

"Diversity, Equity & Inclusion" Award Application Form

Award winners in this category will be selected for successful integration of DEI strategies into practice.

Your League Name: League of Women Voters of Santa Monica

What is your League doing differently to ensure that DEI is reflected in all of your work around voter services and advocacy?

We employ a DEI lens in everything we do and actively seek out ways we can be more inclusive in our overall mission of voter empowerment. We strive to lead by example in the understanding and belief that diversity, equity, and inclusion is about acknowledging and supporting people with different life experiences. We understand that no matter how inclusive we may think we are, there is always more to learn and more people we can learn from in order to work towards our mission of empowering voters and our community at large.

What have you done to incorporate DEI throughout your League?

As mentioned above, we employ a DEI lens in everything we do. Please see below for examples of some ways we have incorporated DEI throughout our League:

Membership

We are very aware that our dues are higher than many other civic organizations in the area. PTA for example is only \$8 - \$15 a year to ensure affordability. Our board of directors is committed to identifying and removing barriers to membership. For that reason, and because we believe our League should reflect our community, we offer a "pay what you can" membership to enable people who may not have the resources to pay the full annual membership fee. We do this through our website via a PayPal "donation" button so that anyone can use it without the need for an application or any unnecessary bureaucracy. Additionally, we maintain a "Dues Assistance Fund" in our budget. The Dues Assistance Fund was created with board approval and has been sustained through member donations. While we do not have many members who choose to use this membership option, we ensure that it is available to anyone who needs it.

Voter Services

Candidate Forums: We typically partner with our City's public television station, CityTV, to put on candidate forums. In 2020, as a result of budget cuts due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, we were not able to partner with CityTV so we hosted candidate forums via Zoom webinar with 3 diverse local organizations to put on 7 (total) candidate forums for 4 local elected bodies. We partnered with the Santa Monica Bay Area Human Relations Council (<http://hrcsantamonica.org/>), the Santa Monica-Malibu PTA Council (<https://www.smmpta.org/>), and The Committee for Racial Justice ["CRJ"] (a program of the Church in Ocean Park- <https://www.ciop4justice.org/home>). Additionally, the theme for the 3 forums with CRJ was "Transformation in the Era of Black Lives Matter." In order to expand access to this vital voter information, we live-streamed each of these forums on our League's YouTube channel and kept the recordings there so that anyone could access the candidate forums at their convenience.

Flex Vote Centers: In order to expand access to the ballot box, our County Registrar's office set up a program to allow organizations to host pop-up voting centers called "Flex Vote Centers" so we partnered with the County and two local nonprofits, The People Concern (<https://www.thepeopleconcern.org/>) and St. Joseph Center (<https://stjosephctr.org/>), to provide one day of on-site voting and voter registration to clients, employees, and volunteers. The People Concern and St. Joseph Center both provide services to people who are or were unhoused. Although we were only able to do this in the lead up to the March 2020 election due to the pandemic, we hope that the Registrar will continue this program and we will be able to continue participating in it in the future.

Community Outreach and Education

Santa Monica Pride: We were able to participate in our city's first ever Pride celebration in June 2019 and actively support voter empowerment of LGBTQ+ people and their allies.

Fall Kickoff: We seek to bring diverse voices to general membership events including our Fall Kickoffs. Our Fall Kickoff was formerly the "Membership Meeting" hosted in the beginning of each fiscal year to welcome members. We renamed it to project energy/action, and again to remove a barrier. Kickoff simply sounds more fun and more inviting than another meeting. In 2019, our speaker was Dr. Karen S. Gunn, the principal of Gunn Consulting Group (<https://www.santamonica.gov/blog/santamonica-black-owned-businesses-and-entrepreneurs-part-5-in-a-series>), on the topic of how we can put DEI into practice. In 2020, we invited two members of the LWVC Criminal Justice Reform Committee and two members of our local Public Safety Reform Advisory Committee (PSRAC) to speak to local and statewide efforts for equitable systems of criminal justice and public safety. One of the members of the PSRAC subsequently became a member of the League and will join our board as a director at our next Annual Meeting.

