



June-July 2021

## CO-PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Greetings from your new co-president. For those of you who don't know me, I'm Becky Siekmeier (Mahtomedi Unit). For those of you who do, it probably feels a bit like recycling since I've been in this spot before, more than once. I look forward to serving with my friend, the amazing Liz Lauder, over the next year.

It's been a while since I was last on the Board, and many things have changed: New members. Meetings on Zoom. A real website! But what hasn't changed is in some ways even more interesting: there is so much TALENT, commitment and passion in League members, and our dedication to voting rights, good government and strong communities is as strong as ever.

A great example of this is the May unit meetings. The topic is police reform. The Mahtomedi unit was the first to engage in the materials prepared by the Program committee. Mary Santi, Lori Delahunt, Lisa Larson, and Jane Bacon put together an informative and thought-provoking presentation. It was a great example of how much we can learn from each other. What a gift!

Another important aspect of our local League that hasn't changed is the need for members to *get involved* – it's what makes the League run and keeps us vibrant and relevant. Being engaged has a positive impact on *you*, the League, and most importantly, on our communities.

Check out the multitude of opportunities to step in and step up in this issue of the *Bear Facts*. You can put on your best white dress and march in the Manitou Days parade on July 2 to celebrate 100 years of Women's Suffrage and the birth of LWV. You can enjoy summer evenings registering voters at the LWV booth during Marketfest. Do you like to learn? Join the Program committee to dig into timely topics like voting rights, the impact of the 2020 census on redistricting and other subjects (you get to help decide what we do!) for unit meetings and events next year. Or, grab a friend and help raise money for our local League. The options for

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getting involved are many, whether you have a little time or a lot, are new to the League or have been around for many years.

I hope to see you in person at this summer's LWVWBLA picnic. It will be held on August 19. The Mahtomedi unit will be putting together a plan to enjoy a tasty meal, and it will be so refreshing to see people in person. Until then, enjoy your summer and spend a little time thinking about how you can get involved in our local League.

Best,

*Becky Siekmeier, LWVWBLA Co-President*

## ANNUAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

The Annual Meeting took place on April 22, 2021, following a presentation by Peter Wattson (see page 10). Highlights of the meeting included the election of officers and directors for the 2021-22 year, adoption of the annual budget (including an increase in household membership dues), approval of our Nonpartisan Policy, and approval of our local program position statements on Education, Natural Resources, Environmental Protection, Land Use, Representative Local Government, Representative Ramsey County Government, Social Policy, and the White Bear Lake Conservation District Governance.

### Officers and Board Members 2021-22

Co-President	Elizabeth Lauder	White Bear
	Becky Siekmeier	Mahtomedi
Vice President/Membership	Barbara Memory	White Bear
Secretary	Shannon Moore	White Bear
Treasurer	Margaret Westin	Mahtomedi
Director/Voter Service	Heidi Schmidt Boyd	White Bear
Director/Program	Susan Travis	North Oaks
Director/Bear Facts	Jackie Reis	White Bear
Director/Action Co-Chair	Lori Delahunt	North Oaks
Director/Publicity *	Stephanie McNamara	White Bear
Director/Social Media *	Karen Suzukamo	White Bear

#### Off-Board positions

Action Co-Chair *	Kathy Tomsich	North Oaks
Nominating Committee *		
Chair	Carol Bergeson	North Oaks
Member	Sarah Amundson	Mahtomedi
Member	Kathy Gaylord	White Bear
Council of Metropolitan Area Leagues (CMAL) *	Dick Ottman	White Bear

\* Appointed by the Board

# PEOPLE

## Congratulations, Karen Suzukamo!



The Revolving Bear Award was presented to Karen at the April annual meeting by Shannon Moore, the 2020 recipient. Karen has been involved with multiple activities in the past year. She has contributed to Voter Services, helped with candidate forums, put up posters to advertise our speakers, worked on the publicity committee, and created Karen's New Member Excitement presentation. We are now on Twitter, thanks to Karen!

*"What a joyful surprise! I am so grateful for the opportunity to learn and work with you all – people who care deeply about our community and do the work to make it better!" (Karen)*

## Honoring 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 and for sharing their experiences with us! They will also be recognized by the state League at their annual convention in June.

Previous issues of Bear Facts have told the stories of Helen Baker-Ledy, Jean Tews, Avis Watkins, Carol Bergeson, and Gloria Phillips. This month we honor two additional lifetime members.



