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August 2020

A Hundred Years Later and We Still Fight—Pandemic or No



By Catherine Weller, LWVUT Co-President

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures so the 54th Biennial National Convention of the League of Women voters was also the first virtual national convention of the League of Women Voters. Due to the coronavirus emergency, the national convention was moved to a virtual platform to protect the health of League members, staff and their families. While it was disappointing to not travel to Washington, D.C., and meet face to face with fellow League members—and our congressional delegation— new opportunities were created by moving the convention online.

A total of 12 delegates from Utah and its local Leagues attended the national convention this year. The large number was in part due to the fact that delegates could attend virtually instead of undertaking the time and expense to travel to the convention. Another first this year was the ability to send observers to convention. Utah had three observers during caucuses and the convention plenary. As we did in 2018, the delegation chose to strategize its caucus attendance to ensure maximum coverage of valuable pre-convention meetings and to share information throughout. Utah representatives attended caucuses on League management tools and opportunities, voting rights and security issues, diversity, climate and environmental issues, and health care.

Another pre-plenary activity was the first virtual Lobby Day. It is traditional for the League to conduct a lobby day when its convention is in Washington, D.C. When the board decided to make the convention virtual, a decision was taken to make Lobby Day virtual as well. League members from across the nation contacted their senators to encourage support of the Voting Rights Advancement Act (VRAA). Utah League members joined in that effort and the “twitter storm” that was organized to draw attention to our efforts to get the VRAA out of committee and onto the Senate floor for consideration and a vote.

A number of Utah League members worked on issues prior to the convention that significantly impacted this year’s plenary.

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- Ann O'Connell, LWV Salt Lake, worked tirelessly and quietly for years on a [Voter Representation/Electoral Methods Concurrence](#). Utah local Leagues studied the concurrence and the Utah League joined 22 other state Leagues in supporting the concurrence which passed and is now a part of the LWVUS Program. I was prepared to speak in support of the concurrence but could not due to time constraints.
- I, as LWV of Utah co-president, worked on the Bylaws Committee and also worked with a group on an emergency racial justice resolution (more below).
- Carole Straughn, LWV of Utah Natural Resources director and member of the LWVUS Climate Emergency Working Group, presented at the Climate Emergency caucus. A climate emergency resolution was passed at convention.
- Carey Dabney, LWV Grand County president, worked with a group on a [transfer of federal public lands concurrence](#) with the LWV of New Mexico position and was prepared to testify, but was stymied by technology. The concurrence passed.

The proposed Program was modified during plenary to include abolishing the Electoral College, to which Kathy Biele, LWV of Salt Lake, quickly prepared to speak but could not due to time limitations. The 2020-2022 program, resolutions and concurrences can be found in the [daily convention](#) briefing and should soon be on national's website.

I am excited by the LWV officers and directors for 2020-2022. They are an intelligent, dynamic group of women well equipped to lead the League forward at the beginning of its second century. You can learn more about them [here](#).

When the convention ended I was almost as exhausted as I would have been had we met in person, but I was just as invigorated as I would have been had we met in person. I am impressed with and grateful to LWV board members and staff who worked tirelessly to create a convention process that was not without hiccups but was nevertheless remarkably smooth given the complexities of the task. Once again I was impressed by the knowledge and dedication of the Utah delegation. They were passionate, engaged, and as fired up by convention as I was.

Utah League members can feel as proud and happy as I that our League was well represented by its delegates and observers. I beg your indulgence in this very long letter so I can name them all publically: LWV Utah delegates Vickie Samuelson, Carole Straughn and me. LWV Davis delegate Peggy Carrico. LWV Grand County delegates Carey Dabney and Tina Hose. LWV Salt Lake delegates: Kathy Biele, Jan Brock, Jeanine Kuhn-Coker, Linda Menasco, Shelly Pace and Jan Striefel. Observers were Gigi Brandt, Wendy Molteni and Emily Walsh. Thank you each and every one.

The 55th Biennial National Convention will be in Denver. I encourage all League members to consider representing your local League as a delegate or joining a caucus or working group.

