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JANUARY 2023

Co-Presidents' Message: Democracy Is Uphill Battle



A recent article in the *Post-Crescent* looked back at the November, 2022 midterm election. It was mostly good news for democracy: there was high voter turnout which included many younger first-time voters. Wisconsin and Michigan were among the highest turnout states. Wisconsin's turnout was 60.2%, while Michigan's was 59.3%



But something happened in Michigan in 2018 that allowed the results to more accurately reflect the will of the voters. In that year, voters were successful in getting a referendum on the statewide ballot to allow for the creation of a nonpartisan redistricting commission. As a result, when redistricting took place after the 2020 census in Michigan, the maps could no longer be gerrymandered.

In Wisconsin, there have been many referendums and resolutions calling for a nonpartisan redistricting process in most of the counties and many municipalities, making it clear that 80% of our citizens oppose gerrymandering. But there is a crucial difference between the Michigan and Wisconsin referendum process. The Michigan Constitution allows for citizen-initiated *binding* referendums. The Wisconsin Constitution only allows *advisory* referendums. So, Wisconsin legislators were free to ignore the clear will of the voters when redistricting took place, and they produced maps which were even more skewed than the gerrymandered maps created in 2011.

Those who study gerrymandering often talk about the "efficiency gap". This only applies to elections of state legislators or Congressional districts, not statewide elections. The efficiency gap represents the percentage of votes that are "wasted" because those voters have been drawn into districts where they will never be able to overcome the votes of the other party. The 2011 maps resulted in an 11% efficiency gap. The current maps are estimated to have a 17% efficiency gap. What might have happened to the Wisconsin legislative and Congressional elections in 2022 if an additional 17% of the vote had gone a different way?

There were other differences between Wisconsin and Michigan that the *Post-Crescent* article pointed out. It is harder to vote in Wisconsin. Michigan automatically enrolls voters when they get a driver's license and has no voter ID law. It was also noted that students in Michigan public schools are required to have three years of civics education while Wisconsin only requires one year. (Michigan earned a grade of "B" for its civics education while Wisconsin earned an "F"!)

Clearly, the biggest hurdle to a more democratic (NOT necessarily Democratic) Wisconsin is to overcome the stranglehold that gerrymandering has on our legislature. There is hope on the horizon, however. We do NOT have to live with these unfair maps for the next decade, BUT it will depend on

Continued on page 2

PRESIDENTS: Uphill Battle, continued

the ability of Wisconsin voters to elect a new justice to our Supreme Court in the spring election who will agree to relitigate the redistricting case that was so hastily decided prior to the November, 2022 election.

We learned through our two excellent meetings on Wisconsin courts last fall how crucial judicial elections are. There are four declared candidates for the Wisconsin Supreme Court to fill the open seat left by retiring Justice Patience Roggensack. [Jennifer Dorrow](#) from the Waukesha County Circuit Court, former Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice [Daniel Kelly](#), who ran unsuccessfully for re-election against Justice Jill Karofsky in 2020, [Everett Mitchell](#) from the Dane County Circuit Court, and [Janet Protasiewicz](#) from the Milwaukee County Circuit Court. It is important to research which candidates might be open to revisiting the redistricting case. First there will be a primary on February 21. Because the spring election is nonpartisan, the four candidates will face off against each other. This could result in two conservative-leaning or two liberal-leaning candidates advancing to the general election on April 4. It will all depend on voter turnout. The good news is that this is a statewide election, so gerrymandered districts won't influence the results.

And don't forget about elections in your county and municipality this spring. Our League will be hard at work to bring candidate information to the voters.

The League of Women Voters in Wisconsin and in the Fox Cities clearly has its work cut out for it to make democracy work in 2023. We hope you will find a way to help with that important work!

— *Linda and Marti*

ACTION: League Exercises Its Voice

By Jan Quinlan, Action Vice President

action@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

The League of Women Voters Appleton-Fox Cities is planning our next virtual Legislative Town Hall for Monday, February 6 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. Again, we have invited our three area state Senators — Jacque, Cowles, and Cabral-Guevara — and our five area Representatives — Snodgrass, Murphy, Tusler, Goeben, and Gustafson — to share their legislative priorities with their constituents at the opening of this session.

Our elected representatives will respond to prepared questions and to audience questions, so make your plans to join us that evening. Get to know your legislators and learn where they stand on issues important to you. Look for registration later in January. The event will be held by Zoom and live streaming on our Facebook page.

