



JANUARY 2025

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: Gearing Up for 2025

Now that the big 2024 election year is behind us, it's time for our League volunteers to shift attention to the upcoming local and state-wide elections, and the new state legislative session that will be dominated by the biennial budget negotiations.



By Linda Bjella
president@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

We will also need to focus on helping to protect the most vulnerable among us who will face increased intimidation and threats. One thing you can do is print out a supply of "[Red Cards](#)" that spell out the rights that legal immigrants have. They are available in multiple languages.

The 2025 non-partisan elections will include a **primary on February 18** and a **general election on April 1**. Watch for details on volunteer opportunities to help with voter registration at the DMV as well as potential candidate forums.

Supreme Court Face-Off

The April 1 election will be dominated by another contentious Wisconsin Supreme Court election in which Dane County Court Judge Susan Crawford will face off against Waukesha County Judge and former Attorney General Brad Schimel. They are vying for the seat now held by retiring Justice Ann Walsh Bradley, and the result of this election will determine the ideological balance of the court. There are two relevant webinars highlighted in this newsletter coming up soon that you won't want to miss. One is sponsored by LWV WI on ethics and money in the Wisconsin Supreme Court race on January 28, and another on choosing a supreme court justice, sponsored by the LWV of Dane County on February 6.

Three-Way Primary

There will also be a three-way primary election for State Superintendent of Public Instruction between incumbent Dr. Jill Underly and challengers Jeff Wright and Brittany Kinser. The two highest vote-getters will face off in the April 1 general election. In addition, there will be local city council, town board, and school board elections to watch.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: Gearing Up, cont.

Legislative Town Hall

What will the newly reconstituted state legislature take up in the next sessions? What will GOP lawmakers prioritize with new slimmer majorities? How will these initiatives compare to what Governor Evers outlines in his State-of-the State address on January 22 and his budget address on February 28? How will the state's estimated \$4 billion surplus be used? The LWV WI Legislative Committee has outlined its priorities. You can read them [here](#). And don't miss our next Legislative Town Hall on Monday, February 3 from 6:30-8:00 p.m. on Zoom. All Fox Valley Senators and Representatives have been invited to talk about their legislative priorities and answer our questions.

The League provides opportunities to get involved with the assurance that your efforts are backed by an organization that is non-partisan, experienced, well-informed and respected.

— Linda

VOTER SERVICES: Resolve to Vote in Every Election

As we gear up for the 2025 elections, let's start the year strong and build excitement around voting in every election — big and small!

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

Adapted from the Wisconsin Voting Rights Coalition

One easy way for voters to make sure they vote in every election is by requesting their ballots for the entire calendar year.

Every year, millions of people set intentions for themselves at the beginning of the year by making New Year's resolutions. Resolving to vote in every election can be a powerful commitment to themselves and their community. Make sure this is on your radar for all of 2025.

Many voters have learned that voting by mail is an easy, convenient, and safe way to make their voice heard during elections. Let's work together to start the year off on a high note and build excitement for all of the elections in 2025 by making a commitment to voting as part of our yearly New Year traditions. This will be a worthwhile campaign to celebrate the freedom to vote and the ease of absentee voting.

In Wisconsin, any registered voter can vote absentee — no reason needed.

Important Information & Dates to Share:

The Spring Primary is February 18 and the Spring Election is April 1.

What's on the ballot in Wisconsin this spring? Some of the races include:

- State Supreme Court Justices
- Court of Appeals Judges
- Circuit Court Judges
- Superintendent of Public Instruction
- Other local races like city council and school board

With elections right around the corner, **check something off of your to-do list by requesting all of your absentee ballots for the year at MyVote.Wi.Gov today!**

VOTER SERVICES: Next DMV Call for Volunteers

By Brian Post

Our most successful Voter Registration event is returning for the 2025 Wisconsin Elections. We'll start with January 22-29 ahead of the February primaries. You can sign up here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0B44ADAB2FA6FCC07-54338167-dmvvoter>

If you are new to the effort, there are training materials attached to the signup, and you can access them there. Additionally, if you want training you can contact Brian Post (6615@sbcglobal.net) directly and he will set up a session for those interested.

