



FEBRUARY 2021



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Jeanne Roberts, President

It is hard to believe that we are close to the 101st anniversary of the founding of the League of Women Voters and a year since our celebration of the Black Women's Suffrage Movement. We have made it through an entire year of this COVID-19 pandemic and all of the changes that it has created. Some of the changes have been a struggle, yet others may have made us stronger as an organization. We have definitely had to think creatively and gotten used to newer technology in order to fulfill our mission, and we thank all of you for your support and patience in working through all of this together.

This month's newsletter is about you – your gifts and talents – and how they make our League what it is. Regardless of how you support the League of Women Voters of Appleton's work, your support is important and appreciated. The articles in this issue will let you know what kind of opportunities are available going forward to fulfill our mission to empower voters and defend democracy. There is plenty of work to do and we look forward to doing it together.

Legislative Action Looms at All Levels

By Linda Bjella
Vice President of Action

New Legislation on the Table in Washington, D.C.

January 2021 was dizzying in the amount of governmental change and action that took place. As President Biden begins his term and the new Congress shifts from Republican to all Democratic control, a lot of new legislation has been laid on the table at the national level.

The LWVUS issued an action alert to support HR-1, also known as "For the People Act". This was the first piece of legislation passed by the House of Representatives in 2019. Within it is the John Lewis Voting Rights Act which reinstates provisions in the 1965 Voting Rights Act that were removed in the

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Legislative Action, continued

2013 Supreme Court Ruling (Shelby V. Holder). HR 1 also addresses redistricting, voter suppression, campaign finance reform, gerrymandering, and D.C. statehood.

Another big development is the real possibility that the deadline placed on ERA ratification can be lifted to ensure that this amendment is certified and becomes part of the US Constitution. (The U.S. is one of only 28 countries worldwide without a gender equality provision in its constitution.)

Wisconsin Gears Up for New Legislative Session

At the state level, LWV-WI issued an action alert to oppose the legislature from removing the state-wide mask mandate. This controversy continues to be contentious between the Governor and the Legislature. Other provisions favored by the Legislature regarding the pandemic include the following:

1. Prohibit local health officials from closing or setting limits on places of worship.
2. Prohibit employers or health officials from requiring Covid-19 vaccinations.
3. Require a 2/3 vote by local school boards to authorize only on-line learning for more than 14 days.
4. Prohibit immediate vaccination of prison inmates.
5. Require that any federal Covid-19 relief funds be overseen by the Joint Finance Committee.



Governor Evers will give his budget address on February 16. The powerful Joint Finance Committee has been announced and will soon begin work on the biennial budget. Representative Born and Senator Marklein are co-chairs. Any communication you send to either of them will be distributed to the entire JF Committee.

Redistricting Gets Real

The biggest agenda item for the Wisconsin Legislature this year will be redistricting. The latest word is that census data is delayed and may not be received until June. In the meantime, grassroots fair maps groups are hard at work contacting legislators to urge their support for nonpartisan redistricting legislation. It will also be important to contact legislators to urge their support for the money allocated in the Governor's budget for the Legislative Reference Bureau which would be tasked with drawing new legislative maps in a new nonpartisan process.

In addition, the People's Maps Commission continues to hold hearings in each Congressional District. The PMC has hired a team of experts from Tuft's University to create maps based on the testimony and research done by the PMC. There are three hearings remaining: February 11 (1st CD), Feb. 25 (6th CD) and March 11 (2nd CD).

Redistricting will also be important at the local level. The City of Appleton will have a fair maps referendum on the April 6 ballot, thanks to the efforts of Penny Bernard Schaber. Local and county officials should be contacted to urge them to initiate the redistricting process as it has been done historically.

Breaking with that tradition in 2011, the districts drawn by counties and municipalities were ignored by the legislature, and local officials had to redraw their district maps in 2012 to conform to what the legislature had approved. This added a further layer of complexity to the Fox Cities area which already has 3 counties and 19 municipalities. (For example, the Town of Grand Chute with 23,000 people is divided into 4 legislative districts.) Local officials can also help to put pressure on legislators by asking them to allow the redistricting process to begin at the local level as it should.

Next Step: From Lively Issues to Consensus

By Renee Gralewicz
Program Director

Thank you to those who participated in Lively Issues on January 23. For those unable to attend, here is what happened.

