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# OHIO VOTER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF OHIO FALL 2020

## Election 2020 in Review

*By Jen Miller, LWVO Executive Director*



Despite the global pandemic, 5.97 million Ohioans cast a ballot this fall, breaking Ohio's record from the 2008 General Election of 5.77 million. The fact that this election was certified without any major disruptions is a credit to Ohio's 88 Boards of Elections and the more 56,000 Ohioans who served as poll workers.

We also proved that nothing can stop determined Leaguers from serving democracy - as we adeptly transitioned our work to meet the needs of Ohio voters under entirely new conditions. While we are still trying to fully track our impact, we do know

that nearly 300,000 Ohioans accessed [vote411.org](http://vote411.org) - our online voter guide. We distributed more than 300,000 print materials, and, for the first time, conducted voter education in Arabic, Amharic, English, Nepali, Spanish, and Somali languages. Our work was featured daily in print, radio, tv, and social media reporting, allowing us to provide nonpartisan voter education. We likely surpassed our goal of reaching one million Ohioans with nonpartisan voting information.

Our work also centered on supporting local Leagues and local Voter Service Chairs, who registered voters, conducted online candidate forums, distributed print materials, volunteered as poll workers, and served as Election Protection volunteers. We worked with our partners and local Leagues to create teams of volunteers to meet with nearly 40 Boards of Elections about the operational challenges they were facing. We assisted dozens of Boards of Elections in getting private grant funding for their elections needs - after attempts to get additional federal dollars failed.

From teaching voters how to request or track their absentee ballots to answering questions about public health protocols and election security, our work was as critical as ever - and through this work, we were able to see first hand the unnecessary challenges faced by voters across the Buckeye State. The combination of the pandemic and high participation laid bare the many ways that our system needs updating. A few of those challenges included: long early vote lines, traffic jams of voters in line for the singular ballot drop box location per county, an extremely inefficient absentee ballot system, and unclear instructions for curbside voting. Other voters were wrongfully denied their absentee ballot request or their ballot didn't count, because elections officials believed their signature didn't match.

Before the next election Ohio should implement common sense reforms - such as:

- Providing Multiple Early Vote Centers per County
- Providing Multiple Absentee Ballot Drop Locations per County
- Passing SB 191 to Allow Online Absentee Ballot Applications
- Instituting Automatic Voter Registration at Bureau of Motor Vehicles
- Standardizing and improving signature matching protocols across Ohio
- Increasing poll worker incentives

2020 has been a year like no other, but LWVO's commitment to Ohio's voters remained steadfast. It's been an honor to work with each of you and our dozens of allies. I look forward to another year of voter service in 2021, where we can apply all that we have learned.

## Advocacy Update

Time is quickly moving towards the end of the 133rd General Assembly, and lawmakers are racing to pass their priority pieces of legislation. In addition to core democracy issues, LWVO is following bills centered around certain social justice policy areas that have long been important to the League's work. We urge you to write letters, make daily phone calls, and share the urgency of these issues with friends and family.

**Request an Absentee Ballot Online** - LWVO fully supports expanding and enabling voter access through Senate Bill 191, which would authorize the Secretary of State to establish a secure online process for applying to vote by absentee ballot.

**Elections Security** - SB194 would require the Secretary of State to adopt rules and establish guidelines for the approval and continued certification of voter registration systems, and adopt standards for the security and integrity of voter registration systems to be used in that process. It strengthens elections security by ensuring more reliable machines and giving greater assurance to Ohioans that their vote is accurately counted. LWVO is proud to have testified in support of SB194, where it passed the Senate unanimously.

**School Funding Reform** - LWVO has been working directly with a broad-based, bipartisan coalition in support of HB305/SB376 - a comprehensive plan to correct Ohio's current unconstitutional approach to funding. The House version has passed, but the Senate version still faces obstacles.

**HB6 Repeal** - Despite widespread opposition to the Nuclear Bailout Bill, HB6 passed in the summer of 2019. Ohio now knows that this \$1.5 billion bailout was made possible by way of the worst political corruption scandal in Ohio's history. LWVO supports SB346 which would provide a full repeal of HB6.

**Anti-Protest Legislation:** LWVO stands in opposition to HB784, a dangerous piece of legislation that incorporates "Stand your Ground" language, thereby increasing the likelihood of gun violence with no accountability.

