

## LAME-DUCK ADVOCACY WINS

### MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK PRIORITIES

- **NEW VOTER EMPOWERMENT ACT**  
(A3690/S1888)
- **EXCUSED ABSENCES FOR CIVIC EVENTS**  
(A1271/S2304)

### THE PEOPLE'S LAME DUCK AGENDA

- **LANGUAGE ACCESS (A3837/S2459)**
- **DATA DISAGGREGATION (A3092/S2415)**
- **DOMESTIC WORKERS BILL OF RIGHTS (A822/S723)**
- **SEABROOKS-WASHINGTON COMMUNITY LED CRISIS RESPONSE ACT**  
(A5326/S4250)
- **CLARIFIES JUVENILE'S RIGHT TO AN ATTORNEY (A3117/S269)**
- **EXPANDS PROTECTION OF HARM REDUCTION SUPPLIES**  
(A5630/S3957)

## Advocacy Newsletter: Post Lame-Duck Edition

The League of Women Voters of New Jersey joined with over 30 coalition partners to launch a massive mobilization movement calling for passage of the People's Lame Duck Agenda during the lame-duck session.

Among other things, the People's Lame Duck Agenda prioritized social and racial justice bills to make our democracy more accessible and inclusive, expand transparency and accountability in policing, build a fair and welcoming state for all people regardless of their immigration status, tear down barriers to abortion access, and get profitable corporations to pay their fair share for the public services on which we all rely.

At the same time, the League and our allies stood ready to oppose any attempts to undermine our democracy, rollback progress that we have made to improve our criminal justice system, or advance legislation that prioritizes profits over people.

The efforts of thousands of people, especially immigrants, women of color, domestic workers, and others, led to several victories for the People's Lame Duck Agenda. The League of Women Voters of New Jersey is grateful to these organizers and to our members for their deep commitment to making New Jersey a more equitable and just place where we all have the opportunity to thrive.

The new legislative session has started with lawmakers scheduled to begin holding committee hearings next week. The League of Women Voters of New Jersey will continue to work in coalition to advance our legislative priorities that did not advance during lame-duck.

# Voting Rights & Democracy

## New Voter Empowerment Act

The League of Women Voters of New Jersey had the great honor of joining Governor Murphy, legislative sponsors, and partner organizations for the signing of the "New Voter Empowerment Act."

The "New Voter Empowerment Act" which goes into effect in 2026, permits 17-year-olds to vote in primary elections if they will be 18 by the next general election. **The League of Women Voters of New Jersey strongly believes that meaningfully engaging young people in our elections strengthens our democracy and helps build a lifelong habit of voting.**



"Students, whether they are testifying at the State House, running a voter registration drive, or attending a community event, will gain valuable real world and hands-on civic engagement experience. We applaud the Governor, the legislative sponsors, and the students who championed this bill for helping shape democracy's future leaders."

Jesse Burns  
LWV NJ Executive Director



LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
OF NEW JERSEY

## Excused Absences for Civics

The League also applauds the passage of legislation that allows for public school students, grades 6-12, to have one excused absence per school year to be used for a civic event.

["Governor Murphy Signs Bipartisan Legislation Promoting Civic Engagement Among Students"](#)

This League championed bill passed with bipartisan support. We are thankful to our education committee, the League's Energizing Young Voters program, and the students who championed this bill.

## Open Public Records Act (OPRA)

The League continued our opposition of a package of bills that threatened to gut the Open Public Records Act (OPRA) and undermine the public's ability to access important government records.

The League joined our partners NJ Working Families Party and ACLU-NJ, and 60 other organizations, to [send Senate leadership a letter](#) urging them not to hastily pass major changes to OPRA in the lame-duck session. Instead, we asked them to work with advocates and the public to pursue a thoughtful, deliberative, and transparent process in the next legislative session.

We are thankful that legislators did not fast track this harmful package of bills. Changes to OPRA remain under consideration and can be introduced early in this new session. We look forward to meaningfully engaging with lawmakers in the process of making any changes to OPRA.

### Same-Day Voter Registration

Throughout the legislative session, LWVNJ and a coalition of 80 organizations, called on lawmakers to pass Same-Day Voter Registration. For more than two years, the League and our partners ran a robust public education and advocacy campaign, calling on lawmakers to pass this common-sense reform proven to protect voting rights and increase voter turnout.