We collectively generated more than 30 topics/issues we think LWV Appleton should explore. Many of those ideas were parts of larger topics such as housing and anti-racism, which had the two most votes. We, along with LWV Wisconsin and LWVUS, already have some positions on these issues. Our next steps include flushing out what we already have positions on and deciding what yet needs to be done. If you are interested in helping research housing or anti-racism issues for our League, please contact me, reeneagralewicz@gmail.com

Once we have a handle on what needs in-depth study, I will present the topic to the Board which then approves the issue – or not. From there, at our Annual Meeting in May, we present the issue to the membership and ask for volunteers to join the study group.

May 2020, the LWV Appleton selected Climate Change Resiliency and Vulnerable Populations to study. That research has come to an end, and we now need to listen to the position statements generated by their research. Remember that the purpose of a study group is so that our President can advocate for policies. The LWV is a well-respected organization and our League voice carries weight because we conduct non-partisan research and come to non-partisan conclusions/positions.

Therefore, we need your voice at the **Consensus meeting Saturday, February 13, 9:00 a.m. to noon.** You do not have to be a scientist nor fully understand the research to participate. We need to know if the conclusions/position statements make sense and, in general, if you support the proposed positions. Even if you are unsure of your role in this process, join us to better understand it. To register for the Consensus meeting, click [here](#).

One issue from our Lively Issues event related to the general public's knowledge about our US history with regards to our vast diversity below the surface. How are the contributions of ethnic and religious groups presented? The summer of 2020 brought to light that many of us adults knew little about the actual lives of Black Americans and their relationships to our legal system. Few of us were aware that many Black families have "The Talk" with their children, and "The Talk" is not about human reproduction but one of human survival. This summer some of us learned more about how indigenous women and girls go missing with little notice or concern from police forces.

Just what are our children learning about US history and culture? Join us **Monday, February 15 (5:15 to 6:30 p.m.)** to learn what Appleton and Wisconsin in general are doing. We have three panelists to educate us:

- Kris McDaniel, Social Studies consultant, WI DPI
- Tom Clementi, retired history and humanities teacher, Appleton Area School District (AASD)
- Steve J. Harrison, Assistant Superintendent - Assessment, Curriculum & Instruction, AASD

Coming Events:

- Saturday, Feb. 13 – **Consensus** (9:00 a.m. – Noon)
- Monday, Feb. 15 – **What's Being Taught About US History in Public Schools?** (5:15 – 6:30 p.m.)
- Monday, March 15 – **Reproductive Health Care** (5:15 – 6:30 p.m.) speaker Margo DeNuccio, Planned Parenthood of WI, Inc. Community Outreach Coordinator
- Monday, April 19 – **The Structure of Our Local League** (5:15 – 6:30 p.m.) Learn how LWV is organized and the duties and responsibilities of the positions.
- Saturday, May 15 – **Annual Meeting** (Time TBD)

League Seeks Questions for Candidate Forums

Be an informed voter! Submit your questions to be considered for the League's various Candidate Forums. Then hear what the candidates have to say. Send your questions to league.appleton@yahoo.com

Please write in the Subject line of the email which forum your question addresses: "Candidate Forum Question-City Council District" or "Candidate Forum Question-AASD School Board". Questions must be received 24 hours before each forum.

To view the forum live, please register on the League website: lwvappleton.org or go to the LWV Appleton Facebook page for live streaming. Recordings of the forums will be available on the LWV website.

Monday, March 1 – District #11 Forum; 6:30-7:30 p.m.; Kristin Alfheim and Shawn W. Park

Tuesday, March 2 – AASD School Board Forum; 6:30-8:00 p.m.; Kay Eggert, Sheri S. Hartzheim, Amber McGinley (*Edward Ruffolo politely declined our invitation for this event, as he has decided not to participate in any candidate forums for this election.*)

Thursday, March 4 – District #1 Forum; 6:30-7:30 p.m.; William Siebers and Wendy Bolm

Tuesday, March 9 – District #13 Forum; 6:30-7:30 p.m.; Kyle Lobner and Sheri S. Hartzheim

Wednesday, March 10 – District #15 Forum; 6:30-7:30 p.m.; Chad Doran and Walt Hamburger Lontkowski

Thursday, March 11 – District #3 Forum; 6:30-7:30 p.m.; Brad Firkus and John Foss

Monday, March 15 – District #5 Forum; **7:00-8:00 p.m.**; Katie Van Zeeland and Mark Gabriel. (*LWV monthly program takes place on this date from 5:30-6:30 p.m.*)

If you are unsure which district you live in, you can view the district map on the city website: <https://www.appleton.org/home/showdocument?id=524> or enter your address on <https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/>

Member Spotlight: Meet Denise Fenton



What would you like Appleton League members to know about you?

