

V O T E

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY 2023-2024

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF MAINE EDUCATION FUND

V O T E

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MISSION AND THEORY OF CHANGE

At this crucial time for our nation, Maine can lead towards a more perfect democracy. The League stands for the right of all people to be active participants in their government. We inform voters, empower people to participate in civic life, and advocate for policies that strengthen our democracy.

We are proud of the 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 and turn out to vote at much lower rates.

The higher the poverty rate, the lower the voter participation.

VOTER PARTICIPATION IN 2022

28% Orono | HD 25

37% poverty rate, 28% voter turnout

36% Waterville | HD 64

25% poverty rate, 36% voter turnout

72%

Cape Elizabeth | HD 123

4% poverty rate, 72% voter turnout

73%

Falmouth | HD 111

2% poverty rate, 73% voter turnout

Our 2023-24 plan is to increase equitable voter turnout and civic participation by reducing systemic barriers to voting, improving access to clear, nonpartisan information, and supporting a culture of engagement within communities. We know that voting is a habit,¹ and by supporting new and low-propensity voters to engage in the 2023 general election, we will lay the groundwork for increased turnout in 2024.

1. Green, Donald P. and Alan S. Gerber. *Get Out the Vote: How to Increase Voter Turnout*. Brookings Institution Press, 2019. *Project MUSE*. muse.jhu.edu/book/66721.

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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 2020 record for turnout in the 2024 election

2.

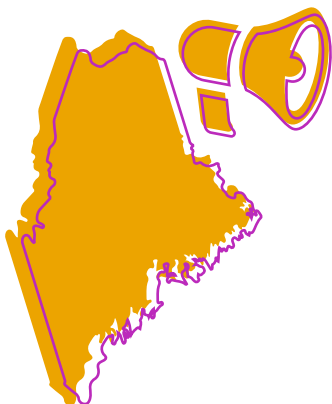
Everyone Participates, and Everyone's Participation Matters: Ensure everyone has the skills, knowledge, and opportunities for meaningful participation in democratic self-governance, and that government is responsive to all voices.

Our short-term goals are to strengthen trust in democracy by combating misinformation, expanding access to information about local politics and government, and advancing policies that result in more representative voting systems that build power in marginalized communities.

3.

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

Our short-term goal is to register and turnout newly-eligible youth and immigrant voters in 2023, building a habit of voting and strengthening civic engagement skills in these communities.



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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.

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POLICY | PRO-DEMOCRACY POLICIES

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

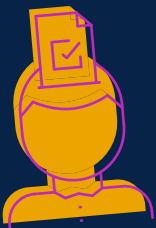
- + Advocacy
- + Research
- + Litigation as needed



CULTURE | COMMUNITY CULTURE OF PARTICIPATION

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

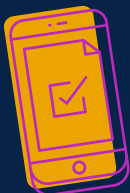
- + Individual Outreach (Neighbor to Neighbor)
- + The League itself and affinity groups like Youth Council
- + Relational Organizing
- + Community Partnerships



INFO | NON-PARTISAN INFORMATION AND CIVIC EDUCATION

We are trusted providers of quality information; we can always improve access to the 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 aim 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.

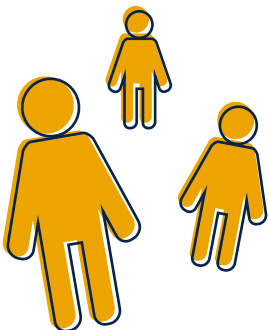
Skills and information.

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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OUR PROGRAMS

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.

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.

- + We **protect voter access** by advocating for expanded early voting hours, fight polling place closures, and assist election officials with poll worker recruitment.
- + We also staff a **voter hotline**, where trained volunteers answer questions and help resolve barriers to voting.
- + By sending trained volunteers to **observe on Election Day**, we can report on the voting process and resolve issues as they arise through on-the-ground action and communication with election officials.
- + We have a **geographically diverse observation program** for the 2023 election, and in 2024 we will have our largest observation program to date for the primary and general elections, with over 100 observers across all 16 counties.

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 also plan to conduct trainings on effective messaging and relational organizing, as well as creating easy to share content for distribution on social media.



THE BUDGET:

2023 BUDGET

\$40,000

UNMET NEED

\$30,000

2024 BUDGET

\$100,000

UNMET NEED

\$90,000

TOTAL:

\$120,000

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THE BUDGET:**2023 BUDGET**

\$30,000

UNMET NEED**\$25,000****2024 BUDGET**

\$65,000

UNMET NEED**\$65,000****TOTAL:****\$90,000****VOTING IN UNDERREPRESENTED COMMUNITIES**

Our Neighbor to Neighbor volunteers go door to door in their communities with low voter participation, low-income areas, and areas with a high proportion of immigrants. By holding conversations at the voter's door, this project mixes the strategies of direct community building, education, and assistance.

- + **Voter direct service:** residents can register to vote, request an absentee ballot, and ask questions, like what it means to join a political party or how to vote early.
- + We provide voter information in **ten languages**.
- + We partner with **local housing providers**, such as Avesta Housing, community leaders, and nonprofit organizations, including the Immigrant Welcome Center, to foster a collaborative process. By returning to the same communities each year, we build trust and engagement with our neighbors.

Additionally, our local League chapters maintain a relationship with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and attend citizenship ceremonies around the state. As soon as new citizens are sworn in, we encourage them to register to vote and answer their questions about the voting process. Our volunteers' direct service allows new citizens to join Maine's strong voting and participation culture.

