ANNUAL REPORT

May 2026

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF WHITE BEAR LAKE AREA

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Since early 2025, our League has experienced incredible growth in membership. Not only have we increased the number of members, but the cities and townships that new members are from increased our geographic representation as well. This trend is being seen by Leagues across Minnesota, as well as in most parts of the country.

In a time when partisanship sometimes seems extreme, it is gratifying to see the interest in becoming active with the League of Women Voters – steadfast in our nonpartisanship. Our goals of empowering voters and defending democracy guide us in our work and provide pathways and opportunities for meaningful engagement, as illustrated in this annual report. We welcome the energy and commitment of our new members; when joined with the experience and wisdom of those who have been active League members for many years, we are ready to meet the challenges that face us. I am honored to work aside each of you and thank you for the gift of your engagement in our mission.

Jackie Reis
President, LWV WBLA

MEMBERSHIP

132 MEMBERS!

We welcomed 52 new members between April 1, 2025 and March 31, 2026; with an additional 11 members who joined since then, total membership as of April 30 is 132.

- Members come from **28 different cities** in our area. 71 people live in Ramsey County, 56 in Washington County, and 5 in either Anoka or Chisago County.
- ***"Meet ups"*** were initiated as a way to give members who live near each other opportunities to meet in small groups, socialize, talk about the League in general, and encourage participation in League activities. Meet ups were held periodically throughout the year in Shoreview, Stillwater, and White Bear Lake. Those in the Hugo area are getting together monthly.
- **New member orientation** was held via zoom in February and was well attended.
- A **member engagement survey** was sent out in March to all members, with the objective to learn more about member interests and to connect them with League activities.

VOTER SERVICE

In 2025, our Voter Services team focused on three critical pillars: equipping **White Bear Lake** area voters for local elections, empowering **students** to join the electorate, and revitalizing our **outreach materials** in preparation for the 2026 midterms.

Empowering Local Voters

In White Bear Lake, **which had the only election this year**, we focused on providing the nonpartisan information necessary for an informed local government. Our candidate forums remain a cornerstone of this effort:

- **Forums & Interviews:** We hosted forums for both the mayoral primary and general elections, alongside one-on-one interviews with City Council candidates.
- **Digital Reach:** To ensure accessibility for all, these sessions were recorded and shared on our YouTube channel and on local public access television, garnering **over 1,800 views**—a testament to our community's desire for reliable candidate information.

Cultivating the Next Generation of Voters

Our registration efforts focused on meeting new voters where they are: local colleges and high schools.

- **Education Through Engagement:** Beyond simple registration, we used a "trivia wheel" to spark conversations about how government works. These interactive sessions, complete with prizes, help demystify the voting process for young citizens.
- **"Adopt-a-School" Program:** To sustain these vital relationships, we continued a new initiative where League members can "adopt" a high school. This ensures consistent, year-round voter education and support.
- **Expanding Our Reach:** We are now scaling this model to reach residents in **elder care facilities** and **apartment complexes.**
- **Youth Vote 2026:** We look forward to working with students from Mahtomedi, Stillwater, and White Bear Lake High Schools on their voter registration, and get out the vote efforts. Seven League members are serving as coaches for our six youth civic engagement fellows.

Preparing for the 2026 Midterms

The 2026 election season will provide significant opportunities to engage voters and new volunteers. We are refreshing our toolkit to resonate with a modern audience. Our 2026 strategy includes:

- **Topical "Information Towers":** Visually engaging displays designed to spark curiosity and answer frequently asked questions in high-traffic community spaces; these were piloted at select community and league events and met with great interest
- **Voter Voice Campaign:** New tools that empower voters to share their own "Why I Vote" messages across social media, turning personal stories into community action
- **Know your Candidate:** Expanding the number of trained moderators and providing training to our many new members who want to be engaged with our candidate forums

We are grateful for the efforts of so many to create, disseminate and deliver our nonpartisan messages in 2025 and beyond. We look forward to seeing you at a voter service meeting, one of our many planned outreach events or at a candidate forum!

PROGRAM & EVENTS

Various **Hot Topics** were explored this year with the help of our program teams and great speakers.

- *Civic Engagement: Why It Matters for Democracy*
- *Are We in a Constitutional Crisis?*
- *Navigating Uncertainty: The Complex Role of the County Commissioner*
- *Truth, Trust and the Ballot Box: Understanding Election Security*
- *Watts, Water & Secrecy: The Hidden Costs of Data Centers*

We averaged 40+ attendees at each of these programs. Videos of all Hot Topics programs are on our website and are getting from 41 – 163 views. The video of Election Security is being shown on local public access station Nine North.