**Stand Your Ground:** Several "Stand Your Ground" and "Duty to Retreat" bills exist in the Legislature to which LWVO stands firmly in opposition. These laws threaten public safety, are associated with increases in violence, and disproportionately impact communities of color.

**Human Trafficking:** SB13 passed the Senate unanimously in June 2019. The bipartisan bill would help protect and rescue Ohio's minors from the horrors of sex trafficking, and also bring Ohio into compliance with federal law, making available additional resources for the broader anti-human trafficking effort in the state. LWVO supports the revival of SB 13 in the House.

The "Take Action" page of the LWV Ohio website (<https://www.lwvohio.org/takeaction>) includes letter writing tools that enable you to send messages to your legislators about these issues with just a few clicks. To stay informed of LWVO's advocacy efforts and work with the LWVO Lobby Corps, sign up for the listserve in the "Advocacy" section of our webpage.

## It's Time to Update Your Membership Roster!

Please update your membership roster with LWVUS for an accurate member count. Your member count will freeze on January 31, 2021 and it determines the amount your League must pay in PMP for fiscal year 2021-22 as well as LWVUS Convention delegate representation in 2022. To update your League's member count, you must update your roster online - including the expiration date and status of each member record.

If you are unable to access your League's database on the LWVUS website or your League doesn't have a password, please email LWVUS at [rostersupport@lwv.org](mailto:rostersupport@lwv.org) or contact Munia Mostafa at [mmostafa@lwvohio.org](mailto:mmostafa@lwvohio.org).

## Give a Gift Membership!

Share your passion for civic engagement by giving someone special a LWVO membership. LWVO gift membership opens the door to opportunities, information and a legacy of collaboration to create positive change.

The League membership is open to anyone, male or female, over the age of 16. The current membership levels are:

- Individual membership - \$60
- Household membership - \$90 (For two people at the same address.)
- Student membership - \$5

Contact the LWVO office at [mmostafa@lwvohio.org](mailto:mmostafa@lwvohio.org) for more questions on membership.

## Engaging Members During the COVID-19 Era

Despite the ongoing pandemic, the local Leagues have been busy recruiting and engaging members throughout the state. Below are some excerpts from League members about their community engagement activities:

*“We engaged new and old members in producing and distributing the Voters Guide - over 150,000 copies in two languages. Many members were also involved in voter registration and GOTV activities. We also used VOTE411 for both the primary and general elections and were pleased that the setup we did for the primary meant little additional effort was needed for the general election. We have 52 new members. We recruit through League events, anyone who has attended a League event and is not a member gets a thank you for attending and an invitation to join League. We are also now selling gift certificate memberships to members to give as gifts to their friends, families and as a door prize at an upcoming event in December. Also, through our Voters Guide we include a League membership invite and usually get a few new members and donations from that effort.”* - **Susan Hesselgesser, LWV of Greater Dayton**

*“The League of Women Voters of the Perrysburg Area is alive and well. We successfully completed our Voters Guide prior to the election, held a Candidates Forum with the Bowling Green League and managed to sponsor our Topical Tuesdays with Way Public Library. Our membership is about the same number. An informative article in the Messenger Journal brought three new members. We then put together and sent packets to them which contained our Voter, our monthly newsletter, a copy of our Public Officials Guide, and a note sheet full of facts about our league as well as ways to reach the state and national leagues. We also wrote notes to past members to remind them about dues which was successful. We are currently working on our Fundraiser Drive to members and nonmembers. We do miss opportunities to meet together; Zoom will do for now.”*  
- **Suzanne Hoffman, LWV of Perrysburg Area**

*“Since Jan 1, 2020, LWVMC has welcomed 126 new members! Our membership committee coordinates a mentorship program that matches new members with League mentors who can answer questions and make sure new members get connected with relevant projects and committees. During 2020 we tried to offer a variety of volunteer opportunities - including in-person, virtual, one-time volunteer opportunities and larger volunteer commitments. We had a lot of enthusiasm for Getting Out the Vote this year!”*