When outgoing president Chris Carson called convention to order she noted women, including League founders, fought for the right to vote during the 1918-1919 flu pandemic. They didn't let the pandemic stop their work. While we



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may have been forced to adapt to our own pandemic, we won't let the coronavirus keep us from our work. The next League year holds elections that need to be safe and secure; a legislative session that needs to be transparent even though it will probably be online; work on all levels toward equity, inclusion and racial justice; and climate issues that only grow in urgency. Our mission to empower voters and defend democracy is as important now as it's ever been.

Timely Racial Justice Resolution Passes

By Catherine Weller, LWVUT Co-President

The May 25 killing of George Floyd and the resulting protests, the latest of so many other killings and protests, spurred League members in Arizona, Missouri and California to begin work on an emergency resolution on racial justice to be presented at the LWV Biennial Convention. LWV Utah, along with several other states, was invited to work on and eventually support the resolution that was developed. The discussion was thoughtful and bracing with league members from across the country weighing in to quickly craft a resolution in time for the convention. Once the language was finalized, the Utah board quickly and proudly voted to support it. The resolution became Motion 2020-136 and passed with a vote of 1094 yays and 32 nay votes. It reads:

We Resolve First, That the League advocates against systemic racism in the justice system and, at a minimum, for preventing excessive force and brutality by law enforcement. We also call for prompt actions by all League members to advocate within every level of government to eradicate systemic racism, and the harm that it causes;

We Resolve Second, That the League help our elected officials and all Americans recognize these truths to be self-evident; that Black, Indigenous and all people of color (BIPOC) deserve equal protection under the law; and that we demand solutions for the terrible wrongs done, so that regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, disability, and gender identity or sexual orientation we may truly become a nation "indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

100 Years Running 5K Fun Run Seeped in History

By Kathy Biele, LWVSL Fun Run Committee

Grab a walking partner or run like the wind on your own. The 100 Years Running 5K Fun Run is coming to a neighborhood near you from September 11-20.

For our third annual fun run, we are going virtual to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the League of Women Voters and the 19th Amendment. While we recommend our set course around Liberty Park, we want you to



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join us wherever you are — and we mean wherever. Just download a running app and keep track while you go 5K (3.1 miles). Take photos along the way and send them to us.



You can register now for just \$35 to qualify for prizes in three categories: Best photo; most interesting event that happened on your route; and most surprising fact about voter history. And you will receive a free commemorative League-branded face mask!

An extra benefit from the 5K is the voting timeline you'll experience. Each station is equipped with a QR code taking you through the history of voting in the country. You'll be surprised and perhaps inspired by the facts that take you on this voting journey from 1789 to 2020. The dates and fun facts will be on QR codes placed

around the route, and also on the website beginning September 11.

Check out our website or the LWVSL Facebook page for more information. [Register now!](#)

100 Years Running 5K Virtual Fun Run

Date: Sept. 11-20
Place: Your Neighborhood
Cost: \$35

Watch [the video](#):
Register [now](#)

Primary Election's Over, Now What?

By Shelly Jackson, LWVUT Director, Voter Services

Utah saw a successful Primary Election by mail on June 30. A few counties even hosted drive-through polling places where voters conducted their balloting from the safety of their own car. Both voters and poll workers reported feeling protected and many voters were grateful for the opportunity to cast a ballot on Election Day.



This may be a preview of what Utah voters can expect for the General Election, although the Legislature has yet to weigh in. What is clear is that voters should prepare early by checking their registration status at voter.utah.gov and planning to vote by mail from home.

By-mail ballots will begin arriving in mailboxes in mid-October. By receiving your ballot at home, you will have a chance to research the many candidates and issues on the ballot. Most voters can expect a lengthy ballot consisting of congressional, county, state and local school board races, as well as judicial retention races. Also seven proposed Amendments to the Utah Constitution are likely to be on the ballot. Oh, and let's not forget the presidential race at the top of the ballot.

Make sure to check out the League's [VOTE411](https://vote411.org) as you research your ballot choices. The League of Women Voters is proud to sponsor a nonpartisan website that allows voters to hear from the candidates in their own words. As the November 3 election draws closer, visit vote411.org/Utah to be an informed voter.

ERA Grant Project Promises Insight, Activism

By Vickie Samuelson, LWVUT Co-President

The Utah League received a national grant to promote the Equal Rights Amendment in the state, and I am so excited to report our project is in the final stages. We contracted Sparklight Productions, a woman-owned business, to create a video that promises to be amazing.