ACTION: Mark Calendars for Legislative Town Hall

By Janice 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 3 at 6:30-8:00 p.m.** Again, we have invited our area state Senators — Dassler-Alfheim, Jacque, Wimberger, and Cabral-Guevara — and our area Representatives — Snodgrass, Murphy, Kaufert, Tusler, Palmeri, Sortwell, 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. It is a biennial budget year so hearing their legislative priorities will be especially important.

Look for registration later in January. The event will be held by Zoom and available on recording after the event.

TRANSFORMATION: Changes Coming for Membership

LWV is switching to a new member portal soon for all Leagues across the country. There is no action that members need to take right now, but we want to provide you with an overview of what these changes will mean for you.

By Linda Bjella
president@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

If you haven't already renewed your membership, please do so **before January 31**. Until the end of January, you can still renew in the usual way. We offer the option of a sliding scale of dues from \$0 to a suggested amount of \$75. The LWV of Appleton-Fox Cities will then pay a portion of your dues to the LWV of WI and to LWVUS. If you elect to join at the sustaining level of \$150, the extra \$75 counts as a donation to our League.

The new membership system will launch in January 2025. You will receive an email to log in to the portal. Once you have access to the portal, you will be able to update your own information, including contact information. However, you will not be asked to renew again until a year after your most recent renewal. Your membership will last a year after your last renewal, and you also will be given the option to sign up to auto-renew annually.

When it comes time to renew, you will receive an email reminder. Dues will no longer be a fixed rate

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TRANSFORMATION: Changes Coming, cont.

but will be pay-what-you-can. The recommended dues amount for all members across the country will be \$75, but members can pay any amount (min. \$20), including the current dues rate.

Under the new system, a percentage of dues will automatically go to the state and national League. This means that when you renew, if you would like to make an additional contribution directly to LWV of Appleton-Fox Cities, as some members choose to do when they renew under the current system, this will become a second step in the renewal process. First you will select the level of dues you wish to pay, which will be automatically divided into the national (33%), state (47%) and local (20%) portions, thus benefitting the League as a whole. Once you complete that step in the process, you will be taken to a new screen where you can make a donation, the total amount of which will go directly to our local League only.

There will still be the option to renew by check for members who don't use the internet, but members who are able to access the portal and renew that way are encouraged to do so.

On a member level, we hope these changes will make managing your membership easier. On a League level, this is expected to increase membership around the country and increase our ability to empower voters and defend democracy. We will keep you informed as we have new and relevant information.

MEMBERSHIP: Ride the Renewal Wave Today

By Cindy Fallona

Director, Membership

membership@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

This is our annual membership renewal period and renewals are coming in fast and furious! Out of 145 members, as of January 12, only 26 people have not yet renewed. Thank you to all who have taken a moment to renew online or sent in a check.

The deadline to report our renewal numbers to the national League is January 31. If you still need to renew, do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or problems.

2025 is upon us, and the League has a full plate of issues and items to carry out. Voter registration, legislative forums, candidate interviews, etc., will only succeed with a strong membership and active participation.

• **WELCOME NEW MEMBERS: Brianna Skorr, Appleton, and Scott Valitchka, Neenah**

To renew your membership online go to lwvappletonfoxcities.org. To renew by mail, make the check payable to LWV Appleton-Fox Cities and mail to LWV Appleton-Fox Cities, PO Box 1281, Appleton, WI, 54912.

SHARED RESOURCES: Leagues Collaborate on Webinars

Sign up for any or all of these relevant webinars hosted by local Leagues from around the state.

