



MAY 2021



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Jeanne Roberts, President

This will be my last president's message as my four years as LWV Appleton president are ending at the Annual Meeting. I want to thank everyone who has helped to make the League the thriving organization that it is. I have had a great Board to work with every year and am very thankful for each Board member.

Every president has their own priorities that they bring to the position in a completely nonpartisan manner. My priority from the start was diversity, equity and inclusion – within our membership, with our collaborations, with our issues advocacy and with our voter registration and education efforts. I think our League has made much progress in this area but as with all journeys, we have a long way to go.

My time as president has helped me grow in many ways. My personal DEI journey has been a wonderful challenge and I look forward to continuing with this throughout my lifetime. Most importantly, I have learned from the League the importance of viewing issues through a nonpartisan lens focusing on positions rather than party or candidate affiliations.

We have a new Board and new co-presidents who are going to continue making the LWV of Appleton a great nonpartisan advocacy organization. Thank you all and I look forward to working with you in the future.

**Don't Miss Out! Celebrate the Past Year,
Help Shape Upcoming Activities**

Please register today to participate in the LWV Appleton
ANNUAL MEETING • This Saturday, May 15 • 9 to 11 a.m. • Socialize 8:45 to 9 a.m.

Vote on directives for upcoming League activities, celebrate the accomplishments
of the past year, and learn what lies ahead.
Click [here](#) to register!

Census, Redistricting: Awaiting New Maps

Due to the pandemic, census data which is normally released in April has been delayed. Until recently, it was not expected until late September which would make it impossible to complete the redistricting process in time for the election in the spring of 2022. That election would be conducted using the existing maps. However, this past week it was announced that the data will be released August 16.

The Wisconsin Counties Association is considering a proposal to speed up the redistricting process in order for the spring 2022 election to be conducted using new maps. The condensed plan would allow for less time for public input and hearings, however. The deadline for all county and municipal maps to be finalized would be December 1, the filing deadline for the February primary.

At a meeting of the Counties Association this week, it seemed as if counties were divided about how feasible this accelerated timeline would be, and also were concerned about the amount of transparency in the process. No final decision has been made.

This is the proposed new timeline:

August 31:	Preliminary census data is transmitted to counties
September 7:	Public hearing notice given
September 28:	Tentative county district plan adopted and sent to municipalities
October 24:	Municipal ward districts adopted
October 25:	Public hearing notice given
November 15:	Final county plan adopted
November 23:	Municipal clerks publish Type A notice for spring elections
December 1:	Filing deadline for February, 2022 primary

Bridge the Divide: Civic Health Project Review

By Brian Post – Director, Voter Registration LWV Appleton

Civil Discourse was a topic area identified at our Lively Issues session earlier this year. I've been a part of a loose network consisting of [National Institute for Civil Discourse](#) and various members of League of Women Voters from across the country for the past several years. Our network is advocating for those interested in learning about and participating in an effort to help bridge the divide in our country. If this is an area of interest for you, please read on and consider joining this event!

"Constructive engagement across political divides is a precondition for democracy. If we can't talk with each other, we can't govern ourselves as a nation – it's that simple."

This is the opening statement and the overriding premise of a white paper entitled *Depolarizing America: Promising Paths Forward*. In this study conducted by [Civic Health Project](#), the writing team outlines the destructive impact of our *affective polarization*. Affective polarization extends beyond simply holding different views from another person. It occurs when individuals develop strong negative views about the people who hold those views, thereby reducing any chance of dialogue between opposing groups. There are many groups working together as 'bridgers' to provide a path that brings those of different views together. And, we met one of the leaders Thursday.

On Thursday, April 15th, Kristin Hansen, Exec. Dir. of Civic Health Project, provided an overview of the [Civic Health Project](#), as well as her work with [America Talks](#), a June 12-13 weekend event kicking off the [National Week of Conversation](#) June 14-20.

Kristin outlined a powerful rationale – and a powerful process - for bringing people of differing views together. For our democracy is constructed with the understanding that we must listen, talk, respectfully challenge different ideas, and we must consider all sides to find common ground and elevate productive solutions. You can view [the recording here](#). And she left us with materials to share with you located in a [google folder here](#).

Programs Close Year, Lead into Summer

By Renee Gralewicz, Vice President, Programs

May has arrived and I hope that all is still well with you and your families. Our state and nations are coming out of this COVID-19 fog and preparing for another “new normal” life. I look forward to creating programs for the coming year that offer both in-person gatherings as well as virtual access. We do not want to presume that everyone will be willing or able to join indoor gatherings.

