



March Unit Meetings

In our March unit meetings we will re-examine the Voting Rights Act. The now-named John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2019 aims to restore the full protections of the original, bipartisan Voting Rights Act of 1965, which was lastly reauthorized by Congress in 2006, but gutted by the Supreme Court in 2013. These meetings will be lead by Kathy Tomsich and Gladys Ritter. See the complete description from Kathy below. We hope to see everyone online at our unit meetings! Zoom links will be sent to you by your unit leaders.

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The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act

After the tumultuous events leading up to and after the Presidential election and the Senate run-off elections in Georgia, it could not be a better time to discuss **The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (JLVRA)**. In the 2020 elections, conducted during a global pandemic in a highly charged partisan atmosphere, voters came out in record numbers across the country and made dramatic changes to the way elections are usually conducted. In state after state, election officials proved they were able to meet the challenges of handling record numbers of mail-in and absentee ballots while maintaining health restrictions due to Covid-19. Officials declared this election to be the safest and most secure in history with no evidence of extensive voter fraud. By any measure, especially turnout, the conduct of this election was a success across the states. In spite of this success, Republican legislators in some states such as Georgia and Arizona, disappointed by the election results and surprised by the high voter turnout of people of color, are contemplating election law changes that would make it more difficult to vote in future elections, especially the 2022 elections.

A [recent analysis](#) by the Brennan Center for Justice found that 106 bills have been filed by Republican lawmakers in 28 states that would restrict voting (the group also found 406 bills in 35 states that would expand voting access). Many of the bills would limit voting by mail, add new voter ID requirements, make it more difficult to register voters and give states greater leeway to purge voter files if voters don't consistently cast ballots in every election. ¹ Voting rights continue to be under threat in our country.

Minnesota is not immune to this phenomenon. Several bills have already been introduced by Republicans in the Minnesota Senate that require voters to present a voter ID to vote and introduce provisional ballots. On the plus side, Democrats have introduced bills that would expand voting access.² Due to our divided legislature, there is little possibility any of these bills will become law.

This 2020 election and its aftermath revealed there is a great need for restoring the Voting Rights Act to its full power, the power it had before the Supreme Court gutted the major enforcement provision in *Shelby County V. Holder*. In *Shelby*, the Supreme Court called on Congress to update the VRA to address modern challenges of voting discrimination that have evolved since 1965 when the Voting Rights Act was passed. The John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (JLVRA) was created to achieve that goal. We will review the *Shelby* decision, discuss the provisions in the JLVRA, and the prospects that it will be signed into law.

The challenges presented by the pandemic highlighted the importance of election reform that would make it easier to vote and encourage voting. We will look at a summary of the For the People Act which addresses voting rights issues plus money in politics, and redistricting guidelines.

A separate document titled “The John Lewis Advancement Act and For the People Act” will be emailed to you before the March unit meetings. Please read it in preparation for the unit discussions.

-Submitted by Kathy Tomsich

Mark Your Calendars!

Mahtomedi Unit: Monday, March 8th at 7PM

North Oaks Unit: Wednesday, March 10th at 12:30PM

SCValley Unit: Thursday, March 11th at 3PM

White Bear Lake Unit: Thursday, March 11th at 7PM

¹ <https://wamu.org/story/21/02/07/after-record-2020-turnout-state-republicans-weigh-making-it-harder-to-vote/>

² Note: bills have been introduced in the Minnesota Legislature that are state versions of For the People Act.

President's Column

A recent blog post by LWVUS CEO, Virginia Kase, was about remaining nonpartisan in hyper-partisan times

(https://www.lwv.org/blog/remaining-nonpartisan-hyper-partisan-times?utm_source=PressRelease&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=02142021).

In her post, Kase made the point that the positions the League has taken on issues should not be construed as supporting one political party over another. After all, political parties change their positions on issues. It was the Republican party that supported woman's suffrage in 1920 when Democrats did not.

The League stays true to our nonpartisan commitment because we focus on issues, not parties or candidates. We will always support the issue of providing free, fair, and open elections to all qualified voters. LWVMN Executive Director, Michelle Witte, said during the February statewide local League Presidents' call that it would be partisan of the League to *not* criticize members of a political party for actions or statements that are counter to our positions. That is why the State League sent a [letter](#) to the leaders of both parties of the Minnesota House and Senate to demand they hold accountable those members who publicly refused to disavow the lie that the 2020 Presidential Election was not fair.