### Joann Youngstrom

The League honors Joann Youngstrom, a 65-year member who first heard of the League as a history major at St. Olaf College. She learned then that the League is a good place when one is new in a community to meet people and to learn about local opportunities. This was true when the Youngstroms settled in Minnetonka, MN. (They had been living in Ohio and Indiana where husband John Youngstrom worked as a civil engineer.)

Minnetonka, a suburb of Minneapolis, was a brand-new city in 1957. Their LWV was new also. It met twice a month in the evenings in members' homes. Some of the women worked, but most were stay at home

moms who loved a night out. Joann was one of these with four young children for John to take care of on LWV nights.

A job change to the St. Paul area in the 1970's found Joann again in LWV in North Oaks. Carol Bergeson, Joan Brainerd, Avis Watkins, and Mary Santi were some of the members who became friends at that time. Later, Kathy Tomsich, Stephanie McNamara, Carolyn Folke, and Liz Lauder were members and friends.

Joann suggests that a future direction for the LWV is to encourage men to join. John Youngstrom had taken pleasure in the new knowledge and discussions that the League meetings offered.

Joann moved to Cherrywood Pointe of Roseville in 2020. She is enjoying new friends and activities and old movies. All residents were vaccinated at the same time allowing such social interaction.

Joann's happy memories and *joie de vivre* make for a lovely conversation!

P.S. A special thank you to Dick Ottman who sends Joann a paper copy of the BEAR FACTS.

*Submitted by Barb Memory*



### Peg Olson

The League honors Peg Olson, who joined the WBL League 55 years ago, then moved to three different localities with her husband, and returned to WBL to raise their young family. Peg is unabashed in her praise of the League, its members, and its accomplishments, saying, "I enjoyed everything about the League!"

Peg first joined "to get out of the house!" She sought adult companionship, found wonderful people, and discovered through the topics and study groups many issues that interested her. In the early days that involved bringing her children Kate and Erich to League meetings. Kate at age 4 began pre-school, and baby Erich kept coming. "Erich attended more meetings than most members!"

Over the years Peg assumed almost every League role several times – president, unit leader, committee member. "All of the above! When the group is small, everyone repeats jobs over the years." She recalls how each member "finds their thing and does a good job." She mentioned as examples a Citizen Ceremony (primarily for Hmong immigrants), studies of waste-water and civics education, Carol Bergeson's Calendar sales, and Mary Santi "doing everything for everybody."

Peg concentrated on voter education and registration ("that was my bag") and considers those League activities very successful. One of her favorite stories happened in the cafeteria at Mounds View High School when a boy approached their display table and said, "I don't want to join – I've never heard of you. What do you do?" She gave an answer and added, "We are mostly women." He high-tailed it out of there! She laughs and loves to remember that story.

Peg has never been afraid of a challenge. The first move that she and her husband made from Minnesota was to Jackson, MS. This was during the era of “separate but equal,” when schools were separate but definitely not equal. They arrived when Charles Evers was a leader and his brother was assassinated. Peg enjoyed working two days a week as a dietician at a local hospital at this time. With two young children who needed a babysitter, she hired a woman named Marilee to look after them when she went to work. She valued the opportunity to have frequent, positive interactions with a Black woman during this particular time and place in history.

Peg retired in the early ‘70s and she enjoyed her Shoreview neighborhood and three granddaughters. When asked her vision of the League in the future, she laments that “we have a generational problem.” She described how her daughter, Kate, grew up with “a mother active in the League,” but like so many working mothers of her generation has been far too busy to join the League. Peg suggests that the next generation will need to learn the benefits of joining. She also points to the importance of the League’s role in giving information and education through public meetings and study topics of concern in local communities.

Peg’s outlook on life is one of boundless appreciation and gratitude for her “wonderful life and interesting experiences.” She has truly enjoyed her life in the League, as well as her loving family, friends, and neighbors.

We honor Peg for her 55 years of commitment to the mission and activities of the League!

*Submitted by Barb Memory*


## Welcoming New Members

### The League Welcomes Rebecca Erickson

The League welcomes Rebecca Erickson who joins to honor her mother Alice, who passed away in 2002. Alice would be as appalled as her daughter is at the voter suppression efforts underway today. As Covid-19 shut down all of Rebecca’s activities, she spent the last year figuring out how to become active politically. Joining the League is what made sense.

Rebecca grew up in Cannon Falls where she lived from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. She was a music major at St. Olaf College (piano), married and moved to Stillwater, where she and Carl began their blended family of three girls and a boy.