Newsletter: Our weekly newsletter features updates on various issues of equity around our community, and has continued to demonstrate our dedication to DEI in principle and in practice. On a weekly basis, we include a Land Acknowledgement in order to acknowledge and honor the original inhabitants of the areas our League currently represents at the top, as well as a statement regarding our DEI policy. We regularly feature topics including, but not limited to, updates around public safety reform efforts, diverse historical figures people may not know about, efforts to correct past injustices in our community, opportunities to make public comment on a variety of issues related to DEI before our local elected bodies, including transparency, access and opportunity. (again removing barriers to participation). Over the last 17 months and since we began enhancing and enriching the content and focus of the newsletter, our readership for every issue has increased significantly, as has the number of click throughs.

Housing Speaker Series: We have recently launched a monthly speaker series exploring the different facets of housing as a policy issue. Although we have only had two events so far, we are approaching this series with a DEI lens through the speakers we invite, the topics that we cover, and the understanding that housing is also an equity and justice issue. Our first event featured a discussion of the history of housing in our community with experts and community members with lived experience discussing the effects of redlining and how housing policy has changed through the past several decades. Our second event explored the intersections of housing and the environment, where we learned about the very real dangers that the climate crisis brings, particularly to already marginalized communities, and how we can address some of them through housing policy. As with all of our events in recent memory, we include a Land Acknowledgement at the beginning.

Women Who Shape Santa Monica: We honor women who have shaped our community annually at our Women Who Shape Santa Monica celebration. Each year, we honor a diverse group of women who have positively impacted our community in a variety of ways, reflecting the themes of Women's History Month.

Advocacy

We incorporate DEI principles into our advocacy efforts such as public input supporting a housing element that would affirmatively further fair housing (as supported by League positions and mandated by State law) and urging our City Council to consider the potential negative unintended consequences that a proposed ordinance to ban "improvised weapons" at protests, demonstrations, and community gatherings would have. In a letter regarding a proposal to split our local School District, we noted the importance of an equitable allocation of fiscal resources should the unification process move forward.

Why do you think DEI is important?

DEI is important because we believe it is inherent in our mission. It strengthens our coalition of people fighting for active and informed participation in government at all levels. When we are able to learn about the issues that we seek to address from those with lived experience, we're able to better understand what and who we're fighting for. DEI is about an understanding that people have different life experiences and embracing the diversity within our communities is key to making our communities more resilient. We believe that to fully fulfill our mission as a Local League, our membership should and must reflect the people of our communities.

Do you believe that this project has potential to be a model for use by other Leagues? If yes, tell us the critical elements for success.

We do not believe that DEI is a project, but rather an ongoing effort to support the League's overarching mission to empower voters and defend democracy by meeting people where they are rather than where we think they should be.

Critical elements of being a League (not of doing a project):

- Accessible
- Affordable
- Removal of barriers
- Working in partnerships
- Being intentional in our choices and infusing the philosophy of DEI in all aspects of League work on the assumption that democracy includes everyone and Local League membership should reflect the community of that League.
- Meeting people where they are
- Persistence - in building bridges with people who have not historically joined the League, reach out and make personal contact. Do not just send a flyer and then say "We invited them and they didn't respond" - that has historically been used as a rationale to exclude or at least not welcome community members. Building those bridges is a two-way, multi-layered effort and often takes time, patience and persistence. In the long run it is Making Democracy Work.
- Patience - We don't see DEI as a project. Projects have a defined start and end point. We see DEI as ongoing – transformative - powerful



MOVED LATELY?
RE-REGISTER
HERE-NOW

GET THE FACTS
BEFORE YOU VOTE
Voters.dge.org

Hoboken
STYLE
Baby!