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Imbalance of Power:
How Shifts in State Government Undermine Wisconsin's Conservation Legacy

January 10, 2023
6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Register at:
https://us02web.zoom.us/join/register/WN_xVJmaucR_mBoVGcUPuEfw

Presented by:

-  **Fred Clark**
WGF Executive Director
-  **Paul Heinen**
WGF Legislative Liaison
-  **Mark Thimke**
Environmental Attorney

Scan to Register!

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WISCONSIN

Sponsored by the following local WLV Leagues: Appleton-Fox Cities, Ashland and Bayfield Counties, Beloit, Dane County, Door County, Greater Chippewa Valley, Greater Green Bay, Janesville, La Crosse Area, Milwaukee County, Manitowoc County, Northwoods, Ozaukee County, Ripon Area, Stevens Point Area, Whitewater Area, Winnebago County, Wisconsin Rapids Area

LIVELY ISSUES: Your Concerns Help Inform Study, Programs

By Renee Gralewicz, Program Vice President
program@lwwappletonfoxcities.org

Each year, the League of Women Voters of Appleton-Fox Cities conducts **Lively Issues**, a roundtable conversation in which participants, both members and non-members, call out community issues of concern or interest to them. Based on this discussion, our members vote to prioritize issues for thorough study or for programs. Knowledge gleaned from this process helps the League form positions and take action.

The November newsletter announced our **Lively Issues** gathering being held at Long Chen Marketplace. The **location has changed**. The **January 14** meeting will be at **Kaukauna Public Library** (207 Thilmany Rd #200, Kaukauna). There is limited parking by the main entrance. Drive around the building and down the hill to find ample parking space. We'll **start at 9:00 a.m.** and **end by noon**. This is an in-person meeting. Registration is recommended but not required, and can be made [here](#).

Non-members are welcome and may participate in the discussion. Hearing from others enhances our effectiveness by assuring we hear from a diverse segment of our community. That being said, only League members will vote to prioritize issues for future consideration.

League of Women Voters has been an activist, grassroots organization since 1920 whose leaders believed that people should play a critical role in democracy. Lively Issues is the start to activism and educated voting. Lively Issues is a chance for us to discuss and present issues impacting our community. It's through lively conversations that we better understand the areas of our community that our members feel important. We do not advocate for specific candidates or political parties; we advocate for policies. It is only through research that we can develop positions and it is only through positions that we can advocate for or against specific policies our legislators are considering. It is through Lively Issues that we select an area of study for which we believe that our advocacy will be able to affect positive changes in our community. It is also the place to propose issues on which you think the League should focus.

Saturday at Lively Issues we will start with an update on the Local Health Care Assessment Through a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Lens study that was selected in the 2020 and 2021 Lively Issues gatherings. This will be followed by a brief presentation on the current local position statements. I encourage you to browse through our League Position Statements in preparation. Click [here](#) for the positions.

Once we get through those, everyone will get an opportunity to present and discuss their ideas. We listen to each other and often build upon each other's ideas. As the morning progresses, we begin to categorize issues by broader topic headings and eventually end by voting on the proposed issues.

Though some/most issues will not be selected for research and study, the presented issues help the Board decide what educational opportunities should be provided in its programs. The Action Committee and Board also use these topics to guide our advocacy throughout the year.

PROGRAMS: Consensus, Town Hall First Up This Winter

By Renee Gralewicz, Program Vice President
program@lwwappletonfoxcities.org

Welcome to another winter, and welcome to the snow people. Many see snow as an inconvenience and as dangerous. We rightly should look at snow as dangerous, but we also need to understand the danger of not having a blanket of snow upon the earth this time of year. We need snow to protect the tender plants and their roots. Without this blanket to cover them, the roots are susceptible to freeze burn and early death. We also will need the blanket to slowly melt in the spring, warming the roots and awakening our burrowing relatives. Anyhow, I'm appreciating the beautiful white blanket in my backyard as I type this message.

Continued on page 4

PROGRAMS: Consensus, Legislative Town Hall, cont.

Lively Issues will take up our attention on Saturday, January 14, as noted in the previous article. Then we'll hear from our state legislators about their priorities for the current 2023 session when we invite them to participate in our Legislative Town Hall. This virtual event will take place on February 6.

The **March 20, 2023 Consensus** meeting is where the 2020 – 2022 Local Health Care Assessment Through a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Lens study will present their proposed position statements. You will get an opportunity to question and propose changes to the positions. This is a crucial step toward advocacy. The Study Team will explain how we came to these positions and the resources we used to support them. This too is an in-person meeting.

