



JUNE 2022

Co-Presidents' Message: A Look Back; A Look Ahead



By Co-Presidents Linda Bjella and Marti Hemwall

LOOKING BACK

As we reflect on our first year as co-presidents, this is what we see.

- The League has pledged to bring **diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)** into everything it does. So, what did that mean for us?



Inclusivity led us to change our name to LWV of Appleton-Fox Cities. More than 40% of our members don't live in the City of Appleton, so we are working to expand our Observer Corps and advocacy into our greater community. We are now more accessible to the public through our redesigned Club Express website and increased use of social media to reach out to younger people. And we have a new office — a physical space where we can hold meetings and maintain a welcoming presence in downtown Appleton.

We brought a **DEI focus** to much of our programming and relied on Zoom to make our programs more accessible. We are completing the first year of a comprehensive local study on health equity. While we have a dedicated DEI board position and team, we view this as a means of bringing a “consciousness of equity” to all of our work rather than compartmentalizing it into one committee.

- We established **tiered levels of membership**. Dues range from \$0 for an “open door” membership up to \$150 per year for a sustaining membership, allowing people to choose the amount that is comfortable for them. We are proud that there is **no financial barrier** to becoming a member of our League. Our membership is growing and our finances are sound. Many new members cite our emphasis on DEI as a primary motivation for joining.
- **Voter Services** had to reinvent itself due to the pandemic, but this also resulted in **more inclusive** and easily accessible information. This team developed “**how-to videos**” featuring diverse voices to help people register to vote, and request and complete absentee ballots. Some of these were in multiple languages. They also created **contactless voting information** using a QR code on small cards that link to the myvote.wi.gov website. This spring, Voter Services provided 13 **recorded interviews or candidate forums as well as Vote 411 information** through our website. This team actively works to **reach out to younger voters** at local high schools and colleges and makes sure to have tables at events such as Juneteenth, Latinofest, and Hmong New Year.

Continued on page 2

Where We've Been, Where We're Headed, continued

- The **Swag Team** developed **Vote buttons** with the help of representatives from **diverse communities, including the** tribes of Wisconsin, Latinex, Hmong, LGBTQ+, and youth. These buttons, along with informational explanations, will be widely distributed as the campaign season heats up.

- We created an **Executive Action Team** which brings **public policy leaders** in our community together. Because of their diverse interests, they are able to keep their fingers on the pulse of **“hot topics”** and **respond quickly** with action alerts when needed. This also provides a means to **network more closely** with other local groups whose policies align with ours. The Action Team tracks **ARPA fund use**, works on the **Fair Maps** campaign, and has been supportive of **mask mandates** and the new **climate task force** in Appleton. We sponsor regular **Legislative Town Halls** with Fox Cities state representatives and senators during the periods when the legislature is in session.

Thanks to the hard work and vision of our incredible board members and their teams, it has been an exciting year for the League of Women Voters of Appleton-Fox Cities!

LOOKING FORWARD

Looking ahead to our final year as co-presidents, this is the vision we have for our League.

- We see our League continuing to **grow** and become even **more dynamic and influential** in the Fox Cities region. We will be **more visible** with our new office and our swag **“showing our pride”** wherever we go.

- We see our **membership** becoming **younger and more diverse**. Whom do you know who you could invite to become a part of our League? Are they younger working people? Parents with small children? College students? People from minority communities? Even if they don't have a lot of time to give, they will benefit from gaining access to the incredible amount of **trustworthy information** the League provides its members, and our League will become stronger through members with **diverse points of view**. Ask them to join us!

- We see **leadership** becoming more **de-centralized** with **strong teams** steering the future direction of our organization. This means an **all-hands-on-deck** approach in this era of extreme challenge to our democracy. **All of our members** must ask themselves **how they can get involved** — even in a small, limited way. There is critically important work to be done. Our board of 10, although incredibly competent and dedicated, cannot do this work alone. Without **more involvement** from more of our members, some things just won't happen.

- We plan to take a **more aggressive approach** to putting our League on a more **sustainable financial foundation**. This will mean asking for consistent annual **support from our members** and going to other sources in the community where we find those who **share our values and mission**.

So, what is our mission? This is how we see it:

Empower voters and defend democracy: This is what we stand for.

Voter services, voter education, and advocacy: This is what we do.

Nonpartisanship and diversity, equity, and inclusion: These are our core values.

Our **nonpartisan status** and our **reasoned approach to advocacy**, grounded in our **comprehensive and well-researched positions**, are what have given us **credibility and respect** for over a century. This is something that we must **safeguard** at all times or we will lose our relevance.