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA MONICA



P.O. Box 1265 Santa Monica, CA 90406-1265
Phone: 310.564.6946 www.lwvsantamonica.org

#MakingDemocracyWork

OFFICERS April 13, 2021

President
Natalya Zernitskaya

Re: City Council Agenda Item 7C

Vice President, Program
Barbara Inatsugu

Dear Mayor Himmelrich, Mayor Pro Tem McCowan, and members of the City Council,

Secretary
Sharon Hart

Treasurer
Karen Carrey

The League of Women Voters of Santa Monica believes in the individual liberties guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. Individual rights protected by the Constitution should not be weakened or abridged.

DIRECTORS

Cathie Gentile
Camille Hannant
Ann Williams

In the last few years, the League of Women Voters has defended the First Amendment as the right to protest has become increasingly threatened. In 2020, the League condemned the use of tear gas and violence used on peaceful protesters gathering to decry police brutality and the killings of unarmed Black and brown people. The League recognized that the individual liberties of Black and brown individuals are not being equally protected and the League of Women Voters of the United States has signed on to letters by the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights calling on the DOJ to investigate the police departments and officials that committed the horrific murders of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd for civil rights violations.

The proposed emergency ordinance in Agenda Item 7C relating to restrictions on carrying, using, or possessing certain specified items during community events or public assemblies may potentially result in negative unintended consequences. In addition to potential misuse due to the wide-ranging types of objects and potential situations in which it may be applied, it does not appear to address the challenges that our community has experienced. It is also important to consider whether the actions that the ordinance seeks to address may already be prohibited under existing law.

The ordinance language refers to violence at public events such as those in Washington D.C., Charlottesville, VA, St. Louis, MO, and others. The implication of the cited jurisdictions seems to indicate that the ordinance seeks to address the types of violence at public events related to organized White supremacist hate groups as well as situations where individuals or small groups within larger demonstrations escalated conflicts leading to violence and/or property damage. However, the last time Santa Monica was the site of demonstrations by an organized White supremacist hate group was in 2016.

If we did not need this type of ordinance after those demonstrations, why would now be the appropriate time? Additionally, it is important to consider whether the restrictions as proposed in the ordinance would address the concerns that arose out of the demonstrations for civil rights and contemporaneous destruction of private property in Santa Monica last year. The OIR Group has not yet submitted or

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#MakingDemocracyWork

OFFICERS

President

Natalya Zernitskaya

published their final report on the events of May 31, 2020 so is there sufficient evidence that this ordinance would truly protect against potential future violence?

Vice President, Program
Barbara Inatsugu

As an emergency ordinance, it would take effect immediately, without the contemplation, reflection, or robust public discussion necessary for proposed restrictions of civil liberties.

Secretary
Sharon Hart

Treasurer
Karen Carrey

We recognize the City's efforts in addressing systemic inequities in our community, including in the area of public safety. The proposed emergency ordinance could set the City back in its efforts to build public trust and positive community relationships. Historically, many laws that place restrictions or limitations on actions such as protesting have resulted in disproportionate policing and incarceration of marginalized communities.

DIRECTORS

Cathie Gentile

Camille Hannant

Ann Williams

Decisions that would potentially impact constitutionally protected rights, such as the right of the people peaceably to assemble, should be carefully and thoughtfully examined to ensure that measures do not weaken or abridge these rights.

We urge the City Council to consider these concerns in connection with the proposed emergency ordinance in Agenda Item 7C.

Sincerely,
Natalya Zernitskaya
President
League of Women Voters of Santa Monica

Supporting Our Community

LWVSM <league@lwvsantamonica.org>

Reply-To: league@lwvsantamonica.org

To: nzernitskaya@gmail.com

Wed, Feb 24, 2021 at 12:35 PM

February 24, 2021



Empowering Voters.
Defending Democracy.

LWV Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy

LWV is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice. Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are central to the organization's current and future success in engaging all individuals, households, communities, and policy makers in creating a more perfect democracy. (LWV and LWVSM ByLaws)
Read more [here](#).

