

POLICY & ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

2026-2027

LWVNJ.ORG



**EMPOWERING VOTERS.
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY.**

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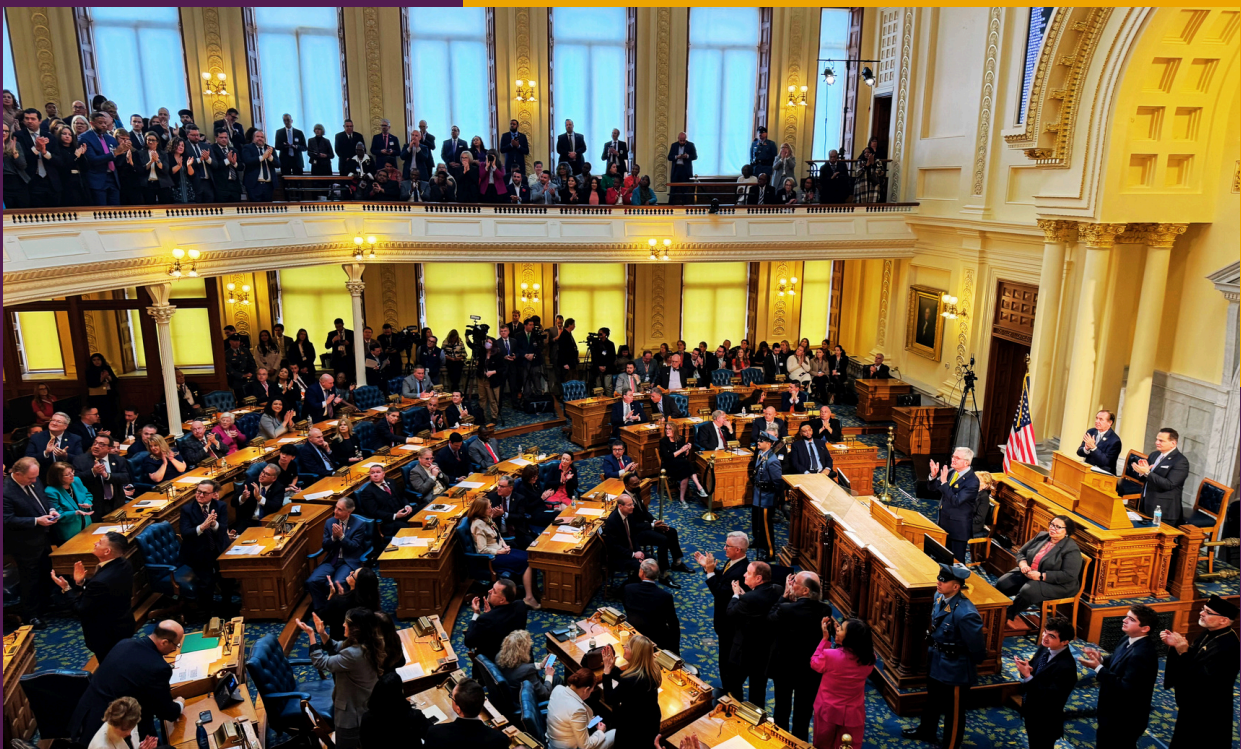
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INTRODUCTION

About the League of Women Voters

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to protecting and expanding voting rights and ensuring that everyone is represented in our democracy. We empower voters and defend democracy through advocacy, education, and litigation at the local, state, and national levels.

About Our Policy & Advocacy Priorities

This document outlines the League of Women Voters of New Jersey's (LWVNJ) key policy priorities for the 2026–2027 legislative session. Developed through LWVNJ membership engagement, these priorities reflect a shared commitment to protecting voting rights, advancing racial justice, expanding access to critical resources, strengthening representation, and ensuring transparency and accountability in New Jersey's government. This agenda will guide our advocacy, education, and coalition work over the next two years, ensuring we remain focused, strategic, and responsive to community needs.