It's important for us to read this letter because it names specific legislators and draws attention to their own words and actions. The League of Women Voters has always been about finding out the truth about an issue, no matter how difficult that may be. In her blog post, Virginia Kase wrote, "Our founders believed that voters must always have the facts, no matter how difficult those facts could be to accept, especially when it challenges one's deeply held beliefs about a candidate or political party. Our founders were attacked for taking positions rooted in fact back then, and today, not much has changed. League leaders continue to face this challenge and often stand accused of being partisan for our efforts to advance democracy."

I hope our members and our organization continue to speak out about issues, using our positions which have been researched, discussed and approved at the local, regional, state, and national levels. We have a firm foundation on which to act!

-Submitted by Liz Lauder

General Meeting Recap

Tawanna Black was our featured speaker for the February 18, 2021, virtual one-hour general meeting on Economic Inclusion and Racial Equity. Ms. Black is the Founder and CEO of the Center for Economic Inclusion, an organization whose mission is to advance an inclusive economy, racial equity, and shared prosperity by strengthening the civic infrastructure and collective capacity of Twin Cities metropolitan-area systems and markets. Ms. Black divided her talk into three parts:

- an overview of the Center for Economic Inclusion (CEI), its accomplishments and her professional work as the CEI founder and CEO
- the CEI's goals and next steps in areas such as wealth equity and the economics and philanthropies of place
- how education and advocacy organizations like the League of Women Voters might help support CEI's work.

Ms. Black showed slides with important data and trends to support key points in her presentation. Access them at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EbTqG0t2v18u80bdXQeiEgUh9T4GvThv/view?usp=sharing>

In Part 1, among other points, Ms. Black compared inclusive economic growth in the Twin Cities area to other metropolitan areas and showed us how racial disparities and failed employer actions in the Twin Cities impede an inclusive regional economy. She talked about the need for data-informed and market-responsive solutions to create opportunities and racial equity for Black, Indigenous, & People of Color (BIPOC) populations. Accountability, the dismantling of systemic racism, and place-based opportunities are needed to effect such solutions.

In Part 2, among other points, Ms. Black talked about how important addressing racism is to building a racially equitable, inclusive, and economically just metropolitan area and economy. A ten percent increase between now and 2025 in the number of BIPOC workers ages 16 to 64 in the local workforce is a targeted goal of CEI. Expanding upon that goal, CEI's ten-year 2030 targets include: an increased regional GDP; increased family-sustaining jobs at BIPOC-owned businesses; increased family-sustaining jobs and increased regional spending by employers to create family-sustaining jobs; increased numbers of BIPOC-owned businesses, elected officials, and corporate leaders; and decreases in the wage, employment, and wealth gaps between BIPOC and white populations.

Lastly, in Part 3, Ms. Black talked about how we might learn more about the issues she discussed and reach out to local and regional organizations to work together to help realize CEI-identified goals.

A link to Ms. Black's talk is available on the LWVWBLA website or on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xx42jdzi2HE>

-Submitted by Lisa Larson

Zoom Party Celebrates New Members

New members gathered for a Zoom Welcome Party on Monday, Feb. 15th. The date seemed inevitable – it was Susan B. Anthony's 101st Birthday, Presidents' Day, and one day after the 101st Anniversary of Women's Suffrage!

New members in attendance were Janet Ciegler, Diane Dahl, Becky Kanten-McCoy, Mary Ellen Kasak-Saxler, Jackie Reis, Jane Schroeder, Carol Stauffer, Karen Suzukamo, and Michelle Wood. The Membership Committee (Stephanie McNamara, Barb Memory, Mary Santi, Karen Suzukamo, and Margaret Westin) was joined by Liz Lauder and Heidi Schmidt-Boyd.

Hosts described their leadership roles, and Heidi explained the goals of the Voter Services Committee - to increase voter engagement and education in three primary areas: registering new voters; educating voters on when, where, and how to vote; and educating voters on the candidates. Heidi encouraged new members to get involved in this or other League committees, including Program, Action, Publicity, Social Media, and others.

A highlight of the evening was New Member Karen Suzukamo's presentation, "Karen's New Member Excitement," 4 slides full of ways to connect with LWV activities all across the nation through Twitter and other social media. Karen started with "Wow" and described League members as "fierce champions for empowering voters & defending democracy" in the three target areas of voting, racial justice, and climate change.



(continued on next page)

A primary purpose of the Welcome Party was for us to get to know each other a bit, so we introduced ourselves and shared our reasons for joining the League, the issues of greatest importance for us, and our favorite hobby in a Sharing Circle. We were awed by the members' breadth of interests, expertise, and commitment to making democracy work.

