



SUMMER 2023

President's Message: LWV WI Recognizes Our Work



By Linda Bjella, President
president@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

Among all of the exciting and noteworthy news we have to share with you, we are especially pleased to highlight one item.

LWV of Appleton-Fox Cities has been honored with the LWV of WI annual Membership and Leadership Development Award! This award recognizes a local League for overall accomplishments during the past year.

As President of our League, I was honored and proud to accept the award on behalf of all of you at the Wisconsin League's annual meeting June 10 in La Crosse.

The application for this award was a good exercise in documenting all of the work we have done over the past year, and it is a testimony to the strong leadership of our board and the degree of engagement of our members.

Here's a summary of our application:



- Between May 2022 through May 2023, we hosted 18 events. Here's a list of the main ones:

- a potluck picnic at 1000 Islands Nature Center
- a program examining discrimination in the Fox Cities at Long Cheng Market
- a virtual program on new rules and procedures for elections in Wisconsin
- a hybrid program on affordable housing in the Fox Cities
- two programs on the Wisconsin Court system
- a panel discussion on immigration in the Fox Cities
- a virtual Legislative Town Hall with a bi-partisan group of Fox Cities Legislators
- a virtual program on public school funding
- a hybrid program on local journalism

- We participated in 20 different voter registration events, logging 190 volunteer hours.
- We produced 14 recorded candidate interviews which were posted on our website and YouTube channel.
- We made more than a dozen official statements at local government meetings based on our broad spectrum of positions developed over a century of work.
- We completed a two-year long study on equity in healthcare in the Fox Cities.

(Continued on page 2)

PRESIDENT: LWV WI Award Honors, cont.

- We continue to refine the look and function of our website which now includes an on-line store for our swag items.

That's a lot, but our broad public policy agenda demands it.

I'm often asked, "What does the League of Women Voters do?" I think a good answer is this: We juggle!

At any given time, we have several balls in the air. One evening, we might be attending a local government meeting as a member of our Observer Corps. Another evening, we might be logged in to a Zoom to find out more about the problem of PFAS in our water system. Or maybe we meet for coffee with some committee members to delve into a study or work on plans for the next meeting.

On election day, we might be working at the polls. Maybe we make a cardboard sign and join others at Houdini Plaza to demonstrate our support for better gun safety laws. We attend listening sessions with our state legislators and we follow up with emails to express our views. We write letters to the editor. We cart our lawn chairs and water bottles to a park or a farmer's market to help people register to vote and answer their questions.

And more and more, maybe we step outside our comfort zone to join hands as allies with people whose voices have not been heard and heeded in our political system.

This ball juggling means there are hundreds of ways that you can become involved in our meaningful, consequential work. Which ball would you like to throw in the air?

VOTER SERVICE: Help Register Voters This Summer

By Jacqui Klimaszewski, VP Voter Services

voterservice@lwwappletonfoxcities.org

As we look to providing voter registration assistance through the summer and into the fall, Brian Post held a voter registration assistance training on June 6 and 5 members are now trained and ready to help. If you would like training to join us at future events, just let us know.

So far the June Voter Registration Assistance events include:

- Juneteenth, June 11th — April Savage took the lead on getting things organized and running smoothly. Thank you to April and Helene Pohl and Linda Bjella who joined her! The event was moved indoors due to the threat of bad weather.
- Celebrate Diversity Picnic — June 17; Jefferson Park, Menasha. Denise Fenton was the lead for setup/take down. They had a carnival theme this year; Kathie Kinneman wrote questions for our game, which dealt with voting/civics. Linda Bjella and Sara Companik were there to join in the fun.
- Appleton Pride at Jones Park — June 24, 12:30-5:00. Jeanne Roberts is taking the lead on setup/take down. She will be assisted by Renee Gralewicz, Jan Quinlan, Linda Bjella and Nancy Pourciau.

Also coming up in July, August and September: Women's Action Coalition launch August 26 at Appleton Farm Market, and Latino Fest, September 9 at Pierce Park.

Brian Post is also setting up voter registration assistance events at high schools as well as FVTC and UW O-Fox Cities. And then there is National Voting Registration Day on September 19!

As you can see, there are plenty of opportunities for you to get involved and help with voter registration assistance events. This is an important part of what Voter Services does, and is a fun way to help the League.

