



WHITE PAPER ON CIVIC EDUCATION

League of Women Voters of New Jersey Education Committee

INTRODUCTION

This white paper on Civic Education has been developed by the League of Women Voters of New Jersey Education Committee as a resource for local Leagues when they interact with the public in schools or voter outreach activities, and when representing the League to other civic organizations.

The goal of this white paper is to expand outreach opportunities by providing the resources our local Leagues need to create their own outreach activities. This white paper is divided into the following sections to assist Leagues in their outreach efforts

- The goals of effective civic education programs
- What local Leagues in New Jersey can be doing and saying publicly about civic education
- What advocacy means and how it differs from partisan activities
- How local Leagues can move beyond registering 17-year-olds and others, to supporting them as they become informed and engaged citizens
- A glossary of terms related to New Jersey government structures and League policies
- A list of useful resources
- Some suggested engagement projects and activities.

This is not a course in civic education. Our goal is to provide guidance for local Leagues as they discuss the electoral process and how governments are structured and organized. As a League, we need to help potential voters understand how the voting process works and why it is important to vote. We also need to help people understand the importance of being civically engaged to 1) to understand laws and policies under consideration and passed; 2) monitor policymakers' actions once they are in office; and 3) consider running for office themselves.

We have attempted to define civic education both within schools and in local communities. Discussions take place not only in schools, but in a wide range of public venues. This document will provide resources to assist Leagues as they seek to develop or enhance school-based programs and effective voter outreach education and programs aimed at adults. We have also incorporated information collected by Ilene Kahn, co-chair of the League of

Women Voters of New Jersey Voters Services Coalition concerning current local League programs. This reference can be found in the resources section at the end of this white paper.

All League activities must support our DEI policies. We must always be welcoming and supportive in our interactions with diverse individuals and be willing to make any adaptations in our materials and presentations to accommodate any special needs. League members should be especially welcoming to individuals who have not grown up in the United States, who may have lived under a different governmental structure and organization, and who may be more comfortable interacting in a language other than English. Our outreach must be inclusive of those who may have physical, mental, or emotional conditions. All people must be treated with respect, and their opinions and voices valued.

Over the last century, one of the most essential roles played by the League of Women Voters involves civic engagement: preparing, supporting, and informing voters whenever and wherever we find them. Civic education is the process we use to accomplish these tasks. The primary goal of civic education is to help citizens recognize and exercise the rights, responsibilities and duties described in the Constitution. LWV accomplishes its mission in many ways. We encourage responsible citizenship by informing voters about:

- Candidates' positions when we host voter forums and debates
- The voting process when registering voters, and by making certain they know when, how, and why to vote
- Following laws, serving on juries, paying taxes, and caring for others.

In these ways, we hope to encourage habits of mind that will result in all individuals becoming life-long activists and voters. Each time we host a voter registration drive at a school, community celebration, farmers market, or other community venues, or each time we conduct a candidate forum or debate, reach out to unregistered voters, including the formerly incarcerated who are again eligible to vote, we are engaging in our civic duty.

Each level of the League of Women Voters bears different, but related responsibilities. The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) engages citizens in national elections, and in national and international programs, and policies. LWVUS, for example, maintains a permanent observer committee monitoring events at the United Nations and supporting lobbyists who work with members of Congress. The League of Women Voters of New Jersey (LWVNJ) handles policies, elections, and candidate issues within New Jersey. As a current example, since district lines are created by a state commission, LWVNJ is concerned with creating fair congressional and state legislative election districts. Local Leagues address issues at the municipal and county levels to prepare voters for the county, local municipal, and school board electoral contests. Because effective civic engagement requires accurate and up-to-date information, local Leagues encourage candidates to complete their profile and position statements on Vote411.org and encourage the public to use this information when deciding how they will vote.

It is essential that each level of the League of Women Voters adhere to the League's commitment to non-partisanship. We must be careful never to give the impression that we support a particular candidate or political party. We must remain neutral about parties and candidates, while at the same time supporting government actions to benefit society. The League does take positions on important issues. In doing so, we must always be careful to separate our positions on issues from discussions about how to vote. To avoid confusion about these separate League roles, information about how to vote and information about issues the League supports should be addressed separately during tabling events -- at separate tables and by different individuals.

The League performs an advocacy role in supporting civic education at the state level by following state Board of Education actions, supporting legislation to provide curriculum mandates, and lobbying for greater and more consistent attention to civic education programs at the state Department of Education. In each of these actions, the League is drawing attention to the need for effective civic education in schools and for faculty to have all the resources they need to be civically engaged themselves, and to encourage their students to do the same.

In schools, it is important for students to experience real-life political activities and be active participants in the learning process. Students need to develop reliable processing and communication skills. They need to know how to ask difficult questions and seek answers using reliable resources. League members can support these instructional strategies to help students develop the ability to engage in civil dialogue across the political divide and to know how to come to a consensus when working with others.

Leagues may also be called upon to address civic education for in-service educators at faculty conferences and to work with pre-service educators in their college classrooms. Awareness of resources that Leagues can make available to them as they are earning their certification or growing professionally may encourage educators to invite Leagues into their classrooms.

This white paper does not attempt to cover the entire field of civic education and civic engagement, but to open a door to further research and involvement for all members of LWVNJ. We welcome comments and suggestions.

