have had these varied experiences to understand how teaching and learning is happening within different contexts. Teaching and learning is directly correlated with civic participation- curious, engaged community-oriented, civically conscious citizens committed to leaving the world a bit better than we found it can change the world. We have work to do; we all do. I am especially interested in student outreach and the scholarship committee and look forward to my LWVLC participation in that way.

**Have you joined the
League in the last
6-12 months?**

**Share your bio with
LWVofLC@gmail.com
to be featured!**

A Note from our Vice President , Charlotte Jones Voiklis...

Charlotte was unable to attend our annual meeting last month, and her son Kosta read this wonderful note in her absence.

I'm sorry I can't be here with you in person today, but I'm incredibly grateful to my son for standing in for me, and in a way, I think it's quite fitting.

Because one of the things I want to say is this: the League isn't just for women. It's not just for any one generation, political background, or stage of life. It's for anyone who believes that participation matters — in voting, in local government, in community life.

That includes young people. It includes men. It includes people who might not see themselves in a group like this — but who belong here all the same.

I only joined the League a year ago. My first meeting was last year's annual meeting. If this is your first time here, I want you to know: you can step up today. You can join the board. We need you.

I joined because I was deeply concerned — about threats to fundamental democratic structures, about voter suppression, about how hard it's become to separate fact from spin. But I stayed because I found something that helped me move through that concern: taking action.

Not just voting, but showing up. Organizing voter registration drives. Attending candidate forums. Talking with neighbors. Helping others understand how local government actually works.

And doing that alongside people who care about those things too — even if we don't all agree on every issue.

Because we don't have to. The League is nonpartisan. We don't endorse candidates. But we do believe that democracy works better when more people participate — and that informed voters are essential to that process.

That's the work we do. And we need more people to do it with us. So if you've been thinking about getting involved — or if you know someone who's been feeling discouraged or unsure of how to help — invite them to a League event. Tell them what we're about. Let them know there's room for them.

Whether it's helping out at a voter table, keeping track of town meetings, greeting newcomers, or just asking good questions — there's a place for all of us.

The year ahead will bring plenty of challenges. But I believe we're ready for them — not because we all think the same way, but because we care enough to act.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for stepping up. I'm honored to be your incoming vice president, and I'm looking forward to all that we'll do together.

— Charlotte Jones Voiklis,
Vice President LWVLC

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://litchfieldlwv.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=bHd2b2ZsY0BnbWFpbC5jb20>

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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