If interested in learning more, reach out to me at voterservice@lwwappletonfoxcities.org

The Informed Voter



VOICE OF THE LEAGUE: Who Speaks for the League?

By Jan Quinlan, VP Action

action@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

Who Speaks for LWV of Appleton-Fox Cities?

Non-partisanship is extremely important to our organization. It allows us to do candidate interviews, voter registration, and legislative town halls that are neutral.

As an organization, League is *political* since we advocate for positions we have studied and where we have reached consensus --- and *nonpartisan* in that we never support or oppose candidates or political parties. That duality can be misunderstood. In addition, the League encourages its members *as individuals* to take active roles in political discussions, complicating matters even further.

Here are some FAQs about our League's non-partisan policies. They cover how individual League members can be politically active with confidence.

As a League member, can I speak to elected officials individually or at public meetings?

Yes. League members are always encouraged to communicate with their elected representatives since this is an important part of our democratic system. Exceptions: Our LWV President, VPs, Voters Service, and Communication Directors are our organization's public-facing leaders and as such do not share their personal opinions since these can be misconstrued as League positions. Observer Corps members should also refrain from sharing their personal opinions at government meetings they are observing.

As a League member, can I speak to the media about my opinions on community issues?

Yes, just do not identify yourself with the League of Women Voters when you do. Otherwise, you may be seen as representing our organization. Media questions for our League should be directed to Kathy Voigt, our Communications Director.

What about social media?

The same applies to social media. Feel free to express your opinions on social media sites but do not identify yourself with the League when you do. Our official Facebook page is maintained by our League Communications committee. Please feel free to "like" or "love," comment, and share information from our official site.

Who *does* speak for the League at public meetings?

LWV AFC Public Statements are delivered by the president or by a designee approved by the president. Whenever possible the designee resides in the appropriate government geographical area.

How are League's public statements determined?

Formal public statements are written using LWV local, state and/or national support positions. These may be composed by the President, an officer, Board member, or any current LWV AFC member with special knowledge of the issue area. All LWV AFC public statements are approved by the President and 2 or more Board members *before* being delivered at a government meeting or disseminated to elected officials.

ACTION: League Stands in Solidarity with Community

By Jan Quinlan, VP Action
action@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

Controversy erupted in May when Outagamie County Board Supervisor Tim Hermes, Little Chute, made disparaging comments about transgendered people at a public meeting. LWV Appleton-Fox Cities sent out a May 18 Action Alert to our members, encouraging them to contact their supervisors to express their disapproval of these statements by an elected representative.

At their next regular full County Board Meeting, Chair Jeff Nooyen spoke publicly against Supervisor Hermes' comments but the item was not included on the official agenda. By Board rules, this meant that nobody could speak on this topic during the public participation section of the meeting. This caused an uproar among those members of the public representing both sides of the controversy who were in the packed audience.

Following that meeting, the County Board drafted a censure resolution:

"The Outagamie County Board finds the conduct of Supervisor Hermes to be damaging to the good reputation of Outagamie County, to be disrespectful and insensitive to members of our community, and to be inconsistent with the mission, vision and core values of Outagamie County, its employees, officers and the majority of the County Board of Supervisors." They scheduled a special June 6 Board meeting with the sole agenda item consideration of the censure resolution.



That evening, censure proponents and opponents came out in force. When the Board chambers doors opened at 6:30, the gallery space was standing-room-only within a few minutes.

Our LWV Appleton-Fox Cities sought to stand in solidarity with our LGBTQ+ community members. A group of us met by Zoom to compose a public statement which highlighted our support of the County's hiring an EDI chief officer and for considering a new code of conduct for supervisors. We also encouraged the County Board to "make clear their commitment to a full democracy in which all our citizens feel they are safe and belong." [Read our full public statement by clicking here.](#)

Though mostly orderly, the public participation session lasted almost two hours, followed by another hour of County Supervisors' discussion of the censure. The final vote was 21-8 in favor of censure, an endorsement for a more inclusive community and a statement against divisive politics by elected officials.

MEMBER: Mitchler Honored with Environmental Award



The Clean Water Action Council of Northeast Wisconsin presented its 2023 Environmental Citizen Award to League member Jill Mitchler at the Council's spring banquet in Green Bay.

Jill co-led the League of Women Voters of Appleton-Fox Cities' Climate Resilience and Preparedness Study team in 2020 and 2021. The team's final positions are still relevant and important for our community. Find them online at https://lwvappletonfoxcities.org/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=264322&module_id=484155.

