



MARCH 2024



## President's Message: Understanding Ballot Referendums

**Question 1:** "Use of private funds in election administration. Shall section 7 (1) of article III of the constitution be created to provide that private donations and grants may not be applied for, accepted, expended, or used in connection with the conduct of any primary, election, or referendum?"

**Question 2:** "Election officials: Shall section 7 (2) of article III of the constitution be created to provide that only election officials designated by law may perform tasks in the conduct of primaries, elections, and referendums?"

By **Linda Bjella**  
[president@lwvappletonfoxcities.org](mailto:president@lwvappletonfoxcities.org)

Some voters may be surprised to find two amendments to the Wisconsin state constitution on the April 2 ballot, both pertaining to how elections are administered. Should these referenda be approved, they would become permanent parts of the Wisconsin Constitution.

**LWV WI urges a NO vote on each. Let's dig into why.**

The first amendment stipulates that no private donations or grants may be applied for or accepted in the conduct of any election. The second states that only election officials designated by law may perform tasks in the conduct of elections.

Think back to the 2020 elections that were administered at the height of the Covid 19 pandemic. The Center of Tech and Civic Life provided more than \$10 million to more than 200 Wisconsin communities to help conduct the election during the COVID-19 pandemic. The center, which is funded by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg and his wife, directed most of the money in Wisconsin to the state's five largest cities, where Democratic voters are concentrated. This became the primary focus of the Michael Gableman investigation which cost taxpayers around \$2 million.

I contacted the Appleton City Clerk and the Grand Chute Town Clerk. Both received grants for election administration in the past four years. Grants like these have been used by some municipalities to update and improve voting equipment, and in some cases, add more to keep voting lines reasonable and efficient. Without adequate funding, there may be longer lines to vote and fewer polling places, and the speed of results may be slowed down.

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## **PRESIDENT: Ballot Referendums, cont.**

The cost of elections isn't going to decrease in the future, and if no grants can be accepted, those increased costs will be borne by taxpayers. This amendment would really tie the hands of our local clerks.

The wording of the amendment regarding "private donations and grants" is not clear, and may result in unintended consequences. For instance: what about free use of non-governmental polling places like churches? Is that an in-kind donation? Would people be prohibited from providing food or drinks for our hard-working poll workers?

In the second proposed amendment, the term "election officials" is not clearly defined. Could this be interpreted to prohibit volunteer poll workers? League observers?

Wisconsin has the most decentralized election system in the country. There are 1,850 local clerks overseen by county clerks and the Wisconsin Elections Commission. This complex system simply could not run without thousands of well-trained poll workers who are our friends and neighbors.

It's important to note that both of these election proposals were passed as ordinary bills on strict party lines, and vetoed by the governor. Subsequently, they were introduced as joint resolutions which again passed on strictly party lines. Joint resolutions, once passed through two legislative sessions in consecutive years, by-pass the governor and go directly to the people as binding referendum questions on the ballot. If passed by a majority of the voters, they become a permanent part of the Wisconsin Constitution.

Wisconsin voters should not support amending our Constitution without bi-partisan buy-in from our legislators that reflects wide public support.

## **FAIR MAPS: Grassroots Activism Pays Off**

**By Linda Bjella, President**  
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After 14 years of tireless grassroots activism in every corner of our state, we finally have fair legislative districts maps in place for this year's November election. This is a huge win for democracy.

While voters are the big winners, both political parties will benefit. Already during this past legislative session, there were far more bi-partisan bills introduced and passed than during previous sessions since the 2011 gerrymander was first put in place. The best legislation is crafted when there is input from many perspectives, when public hearings take place, and when time is allowed for constituents to express their opinions to their elected representatives. With more competitive legislative districts, our representatives will have to listen to us!

Last August, when Justice Janet Protasiewicz was seated on the Wisconsin Supreme Court, the process to re-examine the 2021 legislative maps began. The Court found that those maps were unconstitutional because there were many districts that were not contiguous. (If you examine the 2021 maps, it's easy to see the districts that are chopped up and take on "salamander-like" shapes, like the namesake of the word "gerrymander.")

In response to the Court's decision, seven maps were submitted for consideration. In the chart that follows, you will see the scorecard of those seven maps, evaluated on several categories including the partisan "lean" of the map. You'll notice that all of the maps lean Republican due to the geographic nature of Wisconsin. There are more rural conservative districts than liberal urban districts where larger concentrations of people live. The Fox Cities area is becoming increasingly purple in nature, and the new maps reflect that.

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## PRESIDENT: Fair Maps, cont.

The maps that advanced through the legislature were the ones submitted by Governor Evers and he signed them into law on February 19. You can take a look at these new maps compared to the 2021 maps [here](#).