The members of the Education Committee who contributed to the creation of this document include Marlene Burton, Rozella Clyde, Beth Hyre, Nora Krieger, Patricia Lang, Deborah Lee, Patricia Supplee, Sally Tayeb, Melissa Tomlinson, and Jennette Williams.

I. WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF CIVIC EDUCATION?

The primary goal of civic education programs is to prepare informed voters and active participants in the American system of government at the national, state, and local levels.

Voters need to know:

- That the Constitution, including its Amendments, is the foundation upon which our democratic republic is based. The Constitution embodies how our government is designed to function and is our guide and roadmap to democratic citizenship. The Constitution is continually evolving through the amendment process and judicial interpretation.
- The historic backgrounds of the framers and their goals played a role in the government's design. They created a democratic republic where certain powers were delegated to the federal government while other powers were reserved for the states. Conducting elections is one of the powers reserved for the states.
- How the American system of government is organized with a system of checks and balances between three co-equal branches (legislative, executive, and judicial).
- How the political system works, who are the important players, and how they can impact programs and policies on the national, state, county, and local levels.
- The duties of responsible citizenship (for example, voting, paying taxes, serving on juries, following laws, sharing opinions, and promoting the public good.)
- That voting equals power
 - How voting can be used to improve or restrict a society
 - Power needs to be used wisely and effectively
 - Attempts to suppress voter participation or deny voting rights and representation to all citizens must be resisted.
- How to think analytically, ask difficult questions, and seek answers using credible resources. People need to know what "credible" means and know how to assess resources and public policies to determine their authenticity, credibility, and reliability.
- Have the skills and mindset to be able to
 - Engage in respectful dialogue across the political divide and reach consensus
 - Advocate for important legislative and administrative policies and practices
 - Develop leadership skills and be willing to take on leadership roles, run for office, or support leaders and causes important to them
 - Follow legislative and administrative activities by attending meetings, archiving, and reporting actions, and taking positions.
 - Advocate and work for change
 - Prepare others to do the same.

League members accomplish these goals in several different ways depending upon the age, interest level, and experience of the population (K-12, higher education, or adult venues.) Educators and those serving in the role of educators at all levels need to:

- Support voters as they develop the intention to become lifelong voters
- Call for the inclusion of all voices, viewpoints, narratives, literacies
- Encourage requirements for pre-service educators to have at least one specific government/civics course.
- Support cross-curricular professional development and implementation of civic education for in-service educators
- Support involvement in the political process (voting, serving on municipal committees, running for office – school board, council/committee, commissioner & beyond)
- Call for respect and integrity in discourse. Seek first to understand and then be understood.
- Understand the levels of engagement and which level of the League of Women Voters addresses which policies.

II. WHAT COULD THE LWVNJ BE DOING PUBLICLY ABOUT CIVIC EDUCATION AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

LWVNJ has a responsibility to communicate our positions to our membership, to all major educational organizations (NJ School Board Association, NJ Education Association, NJ Principals Association, to parent organizations (PA, PTA, PTO), and to other stakeholders including civic organizations, the voting public at large, and affected students. It is also important to consider equity and inclusion in our communication outreach actions. As a League, we need to develop ways of communicating our positions with people who are visually or hearing impaired, with those whose first language is other than English, and others whom we traditionally have not reached with our messaging.

LWVNJ messaging should not only focus on the need for student-centered civic engagement in all schools and at all grade levels. It should also address the importance of adult engagement in civic activity. It is essential that we emphasize that the need for civic engagement extends beyond the study of typical historic events and documents relating to our democracy. We must emphasize the importance of civic engagement in authentic, relevant ways.

The LWVNJ follows and, after thorough research, comments upon proposed state statutes at legislative hearings. It also monitors administrative policies and regulations related to education that are designed to increase civic engagement. At the state level, the appropriate League committees help structure the position of the League through the bi-annual *Study and Action* document, then create and share position statements on statewide policies. On the local level, as long as they are consistent with statewide and national League policies, local Leagues can support ordinances and/or resolutions adopted by municipal governments or school boards that support instruction leading to effective civic engagement.

LWVNJ can serve as a resource for schools and for the public. We can offer speakers on the topic of civics and civic engagement and can provide classroom materials and other resources. To communicate our position, we urge LWVNJ to consider using:

- Public service announcements and other messaging through a range of media outlets (radio, TV, and print)
- Social media outlets (those currently utilized by LWVNJ and others as they develop)
- Journal articles, both professional and widely read targeted, popular magazines (for example, *Parents*, *Your Teen for Parents*, *Working Mother*, *Family Circle*, and others)
- News commentary outlets (op-eds, blogs, and letters to the editors of state and local news outlets)
- Outreach through well-known entertainment personalities including sports figures, NJ born “stars,” like Miss New Jersey, and media personalities
- Organizations/clubs (Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions Clubs, Women’s Clubs, Girl and Boy Scouts, Fraternities, Sororities, as well as other special interest groups)

LWVNJ messaging needs to emphasize the importance of citizen engagement in democratic processes so every person can become an effective participant who is able to vote and defend democracy with confidence.

II. WHAT COULD LWVNJ BE SAYING PUBLICLY ABOUT CIVIC EDUCATION?

LWVNJ is committed to advancing meaningful and nonpartisan civic learning policies and improving current practices. Civics engagement education needs to build upon and move beyond traditional school civics classes. Instruction in government, history, economics, and law is necessary, but civics engagement instruction is different. It instills in learners, young and old, a sense of civic responsibility. Learners discern how to engage in democratic decision-making, participatory citizenship, and support community well-being.