Jill also founded Citizens' Climate Lobby Appleton-Fox Cities Chapter in 2016 and has held various roles in CCL, including group leader, liaison to congressional district WI-08 and Wisconsin state CCL co-coordinator. A founding member of the Fox Valley environmental group, PopEarth, Jill also volunteers with this team's mission of creatively connecting people to the natural world. Learn more about PopEarth at <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100076220442661&mibextid=ZbWKwL>.

Congratulations, Jill, and thank you for your environmental stewardship!

ANNUAL MEETING: Much Was Accomplished

By Linda Bjella, President

president@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

First, we want to thank everyone who attended our Annual Meeting on Saturday, May 20 at the Scheig Center. The weather that day was perfect, and the gardens surrounding us were magnificent!

Thanks to the participation of those who attended, we accomplished some important things.

- We approved two changes in our by-laws. One officially addressed the idea of having co-presidents (Article IV).
- We clarified language differentiating between “programs”, which have come to mean monthly meetings on various topics, and “study”, which refers to the official adopted study. (Article VIII)

Study Focus Chosen

Speaking of studies, we also approved the positions that resulted from a two-year-long study of equity in health care in the Fox Valley, and approved a new study. This will be a comprehensive re-examination of all of our local positions through a DEI lens and also with an eye to which positions need to be expanded to a more regional Fox Cities application.

For the first time, we adopted an official record retention policy. This will greatly help by providing continuity to future leaders and ensure that everything we do is “by the book.”

Salute Outgoing Officers

We celebrated our two outgoing board members, Marti Hemwall and Julie Evers, and approved a new board which was restructured to give the two vice-presidents oversight of the most important work of the League: advocacy and voter service. We approved the new board for 2023-2024.



Marti Hemwall

Annual Meeting Revamp

We plan to make some changes to our 2024 Annual Meeting next May. Several people

have suggested that we return to an evening dinner event as we have done in the past, so next year, our Annual Meeting will be on Thursday evening, May 23 at a restaurant.



Julie Evers

We also have some structural changes in the works that will make for a much more streamlined business meeting. We will start with an hour of gathering time in which board members will be around the room to highlight their work of the past year and talk informally about plans for the coming year. After dinner, our meeting will then focus only on our official business, with no reports from the board. We hope that will make for a much more effective and enjoyable time for all involved.

Board of Directors 2023-2024

- President- Linda Bjella
- Vice-President: Action – Jan Quinlan
- Vice-President: Voter Service- Jacqui Klimazewski
- Treasurer: Diane Putzer
- Secretary: Karin Alvarez
- Communications & Technology Director: Kathy Voigt
- DEI Director: April Savage
- Membership Director: Cindy Fallona
- Program Director: Renee Gralewicz

WELCOME: Secretary Karin Alvarez



Hello! My name is Karin Alvarez, and I am the incoming secretary for the League of Women Voters Appleton-Fox Cities.

I am originally from Colorado, but have lived in the Appleton area for close to 10 years now. Appleton's sense of community, recreational amenities, and education and job opportunities are what drew me and my family to the area, and we are proud to call it our home.

I became familiar with the League as I sought to become a better-informed citizen and voter, and came across their voting guides and candidate information. I chose to join the League due to my belief that it is an essential duty to actively engage in, question, observe, fortify, and seek truth in our democratic processes, at all levels of government. As important as this is, it can be intimidating, so I value the work the League does to make civic participation and knowledge more accessible and understandable.

In my free time, you'll usually find me trying to get some kind of new plant or seed to grow in my garden, or spending time with my family at a state park.

I look forward to serving as the secretary and hopefully can connect with more members in the future!

MEMBERSHIP: Meet Friends, Greet New Members

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

Summer sun and rain have added two new members to the LWV Appleton-Fox Cities. Join me in welcoming **Mark Scheffler, Appleton** and **Karen Kramer, Appleton!**

We have a great opportunity for current members and prospective members to meet and greet. Our second annual summer potluck picnic is on Thursday, July 20th, 5pm at 1000 Islands Environmental Center in Kaukauna. Connect with old friends, meet new members, enjoy the beauty of the park and partake of an array of dishes members bring to share. Hamburgers, brats and beverages are provided by the League.

