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President's Message: Mis- and Disinformation Pose Threats

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In an age where information flows abundantly and swiftly through various channels, the challenge of distinguishing between accurate information and misleading content has become more crucial than ever. Misinformation and disinformation pose significant threats to informed decision-making, public discourse, and societal trust. To navigate this complex landscape, it is essential for individuals to develop a keen sense of discernment. Here's a guide on how to identify misinformation and disinformation:

- 1. Check the Source:** Start by examining the source of the information. Reputable news outlets, official government websites, and well-established organizations are generally more reliable. Be wary of sources that lack transparency, have a history of spreading false information, or use inflammatory language.
- 2. Verify Information:** Cross-reference information across multiple sources to verify its accuracy. Legitimate news stories are often reported by several reputable outlets. If a piece of information is not corroborated by independent sources, approach it with skepticism.
- 3. Evaluate the Tone and Language:** Pay attention to the tone and language used in the content. Misinformation and disinformation often employ sensationalism, hyperbole, or emotionally charged language to provoke a specific reaction. Objective and fact-based reporting tends to be more measured and neutral.
- 4. Examine the Date:** Check the publication date of the information. Sometimes outdated or old news is presented as current events, leading to confusion. Stay informed about the context and timeline of events to avoid falling for outdated information.
- 5. Be Critical of Images and Videos:** In the era of photo and video editing tools, visual content can be easily manipulated. Reverse image searches and video analysis tools can help determine the authenticity of images and videos. Be cautious of content that lacks proper attribution or context.
- 6. Fact-Checking Websites:** Utilize fact-checking websites that specialize in debunking false information. Fact-checkers analyze claims made in news articles, social media posts, and other sources

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President: Mis- and Disinformation, cont.

to provide accurate assessments of their validity.

7. Consider the Intent: Evaluate the intent behind the information. Misinformation is often spread unintentionally due to a lack of verification, while disinformation is typically circulated with the purpose of deceiving and manipulating public opinion. Understanding the motive can be a key factor in identifying deceptive content.

8. Question Your Biases: Be aware of your own biases and preconceptions. Misinformation can be more easily accepted when it aligns with our existing beliefs. Take a step back and objectively evaluate information, even if it supports your views.

In an era where information is power, the ability to discern between truth and falsehood is a valuable skill. By adopting a critical mindset, checking sources, and staying vigilant, individuals can contribute to a more informed and resilient society. Let us collectively strive to uphold the integrity of information and foster a culture of responsible sharing in the digital age.

Editor's Note: The above message was generated in less than one second by AI (Artificial Intelligence).

This was an eye-opening exercise for me. I wanted to see what the process of using AI for writing was like. It was astonishingly easy: I went to the ChatGPT website and signed up. There is no cost; you just have to create a profile with a user name (email) and password. Once through that simple two-step process, I requested an essay on misinformation and disinformation. Click.

One second later, this is what appeared. It is well written and organized, and contained a lot of really helpful tips. This was not content pulled from the Internet. It was original content.

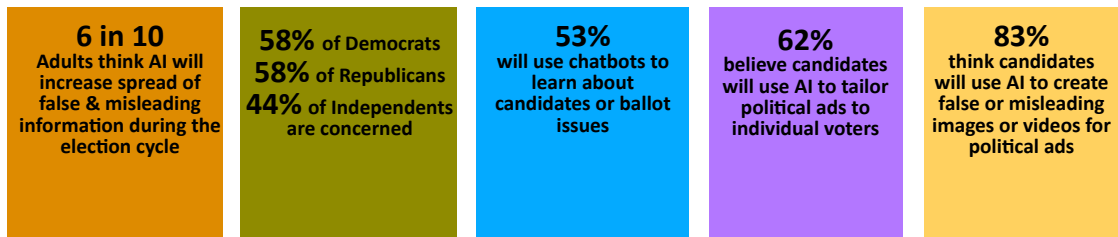
But, it made me wonder — how many AI-generated, well written, plausible, articles have I read and believed to be legitimate? It is truly something to ponder, especially in a crucial election year.

The Who, How and What: Concerns Over AI

AI is now the most downloaded app of all time, with more than 100 million people using it every week.

Imagine the impact AI could have on our political process — for good or for misinformation. It is easy to use, saves time, and is free or affordable. That's the positive side. Of concern are data and privacy issues, the potential for AI to promote incorrect or inaccurate information, and how easily it can be manipulated.