Rebecca had many “fun” jobs in her young adult years. She played piano for church (and continues to this day), did voice-overs at Cookhouse (an AV Studio), and worked at Schmidt Music downtown. Her favorite job was as the Box Office Manager for the Cricket Theatre. When one



Did you know? This past year we welcomed 19 new members!

Mahtomedi – 3

North Oaks – 2

St. Croix Valley - 7

White Bear Lake - 7

of her daughters excelled at flute, Rebecca began serious accompanying for recitals, solo and ensemble festivals, and school events.

Rebecca then had a 16-year career with the League of Minnesota Cities where she worked in Conference Planning. She retired ten years ago when her husband Carl passed away. She considered pursuing another career, perhaps in music therapy, but decided against it as that might take a job away from a younger person.

So she began her life as a Volunteer! In addition to playing piano, she provides in-home and group respite care for dementia patients through Family Means in Stillwater. Since 2015, she has traveled yearly with her church (First Presbyterian in Stillwater) to Daylight School, a small school in Kapenguria, Kenya. She currently serves on its Board of Directors. She is also very active in her church's women's group and worship services.

Prior to the Covid lock-down, Rebecca was an avid fan of cultural events. She had season tickets to the Minnesota Opera, Cantus Chorale, and the Guthrie Theatre, and went to the Chanhassen Dinner Theatre about once a year. She enjoyed eating in restaurants. "I love well-made food, good wine and socializing with friends!"

As a family they enjoyed many road trips, especially through South Dakota, Colorado, and Grand Marais attending her husband's art fairs. When Carl died, Rebecca traveled to South Korea, Wales and Kenya. She hopes to get to Cuba soon.

Three of Rebecca's four children live in the Twin Cities, one lives in Texas, and she enjoys three granddaughters (two in Texas and one here). Rebecca will join the St. Croix Valley Unit and is glad to have the League as an avenue for information and meaningful action.

Welcome, Rebecca!

*Submitted by Barb Memory*

**DON'T FORGET YOUR DUES!!**

Please mail your dues to:

*Margaret Westin, 200 Wildwood Avenue, Birchwood MN 55110.*  
Checks can be made out to LWVWBLA.

Individual membership: \$60      Household membership: \$90  
Lifetime members: Free



At the annual meeting, President Liz Lauder recognized four people who have completed their terms as board members and thanked them for doing such a great job!

*Joan Neumiller* has served as Vice President and Chair of Publicity. She could not be with us because she is living in London. She has written many wonderful informative flyers, press releases, letters to the editor, local newspaper columns and letters to our local legislators. She has organized volunteers to distribute flyers. She has helped out with website design and content. She has given her time, talent and wisdom during our board meetings and to the membership as a whole. She has done a lot of this from seven time zones away. Thank you, Joan, for all you have done!

*Mary Santi* has been serving as Media Chair. What can you say about Mary Santi that has not already been said. She picked up the job of overseeing our Facebook page and Website because no one else would do it. She took a Community Ed class in Wordpress and spent countless hours learning to add content to our website. She used Eventbrite to expand our general meetings to more of the public. She started our YouTube channel to stream and store our candidate forums and guest speaker presentations. Thank you, Mary, for all you have done!

*Sarah Amundson* has been serving as Co-Chair of Voter Services. She has been doing voter registration work and in the pandemic that has been very challenging. Sarah got very creative by attending White Bear Townships Movies in the Park events to register voters. She partnered with students at local high schools to get the word out on voting. She also tried traditional methods like tabling events and contacted 35 apartment, senior housing and assisted living facilities. She also distributed our Vote From Home signs last fall. Sarah is enthusiastic, committed and has a great sense of humor. Thank you, Sarah, for all you have done!

*Lisa Larson* has served as our Program Director. Lisa has been amazing at finding great speakers such as Peter Wattson, the one we had tonight. She is an excellent facilitator and her kindness and astuteness when she is talking with speakers is wonderful. She has resurrected our monthly programs and energized our content and group discussions with top-notch speakers and relevant topics. She has continually challenged us to ask, "What can we can do with this information." Lisa has chaffed under the arcane League rules and tried to develop processes and procedures wherever possible. Thank you, Lisa, together we do better!