Thanks to the **Ramsey County Library** for co-sponsoring our Hot Topic programs and the New Brighton Area, Roseville Area, and St. Paul Leagues, who collaborated on the Election Security program.

The **annual book club selection**, *"20 Lessons on Tyranny from the 20th Century",* sparked lively discussion among League members and resonated with today 's political environment. Two other programs during the year, *Meet Your Legislators* and *The Rights of Immigrants* are described elsewhere in this report.

Summer picnic: Our annual picnic was held in August at Lakewood Hills Pavilion and featured a book and puzzle swap as well as the introduction of the program calendar for 2025-26.

Holiday Gathering: Dick Ottman once again hosted us at Gable Pines and Heidi Boyd provided delightful holiday music on the piano. League members brought diapers and personal care items to donate to our local food shelves in Hugo, Mahtomedi, Stillwater, and White Bear Lake.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Communications Committee coordinates how we keep our members and the community informed about the League's activities and mission. We manage a wide **range of communication channels.**

- Currently we are re-designing and updating the LWV-WBLA website
- Sending periodic emails and the Bear Facts newsletter to members, and creating graphics for events using Canva, also using it to compile this annual report.
- Sending out press releases, placing newspaper ads, and keeping the events calendar updated, managing Google ads and Eventbrite for event registration
- Worked with local public access television stations to cover candidate forums and speaker events, especially our new Hot Topics series. Links are provided on our website for public viewing.
- Managing our social media presence and YouTube channel

ACTION

Our action and advocacy efforts involve observing and communicating with elected officials about legislative priorities.

- In May 2026, LWVUS launched the **Unite and Rise 8.5** initiative which aims to mobilize 8.5 million voters using the power of voter engagement. LWV WBLA members wrote letters to the editor of local newspapers and to members of our Congressional delegation regarding precinct caucuses, the SAVE bill and other bills related to the administration's focus on SNAP and Medicaid.
- LWV WBLA members attended several rallies organized by GRASSROOTS WB and signed up over 125 people to receive monthly updates from LWVMN. League members also participated in subsequent No Kings Rallies.
- WBLA League members attended the first Suffrage Celebration at the MN Capitol in August and in the spring participated in the ERA rally at the Capitol.
- Meet Your Legislator events were held in January 2026, for Senate Districts 36, House 36A and 36B in White Bear Lake and for Senate District 33, House 33A and 33B in Stillwater.
- The MN legislative session began in February and LWV WBLA members participated in the state League's Lobby and Observer Corps throughout the session. Members also participated in LWV MN's **"Fired Up Fridays"** conversations.
- For a third year, LWV WBLA participated in the Festival of Trees at the WBLA Historical Society and handed out hundreds of ballots for people to vote on their favorite tree.

Ramsey County Advocacy Team (RCAT)
LWVWBLA, together with LWV New Brighton Area, LWV Roseville Area, and LWV St. Paul, formed the Ramsey County Advocacy Team (RCAT) to provide a coordinated and collaborative approach to advocacy and action on issues impacting residents of Ramsey County. RCAT monitored County budget and property tax hearings and provided testimony, hosted a meeting for League members with the County Manager, provided materials to League members on federal legislative issues, hosted a public education program on Election Security, and a Lunch and Learn for League members on Youth Civic Engagement.

Washington Democracy
LWVWBLA members are participating in Washington Democracy, a group of County residents coming together to identify issues of concern to our communities, build relationships among organizations doing related work, and develop relationships with County personnel and community leaders. The two primary goals are to defend, preserve and stabilize our democracy, and voting rights. One aspect of their work is a Local Observer Corps; a member attends and reports to the community on each meeting of Washington County Commissioners, and often Woodbury City Council. Their current team is comprised primarily of members of LWV White Bear Lake Area and LWV Woodbury Cottage Grove, Clean Elections Minnesota, St Croix Valley Indivisible, and We Choose Us.

DEI
DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Committee continued to promote events and resources to help members become better informed and more culturally aware.

We added a new way to accomplish this goal by hosting quarterly gatherings that require little or no preparation and that are held on the weekend to increase accessibility.

- Watched and discussed the video called “Reconstruction Deconstructed,”
- Attended the play, “Nobody, No Time” at the Illusion Theater.
- In May, we will discuss the book "The Serviceberry" and view and discuss an interview with the author, Robin Wall Kimmerer.

The DEI Committee

- Continued to update a spreadsheet (available on the LWV member portal) listing upcoming events and other resources to help members become better informed and more culturally aware.
- Expanded the DEI Affinity List to encourage people to experience these events and our quarterly meetings with other LWV members.
- Highlighted a few of these events in every edition of Bear Facts.