Another highlight was a LWV-WBLA PowerPoint Presentation by Mary Santi, educating us on our mission, origins, and opportunities for involvement. Mary's message included urging us all to do something with the League every year.

Then there was the Trivia Game! Heidi was the Game Master, and our knowledge of the League was tested. (Team #1 claimed the victory!)

The last agenda item was Fun and Fascinating League Experiences shared by Mary, Margaret, Stephanie, and Liz. Ask them at your next opportunity about a paper drive inside a dumpster in the rain and a recycling road clean-up including a car bumper! Also shared were the awesome experiences of representing the League and advocating for issues in the halls of the state capitol and in Washington, DC. as well as meeting leaders of our government.

The Zoom Party was an enjoyable way to welcome New Members to active participation in the work of our organization.

-Submitted by Barb Memory for the Membership Committee

To learn more about some of our new members, see pages 10-12.

Save The Date!

The LWVWBLA Annual Meeting

**Thursday, April 22
5:30 PM Via Zoom**

Guest Speaker Peter Wattson will speak on redistricting.

Check the next Bear Facts for items that will be voted on at the meeting!

There are many League activities in the works that you may want to know more about. Be sure to visit www.lwvmn.org and www.lwv-wbla.org to keep abreast of current local, state and national events. Here are some highlights to consider checking out:

Save The Date for March – Public Meeting!

***Regulatory Capture and Minnesota's Government:
Working for the Public Interest, or Special Interests?***

Speaker: Don Arnosti, Environmental Consultant

Regulatory capture occurs when, instead of enforcing existing laws written in the public interest, government serves private interests. Don Arnosti will provide evidence that documents regulatory capture in multiple Minnesota agencies, on various issues, and during the administrations of all political parties.

REGULATORY CAPTURE:

Government of the ~~people,~~
by the ~~people,~~ **SPECIAL** ★
and for the ~~people~~ **INTERESTS**

When: Monday, March 15, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom **Register here:** <https://forms.gle/TERXETncnvP4sn8H6>
Open to the public – invite a friend!

Monday, March 15, 7:00PM

Hear Don Arnosti, Environmental Consultant, discuss the problem of cooptation of government agencies by the special interests they are meant to regulate, and how that is a problem for democratic governance in Minnesota. Cosponsored by LWV-Woodbury/Cottage Grove Area and LWV-White Bear Lake Area. Registration is open to the public via Zoom.

RSVP at <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeOrEki6d8EVF1INZrpWW9JqKr8Qu885gd7o09CRyec1WjfPg/viewform>

Thursday, March 18, 6:00-7:00PM

How We Know 2020 Elections Were Fair & Accurate

LWVMN hosts a special hour with Secretary of State Simon and county election officials from metro and greater Minnesota to answer the common questions we continue to hear about the election. Learn about the many checks and balances that are in place to ensure election safety and integrity, and how our local counties managed the special challenges of 2020. This webinar is free, but registration is required at <https://www.lwvmn.org/league-calendar>

State Convention 2021

June 11-12, 2021

The schedule will be finalized by April 12, when registration opens. Look for an announcement in *All Member News*. The cost is only \$25. For updates, check back in at <https://www.lwvmn.org/convention-2021> Virtual & Fun!

(more events on next page)



Buy your tickets onsite at the box office or call 651-259-3015.

If you are not ready to travel to the History Center in person, check out this online exhibit <https://www.mnhs.org/historycenter/activities/museum/votes-for-women> or the preview webinar for LWVMN members on March 4th. Register for that at https://mnhs-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_9sejhJmsR-ai81rSxtq0jw

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Citizenship Ceremonies May Return in April!

Many of you probably read the touching article in the Star Tribune regarding a Karen couple who received citizenship when Judge Donovan Frank went to their home to give them the oath...the husband was dying, and wanted to become an American citizen before that happened....and he did. These personal ceremonies do occur, and we should give credit to the judges in the Federal Court who help to make it happen.

But, Covid-19 has changed much about the ceremonies. Right now, new citizens are given the oath "virtually" and this will continue through March, with the goal of being able to get back into the Landmark or RiverCentre beginning in April. Until then, LWV will not be participating in registering them to vote. The registration form is included in the package of information given to them before their ceremony....we hope they fill it out and mail it in.



In 2020, from Jan. 1st through Nov. 2nd, there were 220 ceremonies, but none were held during April and May. Interviews were not held during this time period either. But approximately 1,500 had been approved for citizenship before the ceremonies were shut

down. The USCIS (Citizenship and Immigration Services) and the Federal Court made it a goal to get all of these individuals registered to vote before July 4th (actually finished on July 8th)!