We have conducted three interviews for the video with longtime League member Irene Fisher, former Congresswoman Karen Shepherd and her daughter Heather, who is the principal of a local charter school. Each talked about women's rights and the need to continue the fight. Irene and Karen both had intimate experiences at the 1975 International Women's Year, and worldwide event begun by the United Nations.



Karen gave her perspective on the ERA and spoke about her political life in Utah as well as her work with Network Magazine, a publication to provide women support.

I can't wait for all of you to see the video, which will give you a deeper understanding of the ERA and why women need to push for ratification today.

The other half of the project involves a postcard of father and daughter Manoli and Kalli Sargetakis. Watch for it and its message soon.

LWV Needs Help with Representational Equity Study

Do you think urban areas are not fairly represented in the Utah legislature? Or are the concerns of rural areas minimized or ignored? Does the Wasatch Front take precedence over southern Utah when the impacts of legislation are considered?

Shauna Bona of the Salt Lake League is interested in leading a study of Representational Equity in Utah, and needs a couple of volunteers to work with her. This is a great opportunity to work with a team of League members and educate yourself and others about these perennial questions.

If you're interested, contact Nickie Nelson at nickie.nelson@gmail.com and Shauna at shauna@lwvsl.org

I would like to thank Kathy Biele, Shelly Pace, and Catherine Weller, and of course Sparklight's Paige Sparks and Ilana Fogelson, for their help on this project.

The ERA Needs Your Help!

The ERA Grant has a couple of tasks that need your help. We are partners with Utah ERA Coalition and we would like to do a blitz on Women's Equality Day, August 26. Here's where you come in.

We will have postcard packets of 15 to 25 cards of our father/daughter team and postage that you can request before the above date to mail out to family and friends asking them to contact Sens. Mike Lee and Mitt Romney requesting that they support [SJR 6](#), which would remove the the timeline that is keeping women from being equally represented in our U.S. Constitution.

We would love to flood their offices with calls and emails on Women's Equality Day to remind them that we are not equal under the law. There will be an action alert as well to remind everyone, and notices on our social media about the blitz.

Contact me for your packets ASAP at 801-750-2217 or vlwv0200@gmail.com

Salt Lake Observer Corps to Focus on Policing Practices



"Now is a powerful time to get involved in policing practices. Our goal is for all San Franciscans to understand and help shape policing practices."
— LWV San Francisco website

By Shauna Bona, LWVSL, Local and County Government Committee Chair

While many Americans are taking to the streets, social media, or editorial pages to protest police violence, many others are still seeking ways to help improve policing practices. In some cities, the League of Women Voters Observer Corps are providing opportunities to do just that. In San Francisco, for instance, the League is training observers to ensure that all

Got Members? Get a League

By Julie DeLong, LWVUT Vice President of Local Leagues

The League at Large (LAL) process can help any community start a local league with five active members. The state will take on some of the administrative functions so the LAL can work directly on the mission:

Empowering Voters and Defending Democracy.

Find League at Large information on the Get Involved tab of the [website](#).

Do you know someone in a Utah community where we may not have many members? Talk to them about getting involved and tell them where to find all the details. Go to our Utah website [HERE](#), and thanks for spreading the word.

citizens know about “meetings, decisions, policies, and programs” that have an impact on policing.

Because police practices are typically governed at the county and municipal level, the Salt Lake League’s County Observer Corps is exploring ways to follow San Francisco’s lead—training observers to monitor and share information about police actions throughout our county.

Potential activities for our members include observing and reporting on the following:

- County and City Council Meetings where police matters are addressed
- Unified Police Department Board Meetings
- Salt Lake City’s Racial Equity in Policing Commission
- Other public meetings, as our knowledge expands

If you are interested in joining our Observer Corps as we develop a mission and practice around investigating police practices, please contact me at shauna@lwvsl.org.

Legislative Action to Benefit Water for Great Salt Lake



By Jan Striefel, LWVSL Natural Resources

The highest priority for the Great Salt Lake Advisory Council (GSLAC) is investigating and emphasizing the importance of policy and actions that secure adequate water flowing into Great Salt Lake. As diversions increase, the lake level continues to decline on average, spiraling toward a dry lakebed. The importance of maintaining an adequate water level in the lake has health, air quality,

economic stability, snow pack, cultural and other consequences for Utah and its residents.