- **Elizabeth Grieser, LWV of Metro Columbus**

*“League of Women Voters of Ashtabula County has had an active summer and fall. We’ve gained new members due to our visibility. One of our members has set up a website under Club Express and posted daily up to the election on our Facebook page. She also started Instagram and Twitter accounts. Our Voter Service Chair went to every library in the county to register voters and, along with other members, put on a successful candidates’ forum in conjunction with the County Library system that was on zoom and posted later to our social media pages. A newer member worked hard to post our information on the Vote411 website, and we had a printed Voters Guide, which we hadn’t done in several years. We’ve also had several people join just by word of mouth. People also contacted us through the League of Women Voters website “ask a local League.” We’ve also continued to have monthly member meetings of interest to the people of Ashtabula County meeting with our County Commissioners, the state health study, one on the state funding of schools and one upcoming on the adult diversion programs run through our Common Pleas Courts, all on zoom. We plan to continue our board and general meetings via zoom for some time to come.”* – **Mary Howe, LWV of Ashtabula County**

### Bringing League To Your Community

Considering starting a local League in your area? LWVO is offering new options for current local Leagues and members who may be exploring different structures. A group of At-Large members can form an At-Large Chapter/Group, which have fewer administrative duties than a formal local League. Members wishing to form an At-Large Chapter/Group must petition LWV Ohio for recognition using the application to form an At-Large Unit. We can support you through the entire process - so League can better serve voters in your area. To request an application form and for more information contact the state League office at 614-469-1505 or [mmostafa@lwvohio.org](mailto:mmostafa@lwvohio.org).



## SHOP VIRTUALLY and GIVE THE GIFT OF DEMOCRACY

Stay safe and shop from the comfort of your own home by giving the Gift of Democracy this holiday season. **Surprise your friends and family with a membership to the LWV Centennial Club!** The Centennial Club was formed to celebrate 100 years of the League of Women Voters!

Centennial Club members will help the LWVO continue to provide outstanding service, education and advocacy for the next 100 years. To express our gratitude, you and/or your loved one(s) will receive a specially-commissioned Centennial Club lapel pin and recognition in upcoming LWVO publications.

Pins can be shipped directly to you or to your friends and family! Time is running out on this amazing opportunity! Purchase by December 10th to insure holiday delivery. As always, thank you for your continued support.

Happy Holidays!

### DONATE TODAY!

Yes, I want to support the work of the LWVO!

\$25  \$50  \$100  \$250  \$500  Other \_\_\_\_

Gifts can be made payable to:

- LWVO (non-tax deductible)
- LWVO Education Fund (tax deductible)
- Split evenly between LWVO and LWVO Education Fund

You can also donate at [www.lwvohio.org](http://www.lwvohio.org) and click "Donate."

Thank you!

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Please return to: League of Women Voters of Ohio,  
100 East Broad Street, Suite 1310, Columbus, OH 43215

## Join Us On Our Monthly Member Calls

### Monthly LWVO Lobby Corps Call

LWVO's volunteer Lobby Corps meets via phone twice a month on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays at 12 noon. It's a great way to hear what is happening in the Statehouse and about lobbying. New lobbyists are always welcome. Any member wishing to join this call must contact the state League office to be added to the list-serve.

Here's how to join the discussion:  
You will receive an email with a ZOOM link along with call information a day prior to call. Calls end by 1pm.

### LWVO Monthly All Member Call

The state League hosts a conference call open to all members on the first Tuesday of every month at noon. The monthly call is a great way for League members across Ohio to connect, share ideas, get updates on hot topics, and plan action.

Here's how to join the discussion:  
You will receive an email with a ZOOM link along with call information.

Watch your email several days in advance for an announcement of that month's call topic. Calls typically end just before 1pm.

### LWVO Voter Service Call

We kindly request League presidents and members engaged in voter service work to join our monthly voter service call. This call is typically held the third Tuesday of every month at 7pm.

Please note that League Presidents and voter service chairs are automatically on the list-serve to receive notice about this call. Other members wishing to join this call must contact the state League office to be added to the list-serve.

## From the President's Desk



*Iris Meltzer*

Thank you! “ Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy”. You all took our mission and Made Democracy Work. The 2020 Election was not only fraught with unprecedented partisanship, misinformation, threats of potential violence, and a seemingly slowed US Postal Service, but it occurred during a world-wide pandemic. Despite these challenges the League and its members carried on.

We are used to registering voters at farmers markets, community events, and schools. Those venues have not been available since mid-March this year. With little hand wringing, local Leagues became creative. The QR code associated with the office of the Secretary of State was visible on sandwich board signs with the message that the code was linked to the voter registration site. Voter registration forms were left on neighbor's door knobs. Social media urged Ohioans to register to vote and links to the State or appropriate County site were provided. I am sure local Leagues engaged in other innovative voter registration strategies. However you did it, you registered voters. You Make Democracy Work. Thank you.