The 209 ceremonies during June through the end of October were "rolling ceremonies" held every 15 minutes outside on the plaza of the Federal Courthouse in Minneapolis, with 12 to 16 gaining citizenship at each ceremony. A total of approximately 6,600 registered to vote during 2020. They added two larger ceremonies (230 at each) on Monday, Nov. 2nd, the day before Election Day, and they were held at the RiverCentre. Everyone wore masks and they happened in the room that holds over 1,000 so spacing was not a problem. We needed to be out in the hall, and the volunteers that day felt it really was worthwhile as they answered questions as to where the new citizens could vote that afternoon or the next day.

So please know that volunteers will be welcome probably beginning in April....but the virus could change that. Thanks to all of you, the success of registering could not happen without your participation.

Thank you,
Judy Stuthman
jastuthman@aol.com



Having a presence at community events and local high schools and colleges allows us to engage with and register eligible voters.

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Don't forget to check out our Facebook page www.Facebook.com/LWVWBLA . You will find it if you search for League of Women Voters White Bear Lake Area. This is where we post and discuss our day-to-day happenings. Our page has a calendar for upcoming events. We post replays from our forums that have already taken place. Check out our page, "like" it "share" it and post your own comments on it.

www.lwv-wbla.org

LWV White Bear Lake Area also has a Website. You will find that at www.lwv-wbla.org. There you will find an events calendar, back issues of the Bear Facts, board information and an invitation and instructions on how to join.

The League Welcomes Diane Dahl

Diane Dahl is a third- generation resident of Stillwater, where many of her aunts, uncles, and cousins also live. She joins the League because of its long history of work to register voters. She has felt that she is living in a “parallel universe of distress” over the past several years, and views the League as an instrument to promote an informed citizenry.

Diane retired 5 years ago after 36 years as a psychiatrist with Ramsey Clinic and Health Partners. She began in pediatrics and later worked mostly in outpatient practice, taking turns serving the clients in in-patient hospital units. Diane attended Macalester College and the U. of Minnesota Medical School, where she met her husband, a physician who retired from a practice in internal medicine to work part-time in hospice and palliative care.

Diane and her husband have 2 daughters, one a Stillwater High School English teacher and the mother of their two grandsons, ages 13 and 10; and the other an attorney in New York City with a practice in public interest law. Diane has enjoyed spending time with her grandsons and family.

Diane has been active in two organizations that address social inequities: St. Croix Valley Women’s Alliance, and We Can Change the World One Vote at a Time. She enjoys several book groups, one of which has been focused on racial inequalities. She enjoys murder mysteries, courtroom thrillers, history, and best sellers.

Her family loves travel, and has enjoyed trips to Southern France, Europe, India, and Central America. They used to vacation as a young family at a lake cabin near Hayward, Wisconsin.

Diane is an avid walker, does Pilates and yoga, and last summer enjoyed playing golf most days. She learned that playing nine holes of golf requires about 4 miles of walking! Welcome Diane, to the St. Croix Valley Unit!



-Submitted by Barb Memory

The LWV-WBLA Welcomes Mary Ellen Kasak-Saxler

The League welcomes Mary Ellen Kasak-Saxler, a Stillwater resident who joins the League because of its good reputation over many years as a positive force for educating citizens. She has always been interested in politics, and was a Political Science major until she found that teaching French was her calling.

Mary Ellen grew up outside of Chicago and attended the University of Illinois, where she continued with graduate school and met her husband, Bob, an architect. They spent their first year of marriage in Senegal in West Africa as part of her French program. They moved to Chaska where their first child was born and her husband worked with a small architecture firm for ten years. Shortly after her youngest child was born they moved to Stillwater. Mary Ellen taught French at Blake Middle School for ten years, 25 years at Stillwater High School and most recently with a college semester abroad program in France and Spain. She and her colleagues took many students on wonderful study tours of France, where language study opened the door to cultural understanding: history, art, and literature came alive amid the many landscapes of France, and while enjoying home-stays with French families.

Mary Ellen and Bob are celebrating 46 years of marriage, four children, and 8 grandchildren. Their daughters live in Cambridge, Mass., New York, and St. Paul (jokingly referred to as “the good daughter”). Their son lives in Madison, WI; all four with children, ranging from age 20 to a baby less than a month old, totaling 7 children under age 13. Bob retired after 25 years as an architect with Andersen Windows in Bayport.

