

THE INFORMED VOTER

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• Empowering Voters
• Defending Democracy

NOVEMBER 2025



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: Local Budgets, Local Heroes



Despite the threats to our democracy and our rights – and the chaos and dysfunction of our federal government – there is reassuring news close to home for the Fox Cities. Our local governments continue to provide excellent services and programs to our residents. Highly proficient local leaders, and elected and professional staff, work daily to ensure that we can have confidence in our essential services and quality of life in the Fox Cities.

Those League members who observed our City of Appleton, Outagamie County, and Town of Grand Chute budget reviews found much to support and applaud. Despite cuts at the federal level, unfunded mandates from the state level, and the inflation everyone is facing — this year our county, town, and city were able to maintain the services we have come to expect. Click on the links below to read our 2026 budget statements: [Outagamie County](#), [City of Appleton](#), [Town of Grand Chute](#).

How long can local governments do this? Not forever, and in the case of the Appleton Area School District, not even this year. AASD faces a \$13 million deficit due to increases in utilities, transportation, technology, staff compensation, and serving students with special needs. To make matters worse, the State of Wisconsin legislature's 2025-2027 biennial budget has no increased school funds despite their surplus of at least \$1 billion. Top this off with the decrease in federal education funding.

The only way AASD can continue to function will be up to the voters who will need to approve a referendum this coming year. If you live in the AASD, you received an important survey in the mail last week prior to this planned referendum. <https://www.aasd.k12.wi.us/district/district-information/referendum>. AASD residents can complete the survey in one of the following ways:

- Online, using their unique email link
- By mailing back the printed survey
- By dropping off the completed surveys at any AASD school

Please do your part: read through and complete the AASD survey before the November 26 deadline. Then it will be up to us, the local grassroots residents, to maintain the fine level of education for which our community is known.

If you're not an AASD resident, please prepare for your own local school district to be facing these same fiscal issues soon.

Looking forward,
Jan

PRESIDENT: Important PHISHING ALERT using League names

A number of our members have received suspicious looking emails which “look like” they have come from Janice Quinlan, League President. If a message from me looks suspicious to you, it is probably a scam. **Do not open any links in the email or try to respond to it.**

Most of these emails have my name but a different email address than my personal address. They may ask you to respond or even to purchase gift cards. This is called PHISHING – the fraudulent and malicious use of emails to obtain money.

PHISHING is becoming more prevalent using the names of people in leadership positions like ministers and non-profit leaders. And they are looking more authentic. Any email that is actually from me will come from my personal email address which you can find using the members only directory on the website. (I’m not going to print it here for obvious reasons.) I will NOT send you a personal email from president@lwvappletonfoxcities.org or any other address except my personal one. Even then, if it looks suspicious – check with me first before taking any action.

I do appreciate *knowing about* these PHISHING attempts — if you’re so inclined, you can forward them to me or contact me by phone. We have filed a fraud alert with the State of Wisconsin – but the best way to combat these is through your awareness of the scam. Apologies for any inconvenience – but this is the best we can do in fighting these online crime attempts.

—Jan

DEI: Group Decides to Alternate Books, Other Resources

By Kathie Kinnaman
DEI Director
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We have a new member - welcome, Joann Gorski! How exciting to have a new point of view.

After a lot of discussion, it was decided that we all want to keep meeting every month. For me at least, it's like getting therapy! But to make it easier for everyone to

A. GET the book, and

B. READ the book,

we are going to pick a book and then discuss it in 2 months. In the intervening month, we will discuss something that takes a lot less time - maybe a documentary, maybe a podcast, maybe an article.

We will of course be flexible. Sometimes circumstances may make it necessary to change things around.

So for November 19, we will meet at Seth's in Little Chute at 2 p.m. We will discuss this 50-minute NPR podcast:

<https://www.npr.org/transcripts/nx-s1-5544347>, and for December (no date yet) we will discuss The Summer of our Discontent: The Age of Certainty and the Demise of Discourse, by Thomas Chatterton Williams.

Always looking for suggestions of podcasts, documentaries, books, and meeting places.

Grateful for you all!



Members of the DEI committee hear postcard directions from Shirley Strange, right. Pictured, l to r, Linda Bjella, Mary Sullivan, Jann Dreier, Gordon Lind, Cindy Fallona.

