

The *informed* Voter

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April – May 2020



President's Message – Jeanne Roberts

It's a really hard time to write a president's message when we should be celebrating as a country but instead we are suffering as a country. And yet, the League of Women Voters has endured and prospered throughout many difficult times in our 100 year history and we will continue. Let's talk about what we have accomplished so far this year. Our voter services team has been reaching out to our high schools and our post graduate schools with very good registration success. Our work with the Willems student marketing team has created some excellent marketing tools to attract young voters. We have continued with outstanding educational programs. Our centennial committee has not only sponsored two incredible programs highlighting parts of suffrage history that are not in the history books, they have created educational resources, a speaker's bureau, brought a women's history display to the Fox Valley and done an exceptional job of fundraising to be able to pay for all of these. To all of our members whether brand new or members for decades, thank you for everything you do to Empower Voters and Defend Democracy! In spite of all of the current struggles, nevertheless, we will persist!

Coronavirus Update

LWV of Appleton has been affected like the rest of the country. So far, we have had to cancel all of our March events including candidate forums, voter registration and educational programs. We had planned to livestream a video of the school board forum without an audience and an educational program regarding the census with City of Appleton Diversity Coordinator, Complete Count Committee Co-chair and LWV Appleton member, Karen Nelson, but were not able to due to Governor Evers' shutdown order. We have important events coming up including programs on climate change preparedness, more voter registration and especially our Annual Meeting. Unfortunately, both the Flag Day Parade and the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin Annual Meeting have been cancelled. We will share more information about the next steps for the LWV WI Annual Meeting as they become available. Thank you for your work and your patience and stay safe!

Conducting an Annual Meeting During a Pandemic

It is an important time of year for all local Leagues in Wisconsin – the time in which we conduct our business and plan for our next year. The big question is how to do this in the midst of a worldwide pandemic. The LWV WI has given local Leagues some guidelines and the LWV Appleton Board has taken these guidelines to develop a plan that works for us locally. As with all current plans, these could change also. At this point, we will continue to plan for a May Annual Meeting. The date that has been chosen is Thursday, May 21 which gives our Program Vice President an additional week to put together an Annual Meeting Packet. The packet will be distributed to all members 30 days prior to the Annual Meeting. The meeting will take place via an on-line meeting site called Zoom so that all local League members can continue practicing social distancing while still participating in the meeting. According to the attorney for LWV WI, votes on bylaws changes or nominations cannot take place on-line. Because of that, all votes will have to be done via a written ballot. LWV WI has told us that these ballots can be sent back via email. It will take some time and planning, but when the details are worked out, all members will be contacted so that they know how to participate. We will include instructions for using whatever virtual meeting site we choose. While it may be difficult and at times clunky, we need to remember the words of Susan B Anthony “wherever women gather together, failure is impossible”!

What Your State and National Membership Dues are Doing for You

There has been a lot of activity at the state and local League level, especially since the social distancing requirements of the COVID-19 virus. The LWV-WI has called upon the state and judiciary to allow absentee ballots to be sent in without a witness signature and to allow the state to send ballots in the mail to all registered voters. In addition, LWVWI in partnership with Reverend Greg Lewis, Souls to the Polls; Voces de la Frontera; Black Leaders Organizing for Communities; American Federation of Teachers, Local 212; AFL-CIO; and SEIU Wisconsin State Council called upon the Western District Court to rule to delay this election. The LWVUS has focused on voter rights related to COVID-19 including more funding to expand voting options. They also continue to focus on the goal of a complete census count especially targeting hard to reach communities. This is even more of a challenge during the current pandemic. Your support of the League has allowed for all of this activity to “Empower Voters and Defend Democracy”.

Michelle Duster Speaks on Black Woman Suffrage Movement

“African American Suffragists and The Struggle for Inclusion”

Marti Hemwall and Karen

Nelson



In an inspiring event, “African American Suffragists and The Struggle for Inclusion” with Michelle Duster, the great-granddaughter of Ida B. Wells, took place on March 7th, 2020 at the Red Lion Paper Valley Hotel in Appleton, Wisconsin. Presented by the Fox Valley 19th Amendment Centennial Coalition and led by the North East Wisconsin Alumnae Chapter (NEWAC) of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. The event, chaired by League member Karen Nelson, and Delta member, Joi Kennedy, attracted more than 185 people, easily exceeding our goal of 150 attendees. Other contributing organizations of the Centennial Coalition included The League of Women Voters of Appleton, American Association of University Women–Appleton, Mid-Day Women’s Alliance and the Women’s Fund for the Fox Valley Region.

During the event Delta members talked about the key role the sorority played in the Suffrage movement. One of their members, Ida B. Wells, went on to become a major leader in both the Suffrage, Civil Rights, and anti-lynching movements.