Our Partner Focus Areas

While this document reflects the League's core democracy work, we collaborate with a broad network of partners and coalitions across key intersectional issues. Our policy work includes immigration, reproductive equity, housing, family policies including childcare and long-term care, education, the environment, and racial justice—areas that shape the well-being of communities across New Jersey. *A separate support agenda will be released in summer 2026.*

POLICY VISION

2026-2027

The League of Women Voters of New Jersey remains committed to advancing policies that strengthen democratic institutions, center the voices of the people, and ensure fair representation for all. Our goal is to advance a more inclusive, multiracial democracy that truly reflects and represents all communities in New Jersey.

In recent years, New Jersey lawmakers have reduced transparency and accountability measures. This troubling pattern of governance behind closed doors limits public understanding and meaningful participation. The League's legislative priorities call for a transparent Trenton, with open, accessible processes that provide the public with ample time and opportunity to engage, weigh in, and hold decision-makers accountable.

At a time when the very principles of democracy are threatened, the League intends to take bold action and uplift the power of people to defend democracy.



A strong democracy depends on openness, public trust, and equitable representation.

Overview

The League of Women Voters has a long-standing commitment to protecting voting rights and expanding access to the ballot, particularly for communities that have been historically excluded from the democratic process.

In 2026, LWVNJ will continue to advocate for and advance state-level voting rights legislation that protects and expands New Jerseyans' access to the ballot. In 2025, we made meaningful progress on the John R. Lewis Voter Empowerment Act, laying important groundwork for passage.

The League remains firmly committed to ensuring this critical legislation is enacted in 2026.

At the same time, as fundamental freedoms and voting rights continue to be weakened federally, New Jersey must take proactive steps to strengthen voter access. One key priority is same-day voter registration. More than 20 states currently offer some form of same day registration, empowering eligible voters and reducing barriers to participation. New Jersey lags behind much of the country in this area, and the League believes that adopting same-day voter registration must remain a core legislative priority.



VOTING RIGHTS

Continued

2026-2027 Policy Priorities

- John Lewis Voter Empowerment Act
- Same-Day Voter Registration

Why It Matters

Strengthening state-level voting protections is critical as federal safeguards weaken, and disenfranchisement persists. The current federal administration is increasingly attacking voting rights, while the U.S. Supreme Court hears cases that threaten to further erode the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

In 2025, the League of Women Voters of New Jersey, in partnership with The Million Voters Project, organized Community Civic Action and Listening Sessions across the state. Through this direct, on-the-ground work, we heard firsthand from voters about the challenges they face when trying to participate in New Jersey's democracy.

These challenges are also reflected in the League's Election Protection program and our year-round voter hotline, where we consistently document persistent barriers to voting—including inaccessible polling locations, late poll openings, improper ID requests, and insufficient language access. These developments make clear that states must act.

Together, the John Lewis Voter Empowerment Act and Same-Day Voter Registration would expand ballot access, strengthen language access protections, establish preclearance to prevent discriminatory voting changes, protect voters from intimidation, and ensure that New Jersey's voting laws do not deny protected communities the right to vote.

THE ROAD TO CENSUS 2030

Issue #2

Overview

Achieving a full and accurate count in the 2030 Census will require early planning, sustained investment, and broad collaboration across sectors. Over the past year, the U.S. Census Bureau has faced significant challenges, including federal funding cuts, reduced staffing capacity and efforts to undermine best practices for Census implementation.

At the same time, ongoing efforts to introduce a citizenship question and other tactics that suppress participation threaten to undermine the count in immigrant and historically undercounted communities. These challenges make early and coordinated action more critical than ever.

The Road to Census 2030 is a core priority for the League. We are committed to ensuring that every community in New Jersey is fully counted, particularly those that are hardest to reach. A complete and accurate Census is essential to securing fair representation and ensuring the state receives the federal resources its residents deserve. By strengthening partnerships and beginning this work now, we can help safeguard a fair and equitable count in 2030.



