

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY **2021-2022**

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®]
OF MAINE EDUCATION FUND

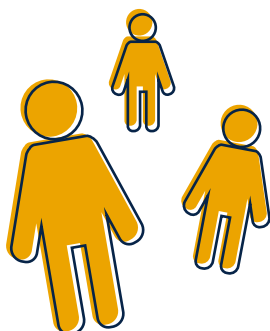


MISSION AND THEORY OF CHANGE

The League stands for the right of all people to be active participants in their government. **We educate voters, empower people to participate in civic life, and advocate for policies that strengthen our democracy.** Empowered and engaged people are both our ‘means’ and our ‘end’.

We are proud of the recent progress Maine has made to enshrine voting rights and expand civic participation. Yet Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), young and low-income Mainers, and people with disabilities, among others, continue to face disproportionate barriers. As we enter our second century, **the League’s programs and goals reflect our commitment to equity in all aspects of our democracy.**

Many of our most treasured democratic norms are unravelling, which is fueling the call for a new vision: a future that realizes a government of we the people. At this moment in history, Maine can lead a path towards a more perfect democracy.



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OUR THREE GOALS FOR MAINE'S DEMOCRACY

1.

Everyone Votes: Approach 100% voter turnout.

Our short-term goal is to break the 2018 record for midterm turnout in the 2022 election.

2.

Everyone Participates, and Everyone's Participation Matters: Ensure everyone has the skills, knowledge, and opportunities for meaningful participation in democratic self-governance, and that government is responsive to all voices.

Our short-term goals are to strengthen trust in democracy by combatting misinformation, expand access to information about local politics and government, and to advance policies that reduce the influence of money in politics and result in more representative voting systems.

3.

Everyone Means Everyone: Reduce and eliminate inequities in voter turnout and public participation.

Our short-term goals are to increase civic participation in the ten communities with the lowest voter turnout in 2020 (which are also towns with some of the highest poverty rates and greatest racial diversity¹) and to sustain the surge in youth voter engagement from 2020 into the 2022 midterm and local elections.



1. Based on our State of Democracy research, these are Biddeford, Portland, Lewiston, Augusta, Waterville, Skowhegan, Bangor, Orono, Old Town/Indian Island and Presque Isle

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OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

How do we achieve these ambitious goals? Our strategies are based on our organizational experience and best practices, as well as the evidence gathered by political scientists and sociologists.



POLICY | PRO-DEMOCRACY POLICIES

Alignment in means and ends: We promote policies that increase civic activism; we win those policies through civic activism.

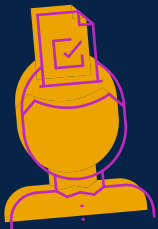
- + Advocacy
- + Research
- + Litigation as needed



CULTURE | COMMUNITY CULTURE OF PARTICIPATION

Relationships and community are what sustain activism and the most impactful path to get out the vote.

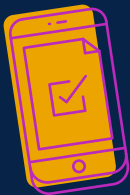
- + Individual Outreach (Neighbor to Neighbor)
- + The League itself and affinity groups like Youth Council
- + Relational Organizing
- + Community Partnerships



INFO | NON-PARTISAN INFORMATION AND CIVIC EDUCATION

We are trusted providers of quality information; we can always improve access to and range of offerings to meet community needs.

- + Voter Guides and Vote411.org
- + School-based Civics
- + Skills Training
- + Issue Education
- + Observation Programs



SERVICE | DIRECTLY NAVIGATING BARRIERS

While still needed, we are increasingly trying to meet direct needs through community relationships and policy implementation.

- + Voter Registration
- + Absentee Ballot Requests
- + Voter Hotline



Pro-democracy policies.

We advocate for policies and legislation that facilitate access to the ballot and true representation for all people. For example, same-day voter registration, public meeting laws, fair redistricting, and Clean Elections each play an important role. This is the focus of our robust, strategic advocacy work.

Strong community and culture of voting and participation.

Personal relationships, social and peer examples, and community support are important determinants of who participates in our democracy and who grows their engagement beyond Election Day.

Skills and information.

Whether it is understanding the role of elected officials and the issues at stake, how to get an absentee ballot, or where to submit a comment on a piece of legislation, voters need information they can trust and must encounter that information in their daily lives.

Direct service and assistance.

Some voters benefit from support with voter registration, getting to the polling place, etc. Where possible, we are working to integrate these services into community networks or to institute policies (such as online voter registration) that reduce the effort needed for a non-profit to run large voter assistance programs.

Each of our programs incorporates one or more of these strategic goals, adapted to the specific needs of the communities we work with.

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PROGRAMS FOR 2022

To increase equitable voter turnout and civic participation, we need to reduce systemic barriers to voting, improve access to clear, nonpartisan information, and build a supportive culture of engagement within communities.