Since retiring in 2016 Mary Ellen has been active in lobbying and advocacy. She founded an organization in her living room, the St. Croix Valley Women’s Alliance, which at one time had over 200 active members, but from which she has withdrawn to pursue a non-partisan approach. She is a member of Citizens for Climate Change, and looks forward to working on LWV projects.

Mary Ellen loves the outdoors –gardening, hiking, walking, kayaking, cross-country skiing – and she loves the in-doors – cooking, preserving, knitting, sewing. Her favorite vacation is to spend time with family and to discover new places with exciting outdoor adventures.

Welcome, Mary Ellen to the St. Croix Valley Unit!

-Submitted by Barb Memory



The LWV-WBLA Welcomes Susan (Sue) Colleen Denkinger

Sue Denkinger joins the League with interests in local government, policy, elections, voter registration, and naturalization. She is in a second 4-year term with the Shoreview City Council, having run for office for the first time in 2016 and getting re-elected in 2020. She participated in the 2020 LWV Candidate Forums as part of her campaign, and was favorably impressed with the work of the League.

Sue also became aware of the League's events around naturalization and looks forward to attending a League-sponsored naturalization. She has friends who emigrated from Kenya and Nigeria and shared their pride upon receiving U.S. citizenship. Sue's sister, Kathy Macomber, recently joined the Roseville LWV, which is another reason Sue is joining at this time.

Sue has lived in Shoreview for over 30 years, and retired in 2016. She worked for over 40 years with Reuters/West Publishing, and, among other positions, was Senior Director of Customer Service, where she worked with law firms both small and global as well as state and federal governments supporting the company's sales of law-books, data and software products. As such, she represented her company managing escalated customer situations and relations with regular customer visits to places such as the federal Supreme Court library, the Office of Federal Courts and the Manhattan D.A.'s Office where people like John F. Kennedy, Jr. began their legal careers.

Sue became involved with local government through serving on the City of Shoreview Economic Development Commission for 8 years, supporting that city's businesses; it was through this work that the Mayor encouraged her to run for City Council.

Sue has been the President and is currently the Past-President of the Ramsey County League of Local Governments, an organization that includes city and county officials, commissioners and school district officials. They collectively study the needs of Ramsey County residents for affordable housing, mental health services, and students' technology needs among other issues. They have formed a collective work effort to identify and drive the group's efforts toward mental health initiatives and possibly legislation.

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She also currently serves as Vice President of the Shoreview Economic Development Authority, which supports that city's housing needs and local businesses. She also serves on the Lake Johanna Fire Board on behalf of the City of Shoreview.

Sue grew up in St. Paul and attended Augsburg University, earning her undergraduate degree as a 42-year-old single mother of 2 daughters, and her M.B.A. in 2008. That year her family celebrated the graduations of Sue, her older daughter from college, and her younger daughter from high school. Her youngest daughter of course got the party! She enjoys spending time with her 3 grandchildren, ages 3, 2, and 1!

Sue has a passion for music, and was originally a voice major at the University of Minnesota. She decided she didn't want to sing opera, but stayed active as a singer in church, weddings, and funerals. She also plays piano and guitar! Sue loves to travel and enjoys the beautiful outdoors of Shoreview.

Welcome, Sue to the North Oaks Unit!

-Submitted by Barb Memory

Lifetime Members

Lifetime Members are those who have belonged to the League for 50 years or more. We are very fortunate that some of our members have gained this status- and we thank them for their years of involvement. Recently, some of those members were interviewed by our new members who summarized what they learned. Read on to find out more:

Helen Baker-Ledy

Helen, a graduate of Macalester College, joined the League of Women Voters in the late 1960's or 1970, meeting with the large and active group in Afton, Minnesota. She joined because she had always had an interest in politics. There she became friends with Gloria Phillips and still is to this day. Later she moved to White Bear Lake, before moving to Oak Park Heights with her late husband.

Her interests were mainly environmental, and she fondly recalls working with Walter Mondale's campaign and attending many events that led to designating the St. Croix River as a National Scenic Waterway. When Mr. Mondale visited Afton while running for vice-president, there were not rooms for his entourage, so Helen remembered members of his secret service sleeping in the basement in one of the member's homes. She has worked chiefly for protecting groundwater and for other environmental issues.

The League stimulated her interest in many political issues as well. She was very active, and served on several committees including the Planning Commission and the Zoning Administration.

-Submitted by Jan Ciegler

Carol Bergeson

Carol has been a LWV member for 65 years and is still going strong! A co-worker at Honeywell encouraged Carol to join the League. She initially joined the Roseville League in 1956 and then switched to White Bear Lake- North Oaks League in 1963. She found the League to be wonderful and she “started reading the newspaper in a new way!” Initially, she and another member brought their babies to meetings, and then shared a babysitter.