### **Calling Suffragist Marchers for the Manitou Days Parade – Friday, July 2<sup>nd</sup>**

The Manitou Days Parade **WILL** take place on Friday, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, starting at 6:30 p.m. Our League has participated in the past, bearing LWV banners and posters, some riding in a classic Model T antique car! In celebration of the 101st anniversary of Women's Suffrage AND the birth of the League of Women Voters, marchers are encouraged to wear vintage outfits from the 1900s or all white (as the suffragists did in their marches). We hope to have two antique cars for rides for those unable to march. Banners and posters will be provided. If you made one of the posters at the White Bear Center for the Arts in 2019, it will be ready and waiting for you to carry it, mounted on a stick. Carol Bergeson is in charge and ready to organize our troops. Please let Carol know that you will bring out your Inner Suffragist on July 2<sup>nd</sup>. [cjbergeson@comcast.net](mailto:cjbergeson@comcast.net).

### **Why did YOU join the LWV?**

If your answer is "to help voters" or "get out the vote," the time is NOW! **Voter Services** needs your help. We are neck deep in planning and implementing our registration events, candidate forums, and other critical work to gear up for the 2021 election. A common misconception is that this happens in the fall. Not true! Mail-in and absentee voting are playing a larger part in our elections meaning we need to ramp up now to be ready for voting in October or earlier.

By the numbers:

- Less than 15% of WBLA members help out with voter services.
- Less than 4% of our local budget is dedicated to voter services.

Our mission to **Empower Voters and Defend Democracy** depends on you! Please contact Heidi at 651-329-7059 today to ENGAGE NOW!

### **Volunteer at Marketfest: July 1<sup>st</sup> or August 5<sup>th</sup>**

Interested in helping at the Marketfest booth for LWV this summer? Volunteers are needed to: (1) register new voters, (2) educate voters about the upcoming elections in the fall, and (3) solicit new LWV members. Please contact Heidi at 651-329-7059 today to SIGN UP for a shift!



## Call for Program Ideas for 2021-22

Ideas are bubbling – reparations, regulatory capture (what's that?), water issues, local government transparency, civics education, new Joan Grove bio by Lori Sturdevant, Braver Angels, redistricting who and how, policing reform, roundtable of local mayors to discuss environmental concerns, ideas about the future of National Parks, boosting our local involvement, Restorative Justice, American Nations by Colin Woodard, guest speakers. Yes, so many possibilities, so many talented members. Join the **Program Team** and help make many of these ideas and others a reality. Let me know if you'd like to be part of planning for next year. Susan Travis, [stravis41@aol.com](mailto:stravis41@aol.com), 651-483-8473 or 763-377-3293

## Volunteer(s) Needed for a Fun(d) Project

Every year the LWVWBLA has kept to its budget; every year the state and national Per-Member-Payments (PMPS) eat up all of our dues and more. The Board has asked for an annual fund-raiser that will provide a cushion for operating funds: printing, mailing, speaker fees, rental of venues, expenses for the Fall Picnic, etc. The Board raised dues to \$90 this year for household memberships but wants to avoid this approach for individual dues. **Will you be the volunteer to develop such a fund-raiser?** You can count on help from others, and you can keep it as simple or as elaborate as you wish! A silent auction of services or events at our in-person picnic might be an option.

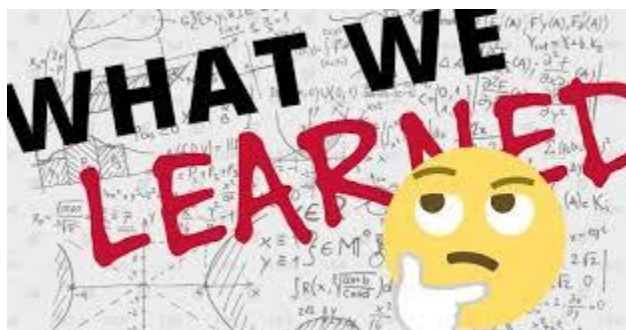
Seeds of ideas have already been gathered – needed is a volunteer to plant and water the flowers! Please let Barb Memory know of your interest. [memoryb@ecu.edu](mailto:memoryb@ecu.edu).



## Be an Action Liaison

Are you new to the League and looking for a way to get involved? Or not so new- but ready to get more involved? Consider becoming an **Action Liaison** for your unit. Starting this Fall, we hope to have a representative from White Bear Lake, Mahtomedi, St. Croix Valley, and North Oaks who will relay to their unit members relevant legislation being proposed and the action they might take in relation to League positions. Often, this will have to do with whether a legislator in a member's district is on a particular committee where his/her vote will be crucial in advancing a bill. Action Liaisons will be

the unit contacts with the LWVWBLA Action Co-chairs, Kathy Tomsich and Lori Delahunt. They can get to know which issues resonate with individual members of their unit (e.g., education, environmental issues, etc.) and encourage members to bring up local issues we may want to get more involved with. The time commitment should not be more than a couple hours per month during the legislative session. Ready to sign on? Please contact Kathy Tomsich at [ktomsich@comcast.net](mailto:ktomsich@comcast.net) or Lori Delahunt at [ldelahunt@comcast.net](mailto:ldelahunt@comcast.net)