But fully embracing **diversity, equity, and inclusion** is equally crucial to our **future relevance**.

Now in the early years of the 21st century, we are an organization that is primarily white, female, older, and upper income whose founders left us an uncomfortable history of excluding others. We **must seek to change** this. We must continue to reinvent ourselves, **welcoming the** next generation of diverse League leaders so we can be a powerful force for inclusive democracy in our next century of existence.

ACTION: Is ‘Final Five Voting’ a Solution?

By Jan Quinlan, Action Vice-President

It is a gigantic problem: Congress’ disapproval rating is 90%. Polarization is our new norm. Little to nothing gets done for voters. It feels like our democracy is dying.

Why? Candidates often start out promising to be problem-solvers, trying to find solutions to the political gridlock. Unfortunately, consensus solutions don’t work if you want to get re-elected. The most engaged voters of political parties (those 10% who vote in primaries) determine who proceeds to the general election. Add this to gerrymandered districts, and you end up with pre-ordained candidates selected by a minority of voters. Consensus-seeking candidates are actually penalized for finding common ground. The unhappy result: overwhelmingly popular political ideas such as gun safety are left in the dust.

Final Five Voting seeks to change the equation. On May 10, 2022, in a facilitated discussion held at Lawrence University, Representatives Lee Snodgrass (D-Appleton) and Ron Tusler (R-Harrison) discussed a proposal for Wisconsin on which they, yes, agree: Final Five Voting.

Katherine Gehl, co-founder of [Democracy Found](#), a Wisconsin-based initiative committed to revitalizing democracy, says “Our political problems aren’t attributable to a single cause, but to a failure of political competition. This is a systems problem -- requiring systems change.”

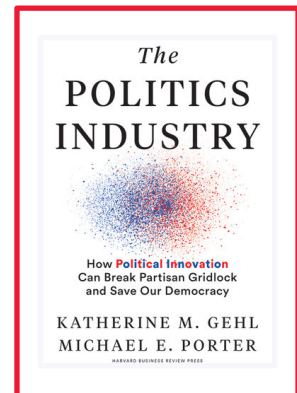
Final Five Voting (FFV) works differently in two critical ways. No longer will you vote in a Republican or a Democratic primary. Instead, voters will cast their ballots in one nonpartisan primary in which up to five candidates proceed to the general election. Then, in the general election, voters are able to rank these “final five” in order of preference using ranked-choice voting. A general election candidate must receive at least 50% of the vote to be declared the winner.

In Wisconsin, Senators Dale Kooyenga (R-Brookfield) and Daniel Reimer (D-Milwaukee) wrote a [May 2020 Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel](#) opinion article explaining why they support Final Five Voting. In April 2021, bi-partisan bill AB244/SB250 was introduced in the WI legislature backed by a coalition of civic and business leaders. Representative Snodgrass was added as a co-author in October. Currently, the bill has not received a hearing.

During the May 10 discussion, Representative Tusler said he supports the idea because “lobbying groups can stand in the way of good ideas” and he believes FFV “incentivizes change for the common good.” Representative Snodgrass said FFV would allow us to “get beyond gerrymandering” though a multi-pronged approach is what ultimately will be needed. “Powerful and achievable” were the words Sylvie Doppelt, managing director of the [Institute for Political Innovation](#), used to describe FFV that evening.

Alaska has already passed a ballot referendum measure while Maine and California have instituted some ranked-voting ballots. “Achievable” because we could see a real difference in Congress with only a handful of states making change.

If these ideas for reducing political polarization intrigue you, I highly recommend reading [The Politics Industry: How Political Innovation Can Break Partisan Gridlock and Save Our Democracy](#) by Katherine Gehl and Michael Porter.



Welcome to Our New Members!
Natasha Banks and Vaya Jones of Appleton, and
Kayleen Trinkner of Little Chute

VOTER SERVICES: We're Back to In-Person Outreach!

By Jacqui Klimaszewski
Director, Voter Education/Turnout
Voter Registration Assistance

The biggest news is that we are once again doing face-to-face voter registration assistance and voter information events. We attended the Long Chen Marketplace Community event on June 5 and are planning to be at Juneteenth on June 12 from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. in Jones Park. Help is needed, especially for canopy pickup and set up.

We are also working on planning for at least two Farmer Market sessions this summer. Please contact me at voterservice@lwwappletonfoxcities.org with any other events that you may know of that would like a voter registration assistance table. If you are new to voter registration, just let me know and we will set up a training session.

