

THE INFORMED VOTER

www.lwvappletonfoxcities.org • PO Box 1281, Appleton, WI 54912 • 920.738.7766

• Empowering Voters
• Defending Democracy

Unite & Rise 8.5
in Action

JANUARY 2026

GUEST PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: Hope Is a Verb



Our January President's Message features a guest president, our own Jeanne Roberts, LWVWI President, who shared these remarks at our January 10 Lively Issues meeting.



Over the holidays I read an article about the psychology of hope. The author talked about hope as a verb, an action. "While optimism is the BELIEF that the future will be better, hope is the belief that we have the power to make it so." And what I saw at Houdini Plaza last night and what I see happening all around the state and country is hope as a verb. Ours is an organization that is set up to keep hope a verb – to use our power and put into action what we need to do in order to empower voters, defend democracy and take our country back.

The LWVUS Board held a retreat last fall to brainstorm how to deal with the issues that we face. They came up with five identity markers for our organization:

To fight the current anti-democratic regime, we need to:

- Be bolder in calling out very clearly antidemocratic actions which will at times include naming names. Instead of saying the executive, legislative or judicial branch, we need to say Trump, Wied, Gorsuch, or any other person who threatens our democracy.
- Be louder and more visible. We need to be strategic with our media partnerships – speaking out unapologetically and strategically using our research based positions. And we need to not be afraid of the accusation of being partisan.
- Be activist – we need to mobilize our grassroots volunteers quickly and visibly.
- Be nimble – we need to make and act on decisions quickly including enabling our leaders across all levels of LWV to call out attacks on democracy.
- Be more influential – we need to be centering marginalized communities while influencing public opinion and public policy.

These are the things that make hope a verb for the LWV. All the hard work that each and every one of you do is what makes hope a verb for our organization and our democracy.

Jeanne Roberts, President
League of Women Voters of Wisconsin

HOW DOES OUR LAW ENFORCEMENT KEEP US SAFE?
WHAT CAN WE DO TO ENSURE LAW ENFORCEMENT AND
JUSTICE ARE EQUITABLE?

TUNE IN TO THIS FREE VIRTUAL PROGRAM AS
THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF APPLETON-FOX CITIES
WALKS THROUGH ITS 2-YEAR STUDY ON PUBLIC SAFETY

BEYOND THE BADGE & BAR: PUBLIC SAFETY IN OUR COMMUNITY

MONDAY, JANUARY 26
6:30 - 8:00 P.M.

REGISTER HERE:

[HTTPS://LWVAPPLETONFOXCITIES.ORG/CONTENT.ASP
X?PAGE_ID=4091&CLUB_ID=264322&ITEM_ID=2857344](https://lwvappletonfoxcities.org/content.asp?PAGE_ID=4091&CLUB_ID=264322&ITEM_ID=2857344)



The League of Women Voters of Appleton-Fox Cities has spent the last two years researching answers to these questions. If you are interested in learning more, or wish to know the next steps, please join us for this free virtual program.

Videoconference information will be provided via email once registration is complete.

ACTION: Legislators Share Agendas for 2026 at Town Hall

By Linda Bjella
Membership Director
membership@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

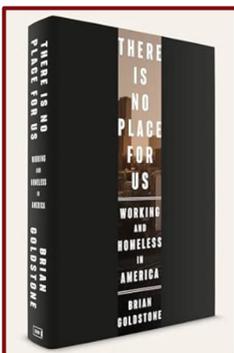
Since 2020, our League has sponsored a virtual **Legislative Town Hall** during each session of the Wisconsin Legislature. This provides an opportunity for our members and the public to hear first-hand about current and pending legislation, and the priorities of their elected representatives.

We are proud that legislators from both political parties have been willing to participate. For the first hour, legislators will share their priorities and respond to prepared questions. During the final 30 minutes, audience questions will be addressed as time allows.

The League of Winnebago County will join us as we hold the Legislative Town Hall on **Monday, February 2 from 6:30-8:00 p.m.** The format will be a Zoom webinar. Members will receive an email with a registration link soon. You can also find a registration link on our website, lwvappletonfoxcities.org under "Upcoming Events."

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION: Connecting in the Community

By Kathie Kinnaman
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Director
dei@lwvappletonfoxcities.org



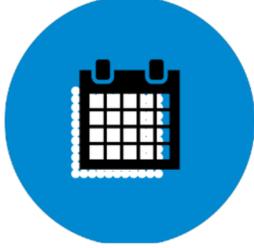
The DEI Committee started 2026 by discussing our focus for this year. We plan to expand our reach by finding ways to connect with other organizations in the Fox Valley —attending their events, perhaps volunteering. The committee also regularly shares stories of successes and challenges to DEI in our area. We are always accepting new members!