She has been active in the League on many levels. Carol describes herself as an “idea” person. She was President of the White Bear League of Women Voters in 1971-73 and again in 1983-84. Carol has been on nearly every League committee at the local level, and was Budget Chair for the State League for two years. When Carol was League President in the 1970’s she fought for the Equal Rights Amendment, and it almost passed. In 1977, she went to the Governor’s mansion to celebrate the appointment of Rosalie Wahl as the first female member of the MN Supreme Court.

Carol has been an advocate for change. She studied solid waste and obstacles to recycling in the 1970’s. She and League members conducted paper drives at the White Bear shopping center and started a recycling program in the First Presbyterian Church parking lot. This program was turned over to the City of White Bear Lake in 1974. Carol notes during this time, the North Oaks units also started a recycling program, now run by that city. In 1972, Carol spoke to the White Bear Lake City Council and Planning Commission against approval of a permit to build Marina Towers apartment at the current site of Lion’s Park, because of runoff and aquifer considerations. The permit to construct the apartment building was denied.

Carol notes a memorable public League event in the 1970’s when she and her husband worked on a health care forum at Century College, which featured Senator Paul Wellstone. Carol had to “encourage” the senator to stop shaking voters’ hands and get up on the stage so they could start the program. She recounts during one League meeting in the 1970’s, she was excited to hear that Title IX was passed. In 2003, Carol won the Peggy Thompson award for her work to increase local League membership by changing the time of unit meetings, which enabled more people to attend.

Carol’s advice to a new League member is to get involved by joining a committee or the board or being a delegate. She believes you can learn and grow so much more when you get involved. Before she became a League member, Carol didn’t think she could speak in public. She was forced to do it, and says “now you can’t make me be quiet.” Carol notes “The League is part of her life”, in addition to singing in her church choir, going to aerobics class, and being involved in her community. In December, 2020, Carol received the “North Oaks Conservation Award for Woodland Conservation and Invasive Species Control” from the City of North Oaks. She treated invasive species, removed a lot herself, and hired a company to remove the rest.

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Carol envisions the League will continue to study, lobby and get voters informed and registered. She hopes more men and young people will join the League. She has observed the pattern of people joining the League before elections and not getting involved. Carol's advice is to stick with it... just as she has done for 65 years!

-Submitted by Jane Schroeder

Jean Tews

Jean Tews displays a unique family heirloom in her home, a framed 'Votes for Women' pennant. Her great-grandmother and grandmother, both of whom were League of Women Voters members, would surely be delighted with all that Jean has accomplished with the League.

Jean joined the League in 1968 in Minneapolis, starting a group with other young mothers that eventually grew so large it became two separate units. When her family moved to Mahtomedi, she promptly joined that unit. Each of her three daughters and her husband Dixon have been involved and supportive throughout Jean's 50+ years of League service.

Jean has the distinction of serving as the state president of the League from 1982 until 1985. Some of her other roles include Social Policy Chair (1978-1980), Action Chair (1980-1982), Debates Project Director (1986), and staff Development Director (1986-1989). In 1990 Jean was honored with the Hope Washburn Award for outstanding service to the LWV because of her many years of service and leadership in the League and in her community.

Jean highlighted two particularly memorable advocacy successes during her League tenure. She worked with Governor Quie and Chief Justice Amdahl to establish the Minnesota Court of Appeals and advocated with League members for the creation of a job-sharing law for state of Minnesota employees. Both of these items continue to make a positive impact on the state.

Jean deeply values the LWV and the enrichment it offers. She observes that the League continues to perform the important mission of educating citizens about their rights and responsibilities as voters, ensuring that government is responsive to its citizens, and working in support of critical environmental and equity issues.

Jean's LWV's legacy is highly impressive and extends beyond Minnesota. Her granddaughter Anna, a third-grade teacher in Rhode Island, proudly teaches her students each year about the impact of her grandmother's work with the League of Women Voters. Congratulations Jean on your 50 years of League service!

-Submitted by Elsbeth Howe

LWVWBLA has three more Lifetime Members whom we hope to highlight in a future issue: Peg Olson, Avis Watkins, and Joann Youngstrom!

Legislative Interview

In Minnesota, our legislative Session has started and LWV Minnesota always asks local leagues to interview their legislators using a Legislative Interview Guide that they provide. After each interview, a report is made summarizing the responses to the interview questions. That report is then sent to the state office in St. Paul. The following interview was conducted by Gene and Mary Coffman.