- **Tuesday, January 28; 6 to 7:30 p.m.** — LWV of Wisconsin presents “Wisconsin Supreme Court Elections: **Money & Ethics.**” Speakers: Jay Heck, Common Cause; former Supreme Court Justice Janine Geske; Attorney Doug Keith, Brennan Center; Attorney Rob Yablon, State Democracy Research Initiative. Register [HERE](#).
- **Thursday, February 6; 6:30-8 p.m.** — Dane County League offers “Choosing a Supreme Court Justice.” Explore what is needed to be a good WI Supreme Court Justice, how money in the campaigns for this office could influence the outcome of this election, and potential cases that might be decided by the justice that we elect this April. Find details and register [HERE](#).
- **Wednesday, February 12; 7-8:30 p.m.** — **Our League** is one of several collaborating on a webinar hosted by the **League of the La Crosse Area** titled “**Improving Civic Health — Why It Matters.**” Speaker: Mary Beth Collins, J.D., M.A., Executive Director, UW Center for Community & Nonprofit Studies. Learn more & register [HERE](#).

PROGRAMS: Lively Issues Generates Vibrant Ideas

Lively Issues took place with an enthusiastic, knowledgeable and sincere group of participants eager to put their energy into action.

By Jan Smith
Director, Programs
program@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

Perhaps it was the promise of a new year or the sense of urgency to meet the ever mounting challenges our community is facing, but the Lively Issues meeting was exceptionally lively. Lively Issues took place at the Kaukauna Public Library on January 11, 2025 with an enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and sincere group of participants eager to put their energy into action.



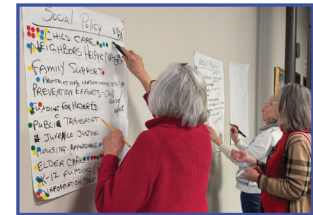
President Linda Bjella opened the morning with a welcome and several calendar updates. Cindy Fallona encouraged membership renewal and explained how the new dues process will work. Karen Pfefferle provided an overview of the Public Safety Study currently begun by a League committee based on the decisions made from Lively Issues last year, and offered insight to the scope of this potentially expansive subject. Anyone interested in learning more or helping with the study is welcome. Email program@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

Attendance was more than registered and higher than anticipated, creating a vibrant room of ideas. Thirty League members offered topics for both study and program consideration that fell under our local League positions of Local Government, Social Policy, and Natural Resources that were timely and relevant to our current community situation.

Significant Community Issues



There were some surprising revelations to consider, with some expanding on topics covered by programs offered during the year, as well as new areas of consideration. The three-hour meeting began with the socialization of obviously good friends, but the business soon underway provided insightful and productive discussion, generating significant community issues in small groups that were presented by a group spokesperson for scribes to write on large papers for everyone to see. The Round Robin discussion sometimes expanded on positions previously investigated, but also raised new areas of concern and focus. After "lively" discussion, members were provided six dots to vote on issues of most importance to them.



Priorities by the Numbers

The top priorities in the area of Local Government included 22 votes for examining the misinformation and disinformation absorbed from nontraditional news media; 15 votes for supporting the efforts to maintain the former University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley Campus; and 14 votes for some aspect of childcare protection, a concern that also surfaced under the Social Policy platform, also with 14 votes. Affordable Housing and Eldercare were among the next important topics, receiving 13 and 12 votes respectively. Under the Natural Resources platform, Biodiversity was the standout for creating awareness, support and examining restoration issues. There were several other topics listed that could easily fall under this area of consideration.



This congenial, well informed and conversant group obviously enjoys examining these things collectively, thus the idea of a few educational and informative field trips surfaced. Although partly in jest and then, more realistically, the results offered many good things to look forward to for the upcoming 2025-26 season.

DEI: Bring Titles, Resources to January Bookshare

This group is growing, and the conversations are lively.

Participants in the monthly DEI Bookshare group have grown in numbers, and the books have been informative. Each book, each discussion, each resource shared has helped promote awareness and understanding.