To achieve the League goals of developing life-long voters and engaged citizens, civic engagement should be infused in the school community at every age. School curricula and course offerings need to include a well-rounded balance of STEM, graphic and language arts,

social sciences, and humanities. Each of these content areas can integrate skills and strategies that develop civic engagement and an understanding of democratic processes. The best pedagogical practices, such as providing authentic experiences within the classroom or in real-world settings, need to be paramount when developing civics educational programming. In addition, civic engagement is an equity issue within both our school systems and our communities. Schools offering less high-quality learning opportunities for civic engagement require additional support. Pre-and in-service professional development to promote these best practices is essential. Any new requirements for civics engagement in New Jersey schools should fully fund both course implementation and staff preparation.

Civic engagement should be encouraged at the community level. Adults who, as students, did not learn how to be civically engaged in our democracy, or who have become discouraged by what they see in today's world, need encouragement and support to assume appropriate roles now. It is essential to the health of our nation. Leagues should be actively seeking out venues where adults may develop civic engagement skills. When providing these learning opportunities to adults, the adult learners should be treated with respect, their level of understanding should be assessed, and goals for the presentation mutually agreed upon. Adults should be encouraged to take active roles in the governance of their local communities through serving on boards, commissions, or municipal committees, as well as becoming active and involved local League members.

To close this civics engagement gap, the League must intentionally develop and implement means to support comprehensive civics educational programming. Comprehensive civics education requires the development of:

- **Civic knowledge and skills:** where people gain an understanding of the history and heritage inherent in the processes of government, prevalent political perspectives, constitutional rights, and civic duties, as well as a comprehensive history of how voting rights have been addressed, including an understanding of those who have been and continue to be marginalized.
- **Civic values, dispositions, and outcomes:** where people gain an appreciation for civil discourse, free speech, petition, and assembly as well as learn how to engage with those whose perspectives differ from their own. An understanding of how to balance media input, investigate media sources, and communicate when using media is critical in today's world. Instruction should be issue-agnostic and focused on skills, processes, policies, and results incorporating effective communications and consensus-building skills.
- **Civic behaviors:** where people develop a sense of civic agency and confidence to vote, volunteer, attend public meetings and interact within their communities through present-day civic engagement. Such behaviors can be taught in the classroom and encouraged through service-learning and community outreach, including afterschool

and summer school learning opportunities, and family and community activities that engage everyone in civic activities.

The implementation of a comprehensive civics engagement program within a school system and community is best realized through a multifaceted approach that incorporates proven practices. ([The Civic Mission of Schools](#))

- **Discussion of Current Events and Controversial Issues:** Educators should incorporate discussion of current local, national, and international issues and events, particularly those that young people view as important to their lives, into classroom activities. The expectation should be that during the discussion, Individuals of all ages (speakers and listeners) demonstrate respectful communication by using a tone that is honest and tactful, and by choosing words that are appropriate to the situation and are noninflammatory.
- **Active learning:** Educators should design and implement active learning programs linked to the formal curriculum and classroom instruction. Activities can range from collaborative or independent research projects and presentations to simulations, mock trials and elections, service-learning projects, and participation in student and local government. School programs should provide opportunities for young people and adults to become involved in community service. The League as well as other community organizations can provide such opportunities.
- **School Governance:** School administrators should encourage student participation in school governance, and school communities should reflect democratic ideals throughout the school climate, culture, and leadership.
- **Simulations of Democratic Processes:** Educators should encourage students to participate in simulations of democratic processes and procedures. In teaching civic engagement, the League should encourage people to participate personally in politics and civil society, particularly at the local level.

Civics engagement programs, supported and encouraged by the League, also need to undergo a cycle of analysis, feedback, and adjustment to strive for maximum effectiveness. When advocating and evaluating civic engagement instruction, we believe stakeholders should incorporate questions like the following:

- What evidence do we have that the educational program has actually increased civic engagement in the world outside school walls?
- Has the program been implemented with sufficient duration and intensity?
- Does the program address the needs of the community and meet specified outcomes?
- Has there been deep thinking about oneself and one's relationship to society through reflective activities and critical thinking opportunities?
- Does the program actively engage participants in meaningful and personally relevant service activities?

- Does the program promote understanding of diversity and mutual respect among all participants?
- In the program implementation, are quality and progress toward meeting goals assessed with the objective of improvement and sustainability?
- Have we provided youth with a strong voice in the planning, implementing, and evaluating of service-learning experiences with guidance from adults?

It is time to move beyond talk and learn about the structure and responsibilities of the government. The League can help make the shift to engaging youth and adults in ways that help them-participate in democracy. We believe schools have the responsibility to prepare students for active, informed citizenship, that it is a co-equal purpose of education along with preparation for higher education and the world of work. We believe adult stakeholders in our democracy also need these developmental activities. It is our responsibility as members of the League of Women Voters to make our voices heard, advocating for schools and community organizations to develop empowered voters who know how to and want to defend democracy.

III. WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

DEFINITION: To *advocate*¹ is to be involved in government and the various systems allowed under our written law – in short, to affect policy or practices.

ADVOCACY: [What is the LWVUS perspective on this question?](#)¹

“The League is proud to be nonpartisan, neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties at any level of government, but always working on vital issues of concern to members and the public.”