On February 18 at 6:00 p.m. at XE 53 Wine & Cocktail Lounge, 1350 W. American Dr., Neenah, the DEI Book Share group will discuss There Is No Place for Us Here: Working and Homeless in America by Brian Goldstone. This book is highly recommended by the New York Times. New members to the group are always welcome. Didn't read the book? Join us for the great conversations!

VOTER SERVICE: Important Dates for April 7 Spring Election

INFORMATION FROM myvote.wi.gov

Voter Registration- Deadlines for the April 7, 2026 Spring Election



Deadlines for Voter Registration and Absentee ballots are listed below. More in-depth information can be found at: <https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/Voter-Deadlines>

Please note this important change regarding the deadline for the Absentee Ballot to be returned:

The postmark on the ballot is no longer the deciding factor as to whether the vote can be counted or not. The absentee ballot MUST BE RECEIVED by the clerk BY 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, or it will NOT be counted. Given the post office routing changes, please get your ballot mailed AT LEAST A WEEK before the election.

March 18, 2026- Deadline to [Register by Mail](#) or to register on-line at MyVote.Wi.US. Your voter registration form, along with [proof of residence](#) must be postmarked to your [municipal clerk](#) no later than March 18, 2026. [Find your Municipal Clerk's Contact Information here.](#)

March 18, 2026- Deadline to [Register to vote online.](#) - Voters who are able to match their name, date of birth, Wisconsin Driver License or State ID number, and address with the Wisconsin DMV can register to vote online through March 18, 2026.

Absentee Voting- Deadlines for the April 7, 2026 Spring Election

All registered voters in Wisconsin can request an absentee ballot be mailed to them for any reason. To request an absentee ballot on MyVote.wi.gov [click here](#). You must provide a photo ID with your absentee ballot request, more information on photo ID can be found [here](#).

March 17, 2026 - Absentee ballots sent to voters with active request already on file.

April 2, 2026 @ 5:00 p.m.- Deadline to Request an Absentee Ballot- Regular and Temporary Overseas Voters

April 3, 2026 @ 5:00 p.m.- Deadline to Request an Absentee Ballot- Indefinitely Confined and Military

March 24, 2026, possibly through April 5, 2026 - In-Person Absentee Voting period. Office hours vary by municipality. Some municipal offices may not offer additional in-person absentee hours [Please contact your municipal clerk for absentee voting hours.](#)

April 7, 2026 @ 8:00 p.m.- Deadline to Return Absentee Ballot- If you have already received an absentee ballot, you must return your absentee ballot by mail or delivery to your [municipal clerk](#). Your ballot must be received by your municipal clerk no later than 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, April 7, 2026.

VOTER SERVICES: Local Notes on Elections, Forums, Training

By Jacqui Klimaszewski
Voter Services Vice President
voterservice@lwwappletonfoxcities.org

Candidate Forums/Interviews—Call for questions!

We are presently working to set up candidate forums for

- AASD School Board
- Appleton Alderperson Districts 2 and 8
- Grand Chute Supervisors 2 and 4.

If there are additional races that you would like to see candidate forums or interviews for, please contact me: voterservice@lwwappletonfoxcities.org. They may be added depending on time and resources.

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VOTER SERVICES: Notes on Elections, Forums, Training, cont.

If you have any questions for any candidates or positions, please send them to voterservice@lwvappletonfoxcities.org by **February 15**. They will be used for forums/interviews and considered for VOTE411 questions. We are sending out VOTE411 questions to most municipalities in Outagamie County and all the school districts. There are a number of contested races for Outagamie County Board (Districts 3, 10, 14, 24 & 25). This is an opportunity to ask about their stance on County issues.

Candidate Forums/Interviews—Call for volunteer assistants!

As we broaden the scope of services into the Fox Cities, the time before elections gets very busy. While there is a lot of work involved and specific procedures to follow, it is very gratifying work and a real service to our community/voters. I feel it is important with this spring election to work with one or more volunteers to “show them the ropes”—the procedures, protocols, timeline, etc. so that we can reach out to more localities and share the work.

It is also important to our League that there are other members who can pick up the tasks. To that end, if you are at all interested, I would encourage you to contact me and we can talk about the various tasks involved, and see which might fit with your time and interests. Contact me at voterservice@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

Potential Constitutional Amendments

We're also seeing some constitutional amendments that could appear on the November ballot:

- √ One to prohibit governmental discrimination or preferential treatment is on its second consideration; another is to curb the governor's partial veto power from creating new taxes or fees.
- √ Another to enshrine the right to keep and bear arms “without clarification” in the state constitution, rather than for purposes of security, defense, hunting, or recreation, is on its first consideration and would need to pass another session of the Legislature before being put to voters.

Constitutional amendments must pass through two sessions of the Legislature, then are placed directly on the ballot for voters to decide. They're not subject to the governor's veto.

Voter Registration Assistance – Appleton Public Library

We will be in the lobby of the Appleton Public Library the third Saturday of every month through the end of the year. Our table will provide information on how to register to vote, getting an absentee ballot, upcoming local elections, and promoting civics education on local government (city, county, school board) through the questions on our Civics game. This is an engaging way to interact with voters and get some energy going for the Spring Election on April 7th.

We are looking for volunteers for February 21, March 21 and April 18. Training will be provided and you will be with someone with experience. Sign up now: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0B44ADAB2FA6FCC07-60164866-voter#/>

Voter Assistance Training

We have a number of new members to the League who have expressed an interest in voter registration assistance. If you have gone through the training before, but would like a refresher—this training is for you, too. There are numerous opportunities coming up for you to assist with registration—especially for the many slots we need to fill at the DMV.

If you have a friend or neighbor who also would be interested, they certainly can join you, and we will add them to the list of volunteers.

If you are interested in the training, please contact Jacqui at voterservice@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

Election Observers Needed

LWV Wisconsin is recruiting volunteers across the state to observe the General Election on April 7, 2026. We would love to have you join us as an Election Observer.

Volunteers will help ensure we have a fair election by watching for signs of voter disenfranchisement and intimidation, and by monitoring the way Wisconsin's election laws and procedures are being applied. Even if you only have a couple hours to spare on Election Day, you can still sign up to be an election observer.

Being an election observer is a vital way you can help maintain a strong democracy in our state. [Learn more and sign up to volunteer today!](#)

Once you sign up, LWV Wisconsin will provide you with everything you need to volunteer: online training, a reporting form, a polling place assignment with flexible shifts, and an Election Day hotline number if you have a question or need to report a problem.

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VOTER SERVICES: Elections, Forums, Training, Civics, cont.

If you have any questions about volunteering please do not hesitate to reach out. You can contact Eileen Newcomer at enewcomer@lwwwi.org or at (608)256-0827. And please share this opportunity with your friends and family - anyone you think might be willing to be part of this vital program.

This Just In!

A Candidate Forum has been set for the Appleton Area School Board on Thursday, March 5 from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. at the Appleton Public Library, in Mary Beth Nienhaus Community Meeting Room C.

Please submit questions for the candidates to Jacqui Klimaszewski at voterservice@lwwappletonfoxcities.org

MEMBERSHIP: You're Appreciated Whether New or Re-Newed

By Linda Bjella
Membership Director
membership@lwwappletonfoxcities.org

Time to Renew

Now that the calendar has turned to January, for many of our League members it is the time to renew your League membership. If you joined prior to February 1, 2025, you should've received an email from LWVUS inviting you to renew your membership for another year. **Thank you** to those who have already renewed.

If you haven't received that email, it may have gone to a spam folder, so if you haven't already, you will soon receive an email from LWV Appleton-Fox Cities which will have a link that you can click on to renew through the LWVUS membership system. You can also renew by clicking on the [Join Today](#) button at the top of our website: lwwappletonfoxcities.org.

For those who joined after February 1, 2025, your membership renewal will be one year after the date you joined or renewed last year. LWV US will send you an email with a link 60 days prior to your join date. If you don't respond to that email, another reminder will be sent 30 days later. You can select the dues amount that fits your budget with a minimum of \$20. If that amount of dues is prohibitive, please contact membership@lwwappletonfoxcities.org. We want to make sure that anyone who wants to join in our mission to **empower voters** and **defend democracy** can participate as a full member of the LWVUS, LWVWI, and LWVAFC.

Welcome, New Members!

Welcome to the following new members who recently joined LWV Appleton-Fox Cities:

*Lynn Van Vreede, Andrew Bober, and Cait Dallas from Appleton
Julie Meitzen, from Kimberly*

Our membership now totals 176! Our organization is growing in numbers and in strength as we add our voices to the powerful UNITE & RISE 8.5 initiative, the most ambitious project undertaken by the League since its founding in 1920.

IN MEMORIAM: Carolyn Mewhorter

With sadness, we report the passing of one of our veteran League of Women Voters of Appleton-Fox Cities members, Carolyn Mewhorter. Carolyn was a spirited member of our League who took leadership positions as vice-president of program and transportation study committee chair. Her leadership on our transportation study resulted in her service as citizen member on the Fox Cities Transit Commission for many years. She was passionate about a Regional Transit Authority.



Carolyn is survived by husband, Terry Mewhorter and her children, Leslie and Joe, along with grandchildren and many friends. We will remember Carolyn for her one-of-a-kind personality, her devotion to education for all, and her ever present sense of humor. A celebration of her life will be held at a future date. [For the full obituary, click here.](#)

UNITE & RISE 8.5: Creativity Mounts as Groups Gain Momentum

By Nancy Jones

Action Vice President

action@lwwappletonfoxcities.org

Building Partnerships

The League’s ongoing Unite & Rise 8.5 Campaign, designed to mobilize 8.5 million people and harness the power of voter engagement, has had a focus during November through January to build partnerships. Based on input from our members, our League reached out to many civically-engaged local organizations with an invitation to an initial convening to explore potential areas of collaboration. On December 4, representatives from 19 organizations gathered at the Appleton Public Library to explore possible partnering; 4 additional organizations expressed interest, but were unable to attend.

The meeting was built around: introducing our organizations’ missions and priorities; sharing challenges our organizations are facing in the current context; exploring possible local collaborative efforts during 2026 to further our missions and increase civic engagement; and gathering specific recommendations for methods to facilitate collaboration. Organizational leaders indicated their interest in continuing to meet and develop areas of cooperation. The next meeting will be held on January 29 and the list of interested organizations has grown.



Coalition-building takes time. It relies on building trust, open communication, and finding mission overlap in which organizations can take action together or support each other’s efforts. Coalition-building can be challenging due to organizations having diverging parts of their missions or differences in approaches. At the same time, working in coalition can be very encouraging. We are not the only organization on high alert and mobilizing for civic engagement. **Allies abound!** They are leading good work —including resistance — and reaching people our League is not.

In our current circumstances, there is real distress, and coalition work does not take all that much convincing. We are building partnerships for the Unite & Rise 8.5 Campaign with, and a clear focus on, reaching those who have been less likely to vote in local elections and midterms. *And we are building for future collaboration that empowers grassroots efforts aimed at preserving “liberty & justice for all.”*

Civic Education and Gaming

The Civic Education Unite & Rise Team seeks to engage voters. What better way than to partner with Appleton Public Library and AAUW on public presentations of the Wisconsin League’s 2025 Issues Briefings. These three presentations feature experts in each of our branches of government who speak to our specific Constitutional Crises. These were held on November 20, December 3, and December 10 in APL’s Mary Beth Nienhaus rooms. Each session included lively small group table discussions on the questions: How are our Checks & Balances working? Where are they falling short? What Can We Do?



Unite & Rise photos from tour of “Gathering Ethos” exhibit at Trout Museum of Art

If you haven’t yet watched these excellent presentations, link here for the recordings:

[The Crisis in Our Executive Branch with Lauren Miller Karalunas](#)

[The Crisis in Our Legislative Branch with Eleanor Neff Powell](#)

[The Crisis in our Judicial Branch with Stephen Vladeck](#)



Arts and Visibility

The vision of this team is to use community art to educate, raising awareness of our Constitution’s content and its meaning for everyday life. Team members are brainstorming a wide variety of opportunities for personal and creative expression, and also researching exhibits and community art which celebrate our democratic values. On January 6, the Arts & Visibility Team organized a visit for the entire Unite & Rise team to the new Trout Museum of Art focusing on the special exhibit: Gathering Ethos. We enjoyed a volunteer-led tour of this provocative art which explores protest and resistance. Teams gathered following the tour for meetings over coffee and tea at The Drinkery.

Media and Story Gathering

The vision of this team is to use traditional and emerging media to gather stories of local impact in our community. Telling of personal stories will better help people understand how actions or inactions by the federal government impact families’ lives. Three members of the Unite & Rise team attended a Meet the Media panel presentation hosted by the Heart of the Valley Chamber of Commerce. This very informative conversation covered how to pitch stories to news media representing broadcast and print, as well as digital outlets and podcasts. Pointers included news release formatting, submission deadlines, stories of interest, and how to contact news decision makers. Under discussion is potential for brief introductory meetings between editors and League representatives to discuss how the League’s nonpartisan reputation can be beneficial in putting news into context.

PROGRAMS: Honing in on Key Topics at Lively Issues & Beyond

By Jan Smith
Program Director
program@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

On Saturday, January 10, 2026, Appleton Public Library opened as normal to their curious public, but not so normal for this opinionated, determined, high spirited group of 40 or so. This group took their morning to “cook up good trouble” on the second floor in a Mary Beth Nienhaus community room at the annual planning session of the League of Women Voters Appleton-Fox Cities called *Lively Issues*.



If there was ever an understatement, that name references anything but a group of complacent thinkers. As with tradition for this annual think tank, *Lively Issues* generates more “issues” for discussion, research and review than can possibly be examined in one program year. Yet, it reflects the energy, passion and civic diligence of this highly thoughtful and socio-politically astute group.



Each year, the members meet to discuss important issues that fall under the umbrellas of Local Government, Natural Resources, and Social Issues. And, each year this well-informed group homes in on timely topics under these titles to study thoroughly and create or update a position statement upon which the League bases its advocacy. This is an important preface for the work of the year for our local League, and the topics, as well as these performers, did not disappoint. The topics generated are voted upon and something of urgency rises to the top that will most likely be selected for a year-long study. This is generally voted upon by the board and forwarded for members to vote on at the annual meeting.



However, all that brainpower is not wasted if a topic is not selected, because so many of these excellent ideas demonstrate sincere interest in pursuing them for programming. These then become topics for further development during the year as program material with a list of potential presenters generated.

As anticipated, this is exactly what happened once again during this year’s *Lively Issues* session. Topics that received the most votes were:

Social Issues:

1. Public Education: Sub-headings in this area included: school vouchers, budgets, private school funding on tax dollars, DEI, accurate teaching of history and several other issues.
2. Technology and data centers raised concerns about regulation, privacy, security, AI, self-driving vehicles...
3. Transportation appeared as an item on its own with safety, affordability, and accessibility considerations.

Local Government:

This area received a listing of topics of concern and interest that might be best served through a public program such as:

1. Towns and Annexation
2. Non-partisan elected county positions
3. Use of technology or internal expertise rather than paying consultants, with concern for fiscal responsibility.
4. Examining the impact of dismantling DEI

Natural Resources:

1. Rights of Nature: considering water and other resources.
2. Biodiversity and the loss of species



These are just a few of the study and program topics discussed, and reflect the current issues and urgent topics of the day. They will be reviewed by the board and brought to a vote during the Annual Meeting in May to determine a study topic or topics undertaken for the year, depending on the available resources in people, time and materials to generate a study, or even more than one.

If you have any interest in joining a study group or assisting with program planning, please contact one of the LWVAF board members. Find their emails under Contact Us on the website, lwvappletonfoxcities.org



(Continued on page 8)

PROGRAMS: Lively Issues Leads into Public Safety Review, cont.



The 2026 calendar will continue with a virtual report on January 26 from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. Led by the Public Safety Team. The team will report on the results of the most recent study undertaken by the Appleton-Fox Cities League's twelve-member committee over the past two years, co-chaired by Karen Pfefferle and April Savage, which examined aspects of criminal justice and public safety in our community.



Next, Fox Cities region legislators have been invited to join a virtual Legislative Town Hall on February 2 from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. led by President Jan Quinlan. Legislators are still confirming their attendance. The Winnebago County League is co-hosting the event.



On February 12 from 4:00-6:00 p.m., members and guests can relax and enjoy the camaraderie of their League friends at Mondo! On the River in Appleton. Bring a friend or two and enjoy pizza and cake to celebrate the US League's 106th anniversary, which occurs on February 14, and how League members and friends contribute "strength in numbers."

The work and pleasure continue to mix as the League cooks up "good trouble" until the end of May. There is a lot of work ahead and its always better with friends.

Leagues of Appleton-Fox Cities & Winnebago County
come together to offer the

Legislative Town Hall

Monday, February 2 • 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.



The virtual Town Hall provides an opportunity for members and the public to hear first-hand about current and pending legislation, and the priorities of their elected representatives.

Lawmakers from both sides of the aisle have been invited to participate.

Register Here for this free event to receive the virtual link:

[https://lwwappletonfoxcities.org/content.aspx? page_id=4092&club_id=264322&item_id=2858075](https://lwwappletonfoxcities.org/content.aspx?page_id=4092&club_id=264322&item_id=2858075)

LET'S CELEBRATE!

Libations with the League

FEBRUARY 12  4:00 - 6:00 P.M.

MONDO! ON THE RIVER

425 W. WATER ST., APPLETON

Bring friends as we celebrate the Valentine's Day

106th Anniversary of

the League of Women Voters, and all that our members and colleagues have done

to **Unite & Rise**

to empower voters & defend democracy.

Enjoy Cash Bar, Free Pizza & Cake

No reservations necessary