Consider these numbers reported from a November 2023 poll conducted by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research and the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy that indicate growing concern over the rapid advances of generative Artificial Intelligence threatening to amplify the influence of misinformation on 2024 presidential election. Of those interviewed:



PROGRAMS: Priority Issue Rises to Top at Lively Issues

By Renee Gralewicz, Program Director
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Can you believe our area weather? After the snow peoples came with 13" of joy causing us to delay our Lively Issues program, there has been a drought. While some rejoice in this, we all know that the culprit is climate change. Let's hope that the snow people won't want to make visits in April and May to compensate for their current absence.

Lively Issues was a success. We had about 34 attend the event. This year we began the conversation by outlining some of the conclusions of the 2023-2024 Position Review Through a DEI and Regional Lens Study. Review Study Team Chair Jan Quinlan outlined the team's process and highlighted the positions the team felt needed revisiting. There is one topic which the Review Team deemed a number one priority: Public Safety/Local Police Protection (1973) and Regional Law Enforcement (1994) positions. We are pleased that those in attendance agreed with us.

The other issues the Review Study Team thought needed attention are:

- Local government positions
- City Governmental Structure, Town Government (1961,1965, 1967, 1969, 1980, 1991; Annexation 1989)
- County Government: Financial Planning (1974)
- County Government: Organization & Function (1975)
- Solid Waste (1969) and Recycling (1990) positions
- Housing (1995) positions which have gaps even when including those embedded within Natural Resource positions: "Climate Resilience and Vulnerable Populations" (2021)
- Local Transportation (1998) positions

Those attending Lively Issues aided by offering some specific issues they thought need to be included in the upcoming study as well as highlighting other issues and concerns. The results will be distributed via email to the members soon.

We, along with all other Wisconsin Leagues, are co-sponsors of the Tuesday, **February 13** (6:30 - 8:00 p.m.) "**Environmental Justice: Systemic Problems/Collaborative Solutions**" program being hosted by the LWV La Crosse Area. You can register for this event via our website or use the link provided in the email about the event.

Of importance to our League is the **Monday, March 18** Consensus meeting. The Review Study Team will present the findings and recommendations of our yearlong assessment of all our local positions.

To refresh everyone's memory, members attending the May 2023 Annual Meeting charged us to assess all of our positions with a Fox Cities regional perspective and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) lens. The intent is to identify standing positions that need further review, updating, and/or identifying areas that potentially require a future study. As mentioned above, there are a few which the team believes need immediate attention, immediate as within a few years.

However, there are many positions which, with a few added phrases or sentences, can meet our regional and DEI perspectives. These will be detailed at the Consensus meeting. We need your input and knowledge to ensure that proposed changes make sense and follow LWV standards. You will be getting emails from me regarding all the upcoming programs.

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 27 (Tuesday, 7:30 p.m.) - "Makin' Cake" with Dasha Kelly Hamilton. [Location: Fox Cities Performing Arts Center, Kimberly-Clark Theater] Ticket purchase required: <https://foxcitiespac.com/event/makin-cake-with-dasha-kelly-hamilton/>

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PROGRAM: Priority Issue Rises to Top, cont.

February 28 (Wednesday, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.) - "Truth Evolution Workshop" featuring Dasha Kelly Hamilton offered in a partnership between the PAC and the League. [Fox Cities Performing Arts Center, Kimberly-Clark Theater] No cost; registration requested: <https://foxcitiespac.com/event/truth-evolution-workshop/>

March 18 (Monday, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.) – Consensus [Location: Van Zeeland Nursery & Landscape Community Room]

April 15 (Monday, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.) – Affordable Senior Housing [Location: Brewster Village, 3300 W. Brewster St., Appleton, WI 54914] [Optional Tour Brewster Village at 4:00. p.m.]

May 23 (Thursday, 5:00 - 8:00 p.m.) – Annual Meeting [Location: The Hillside at Plamann Park, 1375 E. Broadway Drive, Appleton, WI 54913]

ACTION: Despite Rocky Start, Town Hall Got Rolling

By Jan Quinlan
Vice President of Action
action@lwwappletonfoxcities.org

It all started so well. In collaborating with the Leagues in Winnebago County and Greater Green Bay, we were able to invite a number of legislators including for the first time the Oshkosh and Green Bay metro areas. And we got positive results; five area legislators from both sides of the aisle agreed to participate: Rep. Dave Murphy, Rep. Lori Palmeri, Rep. Kristina Shelton, Rep. Lee Snodgrass, and Rep. Ron Tusler were planning to join us.

Unfortunately, that evening we experienced technical difficulties. Legislators and guests alike had challenges signing in. In the end, four of the five legislators were able to join us. Ultimately, this Town Hall was another highly informative session as the elected representatives responded thoughtfully to questions about pending Wisconsin legislation. There was also a new dynamic with more than one Democratic legislator on hand to articulate their priorities.

If you were one of the guests who had difficulty signing in, our apologies. To those of you who were able to join us, thanks for your patience, perseverance, and understanding. And, special thanks to our elected officials who agreed to participate that evening.

Our next Legislative Town Hall will be in February 2025, and we're already preparing for smoother sailing for us all.

We encourage you to watch the video Town Hall proceedings using the link on the League's website, lwwappletonfoxcities.org.

State Legislature Passes Maps; Dismantles 2011 Partisan Gerrymander

On February 13, the Wisconsin State Legislature passed the maps Governor Evers sent to the Supreme Court for consideration in *Clarke v. WEC*. The Governor's maps dismantle the 2011 partisan gerrymander, which guaranteed a dominant majority in the Legislature and thwarted the will of the people. Under the Governor's maps, Wisconsin voters will pick their elected officials - not the other way around. The League calls on Gov. Evers to sign this bill. Find a complete statement regarding this landmark action [here](#).

VOTER SERVICES: Reprising Candidate Forums

By Jacqui Klimaszewski
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After not having in-person candidate forums since COVID, we held two in February before the February 20 primary.

The forum for Appleton District #4 Alderperson was held February 6 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. at Memorial Presbyterian Church (the District #4 poll location). All three candidates attended and there were 20+ attendees. Special thank you to Memorial Presbyterian Church for their assistance in using their facility and to Crystal Mantzke and Becky O'Connor.

The forum for the Town of Buchanan – Supervisor #2 and #4 positions was February 8 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. at the Town Hall. This is the first time we have had a forum beyond City of Appleton and we were made very welcome by the clerk, Cynthia Sieracki. We had five of the six candidates in attendance and read a statement from the candidate who couldn't attend.

Thanks to Sandi Rohde for helping us branch out to Town of Buchanan. Also, we express our appreciation to the many volunteers who helped make these successful: Julie Evers (our timer), Jan Quinlan and Jeanne Roberts for sorting questions, Jerry Roberts and Renee Gralewicz for recording, and to Nancy Pourciau, Cindy Fallona, Cindy Carter and Sara Companik.

Look for links to the recordings of both forums on the League website, lwwapletonfoxcities.org. The primary candidates also were invited to respond to questions on VOTE411.

There are MANY contested races coming up for the April 2 election. Due to the number, we will be contacting candidates regarding doing the interview version of a forum. Watch for the "Call for Questions" for these races.

VOTER SERVICES: DMV Pilot Project Holds Promise

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

We are working on an exciting project to increase voter registration. Based on the successful format of the Dane County League and Janesville League, we have connected with our local DMV to set up a similar project. Volunteers from other Leagues have been very pleased with the number of citizens they were able to assist in getting registered.

Every DMV has a kiosk dedicated to MyVote.WI.gov. The plan will be to have two trained League volunteers who will be there to assist voters after they have finished with their DMV business. The Appleton DMV personnel are very positive toward the project.

The tentative plan is to provide training the week of February 19. We intend to start Monday, February 26 and go through Wednesday, March 13—the dates that MyVote.wi.gov is available for registration. The goal is to cover three 1.5 to 2.5 hour sessions each weekday, and one 3-hour session on Saturdays. That works out to 33 volunteers/week (of course, volunteers can opt for more than one day/more than one session). We would hope that volunteers would pick a day of the week that they could commit to for the duration of the pilot project.

At Lively Issues, 18 League members have volunteered to get involved with the project! Once the project is up and running, we will need someone to step up to coordinate this in an ongoing fashion. A zoom meeting will be held with all of them invited to start formalizing the procedures.

If you are interested in getting involved at the planning stage or once it is organized, please contact: voterservice@lwwapletonfoxcities.org

ERA: Well, It's About Time!

By Irene Strohbeen
for Mid-Day Women's Alliance

Mid-Day Women's Alliance (MDWA) and other partner organizations of the Women's Action Coalition (WAC) held a press conference on Monday, February 5 to announce the bill introduction for the Wisconsin State Equal Rights Amendment to our state constitution.



Representative Lori Palmeri from Oshkosh's 54th Assembly District, who is the lead bill author, introduced the proposed amendment, which is much broader than the original ERA, ensuring equal rights for all under the law because "after more than 50 years, it's embarrassing that ANY Wisconsinite has fewer rights than another." Appleton's Representative Lee Snodgrass, co-author, added her support.

One of Appleton's early feminists, Mary Ann Rossi, shared the history of the WI ERA and the local feminist movement with the crowd of more than 50 people, followed by statements from WAC partner organizations. In particular, Linda Bjella spoke on the history of the League of Women Voters, and Alice Paul's role in women's suffrage and the ERA.

We also heard from the generation that will inherit our past and current decisions: Megan Eisenstein, government major from Lawrence University, spoke on the rights she lost with the Dobbs decision because she came to college in Wisconsin vs staying in Illinois, and how she dreams of the day when equal rights will be restored to millions of people in the state.

Press coverage of the event was picked up across the state — and beyond. Here are a few news videos and posts from the event:

Madison: <https://www.wiproud.com/news/local-news/equal-rights-amendment-bill-re-introduced-in-madison/>

Eau Claire: <https://www.weau.com/2024/02/06/local-lawmakers-introduce-equal-rights-amendment/>

Green Bay: <https://www.wbay.com/2024/02/05/local-lawmakers-introduce-equal-rights-amendment/>

Green Bay: <https://fox11online.com/news/local/gallery/northeast-wisconsin-lawmaker-introduces-equal-rights-amendment-to-state-constitution-representative-lori-palmeri-lee-snodgrass-appleton-oshkosh-lgbtq-race-sex-religion?photo=1>

Green Bay radio: <https://wncy.com/2024/02/05/northeast-wisconsin-lawmaker-introduces-equal-rights-amendment-to-state-constitution/>

Diversity • Equity • Inclusion

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®]
OF APPLETON-FOX CITIES

Book Share Group Selects Not 1 But 2 Books for Discussion!

A great idea came up at our December get-together. We agreed to read something on disability DEI issues. And, we chose not 1 but 2 books for discussion.

Thursday, February 29, 2024 • 11:00 a.m.-12:00 noon

- **Demystifying Disability: What to Know, What to Say, and How to Be an Ally** by Emily Ladau
- **Disability Visibility: First Person Stories from the 21st Century** by Alice Wong

This book also has been adapted for young adult readers.

Both are pretty slim books, so read them both, pick one to read, or don't read any of them. Simply come for the discussion — it's all OK! And everyone is welcome. We meet at the League office, 120 N. Morrison Street, downtown Appleton. It's on the first floor and is accessible. Bring a friend!

JOIN IN: Makin' Cake & Truth Evolution



Dasha Kelly Hamilton's "Makin' Cake" spoken word performance at the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center on February 27 will give you reason



to pause and examine life through new lenses. Audiences will be served layered storytelling about race, culture and class through the eyes of baking and American history.

The performance will be followed by a cake reception and discussion on stage in Thrivent Hall. For more information and to purchase tickets visit the PAC [website](#).

The next day, February 28, continue the conversation experience at the **Truth Evolution Workshop**.

With magic markers, personal story, and imagination, Dasha Kelly Hamilton will guide participants through creative discovery and facilitate a dialogue around race, class, and equity. The Truth Evolution is a model for community vitality, organizational bias training, and personal anti-racism work.

This workshop is offered as a partnership between the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center (PAC) and the League of Women Voters of Appleton-Fox Cities, and is made possible by the generous support of Community First Credit Union.

More details on the February 28th workshop can be found [HERE](#).

A banner for a webinar titled "PFAS THE EVERYDAY EVERYWHERE TOXIN". The banner includes the date and time "March 12th, 6:30-8:00 pm via Zoom" and two speakers: Meleesa Johnson, Executive Director of Wisconsin's Green Fire, and Dr. Beth Neary, Co-President of Wisconsin Environmental Health Network. The background features a blue water splash graphic.

News about PFAS is infiltrating our lives and — appropriately for "forever chemicals" — isn't going away. Contamination from per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, known as PFAS, has been found in sites all over Wisconsin, stemming from any number of the many ways these substances are used.

To arm yourself for the fight to clean our waters and protect the health of Wisconsinites, the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin invites you to join us in the first of two virtual webinars that delve into how PFAS get into our bodies, how to protect ourselves, and what is happening at the state and federal level to mitigate this issue.

- Topics:**
- The origins of PFAS
 - Where it's found in Wisconsin
 - How it enters our bodies and those most at risk
 - Health effects
 - Personal protection measures
 - Current requirements that affect WI

Register at

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUrf-CgqTkqE92p77dbe48bMv91l6xN-x3X#/registration>