Her great granddaughter, Michelle Duster, an author and educator from Chicago, gave a key note address. Her message was clear - we need to constantly monitor and remind people of our history or it will be lost. Her examples of how both individuals and groups have fought to reinsert the history of Suffrage, and to keep Ida Wells in our historical memory were powerful. Such efforts have resulted, for example, in a Suffrage Trail in Tennessee, a street in Chicago named after her great grandmother, and many memorials, statues and museums throughout the U.S. Ms. Duster inspired all of us to take action and to advocate for those forgotten in mainstream history.

Surveys were inserted in the program at the event for attendees to provide feedback. Responses rated the event the highest for the speaker’s effectiveness, program expectations and enjoying the event, 16/17 rated the event highest for speaker knowledge and event being informative, while 1 person rated the event 2nd highest in each of those 2 areas. In the open-ended responses of the survey, attendees provided extremely positive feedback. Attendees shared comments such as such as “I’ve been to the women’s history museum, but today I learned about things omitted there,” “[I learned] that Black women didn’t get to vote with the 19th amendment in every state,” and “Excellent, well-planned program. I am inspired!” For full stream of the Michelle Duster event, please view the recording at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UlsV5opr5rE>.

The event also offered voter registration, a traveling exhibit highlighting women's history from the WI Historical Society in conjunction with The Museum at the Castle, a U.S. Census Bureau resource table, a NEWAC information table and The City of Appleton's Dignity & Respect resource table.

LWV-Appleton's Climate Change Preparedness Study

Jill Mitchler, Committee Co-chair

Year one of the two-year Climate Change Preparedness Study is coming to an end with the Phase One Position Statement to be voted on in May. The Study Committee presented and discussed their draft position statement at both the February 9th Consensus Meeting and the March 4th LWV-Appleton Board Meeting. About a month prior to the May Annual Meeting, the position statement will be emailed to all members for their review and approval at the meeting.

The team also hosted an [Educational Forum](#) summarizing the learning from the first year of the Study. You can view the recording of that informational session on our [LWV-Appleton website](#), linked in a tab on the left side of the page and labeled Climate Change Preparedness. Team members also plan to post other reference materials on that page, including their approved position statements, recommended resources and bibliography.

Phase Two work is slated to begin next month, using virtual, online meetings. There is a lot of information to sort and research as the team members dig deeper into how our communities can be prepared for more effects of climate change. Additional volunteers are welcome for working in small groups on various specific topics in which they may have a special interest or expertise. Please email Jill at jemitchler@gmail.com if you're interested in helping!

Advocacy Report - April, 2020

Linda Bjella

March was the month that the world shut down for Covid 19. Two events were cancelled: Our March 16 program at Copper Rock on the census with Karen Nelson and gerrymandering and fair maps with Penny Bernard-Schaber, and a meeting on March 31 at Lawrence University on fair maps with Professor Bill Whitford.

I did participate in an online Zoom conference on fair maps on Saturday, March 21. Much of the focus was on the 9 counties with upcoming referenda on the April 7 ballot. (Both Outagamie and Winnebago Counties have passed fair maps referenda.)

I have also been working on the census long distance, and participated in a conference call on March 25. Wisconsin's response rate is #1 in the US at 37.4%, and Outagamie County is at 43.8%, Calumet is at 45.1% and Winnebago is at 42% so we are doing well. (The overall US response rate is 30%.) There was an Outagamie County Facebook live event to promote the

census on April 1. All of the timelines for the census have been adjusted two months forward in response to the Covid 19 pandemic.

I have been working with Ligia Rivera and several others from the Fox Valley UU Fellowship on a potential census event for the Latinx community. We had hoped to have this on March 28 at the Fellowship, but have put the plans on hold for the time being. With the census deadlines moved forward, we may be able to put this in place at a later date. What we envision is to invite people through local Latinx organizations, provide food, and have bilingual and census volunteers on hand to help people complete the census on-line at the event.



MEMBERSHIP CONTINUES UPWARD TRAJECTORY

In this period of great uncertainty, as a League we can all take comfort in our Appleton League community. It will take all of us working together to help our Democracy remain healthy from this global pandemic.

The good news is that our membership steadily increases. Since January 1st, we have had seventeen (17) new members join us in **EMPOWERING VOTERS, DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**. Please join me in welcoming our newest members:

Leta Marino
Barb Westhofen
Vered Meltzer
Cindy Carter
Emily Voight
Terry Dawson
Hope Karth

Christianne Weaver
Joni Conrad
Claire Whelan
Patti Clark-Stojke
Catherine McKenzie
April Kain-Breese
Georgia Berceau

To renew or join the League of Women Voters go to <https://my.lwv.org/wisconsin/appleton>, and click on Renew or Join. You may also contact Cindy Fallona, Membership Director, at cbfallona@hotmail.com.