First, that I have the most brilliant two-year-old granddaughter who ever lived (until the next grandchild – due next June – arrives). I'm a native Texan, graduated with a degree in economics from Rice University in Houston, and spent 40 years in information technology.

I took a career break to stay at home with my two daughters, both of whom are public school teachers in Arkansas. Post divorce, I went back to work, met my now-husband Kelly, and eventually took a transfer to New Jersey where we enjoyed nine years a short train ride from Manhattan.

With retirement approaching, we knew we wanted to be closer to family in Texas, Arkansas and Kansas, but not actually IN any of those places, so I took a job that brought us to Appleton at the beginning of 2017. We quickly became involved in local political organizations, which led me to run for Appleton Common Council in a special election in 2019 to fill the vacated seat in my district. While I had never had any interest in running for office, I felt that it was important to keep someone progressive in the seat that we had worked to win from a long-time incumbent in the last election. I have found that I really enjoy local government, particularly keeping the people in my district informed about what is happening in City Hall.

I retired from full time work this spring, planning to spend time traveling to visit family, reading and working on causes I believe in. Hopefully that plan will get back on course reasonably soon.

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Member Spotlight, continued

Tell us one or two important things that League has given you.

I have been a disciple of the League since my first days as a voter, where I would study the Voters Guide for every race. I felt like I could always count on the League for unbiased information. After moving to Appleton, I found that so many of the people that I met and admired here were members of the League, and I joined to benefit from their perspective and experience and to hopefully contribute to my community.

Name one event in your life that helped make you the person you are today.

I always say that a first-grade field trip to the fire station in 1964 or 1965 made me a feminist. In those days, little girls wore dresses, so out of concern for our modesty, we had to stand on the ground and watch while all the boys got to climb around on the fire truck. This seemed completely unfair, as did the fact that there were no organized sports for girls, while the boys had plenty of opportunities to play. This early feminism expanded as I became aware that the unfairness to little white girls in 1960s Texas was minor compared to the injustices faced by so many marginalized communities.

What is the most interesting piece of art you have ever seen?

I suppose it's really more architecture, but La Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, is just fascinating. The design itself is stunning, but the fact that it is still under construction after more than 100 years is amazing.

What is something you think everyone should do at least once in their lives?

Everyone should prepare for and do something that they find terrifying at least once – whether that be something physical, like running or walking a marathon or climbing a mountain, or something where the barrier is purely psychological, like giving a speech or performing in public. The sense of achievement from accomplishing something that seemed impossible stays with us and puts smaller obstacles in perspective.

Which political figure, living or dead, do you admire and why?

Ann Richards. As a native Texan, I was in my teens as she began her political career and a young woman when she was elected Governor in 1990. She was about my mother's age and moved into politics after being a teacher – one of the few careers available to educated women at the time. She was outspoken in her support of the ERA, and one of the highlights of my life was seeing her present the ERA to the delegates of the National Women's Conference in Houston, where I was in college. She overcame so much in her personal and political life – being open about her alcoholism and her recovery and continuing to be active in politics after being defeated for the governorship and seeing Texas move from a Democratic stronghold to the reddest of red states. She was smart, savvy and hilarious, winning people over with charm and wit even if they didn't agree with her policies. She is still my Twitter avatar.

Heartfelt Outreach

As we acknowledge the 101st anniversary of the founding of the League of Women Voters and a year since our celebration of the Black Women's Suffrage Movement, the Appleton League felt it appropriate to send a special greeting to underscore how much we appreciate our members and community partners. Thank you for your participation and support. Watch for this greeting in your mailbox!



Let's Turn Traction into Action!

Jeanne Roberts made two noteworthy points in her President's Message. The Appleton League has worked its way through a challenging year by adapting and innovating, and has come out a stronger organization for it. Conducting business and events have benefitted from more strategic use of technology. Membership has grown. Viewing our work through a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) lens has helped us be more open and welcoming. And, this growth has been largely due to the passion, commitment and expertise of you, our members.

We have really gotten traction in 2020! If you've been energized by the activities of the past year, or if you have been on the other side of the Zoom lens and are looking for a way to participate, we welcome you.

Check out the teams listed below and find some that match your interests, abilities, passions and the possibility to learn and get better acquainted. Contact people are listed for each team.