NEIGHBOR TO NEIGHBOR VOTING

Neighbor to Neighbor volunteers work in neighborhoods with low voter participation, focusing on low-income communities and areas with a high proportion of immigrants. By holding conversations with voters at their doors, this project mixes the strategies of direct person-to-person community building, education, and assistance. We provide voter information in Arabic, French, Portuguese, Somali, and Spanish, as well as English. Residents have the opportunity to learn about the electoral process, including registering to vote, requesting an absentee ballot, and changing one's party affiliation before an election. We also talk to residents about what issues are important to them and their neighbors. We partner with local property owners/managers (for example, Avesta Housing), community leaders, and nonprofit organizations to foster a collaborative process, and we include neighborhood residents in the canvass teams.

★ ★ THE DATA:

In 2020, we held **3,000** Neighbor to Neighbor Conversations around the state, and we will have **5,000** conversations in the lead-up to the 2022 election.

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THE EASY-TO-READ VOTER GUIDE AND VOTE411.ORG

Our flagship voter education program, the printed Easy-to-Read Voter Guide and the Vote411.org website are used by Mainers to learn about how to register and vote, to see what will be on their ballot, and to read candidate questionnaires and nonpartisan descriptions of ballot initiatives. In 2020, we distributed over 100,000 print guides, and more than 14,000 Mainers accessed Vote411.org.

By November 2022, we will surpass these numbers through strategic advertising and working closely with more than 100 business, nonprofit, and civic organizations to distribute the guide and promote Vote411.org. We will also cover every municipal election held in the state through Vote411.org, filling a major gap in voter information, and ensuring no matter where a voter lives, they can access comprehensive voter information. Vote411.org also links voters to upcoming and recorded candidate forums hosted by our local Leagues. We provide translation of the guide in six languages: Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Somali, and Spanish.

THE DATA:

In 2020 we distributed over **100,000** print guides, and more than **14,000** Mainers accessed Vote411.org

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ELECTION PROTECTION AND COMBATTING DISINFORMATION

We conduct election observation and protection activities to increase public confidence in our elections, and identify areas for future voting process improvements. By sending trained volunteers to observe on Election Day, we have been able to report on the voting process and resolve issues as they arise. In 2022, we will have observers in all 16 counties at polling places ranging from large cities to small towns to observe and report on our major state and federal elections. We will also staff a voter hotline, where trained volunteers can answer questions and help resolve barriers to voting.

The most effective way to combat misinformation and disinformation about our elections is to share accurate information. In addition to our main voter education activities, we are also training and supporting our members to spread positive messages in their networks. We will conduct trainings on effective messaging and relational organizing, as well as creating easy to share content for distribution on social media.



THE DATA:

In 2022, we will have observers in all **16** counties at polling places ranging from large cities to small towns to observe and report on our major state and federal elections.

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YOUTH AND SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMMING

Our youth programming combines education with leadership development and community building. With our sibling organization, Maine Students Vote, we provide a suite of services to middle, high school, and college students, teachers, and administrators. These services include specialized curriculum and lesson plans around ranked-choice voting, local government, and other Maine-specific civics topics; voter registration and registration training in partnership with student organizations; speakers and workshops on voting and civics topics; and membership in the League's Youth Council. By Fall 2022, we will partner with at least 100 schools, reaching over 20,000 students, including the communities with the greatest voter participation gaps.

The Youth Council brings together teenagers from around the state who have an interest in activism and making a difference in their communities. Many are already leading efforts on issues they care about, and the Youth Council gives them a space to learn new skills, such as facilitation, project planning, and public speaking. It also connects these young people with a supportive cohort beyond their own schools. The Youth Council appoints a member of the LWVME board of directors to ensure youth perspectives are represented in all our decision-making. By Fall 2022, the youth council will have 100 active members.



THE DATA:

By Fall 2022, we will partner with at least **100** schools, reaching over **20,000** students, including the communities with the greatest voter participation gaps.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

Local governments make many crucial decisions that impact Mainers' everyday lives and future wellbeing. However, local elections have low turnout, most people know very little about local government roles and systems, and local organizing efforts are siloed. Compounding the problem, there is no central source for local election information. We are using aspects of our specific programming described below to increase local civic engagement:

1. Publishing and distributing a **user-friendly guide** to local government in Maine geared toward community members.
2. Providing educators with **lesson plans on local government** and how to impact local issues.
3. Including information on all local, county, and state offices and referendums on the **November 2022 ballot** in our Vote411.org voter guide.
4. Holding at least **5,000 conversations** through our Neighbor to Neighbor program at doors in the ten communities that have neighborhoods with low voter turnout.
5. Hosting **workshops and community calls** with experts in local organizing in order to weave a network of new and experienced activists.



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BUDGET

PROGRAM	BUDGET	UNMET NEED
Neighbor to Neighbor Voting	\$90,000	\$75,000
Voter Guide and Vote411	\$120,000	\$100,000
Election Observation	\$30,000	\$30,000
Youth Programming	\$100,000	\$80,000
Local Government	\$50,000	\$40,000
TOTAL:	\$390,000	\$325,000

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