



JUNE 2021



PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE



**By Linda Bjella & Marti Hemwall, Co-Presidents
League of Women Voters-Appleton**

This newsletter marks the beginning of our League's first co-presidency. We thought that we would write this message together to describe our vision and hopes for League of Women Voters of Appleton.

All of our members work hard to strengthen our democracy and make our own community a better place for everyone. Our demand for excellence, however, can make our responsibilities to League seem overwhelming. A few years ago, the Nominating Committee called almost every member of the League to ask each person to serve in some official capacity or another. The overwhelming response was - "I wish I could but I can't possibly do what's expected or do as good a job as Board members do." This experience suggests to us that the League needs to rethink how we do our work.

As our League works toward being more inclusive, we need to think about making our structure and leadership more decentralized. We agreed to be co-presidents because we believe that working as a team will make us more effective. In this spirit we will share responsibilities, including taking turns writing the Presidents' Message in the newsletter.

And as we examine our board and committee structure, we will begin with the assumption that the League should become an organization of active members. The League began to move in this direction in recent years, developing more committees and subgroups to help board members who were carrying almost all the load. More members now realize that each person can do something – whether big or small – to help.

We encourage all of us to do our part to make the League effective by volunteering for a realistic task. What a difference it would make! Whether licking envelopes once in a while, observing an occasional public meeting, helping with the League's registration or informational booths, sitting on a committee, overseeing a piece of our social media, participating in a study – the list goes on and on. Small tasks to big tasks are easier when we all are involved.

As our moms used to say "Many hands make light work". Please consider what you would like to do. We will be in touch!

2021 Board Aligns Under New Co-Presidents

Our Board of Directors is in place following the Annual Meeting in May, and most of the names likely will sound familiar to members.

Heartfelt thanks and appreciation go out to Jeanne Roberts, who led the organization through uncharted times due to Covid-19 and a whirlwind political year to wrap up not only her four years as president, but also the celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment and the League's 100-year anniversary. Jeanne has already stepped up to take on the role of Director of DEI, so her respite was short-lived!

We'd also like to acknowledge and thank everyone who served on committees and at events during the past year. Your efforts help our League stay true to its mission of empowering voters and defending democracy, and helped us grow to add a new dimension equally as important – diversity, equity and inclusion. Thank you all.

When you see these Board members at events, please introduce yourself to them.



**Linda Bjella
Co-President**



**Marti Hemwall
Co-President**



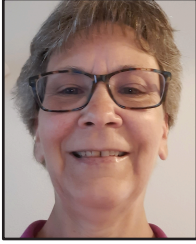
**Jan Quinlan
VP Action**



**Renee
Gralewicz
VP Programs**



**Diane Putzer
Treasurer**



**Julie Evers
Secretary**



**Cindy Fallona
Director
Membership**



**Jacqui
Klimaszewski
Dir. Voter
Education/
Turnout**



**Brian Post
Dir. Voter
Registration**



**Kathy Voigt
Dir.
Communication/
Technology**



**Jeanne Roberts
Director DEI**

Broaden Your Understanding on DEI Study

By Renee Gralewicz, VP Programs

Greetings and salutations. I'm still new at this LWV Program gig and need your assistance.

The new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) issue Study Group needs to be formulated. Once we have a group of interested people together, they/we can better define the scope of the 2021 – 2022 study. If you are interested in being part of the research team, please email me:

reneeagralewicz@gmail.com



YOUR CALENDAR for our educational programs

Once the Program Committee meets, we'll have more details about the year's educational programs. In the meantime, mark these dates on your calendar:

- September 13, 2021
- October 18, 2021
- November 15, 2021
- December 11, 2021
- January 15, 2022 (Saturday) – Lively Issues
- February 21, 2022
- March 21, 2022
- April 18, 2022
- May 21, 2022 (Saturday) – Annual Meeting

Women's Equality Day

Thursday, August 26, 2021
4:30 p.m. Opening Reception

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.

Welcome Our New Members!

By Cindy Fallona, Director of Membership

A strong vibrant membership is what enables the LWV Appleton to fulfill our mission of **Defending Democracy/Empowering Voters**. We have three new members joining us to do just that.

Rick Bjella • Lisa Nitecki • Emily Tseffos

Our new members live in Appleton. Please join me in welcoming them to the League. Hopefully in the near future all members will be able to join together face to face and you can welcome all our new members in person.

The Membership committee is planning for summer socials so that continuing, new and potential members can gather to learn what the League has in store for the upcoming year. Look for updates on days and times for the summer socials.

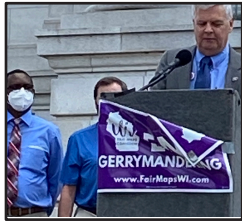
Fair Maps Rally Introduces Nonpartisan Legislation

By Linda Bjella

I attended the rally on May 17 at the State Capitol in Madison. At this event, State Senator Jeff Smith (D-Brunswick) and Assembly Representative Deb Andraca (D-Whitefish Bay) unveiled the bill they will introduce. This bill will create a process for nonpartisan redistricting. It hasn't yet been formally introduced, but at this time, there are two Republican co-sponsors for this legislation which will empower the nonpartisan Legislative Reference Bureau to draw legislative maps that will then be submitted to the legislature for approval. When this legislation was introduced in the last legislative session, there were five Republican co-sponsors.



Rep. Deb Andraca



Sen. Jeff Smith

About 200 people attended the rally on a sunny and beautiful spring day. In addition to Sen. Smith and Rep. Andraca, LWV WI Executive Director Debra Cronmiller was among the speakers at this event, along with Matt Rothchild of the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, Devin Anderson from the African-American Roundtable, and Sachin Chedda, who chairs the Wisconsin Fair Maps Coalition.