## Revisiting Redistricting: Peter Wattson

*Peter Wattson was our invited speaker for the LWVWBLA's annual meeting on April 22. Peter is an expert on redistricting and the named plaintiff in *Peter Wattson, et al v. Secretary of State Steve Simon*, a lawsuit he recently filed with others to place before Minnesota courts the decennial issue of fairly redrawing legislative and congressional district boundaries. Thanks to Lisa Larson for moderating the program and for summarizing Peter's presentation.*

Recall Minnesota lawmakers must redraw district boundaries by May 17, the constitutional date of adjournment for the 2021 legislative session. The deadlines for the 2020 Census to announce states' population data (December 31, 2020) and deliver the block-level data states need to redraw district boundaries (April 1, 2021) were delayed by the pandemic and Trump administration efforts to exclude undocumented immigrants from the population counts. Minnesota lawmakers don't have enough time remaining in the 2021 legislative session to redraw electoral maps, a critical and contentious process made even more difficult by a politically divided state government. Peter expects Minnesota courts yet again, by default, to redraw the maps and filed the lawsuit as a way to give court staff time to become familiar with redistricting principles and the map drawing technology.

Peter began this program with an overview of salient redistricting questions: why do we redistrict; when will it happen; who will draw the maps; how will they draw them; and, important for LWVWBLA members, how can we participate. He talked about the impact of population changes on both reapportionment and redistricting; at that moment we didn't know Minnesota would barely manage to keep its eight U.S. House seats. He explained the delay in publishing 2020 Census data and the requirement for Minnesota to redraw legislative and congressional district boundaries by February 15, 2022, 25 weeks before the state primary. He reminded us: the Minnesota Constitution confers on the Legislature the power to redraw electoral boundaries at its first session after the decennial population census is completed; and, given Minnesota's divided government, the task for redrawing these boundaries has consistently fallen to the Minnesota Supreme Court.

Peter, in his lawsuit, lists principles to guide court map drawing, among them: population equity; minority representation; convenient contiguous territories or areas; preserved communities of interest; and electoral competition. He showed how it's possible to win more seats without winning more votes by packing and cracking electoral districts and pairing or kidnapping incumbents. He stressed the importance of curbing

gerrymanders. He recommended a special redistricting panel but was not optimistic about the Legislature embracing such an idea.

For more information about redistricting, the entire hour-long LWVWBLA-sponsored program can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IWf0xD638U>.

## **Examining Police Reform Proposals – May Unit Meetings**

*Since the death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, there have been many calls for police reform, from outright defunding to changes in oversight, training transparency, and more. In May, units discussed some of the proposed reforms and the benefits and constraints that come with them. Thanks to Program Leaders Mary Santi (WBL), Lori Delahunt (NO), Jane Bacon (WBL), and Lisa Larson (MAHT) for planning and leading lively conversations with each unit!*

### **MAHTOMEDI UNIT DISCUSSION**

The discussion of **Police Reform** was facilitated by fellow LWVWBLA members, Mary Santi, Lisa Larson, Jane Bacon, and Lori Delahunt. Mary Santi introduced the committee members and explained that since the death of George Floyd at the hands of police, there have been many calls for police reform. She noted that some State of Minnesota laws have been changed since this event, most notably, outlawing chokeholds. Mary shared that the Minneapolis LWV has made a statement that “policing is fundamentally broken” and Derek Chauvin’s “conviction was an outlier” in the history of police killings of Black men across the nation.

Members were asked to respond to the question, “what images for police reform come to mind?” Several responses are listed below:

- Address mental health needs along with law enforcement.
- Complete cultural change in the way police approach citizens.
- Do not support “defunding” police - too caustic.
- Minimize use of weapons and military stance of police.

Following this discussion, the committee shared a short video from Trevor Noah’s Daily Show with Seth Stoughton, author of Evaluating Police Uses of Force. Several points made by Mr. Stoughton in the video include:

- Advocating a “guardian approach” to policing, grounded in “protect and serve.”
- Improvements have been made in policing, but there is much more that needs to be done to change police training and culture.
- Racism is in society and reflected in policing rather than police being racist.
- 18,000 police departments in the United States have different methods of training and standards of practice.
- Police are trained based on “worst case scenario” and receive mixed messages in training...“be nice but believe in the threat.”
- Police departments need to address “wandering officers,” improved data collection, union safeguards that make it difficult to discipline officers and ethical policing.