We will start a new Programs Committee at the end of May. The Committee will generate program ideas, help identify presenters, and other fun things I cannot yet imagine. If you have an interest in joining the committee, please email me: reneegrlewicz@gmail.com Even if you offered your name before, please send me another email as I am cleaning up old files and may have inadvertently deleted yours.

Here are reminders about upcoming programs:

Saturday, May 15th (9:00am – 11:00am) at the Annual Meeting we not only acknowledge our accomplishments, we vote on issues that will guide our future such as our budget and our new positions based on the Climate Change Preparedness and Resilience Study Team research.

Some day in June: The DEI committee is starting to formulate ideas for a program focused on Asian American and Pacific Islander historical experiences. We’re thinking of an in-person gathering perhaps with virtual access. Contact Renee (reneegrlewicz@gmail.com) if you want to help structure this event.

Thursday, August 26th (4:30pm Reception): Women’s Equality Day featuring Elaine Weiss, author of *The Woman’s Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote*. This event is sponsored by our local [19th Amendment Coalition](#): Her Voice Her Vote Our Victory. The event will be at UW Oshkosh – Fox Cities Campus. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

League Leaders Take Action in the Community



Brian Post manned a voter registration informational display in Houdini Plaza as part of Earth Day activities.

Land Acknowledgement Shows Respect, Understanding

By Jeanne Roberts, President

Over the past several months, the League of Women Voters of Appleton has begun most of our programming and candidate forums with a land acknowledgement. Prior to doing that, League members did their own research and spoke with some Native people to help us understand the purpose and importance of making these opening statements.

A land acknowledgement is a traditional custom that dates back centuries in many Native nations and communities. Today, land acknowledgments are used by Native Peoples and non-Natives to recognize Indigenous Peoples who are the original stewards of the lands on which we now live. In order to do a proper and respectful land acknowledgement, it is important to ask yourself why you are doing this. Is it because everyone else is? Is it out of personal or organizational guilt? Or is it because your organization is committed to serving the Indigenous community in ways that they believe are most helpful? What have we learned as a result of doing this land acknowledgement? Making a land acknowledgement should be motivated by genuine respect and support for Native Peoples and a genuine interest in knowing more. Speaking and hearing words of recognition is an important step in creating collaborative, accountable, continuous, and respectful relationships with Indigenous nations and communities.

When composing a land acknowledgement, it is important to remember that land acknowledgements do not exist in a past tense, or historical context: colonialism is a current ongoing process that needs to be recognized. Remember, Indigenous people are still here and they are thriving. We need to acknowledge both the trauma of the past and the survival of the present and future. We need to learn their histories and stories and then share them with others.

Finally, it is important to pair any land acknowledgement with a commitment to action. Are we as a League leaving Indigenous people in a stronger, more empowered place because of this land acknowledgement and how does our local League plan to take action to support Indigenous communities?

The League's understanding of land acknowledgements has evolved as all of our other DEI efforts will be evolving. This is new territory for our organization. As one League member recently stated, the more we know, the more we realize what we don't know. Joining the study team on understanding race in the Fox Valley may be a great way for any League member who wants to learn more.

Native American and Indigenous Initiatives: Land Acknowledgement, Northwestern University <https://www.northwestern.edu/native-american-and-indigenous-peoples/about/Land%20Acknowledgement.html>

Native Governance Center: Indigenous Land Acknowledgement <https://nativegov.org/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/>

Renee Gralewicz, VP Programs, top right, speaks to a gathering on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women at Lawrence University. Also attending were League President Jeanne Roberts, bottom left, with Renee and Andrea Lemke Rochon, who spoke on behalf of the family of Renee Elaine Tourtillott, whose murder has been unsolved since 1986.



Contact Representatives to Oppose Voter Suppression

A number of bills have been proposed in the Wisconsin Assembly and Senate that primarily address absentee voting, making it more difficult, and in some cases disenfranchising voters. There is also legislation to loosen restrictions on election observers which may lead to voter intimidation.

A LWV WI call to action was sent out to oppose all of this legislation. It will undoubtedly be vetoed by Governor Evers, but carries the wrong public message that Wisconsin elections are subject to fraud despite the fact that the bi-partisan Wisconsin Elections Commission has found no evidence to support that claim. If you haven't contacted your representatives asking them to oppose it, please do so.