Other exciting news is that we have an iPad as part of a Bright Idea grant from the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region. The grant was awarded to the 19th Amendment Centennial Collaboration to help expand voter registration and information to all of our diverse communities. *And*, we have a hotspot! This means we will be able to log in to <http://myvote.wi.gov/> in any location in the Fox Cities!

Voter Registration Reminder Project - Beyond Starbucks:

Voter Services Team members have identified several businesses/organizations as potential sites, provided an estimate of materials needed, and committed to delivering materials to the businesses. We are having materials printed and will start distributing them over the summer.

VOTE411

For VOTE 411, we are focusing on developing a network for local municipalities. Appleton, Grand Chute and Kaukauna are covered, but there are 30 other municipalities in the Fox Cities. We want a point person for each municipality who would be willing to contact the municipal clerk to get names/contact information for candidates, and assist with setting up a list of 4 to 5 questions for the race to include current hot issues for the area.

Doing this for one or two municipalities takes very little time—however, doing all 33 municipalities is very time-consuming. If this is something you would be willing to do, please contact me at voterservice@lwwappletonfoxcities.org. I will be happy to walk you through the very simple process of how to do this. Any help would be appreciated.

DEI: Programs, Community Events Welcome You

By April Savage, DEI Director

Summer is here. And so are the opportunities to get involved with DEI! Here are some upcoming events:

- **June 12th: Juneteenth Celebration**, Appleton Jones Park from 12 pm-6pm (canopy and voter registration table will be set up)
- **June 18th: Appleton's 2nd Annual Pride**, Appleton Jones Park from 2pm- 7pm
- **July 10th: Building Unity Event**, Appleton City Park (promoting Peace, Environmental Justice, Democracy; sponsored by WISDOM, WI Network on Peace & Justice)

Additionally, the DEI Committee is planning on holding a program to explore underground racism, micro aggressions in the classroom, and Hmong youth experience in Appleton. More details to come.

There are many ways to get involved. In addition to some early stage ideas proposed for book discussions and activities, we will also tackle coordinating and collaborating with our state, national, and other DEI-focused local organizations. This will require relationship building. Most importantly, we need dedicated critical thought to ensure we are applying a DEI lens to our website, resources, and approach. If you are interested or have any questions /comments, please contact: dei@lwwappletonfoxcities.org

Much Accomplished at Annual Meeting

By Marti Hemwall, Co-President

Our meeting began with a fun social hour. We were all so happy to talk to everyone after two years of virtual meetings! During the social hour we also were introduced to our new SWAG items. It was so exciting. Sue Hopfensperger and her Swag committee had many items to sell - t-shirts, hoodies, mugs, phone holders. They also had produced Vote buttons representing all our diverse communities and interests - all 12 tribal groups, LGBTQ, youth, environmental \. These items will be for sale through our new online store soon to be launched!

After dinner, we had a jam-packed meeting. Marti and Linda reviewed the year's accomplishments. A quick summary:

- new name, new website, new office, new swag.
- better outreach thanks to our DEI Committee,
- new ways of reaching voters through Voter Services,
- an effective Executive Committee for Advocacy and Action,
- growing membership.

We are getting better press coverage and have a better online presence because we have a communications director on the board, and we have help from Coalesce Marketing with our website. We will now be able to offer hybrid meetings more often as a result of what we learned during Covid. Our financial situation is stable, thanks to generous donors and being more systematic in seeking donations.

At the meeting we also approved the second year of the DEI Study, and voted for the Nominated slate for the board which included new board member April Savage, taking the place of Jeanne Roberts. Our bylaw changes were discussed and approved, including discussion of how contracts are signed, changes in board terms, a new process of budget review.

Stay tuned for in-depth articles in the next newsletter which will more fully describe these positive changes.

MEMBERSHIP: Come On Out for a Picnic

By Cindy Falona, Membership Director

Show Your Spirit

The debut of our League's "Show Your Spirit!" merchandise — swag, if you will — was met with excitement and enthusiasm at our annual meeting in May. Various apparel items, cell phone stands, bookmarks, key rings, and a host of buttons honoring the League's mission as well as the many cultures and indigenous people of our area drew great interest, and we made our first sales! You'll be hearing more about this League-supporting project, especially once our online store is up and running smoothly.

Let's Picnic!