Members were asked to respond to statements and questions listed below. Several responses are listed under each item.

Discuss the statement, "racism in society is reflected in police":

- White supremacists may be more likely to be drawn to policing.
- Other professions such as educators might also be influenced by racism or bias in Society.
- If one is not directly familiar, personally or professionally, with police, it is difficult to judge the racism within their ranks.

Discuss current calls for police reform from the perspective of current police:

- Given the number of resignations, retirements in the Minneapolis police department, it is likely many officers feel overwhelmed and stressed.
- It must be difficult to hear the level of criticism leveled against individual police and departments which is likely to be demoralizing for many officers.

Police and other public servants are expected to respond to ever more complicated needs in society. How do we prepare? And, how can policing be re-imagined?"

- Develop the "co-responder model" with police and mental health workers.
- More consistency in training models.
- Outlaw "warrior training" (MN already has).
- Decrease weapons training and increase de-escalation training.
- One member recommended a book: Tangled Up in Blue by Rosa Brooks.

Why is it hard to reform police?

- The "blue wall" in police culture that does not allow for accountability.
- Police union protection of officers.
- Imbalance of power in collective bargaining and too many organizations involved in making reforms.

What can LWV do?

- Police reform is daunting and while it presents many opportunities, it is complicated.
- The League should proceed with caution on taking action before knowing more; it may not be a role for the League to take a position in this case.
- LWV members need to continue to educate themselves and others, support the continuing dialogue and contribute to incremental change.

***Submitted by: Theresa Casey-Wolf***

## **NORTH OAKS UNIT DISCUSSION**

A joint statement from the LWVUS, MN and Minneapolis was read. It described our current police system as broken and built on racism, slavery, and white suppression.

Members were asked to describe what comes to mind when police reform is mentioned:

- The phrase "defunding the police".
- It seems to be a loaded phrase.
- A highly politicized phrase.
- Phrase used to stake out extreme positions.

- What does it mean?
- It can be frightening.
- Should we start over?
- Use other resources.
- Lessen the funding.
- Lessen the footprint.
- Broaden the system of service.
- Because we're a divided country we aren't reaching middle ground.

A video was shown of an interview from the Daily Show where Trevor Noah interviewed Seth Stoughton. This was followed by a series of discussion points.

We don't have a race issue in policing we have a race issue in society:

- Some personality types that may include racism may be drawn to policing.
- There is a need for more data measuring and reporting of information.
- Who keeps the data and how is it maintained?
- There can be a fine line between the direction people can go in life, criminal or police officer.
- It is hard to not be racist when all of the pictures in the news include a Black face.
- In Minnesota we have a very large educational achievement gap.
- History of policing evolved after slavery, involving much racism.
- Media doesn't always help seeing policing in totality.
- LWV sees a need for position on this issue.

How would a present-day Minneapolis police officer see their position?

- See it not as an entity but as individuals.
- They have a reason to feel threatened.
- Reforms are needed because problem officers are moved from place to place and train other officers.
- The blue line culture gets in the way of being able to point out wrongdoing. (The testimony in the recent trial showed it can be different.)
- Police culture can be influenced by Military Police culture if military police become civilian police.
- PTSD may be involved.

What is the problem in the current culture of policing? How can it be reimagined and changed?

- Use a Guardian Model to make change at the basic level.
- Currently there is a militarization of policing with military weapons and equipment.
- Proliferation of guns in society.
- Qualifications and training differs among states.
- Establish individual licenses for police officers.
- Consider training levels, e.g., School Resource Officers instead of police officers in schools.

What makes police reform so difficult?

- Thin Blue Line.
- Qualified Immunity - legal defense of someone's rights being violated.
- Police Officer's Bill of Rights - Privileges such as prior knowledge of evidence, can't be questioned without a lawyer and union representation; civilian review board can't impose discipline.

- 18,000 law enforcement agencies in U.S.
- In Minnesota 30 different locations to be certified as police officers.
- Split Legislature in Minnesota makes change difficult.
- No national collection of data about police shootings.
- Who should have authority over police reform? - can cause disagreement.

What can individuals or our League do for Police Reform?

- Encourage police officers we come in contact with.
- Encourage legislation to support data collection.
- Continue discussions to keep the topic alive.
- Educate ourselves.