Notes from Conversation with Rep. Ami Wazlawik, MN House District 38B, 2/11/21

1. What inspired you to run for office?

Two issues :

Schools- She had been tutoring at-risk students in reading and in the process observed what was going on in schools.

Domestic and Sexual Assault

Because of her interest in these two areas she got a Graduate Degree in Public Policy and ran for office.

2. What are your top three priorities for the legislative session? Please be specific as to why those are your priorities and what legislation you plan to support.

To help the speaker put the general budget together and work through issues.

Child Care issues- She is the co-chair of a task force trying to boost awareness of and support for child care issues.

Toxic Chemicals- working on breaking the Forever Chain of toxic chemicals.

3. Is there anything different about your priorities this session compared with last session?

Dealing with the pandemic is a big deal and has changed current legislative priorities.

She considered getting the TCE ban (toxic chemicals) done in 2020 an accomplishment.

4. Later this year the Redistricting process will begin in the Legislature. Do you have any thoughts on potential reforms to the redistricting process?

We know from past experience that this is a very difficult issue.

Ideas about this are floated in the legislature but little is agreed on and the issue never makes it to conference committees.

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In 2021 legislators will not get the data until July which is late and will make it difficult to do anything now.

Work on this issue will go into the next 10 year period and, as we know, it is an issue throughout the country.

5. Currently, Minnesota citizens previously convicted of a felony and no longer incarcerated may not vote until they complete their probation or supervised release. Some believe that the state of Minnesota should restore voting rights to these individuals. Do you agree with this? Why or why not?

She does agree.

If a person is in a community they should be allowed to feel they are a part of the community and participate. She said the research shows that participating in the community leads to many good outcomes.

6. The legislature has been passing laws in fewer, larger omnibus bills every year since the 1970s. Some believe that these large bills violate the single subject clause of the Minnesota constitution. Additionally, negotiations between the legislative leadership often stalls, leading to last-minute deals behind closed doors. What is your opinion on this practice? How might this process be improved to ensure greater transparency and public participation?

She stated that she is not a constitutional expert.

Our current legislature takes a hands off approach.

There would be more transparency if conference committees met more frequently and at times when the public could attend the meetings.

At the end of a session, budget bills need to come from conference committees. They should not be negotiated behind closed doors.

She suggested they might need to meet more than 5 months a year because the process is too constrained with all the other people who need to be consulted.

Not meeting in person has been an issue. It is not possible to stay after a meeting and continue working with the appropriate people.

May I recommend?

In response to our reading of A Good Time for the Truth: Race in Minnesota and listening to Tawanna Black's presentation about the work being done by the Center for Economic Inclusion, many members have asked for more resources. We had questions about where to become better informed and where to donate time, energy and resources in the quest to bring us further towards racial justice. Here are some recommendations for you to consider:

During February, Black History Month, **The Center for Economic Inclusion** held a weekly series called **Reckoning to Rise Together**. If you missed the opportunity to participate, fear not! Links to the programs are available below

Reckoning with Transit Equity

WATCH NOW: <http://bit.ly/R2RFeb421>

Reckoning with Racism, Banking & Freedom on the Journey to Wealth Equity

WATCH NOW: <http://bit.ly/R2RFeb1121>

Reckoning with the Economics of Place & Building Back Better

WATCH NOW: <http://bit.ly/r2rFeb1821>

Reckoning with the Heart of Philanthropy

This link was not yet available at this time.

Consult <https://www.centerforeconomicinclusion.org> for up to date information.

Member Sheila Bennett writes:

I am recommending this organization as a valuable one to support financially, and to follow for personal growth in one's understanding of racism and anti-racism. If you don't want to get a daily newsletter, you can instead sign up for the Saturday-only newsletter, which contains links to all the prior week's articles, as well as to other resources.

<https://www.antiracismdaily.com/>

President Liz Lauder writes:

During our board meeting, I mentioned a group that is supporting women of color running for public office. I read about the organization in this article in the Pioneer Press: <https://www.twincities.com/2020/06/24/george-floyd-more-than-40-black-women-running-for-political-office-in-mn-this-year/>

The group is called Black Women Rising: <https://www.blackwomenrising.net/>

(continued on next page)

Shannon Moore writes:

I support **The Minnesota Freedom Fund**.

The Minnesota Freedom Fund pays for criminal bail and immigration bond for those who cannot afford to as we seek to end disciplinary, coercive, and oppressive jailing.

Your support means more people keep their jobs and their housing while waiting for the outcome of their charges.