Acknowledgement of Native Lands

Although we are virtual at this point in history, the geographic areas this League represents are the traditional lands of the following Native People: [Chumash](#); [Tongva](#); [Kizh](#). Find more information [here](#) and [here](#).



President: Natalya Zernitskaya
Editor: Barbara Inatsugu
league@lwvsantamonica.org



TAKE A MOMENT TO
BREATHE
TAKE A MOMENT TO
REMEMBER

500,000



THE LEAGUE'S NEVER ENDS
****Making Democracy Work****



LWV SANTA MONICA ... RAISE THOSE HANDS!
We Invite You to Serve on Our Board

Would you like to be a nominee, or suggest someone you would like to be on our Board of Directors?

Contact: annwilliams@gmail.com

Nominating Committee: Karen Breakstone, Darlene Evans, Ann Williams

LWVSM MONTHLY SERIES ON HOUSING

Join us for our first of a monthly speaker series on Housing

Date/Time: March 24, 2021 at 06:00 p.m.

[RSVP here](#)

Moderator: Darlene Evans.

WE'RE GOING VIRTUAL!

LWVC Convention: June 7-13, 2024

Events all week & delegate business Friday-Sunday

See our [Letter](#) and [attachment \(LWVSM\)](#)

APPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC SAFETY REFORM AND OVERSIGHT COMMISSION DUE MARCH 1

The application period for service on the new Public Safety Reform and Oversight Commission has opened. The deadline is March 1. Learn more and apply [here](#) (Note: Apparently in last week's newsletter the link gave some of you an error message, so just in case here is the long version: <https://www.santamonica.gov/public-safety-reform-and-oversight-commission>)

[An Update on Santa Monica Boards and Commissions](#) [santamonica.gov](#)

If you are looking for a way to get involved in your local community, Boards and Commissions are a fantastic way to share your expertise and to contribute to civic life in Santa Monica. [Here are all open opportunities.](#)

[2021 State of the City "Our Community Road to Recovery Summit"](#) [santamonica.gov](#)

SANTA MONICA, Calif. – The **Santa Monica** Chamber of Commerce in partnership with the City of **Santa Monica** presents its annual, State of the City ...

[Santa Monica Receives Over \\$5.5 Million for Affordable Housing Production](#) [santamonica.gov](#)

The California Department of Housing and Community Development has announced two significant awards to the City of **Santa Monica** for future ...

UPDATING SANTA MONICA'S HOUSING ELEMENT - A Public Process

This section will be updated as more information becomes available

HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATE

Resources and How to Engage:

[Housing Element Update website.](#)

Email City staff at HousingUpdate@smgov.net if you have any questions on the Housing Element update.

[Join their mailing list](#) to receive the latest updates throughout the project.

For a quick snapshot of the project see the [project fact sheet](#).

For more information, [go here](#).

Summaries and supporting materials for past events will be posted [here](#).

SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

SMMUSD ADOPTS HISTORICAL RESOURCES POLICY

Will guide the district through a multi-step process when considering facilities projects and modernization at all campuses in Santa Monica and Malibu

The Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School Board of Education approved the district's first historical resources policy and administrative regulation at a special board meeting held February 9, 2021. This policy will guide the district through a multi-step process when considering facilities projects and modernization at all campuses in Santa Monica and Malibu. District staff worked with the Santa Monica Conservancy to balance the interests of the community, as well as the educational needs of current and future students. [The full policy is online here.](#)

February:

Celebrate Black History Month

The Black Family: Representation, Identity and Diversity

[Click here for a complete listing of events](#)

BELMAR EVENTS (From [santamonica.gov](#))

[Virtual Belmar Park Event To Honor Santa](#)

[Monica's Black Community Patch.com](#)

Santa Monica will honor its historic Black community on Feb. 28 with a virtual dedication at the new Belmar Park.