It's important to note that these new maps do NOT affect the April 2 election, but will be in place in November. Now begins the task of informing voters about how their districts may have changed. That's OUR job, so let's get to it!

<b>Wisconsin Assembly Redistricting Plan Scorecard</b>												
using criteria outlined by the Wisconsin Supreme Court in <i>Rebecca Clarke v. Wisconsin Elections Commission</i>												
plan submitted by	Majority Minority Districts <sup>1</sup>				# split by districts <sup>2</sup>				Avg. <sup>7</sup> compactness <sup>7</sup>	2022 outcome <sup>3</sup>		Tipping point seat <sup>8</sup>
	Pop. deviation <sup>4</sup>	Black <sup>5</sup>	Hispanic	No majority	Contiguous?	municipalities	counties	wards <sup>6</sup>		Dem.	Rep.	
<b>new submissions (2024)</b>												
Evers 2024	1.96%	5	2	1	Yes	55	44	5	0.39	46	53	+5.2 Rep
Law Forward	0.92%	5	2	1	Yes	45	43	1	0.39	49	50	+3.3 Rep
Legislative Republicans	1.11%	5	2	2	Yes	114	52	117	0.36	35	64	+16.3 Rep
Petering (FastMap)	1.98%	5	2	1	Yes	74	50	33	0.44	47	52	+2 Rep
Senate Democrats	1.86%	6	2	0	Yes <sup>9</sup>	72	50	2	0.39	46	53	+5.3 Rep
W.I.L.L.	0.98%	5	2	2	Yes	37	34	14	0.41	39	60	+11.6 Rep
Wright Petitioners	1.83%	5	2	1	Yes	52	47	0	0.39	48	51	+3.5 Rep
<b>old submissions (2022)</b>												
Evers' Least Change 2021	1.88%	0	2	8	No (35 splits)	174	53	222	0.37	39	60	+11.3 Rep
GOP Legislature 2021	0.76%	5	2	2	No (52 splits)	50	52	0	0.36	35	64	+16.3 Rep
People's Map Commission 2021	1.87%	2	2	5	No (26 splits)	130	45	70	0.40	43	56	+6.9 Rep

<sup>1</sup> Number of districts where each group forms a majority of adults.  
<sup>2</sup> Number of each split into multiple districts that themselves cross muni/county lines.  
<sup>3</sup> The modelled outcome of the 2022 legislative election in this district, modelled using results from statewide races.  
<sup>4</sup> Population deviation is the range between the most populous and least population districts, divided by the ideal district size.  
<sup>5</sup> Only includes adults choosing non-Hispanic Black alone  
<sup>6</sup> This does not include any ward splits which the parties agreed not to count as such in a joint stipulation dated 1/2/2024.  
<sup>7</sup> Average Reock score for the plan. A district's Reock score is ratio of the district's area to the area of the smallest circle that can be drawn around the district.  
<sup>8</sup> The modelled lean of the 50th seat in the 2022 Assembly elections, modelled using results from statewide races.  
<sup>9</sup> The Senate Democrats plan includes 7 districts with disconnected portions, according to the US Census Bureau Census Block GIS file. However, the parties agreed in a joint stipulation dated 1/2/2024 to nonetheless count these as contiguous.  
 Analysis by John D. Johnson, Marquette Law School Lubar Center Research Fellow. See [github.com/fjohn215/wi-legis-map-proposals-2024](https://github.com/fjohn215/wi-legis-map-proposals-2024) for all methodological details, data, and code.

## ACTION: Fair Maps May Alter Your Voting District

By Jan Quinlan, Vice President of Action  
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After more than 14 years, Fair Maps in Wisconsin became a reality on February 19, 2024, when Governor Evers signed his own proposed maps into law. Wisconsin's journey from extreme gerrymandering to Fair Maps is truly a grassroots success story. The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Fair Maps coalition (of which the League is a member) were present as the new fair maps were signed into law. The next day, President Linda Bjella, one of our most active advocates for Fair Maps, was invited to meet Governor Evers in Green Bay as he honored those who took leadership roles.



Gov. Evers, Sharon Bowen, Linda Bjella

What do these new maps mean for Fox Cities voters? Our state's district boundaries have changed to reflect our competitive community. [Click here for the best interactive maps](#) we have found to see if your assembly and/or senate districts have changed. Both Democrats and Republicans will compete on a more level field.

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## ACTION: Fair Maps May Alter Districts, cont.

But the story is not yet over. We will continue to work for a non-partisan process in Wisconsin to determine fair maps in the future. Neither political party should have control over drawing their own maps to their advantage. The old process took the power away from voters and silenced our voices between elections because so many elected officials were in “safe” districts.

In the meantime, let’s celebrate our success. Thank you to each of you for your help in making Wisconsin Fair Maps a 2024 reality.