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

In a time of growing election mis- and disinformation, trusted nonpartisan election information is more important than ever. We make sure that no matter where a voter lives, they can access comprehensive voter information.

- + Maine voters **use our staple publications**, the Easy-to-Read Voter Guide and Vote411.org, to learn how to register and vote, to see what will be on their ballot, and to read candidate questionnaires and nonpartisan descriptions of ballot initiatives.
- + We cover federal, state and local elections for **every town in Maine**, making Vote411.org a unique resource for voters.
- + We provide listings and recordings of **candidate forums** hosted by our local Leagues.
- + We work with **hundreds** of business, nonprofit, and civic organizations to get the information to the voters who need it.
- + Our focus for the November 2023 election, as a referendum election, is to foster **trust in Vote411.org** as a good source of information about the questions that will be on the ballot.
- + In 2024, with increased support and funding from partners, we will print and distribute **100,000 voter guides** as well as expand access to Vote411.org.

THE BUDGET:

2023 BUDGET

\$40,000

2024 BUDGET

\$143,000

TOTAL:

UNMET NEED

\$30,000

UNMET NEED

\$130,000

\$160,000

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YOUTH VOTING AND LEADERSHIP

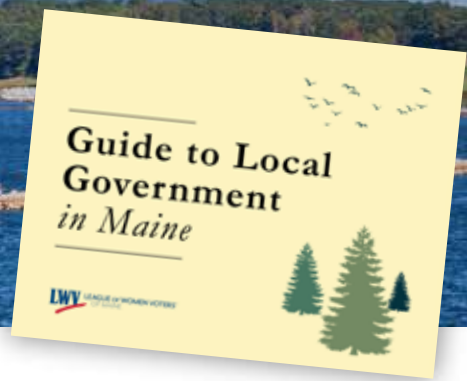
Our youth programming combines education with leadership development and community building.

- + Our **Youth Council** brings together teenagers and young adults from around the state who have an interest in activism and making a difference in their communities. Many already lead the efforts on issues they care about, and the Youth Council gives them a space to learn new skills, such as workshop facilitation, project planning, and public speaking. The Council connects these young people with a supportive cohort beyond their own schools and appoints a member to the League’s board of directors.
- + We **hire high school and college students** to educate their peers in building civic skills. These students make up our intern and fellow cohorts who provide leadership for the Youth Council.
- + We are connected to **28 colleges** and more than **120 high schools** across Maine. In the future, we will double our reach to rural high schools and build a strong relationship with the Maine Department of Education.
- + We provide a **suite of services** to middle, high school, and college students, and to teachers, educators, and administrators. These services include specialized curriculum and support with voter registration.
- + Each fall we host a **Youth Voting Summit** where high school and college students from across the state gather to build their civic leadership skills. This event is designed and planned by young people, with an expectation of at least 100 attendees.

By building a robust network of support we are teaching a new generation of young civic leaders that their voices and votes matter.



THE BUDGET:	
2023 BUDGET	UNMET NEED
\$60,000	\$45,000
2024 BUDGET	UNMET NEED
\$100,000	\$80,000
TOTAL:	\$125,000



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

Local governments make many crucial decisions that impact Mainer’s everyday lives and future well-being, including decisions that can either address or reinforce inequities in our communities and community institutions. However, local elections have low turnout, most Mainers 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. LWVME aims to combine education, advocacy, and community organizing to empower more Mainers to get involved with local government and community decision-making processes. Our specific program projects include:

1. **Providing interactive**, educational community workshops on local government both around the state and with community partners to reach targeted audiences.
2. **Providing educators** with lesson plans on local government and how to impact local issues.
3. **Expanding the implementation** of a pilot project examining how transparent and accountable local governments are to their communities.
4. **Collaborating with** the League’s Racial Justice & Equity Team to better understand the landscape of school boards and school board elections in Maine and to identify partners engaging with issues of equity and school boards.
5. **Conducting research** into local election voter turnout to better understand turnout out rates across the state and what dynamics affect turnout for local elections

THE BUDGET:

2023 BUDGET

\$30,000

UNMET NEED

\$20,000

2024 BUDGET

\$50,000

UNMET NEED

\$40,000

TOTAL:

\$60,000

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'23 BUDGET

Your support is needed:

With eight referendum questions on the November ballot, and with local elections and thousands of new voters becoming eligible, **2023** can't be an "off year" for voter engagement.

PROGRAM	BUDGET	UNMET NEED
Election Protection	\$40,000	\$30,000
Neighbor to Neighbor	\$30,000	\$25,000
Voter Guide and Vote411	\$40,000	\$30,000
Youth Programming	\$60,000	\$45,000
Local Government	\$30,000	\$20,000
TOTAL:	\$200,000	\$150,000

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'24 BUDGET

Your support is needed:

If we want to see high voter turnout, better trust in elections, and strong youth participation in the November **2024** election, we must build engagement and partnerships all year.

PROGRAM	BUDGET	UNMET NEED
Election Observation	\$100,000	\$90,000
Neighbor to Neighbor	\$65,000	\$65,000
Voter Guide and Vote411	\$143,000	\$130,000
Youth Programming	\$100,000	\$80,000
Local Government	\$50,000	\$40,000
TOTAL:	\$465,000	\$425,000

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