THE ROAD TO CENSUS 2030

Continued

2026-2027 Policy Priorities

- Establish a 2030 Complete Count Commission to support early, state-level planning and funding for Census outreach.
- Strengthen cross-sector coalition coordination, informed by lessons learned from the 2020 Census.
- Strengthen public trust and support community-led engagement, with a focus on historically undercounted populations.
- Actively monitor and advocate against federal efforts to weaponize the Census, including attempts to add a citizenship question, defund outreach programs, or reduce Bureau capacity by tracking federal policy threats that could reduce participation among immigrant, hard to count, and mixed-status households.

Why It Matters

A complete count determines federal funding, political representation, infrastructure investment, and community planning. When everyone is counted, communities receive essential resources for schools, hospitals, housing, transportation, and public services. Early, coordinated action is critical to ensuring New Jersey's communities are fully counted and fairly represented in the decade ahead.

FAIR DISTRICTS NJ: REDISTRICTING

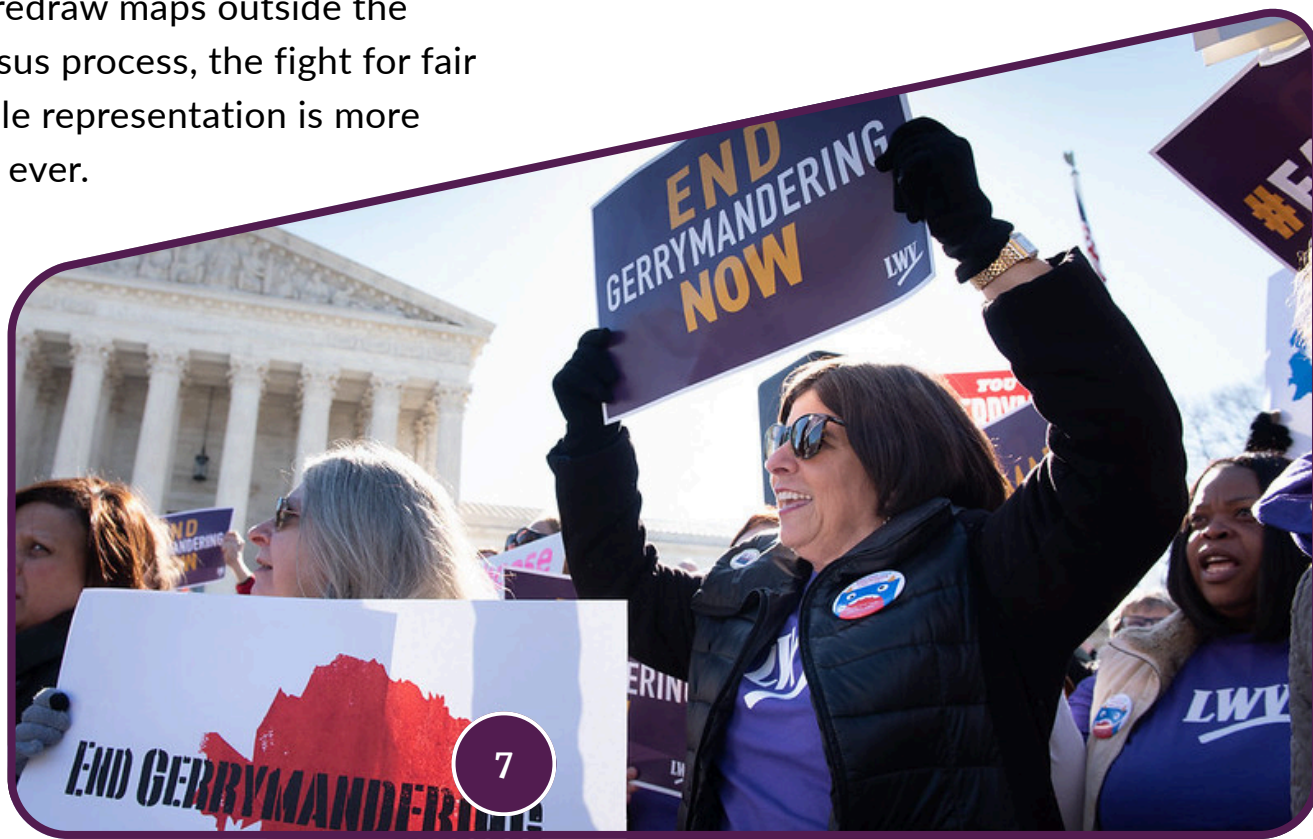
Issue #3

Overview

Redistricting is the process of redrawing voting district boundaries to reflect population changes, occurring every ten years after the Census. How these boundaries are drawn has a profound impact on how our communities are represented in the democratic process.

Gerrymandering, the unfair manipulation of maps to create favorable conditions for one political party or group, continues to be a national concern. As some states attempt to redraw maps outside the regular Census process, the fight for fair and equitable representation is more urgent than ever.

It is critical for New Jersey to begin preparing now for the next round of redistricting. The League of Women Voters of New Jersey's Fair Districts coalition achieved significant success in 2020 advocating for map-making transparency and public access. Moving forward, the coalition will work to ensure all communities receive fair representation. We will continue to advocate for reforms that make the process transparent, accountable, and equitable for the public.



REDISTRICTING

Continued

2026-2027 Policy Priorities

- Research, develop, and advocate for redistricting reforms grounded in best practices, prioritizing transparency, accountability, and a people-centered map-drawing process.
- Build sustained community power ahead of 2030 to ensure that New Jersey's legislative and congressional districts reflect the diversity, needs, and lived experiences of our communities.

Why It Matters