Not a member? It is easy to join. Go to lwwappletonfoxcities.org to become a member today. Your membership assists us in **Empowering Voters/Defending Democracy**. Contact Cindy Fallona at membership@lwwappletonfoxcities.org for assistance or with questions.

Aaah, Summer— Let's Picnic!
Come rain or come shine, the League invites you to join League friends and newcomers at a family friendly
Summer Potluck Picnic
Thursday, July 20, 2023 • 5 p.m.
1000 Islands Environmental Center, Kaukauna
Connect with old friends, meet new members, enjoy the beauty of the park and partake of an array of dishes members bring to share. Hamburgers, brats and beverages are provided by the League. All are welcome!
Scan or snap this code to RSVP by July 17

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF APPLETON-FOX CITIES

PROGRAMS: Pollinate Your Calendar with These Dates

By Renee Gralewicz, Program Director
program@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

What Spring? When May 1 came around, I thought it was April Fool's Day, given the 4" of snow!! Then comes June 1 with temperatures better fitting of July than early June. I've been having to water the gardens every day to keep the flowers blooming and pollinators happy. Thank goodness that most trees have a full complement of leaves to offer shade for the weary.

Thanks again to all of you who participated in the January Lively Issues gathering. Lots of wonderful ideas were generated. Firstly, we have a new approved study coming up. Well, it's not so much a study as it is a review. Rather than a new study, a comprehensive review of all our positions with a Fox Cities regional perspective and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) lens was approved. Our League has grown over the years and many of our members live and work outside of Appleton (hence our new name: LWV Appleton-Fox Cities), and now we need to assess our positions with a regional scope. The end product of the Review is to identify positions that:

- Need further review;
- Need updating; and/or
- Identify areas that potentially require a new study.
- Special attention needs to be given to the CLIMATE CHANGE PREPAREDNESS AND RESILIENCE (2020) and CLIMATE RESILIENCE PRINCIPLE (2021) as they both require periodic reviews.

For a list of all our local positions click [here](#).

Interest in helping with the review process is growing, and we'll be forming a Review Team. This Team will not be asked to make the revisions, nor to conduct new research. The Team will identify those position statements that need attention; they will offer rationale and if possible, direct us to potential resources that will strengthen the position statement.

I will send out an email invitation to all members asking if you're interested in joining the Review Team. The more people we have, the quicker the review will be completed. Scroll down to see links for National, State, and Local positions. We're only interested in the Local ones, which is a 30 page document.

Lively Issues also is the main contributor for the monthly programs. Here are the TENTATIVE dates and programs.

2023

September 18 (Monday) – Legislative Town Hall [Virtual]

October 16 (Monday) – Local Law Enforcement: People and Issues

November 20 (Monday) – Government Accountability/Transparency

December 16 (Saturday) – Holiday Brunch, topic: "The Freedom to Read"

2024

January 13 (Saturday morning) – Lively Issues

Early February – Legislative Town Hall [Virtual]

February 19 (Monday) – Quality and Quantity of Our Water

March 18 (Monday) – Consensus

April 15 (Monday) – Affordable Senior Housing

May 23 (Thursday evening) – Annual Meeting

FAIR MAPS: What Comes Next?

By Linda Bjella, President
president@lwwappletonfoxcities.org

On August 1, Janet Protasiewicz will be seated on the Wisconsin Supreme Court, shifting the ideological balance of the court from conservative to liberal. Her election was the result of a record-breaking turnout in the April 4 election this year.

Law Forward is preparing to file cases based on the Wisconsin Constitution to challenge the current gerrymandered district maps that were approved by the Wisconsin Supreme Court in 2022. This is a new legal approach to political gerrymandering. It isn't clear which court will hear such a case first, but the US Supreme Court has ruled that this must be resolved through state rather than federal courts.

Attorneys with Law Forward are currently conducting interviews throughout the state to find plaintiffs who can demonstrate how the current maps have harmed their ability to be fairly represented by their elected state representatives or senators. Some of these interviews have been conducted with people here in the Fox Cities.

How can harm be demonstrated? For the past 12 years, issues that have clear majority support in Wisconsin polls have been ignored by our state legislature. Here are just a few:

- 90% favor more strict gun safety laws
- 87% oppose gerrymandering
- 70% want the state to accept Medicaid funds from the federal government
- 61% support policies that mitigate the effects of climate change
- 53% believe in a woman's right to make her own reproductive choices

So, what can we do to support the fight for Fair Maps at this time? The best thing is to write letters-to-the-editor spelling out how minority rule has stymied progress on many issues that the majority of Wisconsinites support.