Are you new to the League, a veteran member or considering becoming a member? Well then, join us on Wednesday, July 13th, at 5 p.m. at 1000 Islands Environmental Center in Kaukauna. The League will provide hamburgers, hotdogs and drinks. We ask that you bring a dish to pass.

1000 Islands is a fabulous place to be on a summer evening. We'll plan to gather in the outdoor pavilion. In case of "liquid sunshine," we'll have access to the main building. You can enjoy visiting with League friends, walk along the river trail, check out the nature exhibits in the environmental center, maybe even spot an eagle! Displays of League volunteer opportunities will be out for your perusal.

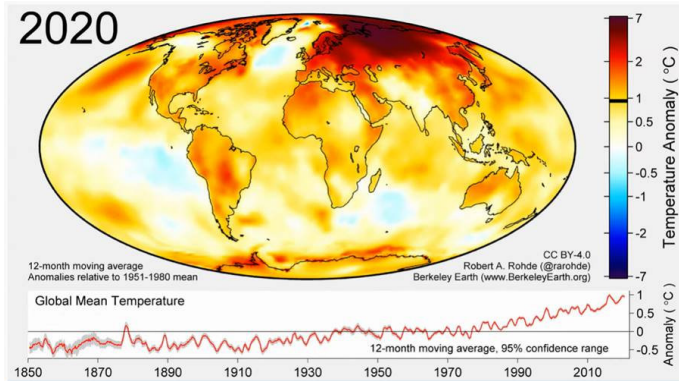
Come — and bring a friend. [Register](#) today! For Membership information, contact Cindy Falona at membership@lwwappletonfoxcities.org

CLIMATE: Inter-League Update on New Science, Strategies

By Ligia Rivera, Climate Resilience Team Co-Facilitator

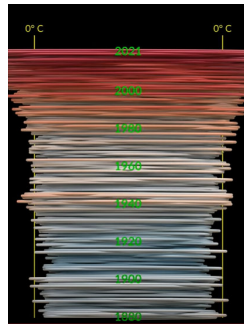
Our League is a member of the LWV Lake Michigan Region (LWV-LMR), an Inter-League Organization with more than 50 local Leagues of Women Voters and four states within the Lake Michigan watershed and regional planning areas. It's mission is to protect Lake Michigan and its watersheds. It also addresses policy and Environmental Justice issues, so vital to the health and well-

being of all residents in the region. Their efforts are relevant to us because the Lower Fox River watershed is one of 33 watersheds that flow into Lake Michigan. Most of our drinking water comes from surface water in this watershed.



The LWV-LMR sponsored a Climate Change (CC) Expert Panel on April 16 to discuss recent developments in CC science and the future of CC strategy. The panelists included: **Tom Skilling**, Chief Meteorologist for WGN-TV; **Donald J. Wuebbles**, PhD, Professor of Atmospheric Science at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana and Nobel Laureate, and **Seth Darling**, Chief Science & Technology Officer for Energy at Argonne National Laboratory.

Skilling grounded us on what is “climate,” which refers to the long-term regional or global average of temperature, humidity and rainfall patterns over years and decades. To help combat misinformation he provided science-based credible sources that can help us to speak with others about CC. Websites and YouTube videos from NASA and NOAA have excellent visualizations that are easier to understand and demonstrate the impact across regions globally.



Wuebbles said that climate is changing ten times faster than normal natural cycles. This is due to human activities such as burning fossil fuels. Minimizing human suffering can only be achieved by doing a lot of mitigation and proactive adaptation to increase resilience. To achieve the international target of not exceeding a 2°C temperature increase, we need to get to Net Zero Emissions by 2050. This will require fast transition to renewable energy sources, policy changes and incentive solutions. He encouraged everyone to maintain a sense of hope. We can make a difference as individuals: speak up!, contact government officials, be an informed voter, be a role model by conserving energy and water, use renewable energy, etc.

Darling provided encouraging information regarding renewable energy innovative solutions. The 2022 global energy demand is 18.5 TW (terawatt is equal to one trillion watts) and forecasted to be 31 TW by 2050. To meet the target of Net Zero Emissions we will need renewable energy producing more than 20 TW. He made the case for a combination of solar plus storage (options beyond batteries such as compressed air, hydroelectric, etc.). He dispelled the myth that solar would take too much land. In a scenario where only 2% of the global land is used, 67 TW of energy could be produced. He mentioned that wind energy is the next best technology, being as cheap as solar and estimated to produce 10 TW by 2050.

Personally, I am pleased to say that we are doing our part, having installed a solar plus battery system last summer.