Once drawn, district maps determine how we are represented in government for the next ten years. These lines shape every major policy decision that affects our daily lives, including appropriations in health care, infrastructure, the environment, education, economic opportunity, and other areas. Fair maps are essential to ensuring that every community has a meaningful voice in the decisions that impact their future.



GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

Issue #4

Overview

Over the last several years, transparency and accountability in Trenton have declined, contributing to an erosion of public trust in New Jersey government. Recent legislative actions have weakened transparency and restricted public access to information, raising serious concerns about open government and democratic accountability.

In 2024, the Legislature and Governor enacted significant changes to the Open Public Records Act (OPRA), introducing new procedural barriers that make it harder for journalists, advocates, and residents to obtain public records essential for oversight.

At the same time, the passage of the “Election Transparency Act” raised donation limits, weakened long-standing pay-to-play restrictions, and reduced the enforcement authority of the New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission, diminishing safeguards against undue influence in the political process.

These developments are compounded by broader process concerns, including bills being introduced at the last minute without adequate public review, limited transparency around bill language, and a budget process that often remains opaque until final approval.

Taken together, these trends signal a troubling shift away from open government and toward diminished accountability, undermining public confidence in the integrity and fairness of New Jersey’s democratic institutions.



GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

Continued

2026-2027 Policy Priorities

- OPRA reform
- Campaign Finance Reform
- Expanding transparency and open government practices
- Preservation and strengthening of independent oversight institutions

Why It Matters

These measures reflect a troubling pattern of diminished transparency, weakened oversight, and backroom deal-making that erodes democratic accountability. Our government must ensure that the public can actively participate in the legislative process and have a voice in decisions that affect their lives—not a system that benefits only a select few.



These policy priorities are made possible through the collective work and partnerships of partner organizations, communities, and League of Women Voters members who are committed to building a better New Jersey. While advancing these policies often takes years of sustained effort and hard-fought advocacy, it is because of everyone involved that we are able to make meaningful progress and improve the lives of communities across our state.

THANK YOU!

Join Your
Local League



Take Action
Today



Support
LWV NJ