ACTION: Unite & Rise Team Identifies Pillars for Local Campaign

By Nancy Jones
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On October 6, members of the Appleton-Fox Cities League gathered to learn about the national and state League Unite & Rise 8.5 campaigns and help shape our local actions to contribute to the mass civic engagement mobilization. Attendees learned that input from our local members determined 3 Pillars for our local campaign:

1. Elections and Voting Rights
2. Constitutional Rights & Duties w/emphasis on PROCESS - How government should be working and how laws and due process are being flaunted.
 - i. Individual Rights, e.g. due process for citizens and immigrants
 - ii. Freedom of the Press, especially for accountability for mis- and dis-information
 - iii. Amassing and misuse of executive power and failure of Congress to exercise its power
3. Impact of Federal Policy Changes on NE Wisconsin residents and communities

The Unite & Rise Team asked members and guests to share their ideas for tactics and creative approaches for reaching more eligible voters, and people had many ideas to share. After processing all the great input, the LWV-AFC Unite & Rise Team has organized into four tactical workgroups, with a possible fifth in the new year.

- Arts & Visibility
- Civic Education & Gaming
- Coalition Building
- Media and Story Gathering/Storytelling about local impacts
- Relational Voter Engagement

The Unite & Rise Team members have chosen a workgroup, and each group is making plans for action. **Each of the workgroups would welcome and needs more League and community members to join them.** Please email Nancy Jones (njones.wisconsin@gmail.com) or Sue Abrahamson (abrahamsonsue@gmail.com) if you would like more information or to find out how to get connected with the overall team and/or a specific workgroup. This is an "all hands on deck" moment in our nation.

Participate right now by signing up for LWV-Wisconsin's bi-weekly Unite & Rise 8.5 newsletter. It is a curated list of articles, resources, opportunities, and actions you can take as an individual. You can sign up for both the newsletter and action alerts [here](#). Your subscription will help LWVWI track progress toward Wisconsin's share of the 8.5 million engaged eligible voters. Thank you!

VOTER SERVICES: Play City, County, State Civics Challenge

By Jacqueline Klimaszewski
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The LWV Appleton-Fox Cities participated with "boots on the ground" in a nonpartisan manner at the "No Kings" rally. Rather than the usual "tabling," volunteers wore a League apron (Thank you, Patti Clark-Stojke!) with numerous pockets that contained voting information and postcards with the Oath to Democracy to the US Constitution for elected officials. These cards were passed out to the crowd to send to their senators and representative regarding issues that are of concern to them. Thank you to Renee Gralewicz for the printed address labels and statements for members in the crowd to use to contact their senators/representative. Volunteers also wore badges with the address QR code to Congress.

This was a very successful day. Some 12 volunteers contributed a total of 34.5 hours and handed out 1,150 accountability cards, many with stickers with statements!! And 32 participants in the rally received voter information, while 11 membership forms were handed out. Please consider joining us for future rallies!

MOVING FORWARD:

The League will be at the Appleton Public Library with tabling augmenting the usual voter registration assistance by providing civics information on the various aspects of city, county and state government. This will include the roles, responsibilities and impacts of each of these areas to help citizens get a better understanding of the importance of voting in spring elections, as well as helping them register to vote. There will be handouts and new questions on each topic for the Civics Game.

These tabling events will be from 9:00 a.m.-noon starting on November 22, and thereafter on the third Saturday of each month through December 2026. Look for volunteer sign up information starting November 1. Check your availability for these dates through April: December 20, January 17, February 21, March 21, April 18.

To volunteer, sign up here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0B44ADAB2FA6FCC07-60164866-voter>

PUBLIC SAFETY STUDY: Reentry Through Justice Reinvestment

By Karen Pfefferle and April Savage
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 fifth 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, conflict resolution outside of the courthouse, and victim crises response team. These past articles are available [HERE](#).



Public Safety Study Team, top l to r: Jan Smith, Hélène Pohl, Cindy Fallona, Jean Janes, Deb Otteson, Mary Klasen; bottom l to r: Linda Bjella, April Savage, Karen Pfefferle, Jan Quinlan, Ada Hall.

This month, we will dive more deeply into what happens when someone leaves jail or prison. Each year, at least 129,000 different people are booked into local jails in Wisconsin. According to the Prison Policy Initiative, Wisconsin has an incarceration rate of 615 per 100,000 people (including prisons, jails, immigration detention, and juvenile justice facilities), meaning that it locks up a higher percentage of its people than almost [any democratic country on earth](#).