Upcoming Confirmed Programs: Mark your calendar

- **January 14, 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Lively Issues** - Kaukauna Public Library (in-person only)
- **February 6, 6:30-8:00 p.m.: Legislative Town Hall** – (virtual only)
- **March 20: Consensus** meeting (details TBD) (in-person only)
- **April 17: April program** focused on the importance of local journalism (details TBD)
- **May 20, 10 a.m. - Noon: Annual Meeting and Brunch** - Scheig Center, Memorial Park, Appleton

DEI: Team Sets Goals, Creates Work Groups

By April Savage, DEI Director

dei@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

During our first Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) meeting of 2023, we reflected on what went well and what we learned in the past year, and what we would like to accomplish in 2023. Our main goals for the new year include:

- Diversify League membership and event participation
- Earn trust and build partnerships with other groups
- Support other organizations' issues that arise in city/county/local government

To achieve our goals, we will form two working groups with flexibility on meeting time and ways to contribute. One will focus on researching resources and clarifying our mission/ vision, particularly with respect to our webpage. The second will focus on partnership and alliance building locally. Many members of our committee have areas of interest and expertise that intersect with issues of DEI, and participate in other local organizations that work on these issues.

The complete committee meets virtually the first Tuesday of the month from 1-2 p.m.

There is a great opportunity to formalize, amplify and strengthen our expertise and connections. The output of these workgroups will be based on and shared with the tremendous work being done at the state level LWV, particularly the [Community Alliance Committee](#) (CAC).

Please feel free to reach out if you have any interest in joining the DEI committee formally or participating /contributing to our work on an ad hoc basis. We welcome your perspective!

Additionally, please be aware of the following events in our area. If you know of any additional events, please share!

Monday January 16th 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. **Virtual Martin Luther King Community Event** - What Is Your Life's Blueprint? - 32nd Annual Fox Cities MLK Community Keynote. Link to register for the event: <https://www.givepulse.com/event/339616-what-is-your-lifes-blueprint-32nd-annual-fox-cities-mlk-community-keynote>

Link to the event Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100088272731031>

Saturday February 4th 12 noon- 4 p.m. **Black History Month event** at Appleton East High School. This event is still in need of funding so if you know anyone in your network who might be willing to sponsor, please share this link: https://www.gofundme.com/f/student-led-community-black-history-month-event?utm_source=customer&utm_medium=copy_link&utm_campaign=p_cf+share-flow-1

BRUNCH: Panelists Share Immigration Experiences



Adriany Soriano
Fox Valley Literacy Council



Tami McLaughlin
World Relief Fox Valley



Marti Wheeler
Community Volunteer

By April Savage, DEI Director

On Saturday, December 10th, the League held our annual holiday brunch at Bubolz Nature Preserve. Around 80 members and friends were able to attend in person, breaking a streak of cancelled brunches due to weather and pandemic.

The snow fell lightly. Cedar, arbor vitae in Latin, decorated the tables. For the Celts and Norse, cedar is a symbol of the tree of life. For some indigenous traditions, it is one of the sacred medicines and when thrown on a fire the spark represents energy and creativity. Fitting themes for our event.

The brunch program included three **Making Democracy Work (MDW)** awards. The MDW Lifetime Achievement award was given to **Helen Nagler**, who sadly passed away in 2022. She was honored not just for her long list of achievements and service, but especially for the legacy of mentorship and guidance she has left us and many others. The 2022 MDW award was presented to **Ronna Swift**, a League member and force within the community. Ronna is most known for passionate support of issues she holds deeply, most notably manifested in her enduring presence at Houdini Plaza in the name of peace. **Maggie McGinnis** was awarded the Youth MDW award. A senior at Xavier High School, Maggie's work to educate her peers and others is most visible through her website [the smart voter](#) providing bi-weekly, nonpartisan voter education.

The program concluded with an interactive panel discussion on the refugee and immigrant experience in the Fox Cities. Invited speakers included **Tami McLaughlin**, Director of World Relief Fox Cities; **Adriany Soriano**, originally from Venezuela and a graduate of the Fox Valley Literacy Council program, and **Marti Wheeler**, a community activist involved with the governing board of the immigration justice ministry of the Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship.

Both Tami and Marti shared ways community members can help those new to our area with day-to-day tasks such as appointments, grocery shopping, navigating institutions and infrastructure, etc. Many members spoke of their experiences in helping those newly arrived, and offered perspective they learned from fresh eyes, such as the expectation that in America money grows on trees, being pleasantly surprised by tolerance and welcoming attitudes, and finding the delicate balance of independence with protection from deceit or being taken advantage of.

Some of the most joyful and uplifting moments of the discussion came from the gratitude and hope that Adriany expressed, based on her ability to create a life for herself and her family here. Although many in the audience were shocked by the rigour of the process it took for her to get here — including a four-hour interview in Chicago, which sounded more like an interrogation.