Normally, we select one book to read and discuss. But for January, we are welcoming suggestions for books, videos, podcasts, and other resources that participants would like to explore.

Join us on **Wednesday, January 15 at 1 p.m.** at the League office, 120 N. Morrison St., Suite 101, Appleton. The first floor meeting space is easily accessible.

MDW: Pohl, Peetz Receive 2024 Honors

An Ogdensburg resident whose volunteering embraces diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) while helping newcomers to this country, and a Lawrence University student passionate about democracy and students' right to vote were honored with the Making Democracy Work Awards from the League of Women Voters of Appleton-Fox Cities at its Holiday Brunch on December 14 at Bubolz Nature Preserve.



Committee Chair Gordon Lind,
Adult Recipient H el ene Pohl,
Youth Recipient Eliza Peetz,
President Linda Bjella

H el ene Pohl's extensive research on DEI issues affecting health care access in the Fox Valley was cited in her nomination for the MDW Award for an adult. Since there is no League chapter in the Waupaca area, her tenacity in joining the Appleton-Fox Cities League is notable, surpassed only by her contributions to the League's DEI-related work and to assisting Afghan and Haitian immigrants in the Appleton-Waupaca-New London areas through World Relief.

Lawrence senior Eliza Peetz was cited for exemplary leadership in launching events, engaging students in the democratic process, and assisting students register to vote in advance of the November 2024 election. Peetz conducted these activities over three years in her role with the university's Civics and Society focus area, which encourages students to engage in the larger Appleton-Fox Cities community.



Eliza Peetz
with her
nominator,
April Savage

In the three days leading up to the election, Peetz assisted 13 students to register to vote. She organized campus shuttles to polling places for students, and instructed students in resources to find voting information.

As a senior, she currently mentors a freshman to take over her role when she graduates.

The League event also engaged attendees in activities as part of the presentation "Childcare Dilemma — Strengthening Families, Building Community, Expanding a Workforce." Presenters were Barb Tengesdal, Ph.D., Executive Director, First 5 Fox Valley; Julie Stoffel, Director of Engagement and Community Outreach, Wisconsin Early Childcare Association, and Parent Representative Jennifer Buelow.

As the program call to action, guests were encouraged to donate items on the "wish lists" of area childcare providers and families with children in childcare. Monetary donations also were accepted. As is typical of League members when a call for assistance goes out, attendees at the brunch loaded a group of tables with backpacks containing all types of family gifts as well as hygiene items.

MDW RECIPIENT: 'I Chose to Be An American' 2024 Making Democracy Work Award recipient H el ene Pohl shares her immigrant story

By H el ene Pohl

You have heard it many times: we are humbled and grateful when we are singled out for an award, and we should be. Truly, the League of Women Voters has dozens of people who are committed to the vision and the mission of the League to empower voters and defend democracy. I gratefully accept this award as one of the many tiny ants who contribute to the success of the League in our area.

Our work is crucial work. The last elections have proven that, thanks to our efforts, we had one of the highest gains in the number of voters. What we do to ensure our democracy remains vibrant is more important than ever.

First, I must tell you about my grandfather: he was the son of a Spanish immigrant and a French man who settled in Algeria after serving the French to conquer colonial territories in Northern Africa. Grand-P ere, as I called my grandpa, retired in Marseilles, France, after the independence of Algeria; he bore no resentment toward the Algerians who fought for their independence and told the French to go home.

As a young child living in the same city, I watched him offer car rides to total strangers when there was pouring rain outside, pick up gum paper on the sidewalk and call his city hall representative to complain about dog poop! I knew back then that these were small gestures, but to me, they were powerful. He sought to improve his surroundings persistently (shall I say, doggedly??) no matter the scope or influence of his endeavors. He was proud of his Frenchness the same way I became proud of my Americanness; after all, I CHOSE to be an American as I would retort to the few who dare tell me to go back where I came from.