The League of Women Voters has fought for over 100 years to improve American systems of government and to impact public policies through citizen education, advocacy, and litigation. The enduring vitality and resonance of the League as a trusted force for change and good government comes from its unique decentralized structure. It is a national organization with strong partnerships at the grassroots level with more than 750 state and local Leagues across the country including the District of Columbia.

Principal Responsibilities related to national League advocacy:

LWVUS has a Strategic Plan that is clearly described in the biannual publication, “Impact on Issues”. [LWV-impact-2020.pdf](#). The 2020-2022 edition encourages all League members to combine education and advocacy. “In applying LWVUS positions to national, state, local, and regional issues, each appropriate League board—depending on the level of action—is

responsible for determining whether member understanding, and agreement exist and whether the action makes sense in terms of timing, need, and effectiveness.”

The LWVUS Director of Government Affairs encourages League members to participate in the development of policy positions and strategies that will influence state and federal legislative activity aligned with the implementation of the LWVUS Strategic Plan. Such responsibilities fall into three major categories:

- **Legislative goals**
 - Assist in the development of legislative goals and strategies
 - Manage the development, coordination, and execution of legislative campaigns through communications, internal and external relationship building, and training.
 - Attend and represent the organization in Congressional and administrative hearings and meetings to secure support and advancement of priority policies
 - Monitor, analyze, and track state and federal legislation.
- **Advocacy goals**
 - Work collaboratively with Leagues across the organization to develop and implement effective advocacy strategies and grassroots advocacy campaigns.
 - Inform, strategize, and coordinate the organization’s participation in grassroots advocacy efforts to achieve government relations goals where appropriate
 - Provide project management of advocacy campaigns and coordinate internal support including communications and research deliverables.
 - Manage the development, coordination, and execution of advocacy capacity through communications, internal and external relationship building, and training
 - Draft testimony, letters of support, meeting requests, and other documents relevant to advocacy priorities.
 - Track and help advance LWVUS advocacy goals by collaborating across internal teams to identify and monitor progress throughout the year.
- **Education**
 - Demonstrate policy knowledge in coalition meetings and by presenting at conferences and events.
 - Provide regular reports, updates, and other communications on progress towards goals of legislative campaigns, advocacy initiatives, and other projects.

How does advocacy relate to civic engagement and education?

The League of Women Voters envisions a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge, and the confidence to participate. The confidence to participate directly translates to an individual's ability to advocate for or against policy.

- What distinctions exist between the roles of the League at different levels?
 - **At the national level**, League activities are coordinated and staffed by two distinct but complementary organizations: Those organizations
 - Work to register voters, provide voters with election information through voter guides as well as candidate forums and debates.
 - Encourage informed and active participation in government, by promoting an understanding of major public policy issues, increasing civic engagement through education, and influencing public policy through advocacy. (See Impact on Issues www.lwv.org/impact-issues)
<https://www.lwv.org/federal>
 - **At the state level**, League issues are coordinated by the LWFNJ Committee to whom the issue is relevant. Care needs to be taken to select and frame the issues in a way that encourages voices from the diverse groups reflected in our DEI policy, with the voices of people holding various political affiliations heard. The decisions of the Committees are forwarded to the LWFNJ Board of Directors for action. Every two years, LWFNJ produces a **Study and Action** document based on responses approved by the local Leagues.
 - **At the local level, Local** Leagues can take positions on local issues as long as they don't contradict a state or national position. They form these positions through a consensus process with their members. Once taking a local position, a local League can act on it without state permission. They cannot solicit state or federal officials. In addition, if the stakeholders/decision-makers they are lobbying/looking to influence span multiple Leagues (County Commissioners, for example) they must work closely with the other Leagues in that area.

What are the Advocacy tools available to Local Leagues?

- LWFNJ is developing and updating several advocacy tools for local League usage. All these toolkits are available on the LWFNJ website and are accessible through leadership group communications.

How do we teach/train students, League members, and members of the public to become effective advocates?

- Developing advocacy skills is a continuous developmental process. LWFNJ has produced a range of print resources, webinars, communication tools like SLACK and identified support staff to support this process.

How can local Leagues move beyond registering 17- year-olds to completely supporting the development of informed citizens?

- **In schools**
 - PK-12
 - Offer Energizing Young Voters (EYV) programs and other student engagement opportunities
 - Develop student teams within high schools who can present EYV lessons to their peers regarding the importance of voting and civic engagement (EYV is piloting this during SY 21-22)
 - Offer assistance to the Center for Civic Education at Rutgers which is charged with developing curriculum and providing professional development for educators around Laura Wooten's Law that mandates civics education in middle school by SY 22-23.
 - Encourage involvement in the Mock Election program
 - Encourage involvement in [Project Citizen](#) and [We, the People](#) and other programs offered through the NJ Center for Civic Education at Rutgers, NJ
 - Offer assistance to local school districts as they develop civics curricula
 - Offer professional development opportunities to schools implementing new civics curriculum requirements
 - Connect high school social studies teachers with advanced professional development opportunities such as the Harvard program, ICivics Roadmap, and others
 - Support student groups that attempt to implement what they learn, and who write, advocate for, and help implement bills in NJ state and local legislatures; offer our imprimatur to those with a connection to League goals (ex:NJ-A1271 in the 2022 legislative calendar)
 - Offer awards to students and/or school districts for exceptional contributions to civics education
 - Higher education
 - Reach out to political science, government, teacher education, and other departments to offer our assistance and support
 - Work with campus clubs and special interest groups to help them utilize and/or adapt EYV materials for their specific needs
 - Develop student teams within community and 4-year colleges who can present EYV lessons to their peers regarding the importance of voting and civic engagement
- **Pre-Service education.**
 - Advocate within the Department of Education for government and civics courses to be required as part of teacher certification requirements.