We would like to highlight community resources for reentry and what is often termed justice reinvestment. Finding stable housing, employment, medical care, and overcoming legal barriers, top the list of challenges faced upon leaving jail or prison. Studies show that around two-thirds will likely be rearrested within three years of their release, according to the [Office of Justice Programs](#) and the [Department of Justice](#).

Reentry programs give high risk and high need people the support they need to successfully return to their communities after incarceration, and can greatly improve public safety. In researching local agencies and organizations who serve those reentering in Outagamie County and beyond, we discovered that our community offers a comprehensive and holistic approach to reentry. Read on to explore this topic and consider donating or becoming involved.

This month the League interviewed Nicole Spangenberg and Stephanie Starke of Riverview Gardens. Riverview Garden's mission is to replace barriers to reentry with skills for success and well-being. The popular misconception about Riverview Gardens is that their organization teaches farming. Nicole and Stephanie underscore they are teaching the soft skills: social and emotional learning, time management skills, interview skills, and resume writing. These programs are designed to quickly allow individuals to enter employment, but clients may remain until they feel ready to move into a new community employment opportunity.

Service Works is their trademark program and moves their clients, who are ready to get their lives on track, from working with peer specialists at Riverview Gardens to working for employee partners in the community. During our interview, we learned how staff understands the importance of celebrating each step — overcoming the challenge of a morning routine, bus travel, energy demands, and arriving on time at 8 a.m. We saw how supportive friendships are formed and reinforced, moving together from transitional housing at COTS to employment preparedness.

Two examples of the programs Riverview offers are:

- **Riverview Culinary Program** (six wks.): <https://riverviewgardens.org/culinary/>
- **Riverview Urban Farm Program** (90 hrs.): <https://riverviewgardens.org/urban-farm/>

If you would like to support this community and contribute to further the mission of Riverview Gardens, our partners in public safety, please see the options below.

- **Hire a Graduate:** <https://riverviewgardens.org/hire-a-serviceworks-graduate/>
- **Donate:** <https://riverviewgardens.org/donate/>
- **Volunteer:** <https://riverviewgardens.org/volunteer/>

Rising to meet the challenges of reentry are the pillars of public safety and a reflection of a community's well-being. To truly support individuals in their reintegration into society, and thus advance public safety, each community is challenged to take inventory. Are transitional housing and employment available? Are returning community members mentally and physically well? Are they able to find healthy relationships, meaningful civic and community engagement?

To see a sampling of resources in our area listed in the LWV 2025 Public Safety Study Resources document, please click [HERE](#).

PROGRAMS: Looking for Answers to Challenges Facing Immigrants

By Jan Smith, Program Director

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On Monday, November 3, the room at the Girl Scout offices was filled with expectant participants looking for answers. Our program focus was “Immigrants in Our Community,” with three excellent panelists: Marc Christopher, an immigration attorney, who practices with his wife, who is an immigrant from Mexico; Lisa Cruz, Executive Director of the Multicultural Coalition in Menasha and who also is married to an immigrant from the Philippines; and Pheona Kisebo and Chantel Baseke, both African immigrants working for Hope and Help Together, Appleton. While Lisa, Pheona, and Chantel painted a picture of the help needed by those they work with, the help that they are receiving, and their daily struggles, Marc offered insights to the legal terminology and the long, challenging path to citizenship many of the immigrants face — if they make it at all.

Marc was receiving the most attention from this bewildered but hopeful audience as they searched for ways to help, and understand the complexities of the immigrant population. However, when a question was asked about how these populations are received in the local community, the bandaid came off. While there is an incredible amount of empathy and assistance, there is also fear and deep anxiety by the immigrants, and in Lisa’s case, extreme threatening prejudice.

Immigrants are frightened. They don’t know who to trust. ICE does not currently have a presence in the local community; however, they are working with our county sheriff’s departments. Marc and Lisa emphasized that it’s not a matter of if, but when. It was evident that this audience was compassionate and wanted to take action; so the messages varied from donations and volunteering to becoming a more powerful advocate. Marc had the following recommendations post meeting for anyone concerned:

1. Really reach out to Federal Legislators, meet with local law enforcement officials, talk about things like public safety, using taxpayer dollars to protect people, not facilitate removal of the most vulnerable.
2. Discuss how statistics show that local cooperation with ICE leads to increased crime as people are less likely to come forward.
3. Talk to neighbors: many people don’t understand the immigration process; they are listening to politicians demonize immigrants, and don’t really put themselves in the shoes of the immigrant.
4. People say “do it the right way,” but there is no “right way” for the vast majority, as Marc emphasized the complexities and the existing prejudices.