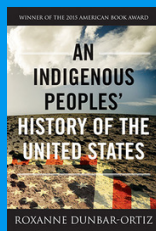
What we should NOT do, is try to lobby judges. It is neither appropriate nor helpful. As frustrating as this may be, it is time to hold our breath and wait for this issue to play out in court with the goal of having new fair maps in place by April 2024, the filing deadline for the November election.

DEI: Bring Your Reading List This Fall

You are invited to join fellow LWV members to discuss books with a DEI theme. Our organizational meeting will be in early fall, when you will be asked to share any book related to DEI issues that you think is worthwhile to discuss. Please come with a short summary prepared.

For future gatherings, we will select a book, podcast, or video to discuss as a group. We hope to meet monthly over the lunch hour so working people can attend, and we encourage you to invite friends who don't belong to the League to join us. Our goal is to learn from each other so we can be better advocates.

But for now, all you have to do is (re)familiarize yourself with a book related to DEI, and stay tuned!



Summer Book Discussions

YOU'RE INVITED TO JOIN FAMILY FRIENDLY DISCUSSIONS
ABOUT THE BOOK

*AN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' HISTORY
OF THE UNITED STATES*

For these family friendly get-togethers, we'll gather at Alicia Park, so bring a lawn chair and your own refreshments. You don't need to have read the book to come enjoy the conversation.

Wed., June 28 • Tues., July 11

Noon - 2 :00 p.m. each day • Rain or shine

Alicia Park, 1301 W. Cedar St., Appleton

LWV of WI: Leaders Gather for Annual Meeting

By Jan Quinlan, VP Action

action@lwwappletonfoxcities.org

Each year in early June, the Wisconsin League (LWVWI) gathers local League leaders together for a convention or an annual meeting. This year's LWVWI Annual Meeting theme was Water. Aptly this event was held at the beautiful LaCrosse Center overlooking a gorgeous Mississippi River vista. LWV Appleton-Fox Cities was well-represented: Linda Bjella, Renee Gralewicz, Beth English, Jan Quinlan, and Jeanne Roberts participated.*

For our League Appleton-Fox Cities, the highlight was receiving 1st Place in the state for LWVWI's Membership, Leadership, and Development Award. As Linda and Marti documented in their President's Report, we received this award for the wide range of voters service, advocacy, membership activities, and programs during the past year. Thanks to all members for helping us achieve this honor.

We heard two excellent multimedia keynote addresses:

- Listen to the Water, with Tinker Schuman, Elder, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa; and Paul DeMain, Spokesperson for Communities United by Water, and a citizen of Oneida Nation of WI.
- Bridging the Rural-Urban Divide, with CaBreatrice Hart, Urban Co-Organizer, Rural Urban Flow; and Philip Matthews, Wormfarm Institute. They encouraged us to embrace the unknown to facilitate rural-urban understanding.

Workshops also revolved around the Water theme,:

- **League Action for Water Advocacy: Advocating for Wisconsin Waters & The Water Connection: InterLeague Organizations (Lake Michigan ILO and Upper Mississippi ILO);** Jan Quinlan attended these.
- **Partnering for Water Advocacy: Legal and Regulatory Issues Related to Drinking Water and Climate Change & Water Advocacy and Legislation;** Renee Gralewicz attended these.
- **Growing and Retaining Your League's Leadership: Growing Your Leadership and Membership & Preventing Burnout and Managing Workloads;** Linda Bjella attended these.

Always informative, the Parade of Leagues included local League representatives sharing their year's highlights. During the Plenary Session, we heard Executive Director Debra Cronmiller's report, accepted a strong financial report and budget, and approved the Nominating Committee's slate of officers. This includes Jeanne Roberts who will serve as new head of the LWVWI Community Alliances Committee.

We also approved the adoption of a newly-updated support position on the UW System. For 2023-2024, the state study committee will research possible updates on positions for the Wisconsin Technical College System.

Editorial note: *This was my first in-person LWVWI Annual Meeting in 25 years since I was sidelined last year with Covid. I was extremely impressed by the transformation of our state League and all it is accomplishing.*

** If you are interested in getting involved in the state League, please let one of us know. We would love to have a conversation with you about the possibilities.*

"Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a president and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters of this country."

— Franklin D. Roosevelt