League of Women Voters Appleton Teams

ACTION:

Educate fellow committee members on issues you are passionate about. Learn how to contact your representatives and the best way to communicate with them. We will meet regularly to strategize on the best ways to influence public policy. Observer Corps will be part of this committee to keep our eyes and ears on the Appleton Common Council, the Outagamie County Board, and the Appleton Area Board of Education which now can be done virtually from home. In the future, we are looking to expand our Observer Corps to include other counties and municipalities. Another goal is a Fox Valley Legislative Forum sponsored by our League so we can meet regularly with our state representatives and senators. This is a standing committee that works year-round but is less active when Congress and the Wisconsin Legislature are not in session. Contact Linda Bjella: lindabjella@gmail.com

CLIMATE/RESILIENCE:

The members of the Climate Change Preparedness and Resilience Study Committee are aware that the topic of Climate Resilience is vast, complex and still growing with new knowledge. Although the two-year study is ending this year, the study members hope that the new Climate Resilience Committee can help carry forward many of the study's recommendations and assist with League advocacy. We hope to attract anyone interested and passionate about this topic, especially younger people who are looking for positive actions in our community. We will meet at least once a month to discuss areas in need of advocacy based on League positions at the local, state and national levels. Contact Ligia Rivera: lrivera@new.rr.com

COMMUNICATIONS:

Bring your writing, social media and techie skills to play, assisting the Director of Communications and our technology experts in describing the activities of the League to our members and the community. The new Communications Team, once established, will meet as needed, although members will be called on when opportunities and needs arise to get the League message out. Professional experience is not required, although strong skills in writing, drafting news releases and website content, social media strategizing and messaging, and use of simple technology tools will be most effective – and rewarding. Some training and assistance are available. This is a great way to experience the activities and outcomes this active League generates, and get acquainted with some of the people who are passionate about its mission. Contact Kathy Voigt: voigtkathy71@gmail.com

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, and INCLUSION:

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee of the League of Women Voters of Appleton set forth goals and an action plan to aid the League's work for the journey toward antiracism. The journey is recognized to include individual transformation as well as the transformation of League members and the wider community. It is a journey which will require learning through the eyes of the oppressed, recognition of historical injustices and our part in it, facing the truth of oppression (White

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Traction into Action, continued

Supremacy), and taking the initiative to break down systems of injustice. Contact Jeanne Roberts: jsbob@new.rr.com

FUNDRAISING:

Help plan fundraising campaigns. Work with the membership committee on relationship-building. Help with addressing and stuffing envelopes. Be an ambassador to the community, your friends, and family in educating people on the value of the League. October, February, and March mailing cycles. Contact Sue Hopfensperger: suehop57@gmail.com

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK:

Review criteria for the award. Seek nominations through mailings, social media, and personal contacts. Contact high school counselors for youth awards. Select recipient and conduct the award ceremony at the December meeting. Work starts in April or May. Meet 4-5 times. Contact Shirley Strange: shirleywstrange@gmail.com

MEMBERSHIP:

Team members assist Membership Director with recruitment and orientation of new members through one-on-one outreach or attending new member meetings. Members also assist in getting to know new members' interests and encouraging participation in the many League opportunities that aid in membership retention. Yearly membership renewal process needs help to contact members who have not renewed. Meetings are scheduled on a need basis. Contact Cindy Fallona: cbfallona@hotmail.com

PROGRAM:

Assist the Program Vice-President to plan and execute programming for the year. Determine topics, speakers, and venues, and help out at events as needed and you are able. This is a standing committee which meets in the spring to plan monthly programs from September through April. Additionally, the committee supports and guides the Study Group throughout their research and hosts the annual Lively Issues meeting. Contact Renee Gralewicz: reneegrlewicz@gmail.com

VOTER SERVICES:

Assist with voter registration. Help out at candidate forums. Work with the AASD student marketing team. Work from home computer to gather and create Vote411 information. Training is provided. This is a dual committee with one focused on voter registration and the other on voter education (forums, Vote411) and turnout. Meetings are usually held the fourth Monday of every month. Additional time commitments depend on projects and activities individuals choose to work on. This committee is more active around election cycles. Contact Persons Brian Post: 6615@sbcglobal.net and Jacqui Klimaszewski: JKlim@new.rr.com

WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY:

Committee determines the topic, speaker, date, refreshments, and venue. Help out at the program on August 26, Women's Equality Day. Meet in March, June, July, and August. The number of meetings vary. Contact Sue Silton: Susansilton@gmail.com

NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome
Gillian Buckardt
Brianna Connolly
Vanessa Sabee
All are from Appleton.

LWV BOOK (to) MARK

"The Untold Story of Women of Color in the League of Women Voters" by Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins explores ways in which these women have been marginalized and recognizes how their contributions will positively influence the organization as it moves into its next 100 years.