This past legislative session was positive in regard to that effort, as several bills were introduced and passed that could have a beneficial effect on lake levels and the future of the lake. (We need to thank the LWV Legislative Corps for their efforts here.) Among the most important are a

The Countdown Begins

As we kick off this 100-day countdown to the biggest election most of us have seen in our lifetimes, we’ve come up with 100 ways to take action between now and Election Day. Check out our list and try to check something off every day between now and when you cast your ballot!

No matter how you vote, or when, make sure to make your voice heard in this election. The future of our democracy is counting on you!

bill creating a [Utah Watershed Council](#), which will establish a framework for creating watershed councils throughout the state and most importantly, a GSL watershed council that would involve all entities adjacent to creeks flowing into the lake, as well as the lake itself. This puts more eyes on what is happening with the lake, a means to create policy and law, and opportunities for advocacy.

Another important bill allows for [water banking](#)—a means for irrigation companies/users to sell unused water for another purpose, and that purpose could be for in-stream flows to GSL. This is significant because rather than “use it or lose it,” farmers/ranchers could be encouraged and compensated for unused water, allowing it for another use—a way to encourage conservation and provide income to farmers/ranchers. Another bill on [split-season leasing](#) would also allow a water right to be used for more than one purpose during a year. And, yet others create opportunities to study water issues and make recommendations.

Among the continuing GSLAC priorities are necessary and critical changes to current water law. Water rights laws in Utah are based on a “prior appropriation doctrine” or “use it or lose it.” Prior appropriation is a common law, meaning it can be changed and adapted relatively easily to address changing conditions and concerns if the political will is there. It requires a recognition of the “right to conserve water” rather than use it, and to acknowledge that water not used and sent downstream should be included as a “beneficial use” as in-stream flow to the GSL. Changes to the law are needed to define conservation as a beneficial use.

A report prepared by Clyde Snow Attorneys at Law is near completion and evaluates 12 priority strategies for allowing more water to flow to GSL. The study provides background and context, identifies tools and techniques, as well as impacts, barriers, and other considerations. Options for each action will be addressed in terms of legality, hydrology, financial, technical, political, and administrative actions/policy. Recommendations will include recognition of the right to conserve water, and the process would likely be administered through the Change Application process administered by the State.

Needless to say, the final report will likely be a difficult/complex read (about 150 pages) but an important one to guide water use in Utah into the future and address declining lake levels. The report will be completed and presented at the September GSLAC meeting. Thereafter, an executive summary will be prepared for distribution to legislators and others.

If you have an interest in the Great Salt Lake, volunteers could be very helpful in attending meetings, participating during the legislative session, and monitoring activities at the local government level. If interested, please get in touch with Jan at janstriefel@gmail.com.

Did you know?

Since 2000, more than 250 million votes have been cast through mail ballots in all 50 states.

At a time when the country is seeing a surge of this deadly virus, we need our elected leaders to make the necessary investments to safeguard the November election. States need an additional \$3.6 billion to invest in equipment and technology, support increased demand for vote-by-mail, train election workers and poll observers, and provide sufficient cleaning supplies to polling locations to protect voters and election workers.

However, this week the United States Senate released their latest stimulus bill—excluding any additional funding to support our election. With less than one hundred days before Election Day, there is still time to get this right—take action and contact your Senators today.



League Members Weight in on Canyons, Inland Port

By Ann O'Connell, LWVSL Natural Resources Chair

Salt Lake League members commented on the Inland Port Business Plan and UDOT's three alternatives for moving people up Little Cottonwood Canyon. Both comment periods were short and the Inland Port Business Plan opportunity was especially brief and awkwardly timed. Although the plan was short, the many critical appendices were not and the month of June was still at the beginning of the public's education about how to deal with the new world of decision-making by remote control. The League member comments I have seen were generally critical of the business plan, but well-reasoned and expressed. As always League members spoke for themselves, not for the League of Women Voters.

The Utah Department of Transportation is proposing three plans to address the ski-season traffic congestion in Little Cottonwood Canyon. There are two versions for expanded bus service and a gondola design. All of them assume the need (or desire) to bring more people into the canyon. There is no discussion of how many people a healthy ecosystem can absorb.

The League of Women Voters of Salt Lake has often pointed out that before UDOT designs transportation improvements, it should find out what the human carrying capacity of Little Cottonwood Canyon is. The first of the two bus service expansions would create a smaller footprint than either of the other proposals and hopefully would change human behavior—*get* people out of their cars. The gondola design carries people to the ski resorts only so does not address the need for stops at hiking trails. Furthermore, once established, it could lead to extensions over the ridgelines into other canyons, and, as has been proposed, out into a commercial site in the valley. The Utah State Legislature is overseeing this project.

Well, two comment periods are over but there is more to come. Opportunities for the League and League members to affect public policy. The first is a happy opportunity to shape the long but hopeful campaign to restore the Jordan River, the second, a tiresome, if not grim, opportunity to perhaps thwart the progress of the St. George Pipeline.

Website Links to Help You Comment

The [Bureau of Reclamation](#) for a description of a legitimate comment. The [email](#) address and mailing address for comments are also included on the page.

The [Utah Rivers Council](#) has long been a source for background. You can find links to the Bureau of Reclamation information on their site as well.

To make your comments count, take the time to back them up with data. Conserve Southwest Utah has made this task relatively easy. The [Conserve Southwest Utah](#) website is a treasure trove of information. Their recent (June 2020) 36-page study and opinion of the pipeline, is here: [Conserve Southwest Utah Rationale for LPP Position](#). You can click on any topic in the study's table of contents to go to the supporting scientific evidence.

The [Jordan River Blueprint Survey](#) is a bit long but not difficult to do; however, you will see that there is a competition among values and uses. For me, water quality and restoring riparian habitat are most important. For others, it might be safety. Should trails be widened and paved? Should there be more policing? There is now a homeless shelter near the river and it is a nice place for the homeless to camp and/or congregate. It is also a good place for running and biking. Unfortunately, that makes it more difficult for walkers and birders. And, of course, there is a question on funding. The LWVUT lobbies for state funds for the Jordan River. If you think this is good use of public funds, you can say so. I might add that geographical diversity in survey respondents is significant to surveyors, so this is not limited to those League members who live along the Jordan River. I could find no end date for the survey.

Perhaps we are all too aware that now is the time for comments on the St. George Pipeline Environmental Impact Statement. The pipeline project has been simmering for more than 20 years and most of us have a firm position on it. The difficulty is that an EIS (an environmental impact statement) is a very long and specialized document which recounts all the study and evidence that has gone into supporting the practicality of the project. It is not arguing that it is a good policy decision. It is very difficult for the citizen to meet the criteria for a valid comment.

In the sidebar to the right are links to websites that can help guide comments that might be taken into consideration by the Bureau of Reclamation

League Joins Letter in Honoring Legacy of Congressman John Lewis

With the recent passing of Congressman John Lewis, the League has signed onto a letter through the Leadership Conference, asking members of Congress to honor his legacy by passing the Voting Rights Advancement Act. Additionally, the letter emphasizes the coalitions current ask for \$3.6 billion in elections funding to ensure all Americans can vote safely this November, as a way to honor Congressman Lewis' work in fighting for the right to vote.

[Read the letter.](#)

2020 Census Response Rate Update



By Mallory Bateman, LWVUT Secretary
Three months ago, the concept of an article trying to encourage response to the 2020 Census would have been silly. July 2020 was the scheduled end of outreach activities and thank yous would have been started to be distributed. However, COVID-19 created the need for a new operational framework. You likely won't see census enumerators