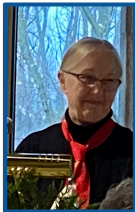
The long-awaited opportunity to be together in person, the meaningful discussion on welcoming newcomers, and the recognition of the shining stars amongst our ranks, all provided a spark of energy and inspiration. 2023 will surely be a time to entwine and strengthen our branches, expanding the roots in this community.

BRUNCH: Honoring MDW Awards Recipients

Despite a spate of wintry weather, an impressive near-capacity crowd gathered for the League's Holiday Brunch at Bubolz Nature Preserve on December 10. Highlights of the event were the presentation of the 2022 Making Democracy Work Awards and a panel entitled The Refugee and Immigrant Experience in the Fox Cities.

The awards committee chose to honor long-time League and community leader and mentor **Helen Nagler** with a **Lifetime Achievement Award**. The award was made posthumously, as Helen passed away in October 2022.

Making Democracy Work was Helen's lifelong mission. Helen was unique in her decades of community service because she was a leader in our League, in local government, and in many other aspects of our community. One of Helen's most enduring gifts was serving as mentor to generations of League members, and to elected and appointed officials. Over the years, she recruited and trained scores of candidates to run for public office.



Ronna Swift received the **Making Democracy Work Award**. The committee noted that Ronna is a connector of people and causes in our community. She seems to be at every event for peace, justice, and democracy. Since 1987, she has been advocating for peace monthly in Houdini Plaza and is a long-time member of the Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice. Ronna's comfortable both as a leader and as a behind-the-scenes "doer" in many progressive organizations. Most recently, Ronna has been assisting a Congolese refugee family adjust to life in Appleton.

Before she was even old enough to vote, Xavier High School student **Maggie McGinnis** was teaching her fellow students why and how to vote. She launched Smart Voter, a bi-weekly, non-partisan newsletter and podcast, in May 2022. That's one of the accomplishments cited in her selection for the **Making Democracy Work Youth Award**. Maggie's website (<https://smartvoter.substack.com>) features more than 50 posts covering a variety of voting and election topics. Through the help of the League's ambassador program, Maggie sends birthday cards to 18-year-old students at Xavier High School with a QR code linking them to voter registration information.



Holiday Brunch Photo Gallery: Faces of the League



MEMBERSHIP: LWV IS Place to Be in 2023

By **Cindy Fallona, Membership Director**
membership@lwwappletonfoxcities.org

Goodbye 2022 — HELLO 2023! Last year was a great year for our League, which sets us up for a successful 2023. Your membership is critical to this success.

Thank you to all of you who have already renewed. Now I need remaining members to go online to lwwappletonfoxcities.org to renew, or complete the form below and send it along with your check to LWV Appleton-Fox Cities, PO Box 1281, Appleton, WI 54912. Questions? Contact Cindy Fallona, Membership Director, at membership@lwwappletonfoxcities.org.



MEMBERSHIP JOIN/RENEW – 2023

Name _____ Phone _____ Home ___ Cell ___

Address _____ City _____ State ___ Zip _____

Email _____ Check if address or phone number is new _____

Membership Level:

Sustaining Contributor _____ Sponsoring (\$150) _____ Regular (\$75) _____

Open door (Dues I am comfortable to pay \$ _____) _____

Second in household (\$35) _____ Student (\$10) _____

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To pay by credit card: simply copy and paste our web address, <https://lwwappletonfoxcities.org> into the search field, and click on JOIN!

VOTER SERVICE: Planning Forums Before Feb. Primary

By **Jacqui Klimaszewski, Voter Services Vice President**
voterservice@lwwappletonfoxcities.org

Voter Services is presently collecting information on candidates running for various offices in the Fox Valley area. As we get the information, we will decide which races require a forum for the primary (February 21), which races require a forum for the April 4 election, and which races to gather information for VOTE411. We are meeting on Thursday, January 12.

Voter registration assistance events will be set up for late January and late February through mid-March. Look for information on the website to volunteer for dates/times that work for you.

Our goal is to have candidates from more races included on VOTE411. To do this, we need to have a cadre of members contacting municipalities for the candidate information, particularly outside of the City of Appleton and Grand Chute. If you are interested in doing this, contact voterservice@lwwappletonfoxcities.org

In the meantime, check out the “Smart Voter” site created by our Making Democracy Work Youth Award winner, Maggie McGinnis: <https://smartvoter.substack.com/> Particularly see the issues #63 and #64 on the importance of the State Supreme Court elections and the candidates.