- Professional Development.
 - Advocate within the Department of Education that links to effective civic education programs, including those developed by LWVNJ, be available to all school districts seeking to support PK-12 in-service professional development programs.
- Curriculum development
- Review existing civics curriculum currently used in NJ. Endorse those that meet the League's criteria as nonpartisan resource materials.
- In communities
 - Adult learning -
 - Remember, adults learn differently than youth. Begin by determining what the participants already know and understand. Approach adult learning with respect, patience, and kindness
 - Build relationships with, investigate the potential support for, and elevate the work of other civic organization
 - Make presentations for and engage with other civic groups within the local community (Rotary, Kiwanis, religious institutions, libraries, senior centers, and other groups); tap into their talents to spread and to enrich what LWVNJ offers to others
 - Reach out to those who may not have completed their high school education and other adults who did not pass through the American educational system to help them understand government structure and organization, so they understand the choices they are being asked to make on the ballot and how the ballot questions could change public policies
 - Participate in public presentations and online events held by cooperating organizations at public libraries and other public or online venues.
 - Host candidate debates/forums. Local Leagues should begin early preparation for forums, record them for future use and publicize them widely.
 - Hold voter registration drives at least two months prior to registration deadlines for both primary and general elections in public venues and at public events
 - Encourage shared values (as opposed to partisan values). Encourage civil discourse and offer instruction in basic communications skills that develop respectful conversations on and off the web.

- Factcheck all types of media posts, articles, or speakers to determine their sources and perspectives prior to supporting or advocating for any type of media event. When in doubt, check it out.
- Youth learning
 - Offer youth voting initiative projects. (Local Leagues with programs that are not reflected on this database are encouraged to contact Ilene to be included on the spreadsheet. Her contact information is included in the resources section.)
 - Youth groups
 - a. Work with Girl and Boy Scouts on meeting civics badge requirements
 - b. Seek out other types of local youth groups at religious organizations or the YM/WCA youth groups for presentations on civic engagement opportunities

APPENDIX A

ACRONYMS AND GLOSSARY

BOE – Board of Education

EYV - Energizing Young Voters organization

FCC – Federal Communications Commission

FEC - Federal Election Commission

FPCA - Federal Postcard Application

IRS – Internal Revenue Service

LWV – League of Women Voters

LWVNJ – League of Women Voters of New Jersey

LWVNJEF – League of Women Voters of New Jersey Education Fund

LWVUS – League of Women Voters of the United States

NJ DOE – New Jersey Department of Education

NJ DOS - DOE – New Jersey Department of State, Division of Elections

QR Codes. - Quick Response codes provide photo links to web-based information

VBM - vote by mail

VS - Voters Service

GLOSSARY OF FREQUENTLY USED TERMS

ADMINISTRATOR – A government official employed by a municipal or county government to supervise all county or municipal government employees and conduct the day-to-day affairs of the government.

ADVOCACY – to take actions in support of a position, adjust public policies, or register a complaint

ALDERMAN – An old English term used to describe a member of a municipal legislative body.

AMENDMENT – An action passed through a pre-described public procedure to change the language, policies or impact of portions of a constitution.

ASSEMBLY – In New Jersey, this legislative body is composed of 80 members. Two people are elected from every state legislative district every two years.

BALLOT – a method for casting a vote. In New Jersey, every county designs its own ballot based on information supplied by election districts. A ballot can be cast on paper or by use of a machine.

BALLOT QUESTIONS – Specific questions placed on a ballot such as proposed budgets, propositions or constitutional amendments. The state League creates informational sheets explaining all ballot questions. In some non-partisan situations, the League will also take a position and advocate for or against a particular ballot question. When the League does advocate, these activities must be separate from voter registration and education activities.

BOROUGH – A form of local municipal government.

BUDGET – This is a plan predicting an organization’s anticipated revenues and expenses. Budgets are generally developed under the supervision of and approved by the appropriate leadership body.

CAMPAIGN – The actions taken by or on behalf of candidates, reaching out to and meeting with voters.

CANDIDATE – A person running for an elected office.

[CANDIDATE FORUM/DEBATE](#) (LWVUS)

- What is the difference between a candidate debate and a candidate forum?

- Debate: The Federal Election Commission (FEC) defines a debate as an event that
 - Includes at least two candidates;
 - Is staged in a way that does not promote or advance one candidate over another; and
 - Allows the candidates to appear concurrently, in face-to-face confrontations, with opportunities to respond to each other.
- Non-debate Candidate Appearances (Candidate Forums/Speeches): Other formats outside those described above are considered “Non-debate Candidate Appearances” - defined as a place, meeting or medium where ideas and views on a particular issue are exchanged.

CENSUS – Every decade the national government organizes structures to count the number of residents for purposes of determining the number of members each state is entitled to in Congress. Congress is limited to 435 members in the House of Representatives.

COALITION – A group of individuals or groups that come together around a specific issue to advocate for public policies.

