

Our thanks to the Board of Legislators for inviting us to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of New York State signing women's suffrage into law, three years before the US passed the 19th Amendment. This was a milestone for the state and a transformative moment in American democracy. Equal opportunity to participate in our democracy is as important a topic today as it was when Susan B. Anthony was arrested in Rochester in 1872 for attempting to vote.

The League of Women Voters was founded in 1919 by a group of highly opinionated, politically engaged, fiercely dynamic women. It was created after women won the right to vote in New York State in 1917. We were the first ever League and one of our founding mothers was Carrie Chapman Catt, an iconic suffragette who started off as an Iowa school teacher but quickly became one of the most instrumental women during the suffrage movement. As a resident of New Rochelle, she founded the League. The League is proud to be nonpartisan, neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties at any level of government, but always working on vital issues of concern to members and to the people.

Our mission is, and has always been, to educate and inform voters and to encourage them to vote – regardless of party affiliation. We are dedicated to ensuring that all eligible voters have the opportunity to cast their ballot. Our attention has focused particularly on making sure that those voters from traditionally under represented or under served communities, including first-time voters, non-college youth, new citizens, minorities, the elderly and low-income Americans, have the opportunity and the information to exercise their right to vote.

We regularly conduct candidate debates before elections and hold our elected officials responsible for their actions. The League advocates for laws that ensure equal protection, quality education, and access to adequate health care for all individuals. We are on the side of a safe and sustainable environment for America and for the planet. We have fought these battles for nearly 100 years and we will continue to fight for them as long as fighting is required.

In our 98th year, we remember that our founding mothers fought for all women to have the right to vote. They fought for equality under the law for all people, regardless of race or religion. **And most importantly, they fought for our democracy.**