The People's Maps Commission is in the process of soliciting Community of Interest maps from citizens. These COI's will help the PMC to identify which geographic areas should be kept intact within legislative districts. I organized a meeting with Maiyoua Thao and Christina Thor representing the Fox Valley Hmong community, and Tony Phillips, who serves on the PMC.

Penny Bernard Schaber also attended this Zoom meeting. We explained the redistricting process and how the local Hmong community might be involved in submitting a COI. We also provided them with contacts for the Milwaukee Hmong community which is involved with this process.

I have ordered some materials from LWV WI that we can use to advocate for fair maps locally. These include Spanish language brochures, bumper magnets, and yard signs. Contact me through the League email, league.appleton@yahoo.com if you are interested in any of these materials, and I'll get them to you.

Civil Discourse: Help Bridge the Divide

By Brian Post, Director Voter Registration

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](#).

Member Spotlight on Marti Hemwall

Marti Hemwall, Co-President

When I was a young mom and in graduate school in Providence, Rhode Island, a woman I knew from local politics approached me about joining the local League. She thought I would appreciate the objective and systematic approach to taking positions on issues. I felt overwhelmed at that time and said “Someday.” That Someday came in 1983 when I moved back to Appleton and explored all the women’s organizations. The League of Women Voters offered me the breadth I was seeking. The members were smart, thoughtful but still took action, and worked hard to engage everyone in the community. I find this still to be true today.



As I juggled two children (I am proud that both Maren and Emily, now grown, work in Fox Valley nonprofits today), co-parenting with my husband (John Peterson/ Peterson, Berk and Cross) who had a busy law practice, a demanding job at Lawrence University, and my political involvement, I was more active in some of the past 38 years than others. Nevertheless, I benefit from all I learn from study committees, discussions, informational sessions, and individual members. The League helps me better understand my community and even encouraged me when I ran and served on the School Board.

Like other League members, I continue to juggle many interests even in retirement. I am an avid reader and hiker, and I love to travel. Spending time with my family, including our 16-year-old granddaughter, is a priority.

The League’s important demand for excellence can seem overwhelming as we juggle life’s many responsibilities. Over the years, I have given quite a bit of thought to how League might better take advantage of our members’ considerable skills by spreading out responsibilities among all of us. I was excited to accept the co-presidency with my friend, Linda Bjella, who shares the same priorities. Recent events have highlighted the League’s need to be even more inclusive while making our democracy as strong as possible. We stand on the strong shoulders of many women and I look forward to seeing what we can all accomplish together. It will be a privilege to work with all of you.

Member Spotlight on Linda Bjella



By Linda Bjella, Co-President

I joined the League in the bicentennial year of 1976 in Ripon, Wisconsin, the birthplace of LWV founder Carrie Chapman Catt. At the time, I was working as a reporter for the local newspaper. Everywhere I went, the most interesting and impressive women I met had one thing in common: they all belonged to the Ripon LWV. The following year, we moved to Iowa. Once again, I found a group of accomplished women in the Cedar Rapids LWV. I served on the board there, in charge of voter service. I remember also working to pass the ERA and the DC Amendment back then, two goals we STILL have yet to realize.

In the early 80’s we moved to Appleton when my husband, Rick, began his 25-year stint as choral director at Lawrence. The first thing I did after unpacking boxes was join the League. Back then, I was a stay-at-home mom with three young kids, and the League was my lifeline to sanity. I signed up for a study committee and then served on the board. Barbara Grant was

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Linda Bjella Spotlight, continued

president and we feel sure that our toddlers, Allison and Eric, played together during our board meetings. Allison is now my daughter-in-law.

Once all three of our children were in school, I resumed my career as a French teacher in Appleton and then for a few years in Texas after Rick threw me a curve ball and accepted a job at Texas Tech. During my full-time working years, volunteer time was nonexistent, so I watched from the sidelines as others carried the LWV torch forward, always knowing that I would return someday.







I retired from teaching in 2016, anxious to spend more time with family which now includes five grandchildren scattered between Madison; Fort Collins, CO, and New Orleans. But League was also a high priority, so I joined the Appleton League once again in 2017, and was amazed to see how it has flourished. This is the strongest League I've been a part of. It is blessed with an extraordinary number of talented, knowledgeable, and dedicated members. It has been my privilege to serve for the past two years as Action vice-president, and I am humbled and honored to now take on the role as co-president with my friend, Marti Hemwall. It takes two of us to carry forward the incredible work that has been done for the past four years by Jeanne Roberts.

I always tell people that joining the League is like signing up for a life-long graduate course in civics. I can't begin to measure how much I have learned from being a member of this century-old, highly respected organization which has woven itself throughout my adult life. To me, there is no better place to learn about public policy and become an engaged citizen. I look forward to all that I will learn in the next two years, working with an incredibly strong board and an engaged membership.



Need a unique gift idea for that special person? Graduation? Birthday? Retirement? New to the area? Congratulations?

The answer is easy – give a membership to the LWV Appleton. You not only provide access to the Appleton organization, but to the State of Wisconsin and the National LWV. Simply go to lwvappleton.org and sign up that person. It is the gift that keeps on giving!

2020 ELECTION IMPACT  	
PROTECTED OVER  25 MILLION VOTERS <i>in 70+ lawsuits</i>	PROPORCIONÓ A 2.2 MILLONES DE PERSONAS  <i>herramientas de votación en español</i>
EDUCATED OVER  6 MILLION VOTERS <i>on VOTE411.ORG</i>	SUPPORTED  233,000 PEOPLE <i>in registering to vote</i>
<small>Data was collected from over 500 Leagues in an internal survey conducted following the 2020 election.</small>	