Below is a glossary of terms to help unravel the complex labels:

- **Immigrant:** A person authorized to live permanently in the U.S. (usually with a “green card”)
- **Nonimmigrant:** A person admitted temporarily for a specific purpose (e.g., student, visitor, worker)
- **LPR (Lawful Permanent Resident):** A “green card” holder with authorization to live and work indefinitely
- **Asylee / Refugee:** A person granted protection due to persecution or fear of persecution based on a protected ground
- **Parolee:** Someone allowed to enter temporarily for humanitarian or public interest reasons
- **Adjustment of Status (AOS):** The process of applying for a green card from inside the U.S.
- **Consular Processing:** Applying for a visa or immigrant status at a U.S. consulate abroad
- **Admission:** The lawful entry of a person into the U.S. after inspection by an immigration officer
- **Asylum:** Protection granted in the U.S. to those fearing persecution.
- **TPS (Temporary Protected Status):** Temporary relief for nationals of countries facing crisis (e.g., war, disaster)
- **DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals):** Protection from removal and work authorization for eligible individuals who came as children
 - **U Visa / T Visa:** For victims of crime (U) or trafficking (T)
 - **VAWA (Violence Against Women Act):** Allows abused spouses, children, or parents of U.S. citizens or LPRs to self-petition.



From the post meeting conversations and the questions during, it is evident that League members want to act. Here is contact information for these organizations, whether you wish to volunteer or support them financially. We will continue to provide information for local initiatives and beyond.

HOPE AND HELP TOGETHER

To Donate: <https://www.hopeandhelpttogether.com/donate>

To Volunteer: <https://www.hopeandhelpttogether.com/volunteering>

MULTICULTURAL COALITION, INC.

To Donate: <https://ourmci.org/donations/>

To Volunteer: <https://ourmci.org/volunteer/>

EVENTS: Holiday Brunch Extends DEI Theme

On **Saturday, December 13**, our Annual Holiday Brunch takes place at Bubolz Nature Preserve from 9:30 a.m. until about 1:00 p.m. Please register online through the website calendar and bring guests. Watch for your invitation via email.

"Doubling Down on DEI," the brunch panel presentation, will feature our very own Jeanne Roberts, President of LWVWI, who will provide an overview of the national and state League's initiatives on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Christy Schwan, who co-chairs the LWVWI Community Alliances Committee with April Savage, will talk about how we can strengthen alliance-building and coalition-building using a DEI lens.

Our local DEI committee will be on hand to distribute postcards they have prepared to send to national leaders on issues that affect many people in our own community.

We're saving a few very unique Silent Auction items to extend the bidding excitement at the brunch as well. The full auction wraps up November 17, so be sure to check it out and join the action. Copy the link from the ad below.

This is always a wonderful opportunity to be socializing and advocating with League friends. We hope to see you there.

MEMBERSHIP: New Members, New Process

By Linda Bjella
Membership Director
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Dear League Members,

We are excited to welcome three fantastic new members to the League of Women Voters of Appleton-Fox Cities! Please join us in greeting **Julie Walborn** from Weyauwega, and **Leah Olson** and **Wanda Van De Hey** from Appleton. Their passion and commitment help strengthen our community and our mission. We're so glad to have them with us!

Thanks to your involvement and dedication, our membership has grown to 170 members—up from 143 last year. This increase shows the power of working together and the importance of our mission in the Fox Cities area. Every new member brings fresh energy and ideas, making our League stronger than ever.

Most membership renewal dates are set for January 31, 2026. Please keep an eye out for renewal emails from LWV-US as we approach that date. These reminders will help ensure your membership stays current, so you can continue to participate in our programs and advocacy efforts.

In the coming weeks, you will receive a letter from the local League. This letter will highlight our recent accomplishments and outline our future goals, all centered around empowering voters and defending democracy. We're proud of what we've achieved together, and we look forward to building on our success.

Thank you for being part of our vibrant League community. Your engagement makes a real difference. Let's stay connected, keep learning, and continue working toward a fair and inclusive democracy for all.

There are a few of our favorite things in the
Silent Auction!

Celebrate the season of giving by lifting up the works of Wisconsin businesses, artisans and thoughtful people by selecting from the curated list of bid-worthy items in the League's 2025 fundraiser.

Hurry! Bidding is live only through November 17th! Don't miss out on the fun and the opportunity to support the League.

<https://www.32auctions.com/CelebrateWI2025>

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF APPLETON-FOX CITIES