Heading into the lame-duck session, we urged legislative leaders to schedule the bill for a committee hearing and a full vote on the floor. **In December, our coalition gathered at the State House to hand-deliver 3,000 postcards written by New Jerseyans from around the state in support of same-day registration.** Unfortunately, the Legislature failed to take any action on this bill, allowing the 21-day registration deadline to remain as an unnecessary obstacle to the ballot.



As we head into 2024, a year with several high-profile and consequential elections, we remain committed to advocating for same-day voter registration and ensuring that every eligible voter is able to participate in our democracy.



## Immigrant Justice

The League of Women Voters of New Jersey applauds the passage of legislation expanding language access to vital government documents, a data disaggregation bill that more accurately captures demographic information about New Jersey's diverse communities, and providing work protections for domestic workers.

**Language Access:** Legislation requiring state government entities to provide vital documents and translation services in at least seven most common non-English languages has been signed into law. One in four New Jersey households speaks a language other than English. This bill helps break down barriers and allows for New Jersey's diverse communities to more easily access vital resources.



**Data Disaggregation:** New Jersey will now collect more detailed and accurate demographic data on Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, North African, and South Asian and Indian Diaspora residents. Data is powerful and this legislation provides visibility to New Jersey's residents, allowing for a better understanding of each communities' distinct needs.

**Domestic Workers Bill of Rights:** The Domestic Workers Bill of Rights provides key protections for the women, women of color, and immigrants who make up the 50,000+ domestic workers in NJ. For too long, these essential workers have been undervalued and denied the most basic workplace protections. Among other measures, this law will guarantee meal and rest breaks, require employers provide written contracts that specify rate of pay and working hours, and ensure domestic workers receive benefits like unemployment insurance and workers compensation.



**These victories belong to immigrants and women of color.** Thank you for your leadership and fearless advocacy!

## Criminal Justice Reform

**Community-Led Crisis Response:** Last week Governor Murphy signed into law the Seabrooks-Washington Community-Led Crisis Response Act. This new law



establishes a Community Crisis Response Advisory Council and creates a pilot program allowing municipalities in six counties to partner with community organizations to create crisis response teams. This is an important step in recognizing the need for communities to take the lead in providing expert care and support to those experiencing behavioral health crises.

We applaud the Governor, legislative sponsors, organizers, and impacted families who shared their stories and worked tirelessly to bring this community-led public safety program to New Jersey.

**Protection of Juvenile's Rights to an Attorney:** New Jersey passed legislation that clarifies and strengthens juvenile's right to attorney representation. Thanks to advocates working diligently on this legislation, juveniles will have the help they need to navigate the judicial system, including guaranteeing the right of a juvenile to counsel for police interrogations.

**Expanded Protection of Harm Reduction Supplies:** Legislation expanding the exemptions from drug paraphernalia laws for certain supplies used for harm reduction. This law allows harm reduction centers to provide more comprehensive support to New Jersey residents and works to improve public health and support people with substance use disorders.

**Civilian Complaint Review Boards:** After several years of sustained advocacy and demands for accountability from communities harmed by police misconduct, a bill for Civilian Complaint Review Boards (CCRBs) finally received a hearing in the Assembly. This bill would allow municipalities to establish local civilian boards to review police operations and conduct, providing meaningful community oversight and transparency.

We thank Assemblywoman Shavonda Sumter for her leadership in scheduling this bill for a hearing in the Assembly Community Development and Affairs Committee. After listening to hours of powerful testimony from the public, the committee approved amendments that would have launched a 5-year pilot program in several municipalities including Jersey City, Newark, Paterson, and Trenton.

Unfortunately, the legislation did not advance any further in either chamber of the Legislature after that. Organizers and impacted communities are prepared to continue fighting for this critical legislation in the new session.

**Equitable Juries:** The right to a jury of our peers, like voting, is a fundamental part of our democracy. However, New Jersey is one of the few states that imposes a lifetime ban on jury service to people with felony convictions. Because of the racial disparities baked into our criminal justice system, this ban results in juries that don't reflect the diversity of our state. Bill A977/S3043 would have restored the ability of people with felony convictions to serve on juries.