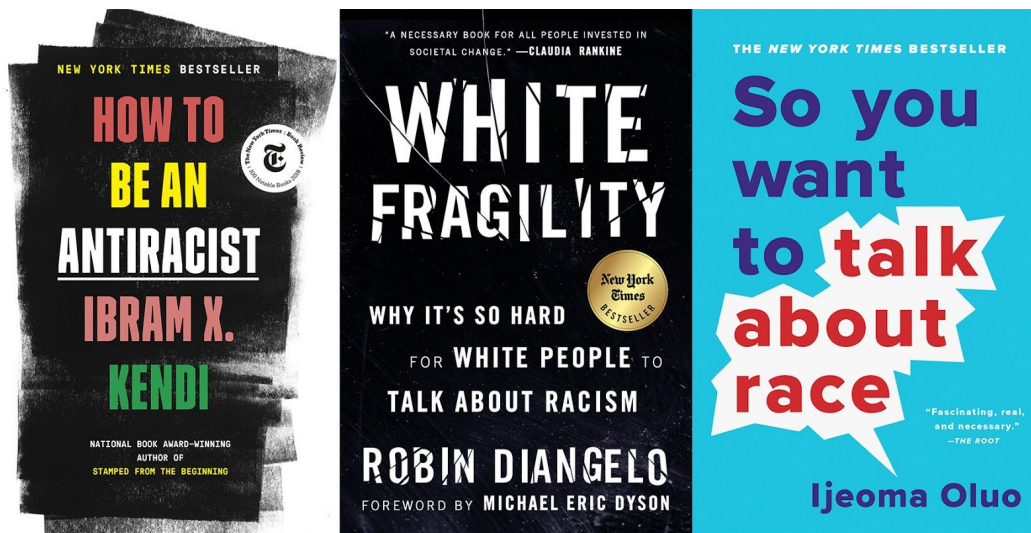
out and about until August, if everything goes to plan. The end of collection has been bumped to Halloween. If approved by Congress, initial numbers are not scheduled to be delivered to the president until the end of April 2021 rather than December 31, 2020. Redistricting data is not slated to get to states until the end of July 2021.

So with all these adjustments, how is Utah doing? Two-thirds of Utah households have responded, placing our statewide response rate at ninth

in the nation (as of July 21). If you look to the county level, you will begin to see some of the impacts of the operational shifts due to COVID-19. Along the Wasatch Front, all counties have response rates higher than the state. Nearly every household in these counties (Weber, Davis, Salt Lake and Utah) received invitations to respond from the Census Bureau in early March.

However, in many rural Utah counties, households did not receive invitations to respond. The Census Bureau relies on traditional mailing addresses to invite people to participate. Areas that rely on post office boxes and nontraditional mailing addresses were intended to receive hand-delivered invitations left on doorsteps. This outreach was postponed until May. Response rates in several Utah counties were very low between March and May, but now they are beginning to increase.

If you are curious about your community's response rate, please visit the map on the 2020 Census [website](#). If you want to help, remind people that their response to the decennial census is a once-a-decade opportunity to make their mark on the distribution of political power and billions of dollars to communities across the nation. The other incentive to get responses in sooner rather than later is to avoid a stranger showing up at your door.



DEI — A Black Lives Matter Reading List

By Millie Fletcher, LWVSL Unit Meetings Chair

As members of the League of Women Voters, we are committed to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion with a heightened sense of urgency. The Salt Lake League has embraced the challenge and many of us are reading books and articles, and watching TED talks and other videos in our attempts to better understand what it means to be a person of color in a country that has not adequately kept the promise of equal opportunity for all. We are learning the difference between non-racist and anti-racist. We are deepening our understanding of institutional racism, implicit bias, and

DEI Books to Read

- “How To Be an Antiracist”
— Ibram X Kendi
- “Stamped From the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America” — Ibram X. Kendi
- “So You Want to Talk about Race” — Ijeoma Oluo
- “White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism” — Robin DiAngelo
- “Between the World and Me” — Ta-Nehisi Coates

For a more historical perspective:

- “The Warmth of Other Suns” — Isabel Wilkerson
- “The Fire Next Time” — James Baldwin

much more. We are learning how all of that negatively impacts the lives of everyone in the country. During the months of August and September, several of our units are sharing ideas and insights through Zoom book group meetings. Even though I know that many of you are already reading some of these books, I am including a list in the sidebar to the right. Others can be found on [Amazon](#), [Goodreads](#), [IndieBound](#) and other similar sites. LWV.org is an excellent resource for more titles but also for an overview of [DEI](#).

Seeking first to understand will no doubt be challenging, but with that will come renewed commitments to action. We're strong. We can do it.