*Submitted by: Sharon Guiser*

### **ST. CROIX VALLEY UNIT DISCUSSION**

Kudos to the Program Committee for their excellent presentation on the topic of police reform. They had to compete with a stellar spring afternoon, but I believe those of us in attendance felt our time was well spent!

Police reform in the United States is a complicated issue starting with the fact that it has been turned into a political issue; if you are for reform, you're against the police. And there are those who feel the system is working as long as you obey the law.

The video featuring Trevor Noah interviewing professor Seth Stoughton was particularly enlightening. Eighteen thousand individual police departments across the country, the lack of hard data regarding policing, and union contract procedures all add to the challenge of making changes.

It's apparent that a pivot to a more guardian style of policing is going to take changes down to the very foundation of our culture. The more we learn about this complicated issue the better we are able to discuss it with friends and family and encourage our elected officials to keep police reform at the forefront.

*Submitted by: Lori Soukup*

### **WHITE BEAR LAKE UNIT DISCUSSION**

The May 13 WBL Unit Zoom Discussion on the subject of Police Reform was well attended. Present were Program Leaders Mary Santi (WBL), Lori Delahunt (NO), and Lisa Larson (MAHT), Unit Leader Kathy Gaylord, and members Heidi Schmidt-Boyd, Liz Lauder, Barb Memory, Shannon Moore, Dick Ottman, Jackie Reis, Jane Schroeder, Karen Suzukamo, and Susan Travis. Also joining was Fran Knothe.

The program opened with a reading of the joint statement on police reform issued by the LWVUS, LWVMN, and LWV-Minneapolis after the conviction of Officer Chauvin in the killing of George Floyd. It stated that policing in America is broken, that policing was built on a legacy of slavery and racism, that this could be the turning point in police reform, and that the conviction of one man does not equal justice for all.

Members responded to Question #1 posed by the Program Leaders: What do we think when we hear the phrase, “police reform”? Then an 8-minute video was played featuring interviewer Trevor Noah and Seth Stoughton, a use-of-force expert from the University of South Carolina who testified at the Chauvin trial. Stoughton described the threat-based and fear-based training that most officers receive (at any minute someone may pull a gun; an ‘us-vs. them’ mentality), and an alternative: a “Guardian Approach,” where the police focus would be on protecting and serving, rather than enforcing.

Questions posed to members included:

What are society’s expectations of police? What problems are police expected to handle? How are officers trained and certified? Are expectations too high?

Among the issues discussed by members were:

- Community policing.
- Racism in society and in policing; multiple causes of crime.
- The value of mental health professionals going on calls with police (overdose, suicide threat, etc.).
- Recruiting “the right person for the right job”.
- Inconsistencies in training, mentoring, supervision, and accountability.
- Personality attributes in officers’ use of force.
- Wandering officers” who hire on at another force after being fired.
- Union contracts that interfere with discipline and accountability.
- Under- and over-policing of communities.
- Resistance to change and a police culture of “the blue line.”
- Need for measurement and data, interpreted carefully.
- Legislation that promotes guns for everyone (Conceal Carry laws).

The final question was: What can we as individuals and as a League do? Comments included:

- “It is our work – up here in the safe white suburbs, not just “over there in Minneapolis.”
- It is uncomfortable work, to step up to people around us who express racist ideas.
- With social media, disturbing attitudes can appear in ANY context, e.g., a decorating blog! Find ways to say, “That is not OK.”

The Wrap-Up included the need not only for self-education, but for ACTION: engage with allies, build coalitions, support evidence-based efforts at reform. The Chat was loaded with valuable resources for members, including member and local activities going on now, and websites for further involvement with 13 community organizations which are working to improve equity and justice. The Chat will be saved and published. The Voter Services Committee is working during the summer on registration and education of underserved communities, including communities of color, youth, and new immigrants. Heidi welcomes all of us to join their efforts!

*Submitted by: Barb Memory*



## More on Police Reform and Public Safety

LWV-Minneapolis recently [issued a report](#), as a result of their League's Reimagining Public Safety Committee, which was created to further the League's mission to increase public understanding of major issues and to encourage citizens to vote. "We endeavored to provide a clear, nonpartisan path through the multi-faceted topic of public safety and the many current initiatives underway in community and government. We hope, like all the citizens of Minneapolis, for a reimagined, inclusive, more respectful, and more positive public safety system...Work to reimagine public safety was heightened by the murder of George Floyd. But it did not begin with Floyd's death, and it does not end with Chauvin's Conviction."

[Their report](#) also lifts up the many community voices who have been sounding the alarm bells for decades, and leading the charge to defund, reform and reimagine. Learn more about these important voices [here](#).