- **Oppose SB 204**, which would require indefinitely confined voters to apply for an absentee ballot for each and every election they wish to vote in, and they would have to provide a picture of their photo ID with each request. This would be an unnecessary burden for voters.
- **Oppose SB 205**, which would require residential care facilities, such as nursing homes, to notify the relatives of occupants of the dates and times when special voting deputies (SVDs) will be visiting the facility. The bill also makes it a felony for an employee of these facilities to encourage an occupant to apply for an absentee ballot or vote. Charging people with a felony for making a good faith effort to encourage people to vote is extreme. This offensive legislation assumes the residents cannot make independent decisions.
- **Oppose SB 211**, which requires the Wisconsin Elections Commission (WEC) to create a very detailed absentee ballot application that is separate and distinct from the absentee ballot certificate envelope voters must already complete when they return their absentee ballots. This makes it more burdensome for voters to request an absentee ballot, and especially so for voters with disabilities.
- **Oppose AB 198 / SB 212**, which prohibits local clerks from making common-sense corrections on an absentee ballot certificate, such as completing a witness address. This would do nothing to help people vote, and it would result in the disqualification of many legitimate ballots.
- **Oppose SB 210 / AB 170**, which would allow observers to be within 3 feet of the poll workers who are assisting with voter registration or voter check-in at the polls. As an organization that advocates for voters and also places trained observers in the polls, we believe having observers this close fails to protect a voter's confidential documents and could be intimidating for some voters and poll workers.

Data Provides Insight on Successful Candidate Forums

By Jacqueline Klimaszewsk, Director, Voter Education & Turnout

LWV Appleton conducted eight Candidate Forums this March:

- Appleton City Council Districts 1, 3, 5, 11, 13 and 15
- Appleton Area School District Board
- Calumet County Circuit Court Branch 2

For the first time these were all done virtually through Zoom and streamed on Facebook. We were also able to record these to YouTube and make them available for access from our webpage (as well as VOTE411). While we needed to do these virtually because of the pandemic, our post evaluation of how things went revealed there were some upsides that we should consider when we plan these for next spring.

First, we must thank the technicians, Dave Strange and Barb Kelly. They were critical to the efficient running of the forums. Procedures were developed and refined down to the last detail to make these sessions run smoothly.

We also were able to collect data on participation. In the previous, in-person format we would count the number of attendees. We also combined City Council Districts for efficiency in scheduling the date and location. This year we were able to focus on the two candidates a district at a time and publicize that to the voters in the district.

The data we collected this year included those who attended the session in real time, the number on Facebook and the YouTube views. In analyzing this information, the Voter Services Team feels that we have, indeed, reached more voters in the virtual format (data is available in the Voter Services Report in the Annual Meeting packet). Therefore, we will be looking at keeping aspects of the virtual format as we plan future forums.

Fair Maps Documentary Draws Wide Audience

By Linda Bjella, Vice President, Action

As part of the LWV US initiative, our League sponsored a screening of the documentary “Can You Hear Us Now” which focused on gerrymandering in Wisconsin as told through the stories of two women running for the Assembly in 2018. The film also featured interviews with grassroots activists who are working for fair maps.

We were able to generate a lot of publicity for this event. It was listed on the LWV US website and promoted by the Wisconsin Fair Maps Coalition also. As a result, there were 208 people from all over the state who signed up to view the film, and we had 71 participants on the virtual webinar we held on April 29. The event also was streamed on our League’s Facebook page, and the recording was made available on our website.

The webinar was a panel discussion that included Susan Peters and Jim Cricchi, the two filmmakers, Penny Bernard Schaber, former Assembly Representative from Appleton, former State Senator Dave Hansen from Green Bay, Tony Phillips from the People’s Maps Commission, and Sheila Plotkin, an activist who maintains the website “We, the Irrelevant”. This website documents the number of contacts legislators have received opposing or supporting specific pieces of legislation.

The eye-opening statistics on Fox Valley legislators were shared on this chart which shows that 99-100% of constituents opposed legislation, yet most of our representatives voted in favor of most of these bills.

4-YEAR TOTALS: FOX VALLEY DISTRICTS					
DISTRICT	OFFICIAL	CONTACTS OPPOSED	CONTACTS IN FAVOR	% OPPOSED	OFFICIAL VOTED YES
SD 2	COWLES	23,428	63	100%	15 of 19
AD 4	STEFFEN	404	54	88%	19 of 19
AD 5	STEINEKE	489	11	98%	19 of 19
AD 6	TAUCHEN	232	81	74%	19 of 19
TOTALS		24,553	209	99%	
SD 19	ROTH	54,558	165	100%	16 of 19
AD 55	ROHRKASTE	31,816	18	100%	19 of 19
AD 56	MURPHY	604	24	96%	19 of 19
AD 57	STUCK	156	39	80%	0 of 19
TOTALS		87,134	246	100%	

demanded \$139.45 for records on gun control