COMMISSIONER (known as Freeholder until January 2021). These are county legislators elected for rotating three-year terms. They select their own Chairperson and hire administrative staff to develop a budget and handle all county-wide activities. All County officials are responsible to the county commissioners. (Please note that municipal governmental bodies also have volunteer Commissioners, who are appointed by the Mayor or the legislative body. Borough Commissions are a part of the municipal government and have a portion of the municipal budget allocated to their activities.)

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT – The districts from which representatives to the House of Representatives are elected. New Jersey currently has 12 Congressional Districts. These districts are redrawn every ten years after the Census results are released.

CONSTITUTION – A formal document describing the structure, powers, and duties of a government, delineating the elected officials, their terms of office, and the selection process. Constitutions are approved through a popular vote and changed through an amendment process.

COUNTY CLERK – In New Jersey, the county clerk is a mandated county official charged with maintaining all county records and overseeing the election process.

DEI (DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION) POLICIES – The League of Women Voters is committed to encouraging and supporting all individuals in a fair and equal manner. We will make every effort to remove all barriers and include every interested individual in our programs and activities, and provide any accommodation necessary to enable that participation. We seek to respect, support, and value the voices and needs of everyone who wishes to work with us.

ELECTIONS

GENERAL ELECTION – Held every year on the first Tuesday in November. Federal, State, County, and municipal officials are elected during different or overlapping years.

MUNICIPAL NON-PARTISAN ELECTION – Held the second Tuesday in May to elect the governing officials for the 14 municipalities in NJ which are nonpartisan organizations.

PRIMARY ELECTION – It is at this election that Voters registered as either Democratic or Republican select their party's candidates for the general election and select the party committee district and state leaders.

SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION – This is a non-partisan election to select members to serve on the district's Board of Education. Many, but not all New Jersey school districts conduct these elections on the general election ballot. A few New Jersey School Boards are appointed and not elected.

ELECTION DISTRICTS

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT (CD) New Jersey has 12 (See more complete explanation above)

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT (LD) New Jersey has 40. (See a more complete explanation below)

ENERGIZING YOUNG VOTERS -an initiative of the *League of Women Voters* focused on 18-29 year old citizens, moving them to become life-long voters with the skills to be civically engaged.

EXECUTIVE – The official elected by the populace to carry out the policies and procedures established by the Constitution and directed by the legislative branch. The chief Executive may select a cabinet as set by legislative policy to carry out specific government responsibilities. At the Federal level, the chief executives are the President and Vice President. On the State level, they are the Governor and Lt. Governor, and on the municipal level, they are the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

FAIR DISTRICTS NEW JERSEY – The LWVNJ has joined with a coalition of other non-partisan organizations to advocate for a neutral public commission to redraw election district lines.

<https://www.fairdistrictsnj.org/>

GERRYMANDERING – A process through which election district lines are drawn to benefit a particular political party.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES – The lower house within the national Congress. The entire House of Representatives is elected every two years. The number of representatives a state is apportioned or entitled to is determined every ten years following the release of the Census count. (New Jersey currently has 12 Congressional Districts)

JUDICIAL – The courts, on the Federal Level, the trial-level court is the District Court, the Courts of Appeals, and the Supreme Court. In New Jersey, municipal courts handle the enforcement of local ordinances. Each County has a superior court, and the State Supreme Court handles Constitutional questions and appeals from the lower courts.

LEGISLATURE – The elected law-making body on each level. Municipal governments pass ordinances and resolutions. State and Federal legislatures pass statutes.

LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS – New Jersey has 40 Legislative Districts. Each legislative district elects one State Senator and two State Assembly members

LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

FEDERAL OFFICES (PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT, REPRESENTATIVE, SENATOR)

STATE OFFICES (GOVERNOR, LT. GOVERNOR, ASSEMBLYMEMBER, STATE SENATE)

COUNTY OFFICES (COMMISSIONER [*formerly FREEHOLDER*,] SHERIFF, SURROGATE, CLERK)

MUNICIPAL OFFICES (MAYOR/COUNCIL, TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE, ALDERMAN. (New Jersey has 12 different types of municipal government structures).

MEET & GREET – an invitation to an informal opportunity for the public to meet and perhaps speak with candidate(s) at a set time, usually after a forum or event. It is not a forum and requires no format.

MUNICIPAL CLERK – local government employee responsible for maintaining all local government records from candidates and voters election registration, election administration, marriage licenses, and property, maintaining a record of all municipal ordinances and resolutions, setting the borough council/township committee agenda, and handling all legislative correspondence.

NON-PARTISAN – not affiliated with or supportive of any political party.

ORDINANCE – a local law that becomes a part of the Municipal Code, passed by a legislature after first having been introduced at a scheduled public session, discussed in a public session, and then voted upon at a subsequent public session.

PARTY AFFILIATION – voters may select a political party when they register. There is no requirement to do so. New Jersey holds closed (must vote for a candidate within your party affiliation) primary elections at the same time and location. Only voters registered for a particular political party may vote in that party's primary. Unaffiliated voters may declare a party at the polls, thus joining a party on that date, but voters registered for one party may not vote for another party when voting in the primary.

PETITION – Every candidate must file a petition for office to be placed on the ballot. The number of signatures varies depending upon the office being sought. Petitions may be obtained from the municipal or county clerk and must be returned with the appropriate number of signatures, notarized and signed by the candidate by the deadlines established by the election office.

PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT – a democratic form of government in which the party (or a coalition of parties) with the greatest representation in the parliament (legislature) forms the government, its leader becoming prime minister or chancellor. Executive functions are

exercised by members of the parliament appointed by the prime minister to the cabinet. The parties in the minority serve in opposition to the majority and have the duty to challenge it regularly. Prime ministers may be removed from power whenever they lose the confidence of a majority of the ruling party or of the parliament. The parliamentary system originated in Britain and was adopted in several of its former colonies. [parliamentary system | Definition & Facts | Britannica](#)

PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT – A form of government with three co-equal branches (executive, legislative and judicial) where members of Congress, the President and Vice President are all directly elected by the people for a fixed term of office. The President is both the Head of State and the head of the Executive Branch. (The United States uses an Electoral College composed of electors selected by the voters of the state to determine the presidency).

POLITICAL PARTIES – In New Jersey there are two major political parties, (Democratic and Republican) who select and support candidates. There are also some minor parties like the Green Party, Socialists, or Libertarian Party that may field candidates. Independent candidates may designate their own party name when they file to be placed on the ballot.

PUBLIC POLICY – An official position determined by legislation or administrative regulations

QR CODE – This is a Quick Response Barcode that can be used by a mobile scanner (such as a mobile phone) to connect the device directly to information on a webpage. These codes are used throughout this document to direct readers to specific information like [Vote411.org](#), or voter registration and information pages.

RESOLUTION – A short-term (lasting a year or less) legislative policy passed by a legislature during a scheduled public session.

SECRETARY OF STATE – In New Jersey, the Administrative Official who, among other duties, administers the Elections and Voting procedures.

SHERIFF – The elected county official charged with supervising police activities and overseeing the county jails.

STATUTE- a law passed by a state legislature (or Congress) and signed into law by the governor (president).

SURROGATE – An elected County official responsible for the probate of wills, estates, adoptions and children's inheritance rights.

UNAFFILIATED VOTER – Also referred to as an independent voter. A registered voter who has not declared affiliation to a political party.

VBM (VOTE BY MAIL) – A process where registered voters may request that a ballot be mailed to their address of record. Specific rules determine the voter's identity through the use of an official signature and the inclusion of the ballot into an internal sealed envelope with an attached verification certificate. Ballots may be mailed, dropped in a secure drop-box, or returned to the election office in person. In New Jersey, individuals may also request the VBM ballot in person, and vote in person within prescribed hours at the county administrative building.

VOTE411- LWV's one-stop-shop for election-related information which provides nonpartisan info to the public. Register to vote, find candidate information, & much more at VOTE411.org

VOTERS SERVICE – The term used by the League to describe member activities to assist the public in voting. Those service efforts include helping voters register to vote; organizing candidate debates and forums; publishing candidate information and voter guides; and distributing materials to understand the voting process, including any issues or questions on the ballot.

WARD – A municipal political division or election district.

WHITE PAPER - A white paper is a document compiled to investigate a particular question or issue. It provides research and information in a clear and precise manner to enable the reader to make an informed decision which can be the basis for further action or analysis.

APPENDIX B

SUGGESTED ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS / ACTIVITIES

- A. Girl Scout/Boy Scout civic engagement badges either through large-scale presentations like Voter Girl, or with individual troops during regular meetings.
- B. Provide LWVNJ/EYV civic engagement opportunities for students: (www.energizingyoungvoters.com)
- **Conduct oral history interviews** with targeted groups of their choice (e.g., the homeless, single mothers, etc.) to capture voting history, impediments to their voting, and motivations.
 - **Youth Advisory Board membership**- a diverse group by age (18-29), gender/sexual orientation, ethnicity/race, and education type who act as a think tank, setting direction and policy for the growth of Energizing Young Voters
 - **Become a presenter of EYV programs to schools and community groups of young people** - arrange and present or assist in delivering our programs in your own school and/or our evening programs. We are particularly hoping to find students and young adults of color to join our team.
 - **Complete an internship**- a competitive, paid, semester-length experience (college/university students) involving data analysis, research, administrative assistance; program designed to coordinate with their career goals.
 - **Earn Service Points**- Volunteerism, secondary/university age —social media monitoring, administrative assistance, video production, NJ Ballot Bowl, VOTE411, teaching/presenting, materials reviews
 - **Voter registration events**, - in person or help others register online and vote using Student Advocate Toolkit
 - **Organize and/or participate in programs like Ballot Bowl at high school and university levels.**
 - **Organize competitions**
 - **Anything we do needs to be**
 - a. Non-partisan
 - b. Inclusive
 - c. Interdisciplinary
 - d. Developmentally appropriate and address learning differences

APPENDIX C

USEFUL RESOURCES FOR LOCAL LEAGUES

Reference to any specific commercial products, process, or service by trade name, trademark, manufacturer, or otherwise, does not constitute or imply its endorsement by the League of Women Voters.