We are used to holding Candidate Forums and Debates in university ballrooms, school cafeterias and the basements of houses of worship. Those were almost uniformly unavailable and certainly unsafe this year. Many of you embraced Zoom or another virtual platform and held effective opportunities for constituents to hear from candidates without gathering in person. You made Voting 1-2-3 cards available in your communities in innovative ways. And, as always, hard copy Voters Guides and Vote411.org provided critical information to voters. You Make Democracy Work. Thank you.

We are used to getting out the vote in a myriad of ways, many of them through face to face interactions. In this election season plagued by COVID-19, you - again - found ways to GOTV. You urged Ohioans through social media, including your websites, to vote by mail. You handed out information about requesting absentee ballots through food pantries, grocery stores and other essential services that maintained operations. You answered questions via social media on how to mail absentee ballots or how to use the drop boxes established in each county by their Board of Elections. You made sure voters knew the timeline for voting, whether by mail, in person early voting or voting on November 3 – Election Day. You Make Democracy Work. Thank you.

Many of you served as poll workers. Others were Election Protection Volunteers at polling locations or on the phones answering the calls from the workers on the ground. Still others were trained to de-escalate potentially threatening or suppressive activities at the polls by being trained in using these techniques. To the poll workers, the County Boards of Election, Election Protection trainers, leads and volunteers; to the clergy who trained other clergy in de-escalation and those who served in that role you Make Democracy Work. Thank you. And to all of you who were able to vote and did so—You Make Democracy Work. Thank you!

Take a deep breath and get ready for our next challenges – the lame duck session in Columbus and redistricting. You have proven that you are up to the task. Keep Making Democracy Work!

### Quarterly President's Call

Please join me and other members of your LWVO Board on **Wednesday, December 9 at 7 pm** for this quarter's All Presidents Call. We'll talk about the impact of COVID-19 on LWVO and local Leagues as well as the next big thing on our horizon – Redistricting. We will continue to have these quarterly calls in 2021. Please check your emails for information on future calls.



## Meet Our New Intern!



Kaiyah Taylor is a fifth-year undergraduate student majoring in Psychology with Research Distinction at The Ohio State University. She also received her Associate of Arts in Business at Ohio Dominican University in 2018. Prior to interning at the League of Women Voters, she worked as a canvasser for URGE Ohio, encouraging citizens to vote and petitioning for voter rights and security legislation. Additionally, she completed a fellowship with Population Action Connection Fund, organizing, lobbying, and petitioning in support of global comprehensive health care. Kaiyah also participated in student-led organizations where she petitioned and lobbied in support of early-college high schools, as well as legislation that would aid human trafficking survivors. Kaiyah spends her spare time reading, watching documentaries, and stressing over her thesis project.

## Hear from our interns about their experiences in working with the League during this election season....

*“Working with the League throughout this election has provided me with invaluable insights into the inner-workings of our democracy. I found myself looking at the (organized) chaos of preparing for a momentous election through a new lens; the talking heads of cable television argue about election protection and policy quadrennially, but this year, their growls and overtones became meaningful in a new and wonderful way. Last election, I could not explain the gravity and different forms of suppression, nor assuage the looming, yet never quite identified, fears of fraud. The League has equipped me with skills, not only to recognize different aspects of our democracy, but to advocate for them too. Yet, still even more the League has given me, causing my civic awareness to blossom into a comprehension of the networks between Boards of Elections, Secretaries of State, legislators, advocates, and much else in between. My time learning and growing at the League is something I will cherish through next election season and beyond.” - Ava Brady*

*“Being an intern for the League during this election season has been incredibly fulfilling. Though I am in high school and cannot vote, working at the League has provided me with an avenue to exercise my civic duties and aid new voters. Through creating social media graphics, raising awareness about the different avenues to vote, helping compile the Vote411 guide, helping and attending events, and aiding in the formation of the new youth caucus, I’ve gained invaluable experience in organizing. I’ve personally also grown as a member of my community and servant leader. I am incredibly grateful to be able to work at the League and plan to continue to further my pursuits of encouraging youth engagement in their local and state governments.” - Haanya Ijaz*

*“I have absolutely loved interning with the LWVO these past few months! It has been especially significant to do so during such an important election year. Though I have some advocacy and canvassing experience, the League has enabled me to learn more about the administrative aspects of elections, as well as the extremely important work to ensure election security. It is important to me that I remain an actively engaged participant in the democratic process beyond voting alone, and the League has offered me plenty of incredible opportunities to do that.” - Kaiyah Taylor*

### Did your local League elect a new board at your annual meeting?

Please remember to send your updated board lists to the LWVO office. Updates can be emailed to the state League office at [lwvoinfo@lwvohio.org](mailto:lwvoinfo@lwvohio.org).