LA County Celebrates Black History Month

The LA County Library is celebrating Black History Month with [virtual programs](#) for all ages. They have compiled a [booklist](#) that reflects America's diverse cultural heritage and spotlights

IN RESPONSE TO YOUR QUERIES

Q. WHEN WILL THE U.S. SUPREME COURT RESUME ORAL ARGUMENTS?

A. U.S. Supreme Court to resume hearing oral arguments in February sitting

- The [U.S. Supreme Court](#) began its [February argument sitting](#) on Feb. 22. The court is conducting oral arguments via teleconference and is providing live audio of the arguments. The court made the decision in accordance with public health guidance in response to COVID-19.
- The court is scheduled to hear arguments in four cases for a total of three hours of oral argument this week:
 - Feb. 22: [Florida v. Georgia](#)
 - Feb. 23: [Barr v. Dai](#) (Consolidated with Barr v. Alcaraz-Enriquez)
 - Feb. 24: [Lange v. California](#)
- The court is scheduled to hear arguments in seven cases for a total of three hours of oral argument the following week:
 - March 1: [United States v. Arthrex Inc.](#) (Consolidated with Smith & Nephew Inc. v. Arthrex Inc. and Arthrex Inc. v. Smith & Nephew Inc.)
 - March 2: [Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee](#) (Consolidated with Arizona Republican Party v. Democratic National Committee)
 - March 3: [Carr v. Saul](#) (Consolidated with Davis v. Saul)

PREACHER, THE CAT AND SOPHIE CHECKING BACK IN ...



HUMANS - HERE'S YOUR CHANCE Santa Monica Animal Shelter relaunches volunteer program

We've been watching on our computers and through our networks learned that too many of the humans at the SM Animal Shelter have disappeared because of what they seem to be calling COVID budgets - or something like that. Those who are still there have been working so hard to take care of our abandoned or stray friends! But they need help!



I agree with Preacher. We need our amazing volunteers back to help with the every day care of our friends and prepare them for their forever homes. Did you know that we're talking about dogs, cats, rabbits, tortoises, iguanas, an occasional snake, guinea pigs, and more? AND, did you know that grown ups and teens can both be volunteers?!



THE CAT likes to assist. That's what his computer is for. He has looked online and it turns out that the shelter is currently closed to the public, but open to volunteers seven days a week. If you have love to give and really want to do something good for animals, you can call the shelter during business hours at 310-458-8595 and ask for Martin Hernandez, who coordinates the program.

UPCOMING EVENTS - DON'T MISS OUT!

NEW MEMBER ORIENTATION

Sunday, March 7th at 1:00 p.m.

Whether you're a new member, curious about joining, or been a member for a while and need a refresher on what we're all about, join us for our quarterly New Member Orientation!

RSVP [here](#).

MONTHLY BOARD MEETING

Monday, March 22nd at 6:00 p.m.

All members are welcome to attend!

Please [email us](#) for the Zoom Link

HOUSING IN SANTA MONICA: A Monthly Speaker Series on Housing

What are the issues? Explore solutions. Look to the future.

Join us for our first of a monthly speaker series

Date/Time: March 24, 2021 at 06:00 p.m.

[RSVP here](#)



JOIN THE LEAGUE

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

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League of Women Voters of Santa Monica | P.O. Box 1265, Santa Monica, CA 90406

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HOUSING SPEAKER SERIES #2

Exploring Housing and the Environment: How Can We Address the Climate Crisis through Housing Policy?

Please join the League of Women Voters of Santa Monica for the 2nd in a monthly Speaker Series discussing the causes, current issues, and potential solutions to our current housing crisis.

Event will also be livestreamed via LWVSM YouTube Channel: <https://bit.ly/3h25BBz>

With Panelists:

Gloria Chun Hoo

Asm. Richard Bloom

Juan Matute

Jose Castañeda

Hank Koning & Julie Eizenberg

Moderated by Darlene Evans

Wednesday, April 28, 2021

6:00 p.m. PST

RSVP: <http://bit.ly/HousingSM428>