In December, the Assembly Judiciary Committee amended the bill to exclude individuals currently serving a sentence of incarceration or anyone convicted of murder or aggravated sexual assault. While LWVNJ and other advocates generally opposed carve-outs to the legislation, we were glad to see the full Assembly vote to pass the legislation in January. Unfortunately, the Senate failed to take up the measure in time.

## Additional Lame-Duck Updates

**Family Leave:** This bill would have extended family leave protections for workers. It received hearings in the Assembly Labor and Assembly Appropriations committees and passed out of that chamber, however the bill was never heard in the senate. The League joined advocates in calling for amendments that ensured the legislation does not disproportionately leave out workers who are women, low income, and people of color. We look forward to continuing this advocacy in 2024.



**Post-partum Care:** Legislation is needed in New Jersey to address the high levels of maternal mortality and morbidity, and the disparity in maternal health outcomes for people of color. The League advocated in support of this bill as it received multiple hearings in the senate and assembly. The bill would raise the healthcare standards by establishing requirements for postpartum care pregnancy loss, and stillbirth information and the development of personalized postpartum care plans. Although it did not ultimately pass out of the legislature, we are hopeful that discussion will begin again in early 2024.

**Social Media:** A bill (A5750/S4215) requiring age verification and parent or guardian consent for minor's use of social media was introduced at the end of November and quickly received multiple committee hearings in the Senate and the Assembly. Though sponsors describe the intention of the bill as protecting NJ youth, advocates identified troubling and unintended consequences of the bill and rallied to slow the process down. The League signed on to a letter asking legislators not to speed the bill through lame-duck and to instead work together to address concerns in the new year.

Advocates were concerned that the legislation would make social media inaccessible to many communities, including vulnerable youth that may be blocked from access by parents/guardians or those that may not have access to a credit card or sufficient ID. The bill was held on the last day of the legislative session and did not pass out of the Legislature.

**Energy Justice:** Two energy bills received some movement during lame duck, although none fully advanced out of the legislature. S1366/A577, which required the Board of Public Utilities to allow gas utilities to increase consumers' electric and heating bills in order to subsidize Renewable Natural Gas, and S2978/A4658 which required 100% of retail electricity sales in New Jersey to come from "clean" sources of energy by 2035. Thanks to coalition opposition, S1366/A577 did not advance. We will continue to advocate in support of S2978/A4658 this year and look forward to the new discussions.

**Corporate Business Tax:** In late November, LWVNJ joined our partners in the For the Many Coalition to urge legislators to renew the millionaire's Corporate Business Tax (CBT) before its December 31st expiration. We were excited to see our joint advocacy lead to the introduction of a bill (A5878) to continue the CBT

surtax, a 2.5 percent tax on profits above \$1 million, sponsored by Assemblyman Thomas Giblin on December 11th.

Ultimately, the Legislature did not act on this issue. Instead, for the time being, mega corporations were given a break and taxpayers were left to foot the bill for essential services and programs New Jersey's working families need, like public transportation, education, housing and more.

While we are disappointed by the failure of our elected officials to take action, we remain committed to advocacy for an equitable and fair tax system.

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## ICYMI: Get Involved!

### LWVNJ Program Committees

If you're looking for an opportunity to make an impact on issues like the ones mentioned above, we invite you to join a LWVNJ Program Committee! Program Committees educate League members and advocate for the League's legislative public policy priorities.

**No expertise or experience is required to join.** Learn more or sign up at [lwnj.org/state-committees](https://lwnj.org/state-committees).

### Activist Training Program

The 2024 spring schedule of the [Activist Training Program](#) is now live!

**Find the full list of trainings and sign up at [lwnj.org/training](https://lwnj.org/training).** Our first session "[Introduction to the NJ Legislative Process](#)" is on February 1st at 6pm.

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## Help Us Continue to Advance this Work

**Please consider a donation to the League of Women Voters of Jersey.** We are working hard to advocate on your behalf in Trenton year-round on a range of public policy issues. Every dollar matters. We're grateful for your generosity and galvanized by your support. Thank you, New Jersey!

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