*From LWVMN May Newsletter*

## County Commissioners Close Out CMAL Year

Ramsey County Commissioner, Victoria Reinhardt, and Anoka County Commissioner, Mandy Meisner, were guest speakers at the Council of Metropolitan Area League's annual meeting via Zoom on Saturday, May 8, 2021.

Commissioner Reinhardt has been Ramsey County Commissioner since 1996. During her portion of the discussion, Commissioner Reinhardt talked about how she received county services to help her escape from an abusive relationship, and later worked for Commissioner Bob Orth, before being elected herself as county commissioner.

Commissioner Reinhardt listed the top priorities for the Ramsey County Commission: environmental health, economic inclusion & racial equity, transportation, and affordable housing. She said Ramsey County is seeking a levy to become a Housing and Redevelopment Authority. Another focus is making certain health waivers granted during the Covid-19 pandemic permanent.

Commissioner Meisner is the newest member of the Anoka County Board of Commissioners. She was elected in 2018 as the first woman of color to serve on the county board. One of her duties was to oversee the processing of the 78,000 absentee ballots in the 2020 election. The county elections office produced a 6-minute video to show how the counting process works (see it here: [Absentee Ballot Behind-the-Scenes](#)).

Commissioner Meisner talked about her desire to develop best practices and policies for hiring and retaining more people of color to work in county government. She hosted a town hall meeting about creating a code of ethics for the county board. She is also working to change the minds and hearts of her fellow commissioners to allow public comment during meetings of the full board.

The CMAL invited the county commissioners to speak as part of their two-year study to update their position on county government. The study was commissioned by the CMAL members at a quarterly meeting in January 2020. Research on the topic is due to be completed by August 2021. Metro area local League members are encouraged to help with the study by looking at information that is available on county websites, and by interviewing county managers and commissioners. Contact CMAL President, Karen Schaffer, for more information ([schafferka@gmail.com](mailto:schafferka@gmail.com)).

*Submitted by Liz Lauder*

## **JUNE-AUGUST CALENDAR**

### **CELEBRATE JUNETEENTH** **Sweet Potato Comfort Pie Jubilee** **Friday, June 18th**

In Celebration of Juneteenth and in Partnership with the 25th Annual Peace Celebration, the first annual Juneteenth Sweet Potato Comfort Pie® Jubilee will be held on Friday, June 18th from 11:00 AM to 6:00 PM at Western Sculpture Park in St. Paul, MN. The Jubilee will feature a sweet potato pie competition, the Character Values Photo Exhibit of community heroes, FREE food and pie samples, stage reading of the Kumbayah: The Juneteenth Story,” and more. This is a FREE event for the Community.

LWV Minnesota is a proud sponsor of this great event, where League volunteers will also help to register new voters! [Email Michelle Witte](#) if you can join in honoring Juneteenth – a historic and special day to commemorate the end of slavery.

### **SAVE THE DATE!**

The LWVWBLA annual picnic will be hosted this year by the Mahtomedi unit.

Watch for details via e-mail!



**August 19th - 5:00 pm**

Lakewood Hills Pavilion  
2110 Orchard Lane, White Bear Lake  
(behind the YMCA)

## Treasurer's Report, LWVWBLA

June 1, 2021

Margaret Westin, Treasurer

		Current	YTD
<b>Income:</b>	Dues	\$ 1,100.00	\$ 1,950.00
	Donations	\$ 440.00	\$ 765.00
	Memorials	\$	\$
	Meetings (socials)	\$	\$
	Service	\$	\$
	In-kind donation	\$	\$
	Voters Service	\$	\$
	Calendars	\$	\$
	NOHOA	\$	\$
	Bank interest	\$ .01	\$
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$ 1,540.01</b>	<b>\$ 2,715.00</b>

<b>Expenses:</b>	Meetings and conventions	\$	\$ 25.00
	LWVMN PMP	\$	\$
	LWVUS PMP	\$	\$
	Meeting site	\$	\$
	Voters Service	\$	\$
	Program (includes publicity)	\$	\$
	Bear Facts copying/printing	\$	\$
	Calendars	\$	\$
	Membership	\$	\$
	(communication, recruiting & recognition)		
	<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$25.00</b>

Opening balance from May 1, 2021:		\$ 6,081.64
Income	+	\$ 1,540.01
Expenses:	-	\$

Current balance: **\$7,621.65**

Ed fund CD: **\$4,227.98**

2020-21 Paid Members: 24 @ \$60 7@ \$90 8 lifetime members  
Total: 46