We all contribute to the extent of our ability to forge a better nation. My passion has been to lend a helping hand to those who have made the same choice as I had 49 years ago and, in many cases, are a vulnerable part of our nation.

Immigrants today account for about 15% of the U.S. population. The overwhelming majority (77%) are in the country legally.

A growing number of unauthorized immigrants have permission to live and work in the U.S. and are temporarily protected from deportation. In 2022, about 3 million unauthorized immigrants had these temporary legal protections. Whether they live in the United States under Temporary Protected Status, DACA, are humanitarian parolees from Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Haiti, or have applied for asylum, they have found jobs, contribute to Social Security, pay taxes, rent for the most part, shop, attend churches, and take care of relatives here and back home.

That our immigration system is broken is an understatement. We need to join the voices who seek a consensus on this problem, no matter how flawed, for a solution, no matter how imperfect.

We also have a moral responsibility to take care of our neighbors. Yes, they could be future voters and yes, they are good for the economy, but more to the point, we need to stand tall to uphold their constitutional rights as US residents and their human rights to food and shelter. Ultimately and unquestionably, we all benefit from their living among us.

If Emma Lazarus calls to "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free", she also urges us to "lift our lamp beside the golden door".

Sincerely,
H el ene Pohl



H el ene and her
award nominator,
Kathie Kinnamaan

(Related information on page 8)

MDW RECIPIENT: 'I Chose to Be An American,' cont.

From the Pew Research Center*

<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/09/27/key-findings-about-us-immigrants/>

These immigrants fall into several groups:

Temporary Protected Status (TPS): About 650,000 immigrants have TPS as of July 2022. TPS is offered to individuals who cannot safely return to their home country because of civil unrest, violence, natural disaster or other extraordinary and temporary conditions.

- Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA): This program allows almost 600,000 immigrants brought to the U.S. as children before 2007 to remain in the U.S.
- Asylum applicants: About 1.6 million immigrants have pending applications for asylum in the U.S. as of mid-2022 because of dangers faced in their home country. These immigrants can stay in the U.S. legally while they wait for a decision on their case.
- Other protections: Several hundred thousand individuals have applied for special visas to become lawful immigrants. These types of visas are offered to victims of trafficking and certain other criminal activities.
- In addition, about 500,000 immigrants arrived in the U.S. by the end of 2023 under programs created for Ukrainians (U4U or Uniting for Ukraine) and people from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela (CHNV parole).
 - *Information provided by H el ene Pohl*

LWV OF WI: 2024 By the Numbers

The work of the League at the state level continues to grow in reach and impact. From reaching more voters through direct actions like texts and postcards, to expanding digital messaging, this work continues to grow. Leagues at the state and local levels connect with more people, providing essential voter resources and ensuring that more voices are heard.

By staying connected, Leagues can and do make a difference.

Here are some benchmarks for the Wisconsin League's impact during 2024:

- **586** provisional voters contacted to ensure their votes were counted
- **600** young voter birthday cards mailed
- **36,018** voters reached through the phone bank
- More than **175,000** users accessed VOTE411.org for candidate information
- More than **200,000** users visited LWVWI.org for vital voter resources
- **248,969** Get Out The Vote (GOTV) postcards mailed
- **347,117** texts sent to voters
- **10.6 million** views on Facebook and **4.5 million** views on Instagram

Watch for more information on the work of LWV of Wisconsin, or log on to LWVWI.org

Leading the Work of LWV of Appleton-Fox Cities

Leading the work of our local League is a Board of dedicated volunteers who bring experience and insight to the mission. You can find their contact information [HERE](#).

Officers: President Linda Bjella; Action Vice President Jan Quinlan; Voter Services Vice President Jacqui Klimaszewski; Secretary Deb Otteson; Treasurer Patti Clark-Strojke

Directors: Cindy Fallona, Membership; Jan Smith, Program ; Kathy Voigt, Communications/Technology; April Savage, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)