This year the DEI committee planned and led a concurrence meeting on the LWV WA study on the “Rights of Immigrants.” This attracted broad participation from our League as well as other Leagues.

Advocated for legislation (e.g. protecting wild rice), and attended a rally to support marginalized communities.

Discussed and updated our goals, including an emphasis on cultural humility.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Financials for the 2025-2026 fiscal year ending March 31, 2026.

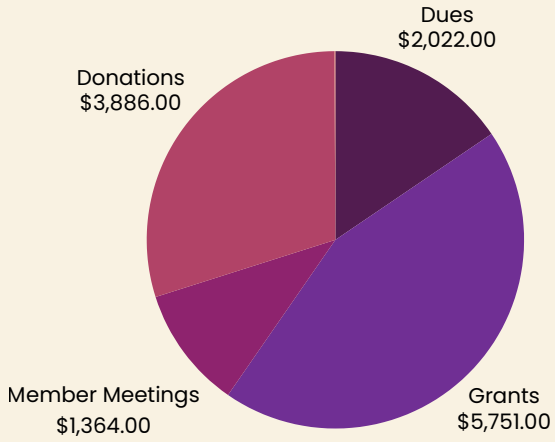
Bank balance as of March 31, 2026 was $11,857 of which $3,363 is designated for Youth Vote and $2,200 is designated for an opportunities fund.

Fiscal Year Highlights

- Successfully transitioned to the national membership portal for new and renewing members. Paid final per person payment to LWV US.
- Established an Opportunities Fund with a $4,000 grant from Piper Sandler and an anonymous $1,000 grant. Allocated $1,300 to our Youth Vote program from this Fund.
- Received additional grants from LWV US and LWV MN (Shumer Family Fund) for 2026 Youth Vote; from LWV MN (Martin and Brown Foundation) for our voter service work; and $100 from Premier Bank in general support of our work.

2025-26 INCOME

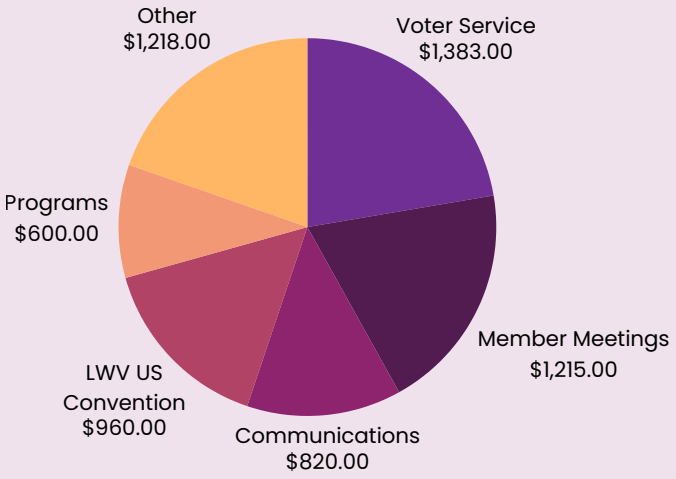
Source	Revenue
Dues	$2,022.00
Grants	$5,751.00
Member Meetings	$1,364.00
Donations	$3886.00
T-Shirt Sales	$11.00
TOTAL:	**$13,034.00**



- Martin and Brown Foundation (LWVMN) Voter Services Grant $438
- LWVUS Educational Foundation Youth Voter Registration Grant $563
- Corporate grant from Piper Sandler Companies for $4,000

2025-26 EXPENSES

Source	Revenue
Voter Service	$1,383.00
Member Meetings	$1,215.00
Communications & Media	$820.00
LWV US Convention	$960.00
Monthly Programs	$600.00
Other	$1218.00
TOTAL:	**$6,196.00**



Grants and donations provide significant support for our work. In addition to the grants mentioned above, we thank all those who made generous donations in addition to their annual membership dues.

2025-26 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President	Jackie Reis
Vice President	Theresa Casey Wolf
Treasurer	Kim Samrock
Secretary	Amy Thomas
Program Chair	Stephaine McNamara
Voter Service Chair	Ingrid Schneider-Sougstad
Membership Chair	Kathy Rozman-Holt
Action & Advocacy Chair	Shannon Moore
DEI Co-Chairs	Jane Bacon Diane Dahl
Communications Chair	Ketty Torrey
At Large	Elsbeth Howe
At Large	Pat Schlagel

GENERAL MEMBER MEETINGS

- Annual Meeting - Spring
- Summer Picnic - August
- Holiday Party - December

More information, including candidate forums and programs, are available on our website at

lwv-wbla.org

EMPOWERING VOTERS.
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY.