

THE INFORMED VOTER

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• Empowering Voters
• Defending Democracy

OCTOBER 2025



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: Heroes in the Fight for Democracy



Dr. Erica Chenowith* is my new hero. Author of *Why Civil Resistance Works*, Dr. Chenowith has researched what actually works in successful people-powered movements. A critical element is the involvement of women. When more women are involved, movements are more likely to be tactically innovative, maintain discipline, and create more inclusive people power.

In September, I spoke for the League at a “women-powered” news conference thanks to an invitation from Irene Strohbeen, one of our League members, who is president of NOW, National Organization of Women, Northeast Wisconsin. Together, 10 women advocated for the proposed Wisconsin Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Speakers were from local organizations: NOW, The Women’s Fund, AAUW, Delta Sigma Sorority, and several individual women who shared their personal stories of unequal treatment. It was a powerful mosaic of strong women’s voices. We hope to start a movement toward true equality in Wisconsin.



Here’s an excerpt from our League statement: “The fight for equality for all citizens is at the heart of the League. Since the 19th Century we have been working for a more just nation where all people are truly equal. Starting with the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution which gave women the right to vote and created our organization — to the 1950s and 60s Civil Rights struggles — to the fight in 1972 for an Equal Rights Amendment for the US Constitution, the League has been a strong voice for equal rights.

Wisconsin was THE FIRST state to ratify the 1972 Equal Rights Amendment to the US Constitution (and proudly so) — yet here we are, 53 years later, and our own state constitution is still without those guarantees.

This Wisconsin Equal Rights Amendment goes beyond the National ERA. This amendment guarantees equal rights, not only for women, but also for citizens with any other characteristic that threatens their rights, including: gender identity, disability, race, religion, and sexual orientation. A constitutional amendment will give Wisconsin a stronger, more permanent **legal** backbone for equal rights for all. Let us show Wisconsin’s commitment toward a more just and fair society — and for protecting all our citizens under the law. We encourage all Wisconsin voters to contact your state representatives to voice your support for this important step *Forward* for Wisconsin.”

Looking forward,
Jan

*If you’re interested in watching an inspiring 25-minute interview with [Dr. Chenowith and Celena Stewart, LWVUS Executive Director](#), please [click here](#).

LWVWI Issues Briefing: Understanding, Surviving Constitutional Crisis



We are a country in crisis. What's at stake for our democracy? How did the 3 branches of government reach this level of dysfunction? Members of our local League identify the Constitutional Crisis as one of the most disturbing threats we face today. What do we do now as citizens, advocates and voters?

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin's **Issues Briefing 2025** is virtual. This year's edition will cover what's at stake and how we fight back. Three outstanding speakers will focus on how each branch of our government is threatened and what we might do to take action during this crisis.

Wednesday, October 22, from 6:30-8:00 p.m.: **The Crisis in Our Executive Branch**, with Lauren Miller Karalunas, Democracy Counsel at Brennan Center for Justice

Saturday, October 25, from 10 a.m.-Noon: **The Crisis in Our Legislative Branch**, with Eleanor Neff Powell, Professor of Political Science at UW-Madison

Tuesday, October 28, from 6:30-8:00 p.m.: **The Crisis in Our Judicial Branch**, with Stephen Vladeck, Law Professor at Georgetown University Law Center

[Register today for LWVWI Issues Briefing 2025](#) to learn more about this crisis from the comfort of your own home. You will receive the registration links upon registration. Invite friends and family to join you to discuss together what we all can do as our democracy and rights are under attack. The more we know, the more we can do.

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK: Now Accepting Award Nominations

"How does she get so much done?!" "This organization makes a real impact." "She's growing into a real leader."

We all know hard-working people, dedicated organizations, and inspiring young people who make a positive impact in our community.

The League honors these democracy champions each year with its **Making Democracy Work Awards**, given to outstanding adults or organizations, and to young people up to age 21.

Nominations are currently open until October 15 for the 2025 award, which will be presented at the Holiday Brunch on Saturday, December 13 at Bubolz Nature Preserve. These awards recognize individuals and organizations that inspire and empower citizens to bring about positive change, to strengthen democracy, and improve our local quality of life.

Anyone can nominate an adult, youth, or organization for this prestigious award using this simple [form](#). A committee will evaluate the nominations and select the recipient(s).

DEI: Share the Conversation & the Book

By Kathie Kinnaman
DEI Director
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Is DEI dead? No way! If DEI issues interest you, please join us at the next DEI Committee meeting. We meet on Zoom, always on the first Tuesday of the month at 1:30. Think of it as a way to keep your finger on the pulse of DEI. We share events and activities related to DEI, as well as articles, TedTalks, podcasts, and possible actions to take.

We also have a DEI Book Share, which meets separately from the committee. Our next book is Everyone Who is Gone is Here: the United States, Central America and the Making of a Crisis, by Jonathon Blitzer. This book is a perfect preview of the LWVAF's November meeting on immigration.

We would welcome you to our committee, or the Book Share, or both!

ACTION: The Arts Connect Voters in Creative Ways

Submitted By Nancy Jones, Action Vice President
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LWVUS declared that our nation is in a Constitutional crisis and is calling all members and US eligible voters to Unite & Rise to defend democracy. As League members, we've been working for a more perfect union and an informed electorate all along. To meet this moment, we need a few new ways to connect with voters. Yes, we need calls, letters, letters-to-the-editor, forums, rallies and press conferences—and we need the arts to help us expand our reach. Check out these October opportunities!

CALL FOR POETRY SUBMISSIONS

BY OCTOBER 15, 2025

LIBERTY • AUTONOMY • EQUITY PEACE • TRUTH • JUSTICE FREEDOM • EXPRESSION • ACCESS UNITED • FORWARD • ONE

ACTIVIST ARTIST NIKI JOHNSON / PHILARIS OF DEMOCRACY

We invite original poems that reflect on the *guiding principles of democracy*—such as justice, equality, freedom, civic engagement, and the common good.

We welcome a wide range of voices, styles, and perspectives. Surprise us with something fresh—insightful, musical, memorable. We're looking for poems that move us: make us laugh, cry, reflect, or see the world in a new way.

DEMOCRACY'S URGENT CALL
 A POETRY ANTHOLOGY BY MEMBERS OF
THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTER'S

100 POEMS
 BY LEAGUE MEMBERS
 FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Join us as we express our love of country and Democracy by lifting our voices together to celebrate America's 250th birthday.

Please submit your poem here:
<https://bit.ly/4pkWCzK>

Register at <https://bit.ly/4pkWCzK>

ANTI-AUTHORITARIAN ARTISTIC ACTIVISM:

What We Can Learn, What We Can Do

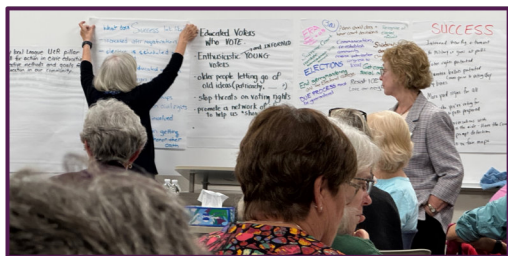
A FREE EVENT
 Wednesday, October 15
 at 3:00pm ET
 on Zoom
REGISTER TODAY

THE CENTER • FOR ARTISTIC ACTIVISM

The Wisconsin League shares this invitation to join the Center For Artistic Activism's Co-founder & Research Director Stephen Duncombe for an energizing, inspiring, and surprisingly fun session on what artistic activism looks like under authoritarian rule — what works, what doesn't, and how we can use these lessons here and now.

Reserve your spot [HERE](https://bit.ly/4pkWCzK).

ACTION: Lively Input at Unite & Rise Information Session



Read details in the "Programs" article on Page 5.

PUBLIC SAFETY STUDY: Trauma, Crisis Services for Victims

By April Savage & Karen Pfefferle
Public Safety Study Team

The Fox Cities League of Women Voters Research Study on Public Safety is developing new advocacy positions on public safety. We are conducting research locally, to ensure we are advocating for the most impactful policy change. As promised, this is the fourth in our series of newsletter updates and action opportunities to keep you informed on special topics. Past issues we've discussed include the need to eliminate crimeless revocation, investing in early social intervention, and conflict resolution outside of the courthouse. These past articles are available [HERE](#).

In this issue, we would like to dive more deeply into victim services available to those experiencing trauma and crises. Trauma and crime have a wide-reaching and lasting impact on our communities. They have a ripple effect upon all of us. In Outagamie County, crimes are committed against individuals or businesses, who suffer direct or indirect physical, Emotional, or financial harm after the crime or attempted crime. Beyond the direct victim are other victims, such as the family members, the bystanders, the interveners, and the general populace who feel less safe within their own community. Restorative Justice seeks to examine the harmful impact of a crime and then determines what can be done to repair that harm while holding the person who caused it accountable for his or her actions. Victim services based on restorative justice practices empower victims by giving them a voice and focuses on healing, resolution, and closure. Sadly, there is a great need for victim services here in the Fox Cities, and your talents and support are needed. Read on to learn more.

The Fox Cities Victim Crisis Response Team ([VCR Team](#)) is a 501(c)(3), volunteer-based organization that assists local law enforcement agencies and other emergency personnel in providing on-scene support for community members in the aftermath of a crime or traumatic event. Established in 1997 by the Appleton Police Department, its members provide immediate support to those in crises, and follows up with community members after the crime or traumatic event to ensure they're getting the services and resources necessary to heal and move forward.

The VCR Team currently partners with the following law enforcement agencies:
Appleton • Grand Chute • Kaukauna • Neenah • Winnebago County Sheriff • Shiocton • Outagamie County Sheriff • Menasha • Fox Crossing • Fox Valley Metro • Hortonville • Seymour • Omro • Oneida • Oshkosh. The team also coordinates and connects those served with many [local organizations](#) offering long-term support, including Diverse & Resilient, Harbor House, Prevent Suicide Fox Cities, UnitedWay, LEAVEN, Reach Counseling, and many others.

The VCR Team currently has two full-time employees and about 60 volunteers. Each volunteer is trained and given materials that cover the variety of cases that they may be called in for. Their main funding source is the Federal Victims of Crime ACT (VOCA). Therefore they can only engage with victims if 1). A "crime" is committed (e.g. overdose is a crime, suicide is not) and 2). If they are called out by law enforcement and the victim(s) are open to their help. Wisconsin's [Marsy's Law](#) is explained by the law enforcement officers to the impacted victim, and they do have the right to refuse the VCR team's services.

The types of calls they receive can vary from domestic violence, homicide, sexual assault, overdose, childcare/abuse, etc. These are all critical but extremely difficult situations — such as explaining to a child why a parent is going to jail, or helping a parent navigate the myriad resources in the community to help with a domestic violence or sexual abuse case for their child. In learning more about their work, it's clear that law enforcement officers who have worked with and seen the VCR Team in action are those most likely to call, as they see first hand how they can assist at crime scenes and with victims. The VCR Team does offer training to law enforcement officers, in the hopes of increasing awareness of their services. They also participate in ride-alongs with law enforcement officers. The process for becoming a volunteer includes online application, fingerprinting, a background check, and interview with a police panel. It is a process that takes commitment, and the work is difficult.

Like so many other organizations addressing those who suffer in our community, the VCR Team understands first hand how devastating the impacts of lack of sufficient/affordable mental health care is in our community. They also only received about half of their federal VOCA grant compared to previous years. Therefore, they greatly appreciate any monetary donations or items on their wish list from those who are unable to volunteer but interested in supporting their work. Learn more about how you can help [here](#).

Programs: Presentations, Brunch Highlight Wisconsin Culture

By Jan Smith, Program Director
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Your League has had a busy start to this fall!

We began our year with a great tour of the Outagamie County Recycling Facility in early September. Then we closed the month with the Legislative Town Hall facilitated by President Jan Quinlan fielding questions to three participating legislators: Jacque, Snodgrass and Palmieri.

On Monday, October 6, Jan Quinlan, Nancy Jones and Sue Abrahamson provided an overview of **Unite and Rise 8.5** at FVTC, with members of the Winnebago County League invited to participate and share their ideas. The agenda laid the groundwork for the Unite & Rise initiative and the underlying belief that the involvement of women and the League are needed to ensure it's objective succeeds. Toward that end, the format drew about 60 members and non-members in attendance to share which threats to democracy most inspire them to *do something*. We cannot emphasize the word **WORK** enough. You are needed, so please continue to follow our League as we formulate our steps to action.

It is becoming more and more difficult to keep up with the latest issues facing immigration and the needs of immigrants, so in November, we are calling on the efforts of the experts. This important and informative meeting will provide insight to the complexities immigrants face in our communities and will attempt to create a broader understanding of these populations, as well as defining the terms we often confuse: immigrant, documented, and undocumented. Join us for this insightful opportunity to learn more, and as always, how you can help.

Monday, November 3, 6:30-8:00 p.m., "Immigrants in our Community" • Girl Scout Headquarters: Attorney Marc Christopher, Lisa Cruz representing the Multicultural Center, and Chantal Baseke of Hope and Help Together will define the terminology around immigrants, and discuss the challenges as well as the misunderstandings they face in the community.

Let's close the year with cheer and good company with our League's annual Holiday Brunch on December 13 from 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at Bulbolz Nature Preserve. Cost to attend is \$30 per person. In addition to announcing the Making Democracy Work Awards, the presentation will focus on the League's National position on DEI. Watch for an invitation soon.

"**Doubling Down on DEI**" will be presented by LWVWI President Jeanne Roberts, who will focus on what she learned at the LWVUS conference regarding the organizational position on DEI. Then April Savage and Christy Schwan will talk about the CAC and share the slides they developed about LWVWI and other local Leagues' DEI initiatives.

A **Silent Auction** with the theme of "**Made in Wisconsin**" will be the fundraising element this year, with plans to establish it on-line **November 3 - 17** — in time to offer holiday gift ideas prior to the Holiday Brunch. Baskets developed for this are encouraged to not only use the theme "Buy Local" when assembling them, but be creative and extend them into the multi-cultural direction with local businesses. Help is welcomed now to seek auction items and create the baskets. Connie Radtke is chairing this initiative.

To offer baskets or items to add to a basket, please email info@lwvappletonfoxcities.org. Contact Cindy Fallona at 920- 606-3475 to have your donated items picked up, or to set up a time to drop them off.



VOTER SERVICE: Civics Game Wins Fans at Community Events

By Jacqui Klimaszewski

Voter Services Vice President

voterservice@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

September Events

During the month of September, 18 volunteers contributed 75 hours of voter registration and information on voting! This resulted in 5 registrations – and provided information to 102, including 11 contacts with possible new members. There were also contacts made with numerous agencies regarding possible tabling events in the future. These are great results and the efforts of our volunteers are much appreciated.

The events included LatinoFest, World Peace Day, National Voter Registration Day at the entryway at the Appleton Public Library, and at the Community Partnership Dental Center.

What's Next?

We have exciting news! LWVUS is joining **No Kings 2** as a national partner on Saturday, October 18. **LWVUS has decided to become an official partner** for this day of mobilization to stand up against hate and authoritarianism. League members are encouraged to show up wearing their League gear. The League has consistently and boldly spoken up in the face of rising authoritarianism. This is an opportunity to put words into action and show up in defense of democracy as an effective ally.



The LWV of Appleton-Fox Cities will participate on the ground in a nonpartisan manner on **Saturday, October 18 from 11:00-1:00 starting in Houdini Plaza**. Rather than the usual “tabling”, volunteers will be wearing a League apron and offering voting information and postcards with the Oath of Office for elected officials. These cards are intended to be sent to senators and representatives regarding issues that are of concern to individuals. If you are interested in being a volunteer, sign up NOW: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0B44ADAB2FA6FCC07-59252092-lwvno>

ALSO--Planning is underway for community involvement at the Appleton Public Library with tabling augmenting voter registration assistance by providing civics information on the various aspects of city, county, and state government. This would include the roles, responsibilities, and impacts of each of these areas to help citizens get a better understanding of the importance of voting in these elections as well as helping them register to vote. This will be from 9:00 a.m. to noon on November 22, and again the third Saturday of each month through December 2026. Look for volunteer sign-up information starting November 1.

VOTER SERVICE: Adopt a Municipal Clerk

By Jacqui Klimaszewski

Voter Services Vice President

voterservice@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

Looking for a way to contribute to the League? Here is a specific, short-term data gathering project that can be done from home.

As we strive to connect with more voters in the “Fox Cities”, we must make our services known. With the increase in our numbers, it’s possible to do this! We are looking for LWV members to volunteer to be a contact for the League with their municipality/school district. The contact, ideally, would be someone who votes in that municipality.

Candidate information for local races is obtained through the municipal clerk. The League knows about the hard work these officials do and we are very appreciative. This project aims to strengthen our communication with them. Also, each school district office must be contacted to get school district candidate information. Here is the gist of the project.

Goals

- Strengthen connections between local municipal clerks and LWV Appleton-Fox Cities
- Support local municipal clerks as appropriate
- Gather candidate data for VOTE411 from local municipalities and school district offices
- Identify issues for VOTE411 questions

Responsibilities (additional training regarding procedures, scripts, spreadsheets, etc. will be provided)

- Contact municipal clerk to introduce yourself and share the nonpartisan nature of the League.
- Second week of January, contact the clerk (school district) for the following information (this information is on their paperwork for running for office and this is an open records request):

(Continued on page 7)

VOTER SERVICE: Adopt a Municipal Clerk, continued

- ✓ All local offices that will be on the ballot and the name of each candidate for each office as it will appear on the ballot.
- ✓ Request the address, phone number, and email address for each candidate (these need to be campaign/personal—not from the municipality in the case of an incumbent).
- ✓ The order of candidates on the ballot when available.
- ✓ Deposit information in shared folder for access by VOTE411 volunteers (Julie Evers and J. Klimaszewski).
- ✓ Add any specific questions that are germane to hot issues in the locality/school district at the time (land use, sewers, policies etc.)

While we have the municipalities of Appleton and Grand Chute covered, many others in the Fox Cities area are not. Because member addresses don't always match the voting municipality, we are sending this **call for volunteers**. Also, we have the Appleton Area School District covered, but not all the others, so please consider adopting a school district in your voting area.

So far, we have these municipalities covered:

City of Appleton/AASD - J. Klimaszewski
Grand Chute - Linda Bjella
City of Kaukauna/KASD- Cindy Fallona
Village of Harrison - Irene Strohbeen
Town of Buchanan - Sandi Rohde

If you are willing and able to adopt a clerk or have questions, please contact voterservice@lwwappletonfoxcities.org

In Memoriam: Dr. Sally Roesch Wagner

The League of Women Voters of Appleton-Fox Cities reports with great sadness the passing of Dr. Sally Roesch Wagner, lecturer, author, and storyteller of women's rights history.

Dr. Roesch Wagner was our keynote speaker at the 19th Amendment Centennial Kick-off Brunch on December 14, 2019, the first of several events planned for the centennial year. Roesch Wagner spoke on "The Influence of Indigenous Women on Early Suffragettes." She was a great story teller, infusing this little known history with passion, riveting the audience of over 200 people. Her impact on our League, as well as on the other Coalition members (AAUW, The Women's Fund, Mid-Day Women's Alliance, and the NE Wisconsin Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta) was significant. She certainly energized us in every way possible.



— Marti Hemwall, co-chair, 19th Amendment Centennial Celebration Coalition (2018-2021)

Oh, Deer!
Need gifts for holiday giving?

Check out the League's Store for shirts, hoodies, mugs & more!
Snap a pic of the dangling QR code, then scroll through the assortment of items that support the League — and solve your gift giving dilemmas!