## VOTER SERVICES: DMV Pilot Project Exceeds Estimates

By Jacqui Klimaszewski & Brian Post, Voter Services Team

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**“You mean I can get my license renewed and my voter registration updated all at the same time? Yea!” — Response from a re-registered voter**

As we are wrapping up our pilot project in collaboration with the Appleton DMV, the complete results are not yet tabulated, BUT....

- We had 31 individual volunteers for approximately 192 volunteer hours (some more than once) over these two weeks.
- There are an additional 5 people interested that weren’t able to get on the schedule—and **YOU are invited to join us.**
- Way **more than 130 voters were assisted** to register or re-register—and many others were provided information for later or to help someone at home to register.

At the halfway point, there were an average of 13.2 registrations a day!! This compares to a total of 65 registrations over the past two years at other registration events.

- We received airtime from WHBY 1150AM and coverage from NBC 26. <https://www.nbc26.com/news/local-news/league-of-women-voters-and-dmv-team-up-to-empower-voters>

From here we will compile all the information regarding volunteers, volunteer hours and the number of voters that we reached. We will also look at the comments that the volunteers left on the data sheets regarding the process and any issues they ran into, as well as sending them a survey for feedback on how it went. This information will be shared with the site manager of the Appleton DMV and he will be interviewed for his perspective as well.

All this information will be discussed by the Voter Services team and the report will include recommendations for the next two elections. This report will be included in the Annual Meeting Packet.

DIVERSITY-EQUITY-INCLUSION

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
OF APPLETON-FOXCITIES

### BOOK SHARE GROUP OFFERS 2 NEW OPTIONS

The Book Share group is offering 2 options to discuss on Wednesday, March 20 –

**“Gender Queer: A Memoir” by Maia Kobabe**  
and/or **“Wandering Stars” by Tommy Orange**

**WEDNESDAY, March 20, 12 Noon - 1 p.m.**

**WHERE: League Office (120 N. Morrison St., Appleton)**

**WHAT: Action-oriented discussion**

**WHO: Open to anyone. Bring a friend!**

Read either book, both – or neither! 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.



## PROGRAMS: Review Study Warrants Your Consensus

By Renee Gralewicz, Program Director  
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Our League is typically engaged in research to assess how our communities are working and how they can possibly become better and healthier for our residents. This past year we had more than 15 people reviewing our local positions, and the Review Study Team is ready to present our findings for your assessment. Please join us on **Monday, March 18** from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. for our Consensus meeting. We'll gather at Van Zeeland Nursery & Landscape Community Room, 2600 N. Casaloma Drive in Appleton.

To refresh your memory, at the May 2023 Annual Meeting our membership charged us to assess all of our local positions with a Fox Cities regional perspective and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) lens. The intent was to identify standing positions that need further review or updating, and/or identifying areas that potentially require a future study.

The Review Study Team is done and now we need your help to assess the recommendations. We need the eyes and thoughts of those who are unfamiliar with the work to ensure that our intent is actually what the written recommendations express. The English language can be confounding and misleading and we're hoping that you will help us clarify the recommendations.

After Consensus, the Study Review Team will revisit the recommendations and forward them to the Board for their approval. The Board will then present the recommendations to our membership for final approval.

I hope to see you at Consensus!!

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**March 18** (Monday, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.) – **Consensus** [Location: Van Zeeland Nursery & Landscape Community Room, 2600 N. Casaloma Drive, Appleton, WI 54913]

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

## MEMBERSHIP: Welcome New Members

By Cindy Fallona, Membership Director  
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The winds of March are bringing us closer to spring and have also brought two new members to the League. Join me in welcoming:

***Theresa Spoehr – Menasha • Tami McLaughlin – Appleton***

Membership is the lifeblood of the League, especially in a presidential election year. There is no lack of opportunities for every member to get involved and help us advance our mission of **Empowering Voters and Defending Democracy**. Simply visit our website, [lwwappletonfoxcities.org](http://lwwappletonfoxcities.org) and click on Get Involved.

Joining or renewing is easy! Both options can be accessed by clicking the Join Today tab on the League website, [lwwappletonfoxcities.org](http://lwwappletonfoxcities.org) We have volunteers ready and willing to answer your questions, assist you or welcome you to the projects and events that best fit your interests. Email [membership@lwwappletonfoxcities.org](mailto:membership@lwwappletonfoxcities.org)

## Q1 2024: Faces, Places of the League's Work

### Lively Issues 2024



### Wisconsin ERA

The WI ERA bill was finally assigned to committees just before the end of the Wisconsin legislative session. We can still contact our elected officials to tell them that we support the WI Equal Rights Amendment and would like to see it become part of our state constitution.



### Truth Evolution



### In the Spotlight