Web-based

1. iCivics Roadmap (<https://www.educatingforamericandemocracy.org/>)
2. Energizing Young Voters ([www.energizing young voters.com](http://www.energizingyoungvoters.com))
3. Civics Online Reasoning (<https://cor.stanford.edu/>)
4. Civics Lessons for Student Engagement
(<https://www.choices.edu/curriculum-unit/civics-lessons-for-student-engagement/>)
5. CivXNow (a project of iCivics (<https://www.civxnow.org/>)
 - a. <https://www.civxnow.org/our-theory-of-change>
 - b. <https://www.civxnow.org/affiliates> - needs to happen at the state level, supporting local schools
 - c. <https://www.civxnow.org/policy> -
6. CIRCLE - Center for Information & Research on Civics Learning and Engagement
(<https://circle.tufts.edu/>)
7. Generation Citizen - <https://generationcitizen.org>
8. New Jersey Center for Civic Education [NJ Center For Civic Ed \(rutgers.edu\)](http://njcenterforciviceducation.rutgers.edu)
9. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2019/04/17/selling-civic-engagement-a-unique-role-for-the-private-sector/>
10. <https://www.bigbadboo.com/>
11. The American Bar Association Division for Public Education [Public Education Homepage \(americanbar.org\)](http://americanbar.org/public-education)
12. New Jersey State Bar Association Benchmarks Civics Project [Benchmarks Civics Project \(njsba.com\)](http://njsba.com/benchmarks-civics-project)
13. AMHOTINO (Pleasantville, NJ) Amistad, Holocaust, Latino history & current
14. [Energizing Young Voters](http://energizingyoungvoters.org) (Fighting for the Vote & Fighting for Change) for middle, high and college)
15. Civics for Citizens
16. [Zinn Education Project](http://zinneducationproject.org)
17. <https://www.amacad.org/ourcommonpurpose/report>

18. [#HigherEd Civic Engagement Resource Collection for Online Learning](#)
19. <https://www.allvotenoplay.org>
20. www.votebydesign.org
21. <https://braverangels.org/>
22. <https://rwjms.rutgers.edu/boggscenter/products/VotingItsYourRight.html>

Speaker's list with contact information and organization

1. Energizing Young Voters - League-trained facilitators offer civics lessons adaptable for middle school through college. Presentations can be offered remotely and/or in-person on voting and the legislative process (www.energizingyoungvoters.com)
2. Elected officials in each level of municipal, county, and state government.

Print-based reading list of related materials

Andrews, Patricia Hayes, Hogan, J. Michael, Williams, Glen, et al. *Public Speaking and Civic Engagement*. 2nd Ed. Allyn & Bacon, 2010.

Cress, Christine M., Collier, Peter J., Reitenauer, Vicki. L., *Learning Through Serving: A Student Guidebook for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement Across Academic Disciplines and Cultural Communities*. 2nd Ed. Stylus, 2013.

Joshi, Khyati Y., *White Christian Privilege: The Illusion of Religious Equality America*, NYU 2020.

Lyon George Ella, Potter, Jennifer M. Illustrator. *Voices of Justice: Poems about People Working for a Better World*. Macmillan Children; Publishing Group, 2020. (Reading age 8 - 12)

Skocpol, Theda & Fiorina, Morris P. *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*, Brookings. 1999.

Singleton, Glenn E.. *Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools*. 2nd Ed. Corwin. 2015.

Wilkerson, Isabel. *Caste*. Allen Lane, 2020.

Books for Children from NCSS Notable Trade Books ([Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People | Social Studies](#))

THE INTERACTIVE CONSTITUTION: EXPLORE THE CONSTITUTION WITH FLAPS, WHEELS, COLOR-CHANGING WORDS, AND MORE! David Miles. Illustrated by Albert Pinilla. Bushel & Peck Books. 16pp. Trade ISBN 978-1733633529, \$21.99. (I) This book explains difficult concepts in the Constitution with age-appropriate vocabulary and examples. Word decoders, wheels, flaps, and tactile activities help students explore the three branches of government and the concept of checks and balance.

WE THE PEOPLE: THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION EXPLORED AND EXPLAINED. Aura Lewis and Evan Sargent. Illustrated by Aura Lewis. Quarto Group / Wide Eyed Editions. 128pp. Trade ISBN 978-0711254046, \$24.99. (I) This book allows students to “see the U.S. Constitution in a new light” through an illustrated guide to this foundational document. A useful informational text for teachers. Includes Glossary, Search and Find,

THE POWER OF ONE: EVERY ACT OF KINDNESS COUNTS Trudy Ludwig. Illustrated by Mike Curato. Random House Children’s Books/Alfred A. Knopf BFYR. 40pp. Trade ISBN 978-1524771584, \$15.63. (P) Simple but powerful wording and impactful illustrations convey the effects of individual action. Images of diverse children convey the collective result of singular acts of kindness. Includes Planting Seeds of Kindness in Your Community, Recommended Books for Young Readers, and Recommended Websites. (HHS

THE SUFFRAGIST PLAYBOOK: YOUR GUIDE TO CHANGING THE WORLD. Lucinda Robb and Rebecca Boggs Roberts. Candlewick Press. 142pp. Trade ISBN 9871536210330, \$16.99. (M) While using the women’s suffrage movement to illustrate principles for making effective change, this book chronicles the history of women’s suffrage and serves as an activist’s guide.

For our personal education and reflection:

Videos

- “The Unequal Opportunity Race” [The Unequal Opportunity Race - YouTube](#)
- Suzen Baraka, spoken word poet, “The Painful Truth About the Vote” [Poet Suzen Baraka Tells the Truth about Voting | MR Online](#)
- (Netflix) [Amend: The Fight for America](#)

Research [amend: The Fight for America](#)

- The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, at The Center of the Developing Child, Harvard University, www.developingchild.harvard.edu