LWVUS encourages each League to keep its active officers list up to date in their database as well. If you have questions, or need help with the LWVUS membership database, please email LWVUS at [RosterSupport@lwv.org](mailto:RosterSupport@lwv.org).

## From the Executive Director, Jen Miller

For decades, LWVO has been one of the foremost leaders in the fight against partisan gerrymandering - the practice of rigging legislative maps to favor one political party over another. Both Democrats and Republicans have engaged in gerrymandering, which reduces voter choices through fewer competitive elections and renders elected officials less accountable to their constituents. Currently, Ohio has some of the worst partisan gerrymandered districts in the country, but we have a chance to change that.



In 2021, Ohio will use Census 2020 data to create new statehouse and congressional maps. For the first time, Ohio mapmakers will be required to implement reforms approved by voters in 2015 for the Ohio General Assembly and 2018 for Congress. These reforms would not have been possible without the thousands of League and Common Cause members/supporters who collected petitions, educated voters, lobbied lawmakers, conducted voter outreach, and donated to the cause. We are going to need your support to make sure that Ohio upholds both the letter and spirit of these reforms.

Once again, we will work with Common Cause, ACLU, A. Philip Randolph Institute, and many other key allies to promote fair maps for the people. Our work will focus on several key areas:

Direct advocacy from LWVO staff, Leaguers, partners, and the general public will be needed before and during the mapmaking process. This outreach will help us educate and influence mapmakers, reminding them that Ohio voters overwhelmingly support fair maps.

Media Outreach will raise the visibility of our redistricting efforts, allowing us to reach more Ohioans. To secure earned media, we will release research, conduct media interviews, and submit letters-to-the-editor.

Public Education through our mapmaking competition and speakers bureau will also build a drumbeat for fair maps by spreading basic knowledge about redistricting and inviting diverse Ohioans to get engaged. For the speakers bureau, select members will be equipped with a powerpoint, educational materials, and subject expertise to present at community forums across Ohio. The map competition is an effective way to engage the public (from students and amateurs to experts), while also allowing the public to submit their ideas of fair maps to the official mapmakers.

Our legal team will help set the stage for fair mapmaking by distilling the legal requirements for reapportionment under the new amendments to the Ohio Constitution. They will also help us navigate the Voting Rights Act, prison gerrymandering, partisan indexing, and other technical issues.

Fair maps would make our work on voting rights, dark money, school funding, and women's rights easier, because lawmakers will be more accountable to voters. In the upcoming weeks and months, we will be hosting educational events, sending action alerts, and recruiting volunteers, so stay tuned!

### 2021- 2023 LWVO ByLaws, Positions and Priorities

May 2021 will be a time for us to gather in State Convention, even if it is virtual this year. For everyone's safety, we will be meeting by Zoom, but it will be a little more spread out, allowing us more flexibility with the agenda. As a grassroots organization, we need to hear from local Leagues in terms of possible changes to our state bylaws, our body of positions, and our legislative priorities. Therefore, we ask you to schedule time, either through a member meeting or an open board meeting, to look at where we are and decide where we should go. This is your opportunity to make your voices heard.

In selecting issues that are important, lively and relevant, you can ensure that the League will have an impact on the significant policy issues facing our state. The responses from the local Leagues are due at the end of February. Based on local League responses, changes in bylaws and a proposed program direction will be developed by the LWVO board of directors. At Convention, recommended and non-recommended items will be discussed and debated. Delegates will then adopt the 2021-2023 state program direction, including advocacy priorities. All materials and suggestions for meetings are found in the Member Corner of lwvohio.org. For questions, please email Karen Leith at [kpl7@aol.com](mailto:kpl7@aol.com).



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The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

To become a member or for information,

(614) 469-1505

lwvinfo@lwvohio.org

Or join online at [www.lwvohio.org](http://www.lwvohio.org).



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**MEMBERSHIP FORM**



YES, Sign me up as a Member of the League of Women Voters of Ohio!

\$60 INDIVIDUAL     \$90 HOUSEHOLD

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