OUR APRIL VIRTUAL MEETING:

Fostering Climate Change Leadership at the Local Level—

Registration now Open

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, as well as continue our education on climate change preparedness, we are pleased to be able to host a virtual program featuring Keith Roepelle, Director of Dane County's Office of Energy and Climate Change.

Keith will share insights about the work he has done the past two years to create a science and evidence-based climate action plan for Dane County. He will share lessons learned and ideas for how Appleton and other Fox Valley cities can bring the community together to develop concrete plans for building resilience and the ability to adapt to climate change, while at the same time reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Prior to coming to Dane County, Keith was the Senior Policy Director at Clean Wisconsin where he worked for 32 years leading clean energy campaigns at the state and regional levels. He has served on numerous energy and climate-related task forces and advisory committees. He was a member of Governor Doyle's Task Force on Global Warming where he served on the full Task Force and co-chaired the cap and trade working group. Keith also was a member of the Midwestern Governor's Association Greenhouse Gas Accord advisory committee and served on the group's modeling working group for two years where he helped advise on IPM and macro-economic modeling.

Keith was also a founding member of the RE-AMP (Midwest climate change) network and served as the Chair of RE-AMP's Global Warming Solutions Working group for 9 years, also serving on the RE-AMP steering Committee for those 9 years. Keith helped to found the [Midcontinent Power Sector Collaborative](#), a collaborative of Midwest utilities, NGOs and regulators, in 2011, to give EPA input on the Clean Power Plan. Keith remains a participant in this group which is now exploring how to achieve economy-wide deep decarbonization in the Midwest. Keith also helped to staff a two year contract with [Change Works Consulting](#) aimed at dismantling racism within environmental groups and networks.

We will hold this program as a virtual meeting on the Zoom platform; information to register will be provided next week. Please hold the time to attend this important and educational program:

Date: Monday April 20

Time: 5:30-6:30

Location: Zoom

Registration (for security purposes):

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/uJUdsu2rpzgiQP2-gpUqDFIDCYBGE9J6HA> ;

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

FROM THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS:

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

The League has a long history of being courageous and making difficult decisions in the face of challenging times. In 1988, then LWV President Nancy Neuman famously said that the League *"had no intention in becoming an accessory to the hoodwinking of the American public"* as the reason the board made the bold decision to [withhold sponsorship of the presidential debates](#).

Thirty-two years later, we once again find ourselves in a moment of critical decision-making that requires us to be bold, courageous, and steadfast in our resolve to ensure the American public is put first. The challenges we face are many. Difficult decisions will need to be made, but I am confident that our leadership at the local, state, and national levels will always do what they believe is right and just.

In an effort to support Leagues as you make these decisions, we are continuing to highlight the role of diversity, equity, and inclusion in our work and the importance of ensuring that we examine each decision we make, and position we take, through a DEI lens.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to disrupt all aspects of life, but it is also exacerbating the impact of systemic and structural racism on communities of color. Tomorrow we will stand with the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community by tweeting at 2pm ET. I encourage you to post from your personal and League accounts tomorrow with the hashtag: #NoAAPIHate. Here's a sample post: *We've united to fight #coronavirus. Now it's time to come together online and put an end to the rising racism and hate against Asian Americans and the entire AAPI community. #NoAAPIHate*

Later this month, I will join a distinguished group of female activists and leaders for a tele-Town Hall hosted by YWCA to Stand Against Racism. Join me Thursday, April 23, at 3pm ET as we take a national stand against racism and injustices big and small. [You can register for this free live event here.](#)

Our newest census blog explains the continued need for people to fill out and submit their census questionnaire even during these different times. Read more about [how the Census Bureau is adapting their efforts](#) to get a complete count in 2020.

Finally, the stimulus bill that was passed last month fell dramatically short of the necessary funds to support our elections in this time, but it also left the District of Columbia behind. Join LWVDC leaders for a discussion tomorrow evening, April 14, at 8pm ET to hear how the District's lack of representation in Congress led to DC getting left behind in the recent

coronavirus relief packages. You'll also hear about the continued fight for DC statehood and upcoming opportunities to speak up for the residents of the District of Columbia to your representatives as the statehood effort moves to a vote on the House floor. [You can register for this upcoming discussion here.](#)

I hope you are all finding ways to remain engaged in these topics during these times. Even as many aspects of our lives are paused, our core work continues as part of the vital push for equity in our country.

In Solidarity,

Virginia Kase
CEO

The following is from the LWVUS website:

More than 700,000 residents live in DC, which is more than that of Wyoming and Vermont, yet its residents still lack voting members in the U.S. House and Senate. Without these voting members, residents of DC are denied a voice in Congress to defend them from attacks on their own locally passed laws and citizen backed initiatives.

Residents in DC deserve full representation in Congress. Sign the petition to support DC statehood today on the LWVUS website.