We're Not Kidding When it Comes to Voting Rights

State-by-state Fights to Secure our Elections

COVID-19 remains a threat as we head toward the general election, and it is critical that our fall elections are carried out in a way that assures voters and election workers can participate safely. Here are a few of the cases we've filed on behalf of voters:

LWV Connecticut, with partners, filed a federal lawsuit seeking to make mail-in voting available to every eligible Connecticut voter during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though 45,000 Connecticut residents have contracted COVID-19—including over 4,300 deaths so far—the state has retained one of the most restrictive mail voting systems in the nation for the November general election.

LWV New York State joined an individual plaintiff in a federal lawsuit to ensure absentee voters have the opportunity to cure their ballots if they are rejected for a signature-related issue for the remaining 2020 election cycle. For the past two election cycles, New York's ballot rejection rate has been among the highest in the country. Voters need the opportunity to ensure their vote is counted and their voice is heard—when a ballot is challenged, the voter should be notified and have sufficient time to correct the error.

LWV Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State Conference of NAACP, Common Cause Pennsylvania, and three individual applicants, filed a motion to intervene in a case brought by the president's re-election campaign seeking to prevent voters from using ballot drop-off locations other than county election board offices, severely limiting their options for casting mail-in ballots. The League and partners are asking to join this case to preserve voter access by ensuring that adequate drop-box locations are maintained in Pennsylvania.

After **LWV Rhode Island** and partners filed a lawsuit this month, the state of Rhode Island agreed to eliminate witness/notary requirements for vote-by-mail throughout the 2020 elections due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This agreement is especially important for Black, Latinx,

VOTE411 Gets Traction

Our national voters guide, Vote411.org, is getting recognition from the voting public. Our candidates need to recognize its reach and merit as a resource to the voting public.

Help us get the message across. If you want to help in this next election cycle, contact us at:

voterservices@lwvutah.org

For statewide races,
and

voterservices@lwvsl.org

For Salt Lake County
races.

After the 2020 Primary:
14,510 users had 15,768
sessions statewide to find
information for the
primaries.

Voters from 24 of the 29
Utah counties accessed
Vote411.

elderly, and disabled voters, who will rely on mail-in ballots to vote safely this year. Now Rhode Island voters can be assured that their safely-cast ballots will count.

And, just today, **LWV Ohio** filed a lawsuit challenging Ohio's flawed system of matching voter signatures on absentee ballots and absentee ballot applications. Election officials—who have no handwriting-analysis expertise—are currently allowed to reject an absentee ballot or ballot application, sometimes without notifying the voter, if they think there is a signature mismatch on the voter's paperwork. Especially during a global pandemic, Ohio voters must be able to efficiently secure absentee ballots and have assurance that their votes will count.

Whenever voters are forced to choose between their health and their right to vote, our democracy is weakened, so we'll continue on fighting to make upcoming elections as safe and secure as possible. — *LWV US*

A Letter to Sen. Mike Lee from the Utah League

On behalf of the League of Women Voters, we ask for your support for S. 561, the Voting Rights Advancement Act (VRAA). Thousands of League members from across the country will join us today to recognize the beginning of the League's 100th-Anniversary Convention. We are calling on our Senators to move forward with restoring the Voting Rights Act by passing key legislation which will modernize and enhance protections for voters across the country.

Seven years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned a key part of the Voting Rights Act (VRA), reducing the protections for the voting rights of American citizens. The VRA protected the right to vote regardless of race, ethnicity or language for nearly 50 years and with bipartisan support. It's time for Congress to fulfill its obligations under the Constitution to eradicate voting discrimination by repairing the VRA to its full strength and effectiveness.

After years of tireless organizing, the VRAA passed in the House of Representatives and now it's time for the Senate to act. In 2020, we are heading into a critical election year that we will have to navigate under unprecedented circumstances, and later in 2021 we will begin a new redistricting cycle. The VRAA is needed to keep these processes fair, non-partisan, and free from interference.

100 years ago, the League of Women Voters was formed in the fight for Women's suffrage. 100 years later, our dedication to empower voters and defend democracy remains the same. The time to act is now. We can no longer sweep the concerns of voters across the country under the rug. No matter what difficult circumstances our nation must weather, we must be resolute in making sure that our democratic institutions remain strong.

Voting Rights Act, Part II

NPR's Alisa Change speaks with Myrna Perez, Director of the Brennan Center's Voting Rights and Elections Program, about the history of the Voting Rights Act — the legacy of the late Rep. John Lewis.

Listen to [the broadcast here](#).

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