I went to a League event in St. Paul on September 25, 2019. I listened to Judge Nicole Starr and Tonja Honsey, who at that time was the Executive Director of the Minnesota Freedom Fund. I had no idea of the challenges faced by vulnerable communities when faced with our legal system. People were stuck in jail because they could not afford \$150.00 for bail. Minnesota Freedom Fund helps by providing bail, transportation, getting people to their court appearances and other support. Please go to their web site for information on the organization as well as donation and volunteer opportunities.

<https://mnfreedomfund.org>

Karen Suzukamo suggests:

Racism and the Economy: Focus on Housing

This virtual video event focuses on structural racism in our housing markets and its impact on economic outcomes for all Americans. Keynote speakers will outline the historical and contemporary context of how racism, racial exclusion, and predatory inclusion have limited housing opportunities and wealth-building for communities of color. Leaders from the public, nonprofit, and academic sectors will then present policy proposals for dismantling the deep inequities in housing market valuation, mortgage lending, and patterns of housing development. **Register for the March 1st program** at: <https://web.cvent.com/event/995ce8ea-5885-4055-a5a0-8abd2751580e/regProcessStep1>

Joan Neumiller suggests:

Discrimination in Housing Opportunities - Redlining and Racial Covenants Then and Now: Join Kirsten Delegard, co-founder of Mapping Prejudice, and Kari Collins, Ramsey County Community and Economic Development Director, for a discussion of how racial covenants were used in the past to discriminate, how the impacts of this discrimination still manifest today, and what current barriers to equitable home ownership may be. Open to the public via Zoom. Register through the Ramsey County Public Library at https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_OpviEBINSR-MPWchx8YyDQ
March 23, 2021, 7-8:30 PM

(additional recommendation on the following page)



The Science Museum of Minnesota is reopening as of February 27th. Current exhibits include two which are relevant to the topic we have been focusing on over the last couple months. One is **The Bias Inside Us**.

The goal of the exhibit is to enable us to learn how to counter our implicit biases around race and identity and start conversations in our community to make it more inclusive of all kinds of people with **The Bias Inside Us**, a traveling exhibit from The Smithsonian Institution.

Another is a revised and updated version of a previous exhibit entitled RACE: Are we so different? It is described in this way:

The idea that we can group people into “races” is only a few hundred years old. It was, and is, tied to power and hierarchy. Today, scientists have disproved the idea of race and its notions of biological superiority. But the idea of race continues to shape our lives. How did we get here? And how can we do better?

To comply with Covid-19 restrictions, all tickets must be reserved in advance. To find out more, check out <https://new.smm.org>

Shannon Moore submitted these to tickle your funny bone! Enjoy!



I don't remember
much from last night
but the fact that i
needed sunglasses to
open the fridge this
morning tells me it
was awesome.

MY MIND IS LIKE
SOMEONE EMPTIED
THE KITCHEN
JUNK DRAWER
ONTO A TRAMPOLINE



MY BODY IS A
TEMPLE
ANCIENT AND CRUMBLING
PROBABLY CURSED OR HAUNTED

When I say "the other day,"
I could be referring to any
time between yesterday and
15 years ago

Treasurer's Report

February 1, 2021

Margaret Westin, Treasurer

		Current	YTD
Income:	Dues	\$ 75.00	\$ 3,975.00
	Donations	\$ 75.00	\$ 2535.00
	Memorials	\$	\$
	Meetings (socials)	\$	\$
	Service	\$	\$
	In-kind donation	\$	\$
	Voters Service	\$ 600.00	\$ 900.00
	Calendars	\$	\$ 95.00
	NOHOA	\$	\$ 500.00
	Bank interest	\$	\$ 0.02
	Transfer from CD	\$	\$1,000.00
	Total:	\$ 750.00	\$ 9,005.02

Expenses:	Meetings (socials)	\$	\$ 89.82
	LWVMN PMP	\$	\$
	LWVUS PMP	\$	\$
	Meeting site	\$	\$
	Voters Service	\$	\$ 1482.33
	Program (includes publicity)	\$	\$ 301.39
	Bear Facts copying/printing	\$	\$
	Calendars	\$	\$
	Membership	\$	\$
	(communication, recruiting & recognition)		
	Total:	\$0	\$1,873.54

Opening balance from January 1, 2021:	\$ 8,565.25
Income	+ 750.00
Expenses:	- 0.00

Current balance: **\$9,315.25**

Ed fund CD: **\$4,216.81**

2020-21 Paid Members: 54 @ \$60 10@ \$75

Total: 75 (including our lifetime members)