

LWW LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF IOWA

THE VOTER

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

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President's Message

By Terese Grant, LWWIA President

It has been a very busy summer for the League of Women Voters of Iowa and the fall promises to have even more activity.

The Board of the League of Women Voters of Iowa met for a retreat in Ames for a weekend in early August. We did a serious analysis of the League and discussed both our strengths and weaknesses, as well as our opportunities and threats. From these discussions, several new committees are being formed.

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Important Dates

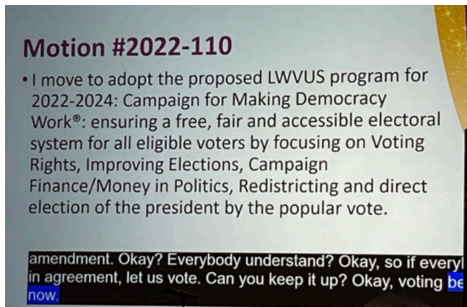
October 19, 2022
First day of absentee voting

October 24, 2022
Pre-registration to vote deadline
Deadline to request absentee ballot to be mailed

November 5, 2022
Auditors' offices open for absentee voting

November 7, 2022
Absentee ballot in-person deadline

November 8, 2022
General Election Day
Absentee ballots receipt deadline



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We also discussed the need to develop a strategic plan for the League. This will be a process that will take time as we analyze our mission, our goals, and how do we accomplish them.

One of the other topics we discussed at the retreat was the Legislative Priorities for the 2023 Legislative Session. We plan to narrow our focus this year to four or five issues: Voting in Free and Fair Elections, Government Accountability and Transparency, Importance of Public Schools, Health/Women's Reproductive Rights, and Gun Safety. We are discussing a different format to focus on each one of these topics instead of an Issues Briefing this year. We will provide more details once specific plans are in place.

As we prepare for the November 8 General Election, one of our educational goals is to inform lowans on Public Measure #1. The League of Women Voters of Iowa is one of the partners with the lowans for Responsible Gun Laws coalition. Many lowans do not know about the amendment or what it means. Many Leagues are hosting forums to ensure that lowans understand that this proposed constitutional amendment is not a replica of the Second Amendment in the U.S. Constitution. The proposed amendment contains the term strict scrutiny "that will take power away from voters and give it to the courts." We will continue to encourage voters to vote "No" on this amendment on November 8. (See the FAQs on pages 7-8 of this newsletter.)

As the fall continues, we will continue to register voters, host candidate forums, and encourage all eligible lowans to vote. We will live up to our mission: Empower Voters. Defend Democracy.

Campaign for Making Democracy Work

By Nancy Porter, Delegate to the LWWUS Convention

At the 2022 LWWUS Convention the Campaign for Making Democracy Work program was discussed and adopted. With an election close at hand and voting to begin October 19, promotion of this motion (pictured at left) is more than appropriate. Register voters, help them understand the new Iowa voting laws, and get to the polls. The picture (to the left of this article) came from the giant screen at our Denver meeting. The motion passed unanimously with guidance from President Deb Turner.



Voter Registration Day



League members from across the state registered voters on National Voter Registration Day.

Pictured above: League of Women Voters of North Iowa.

Below: League of Women Voters of Black Hawk-Bremer Counties.



Criminal and Juvenile Justice Committee (CJJC) Update

By Myrna Loehrlein, CJJC Chair

The statewide Zoom Book Club is up and running. We have met three times and are finishing up our reading of Punishment Without Crime. We will be choosing our next book at our upcoming meeting on or about October 20. I'll be sending out a poll to choose our exact meeting date and time. If you think you might like having Justice-related conversations with members across the state, just send your email address to me at myrnaloehr@gmail.com.

The Criminal and Juvenile Justice Committee recently completed an issue advocacy action relative to the Pieper Lewis Case. We drafted a letter and submitted it to our State Board to be used in any way they choose. We also made a response to our lobbyist Amy Campbell.

We'd love to have you join our monthly Zoom meeting or our monthly Book Club Zoom meeting. Just email me to let me know.

ATTENTION DEDICATED LWV MEMBERS

By Nancy Halvorson, LWVIA Vice President

Would you like to be more involved at the State level? Would you like to help us grow and develop our presence in statewide communities as we move forward in this decade that is so important? If you have an interest in stepping up, we will have positions available for terms to begin in June 2023 on the Executive Board: President and Executive Board Secretary. Additionally, there are other Board member positions for those whose terms are expiring in June 2023. The Bylaws Review team is working on some minor changes/updates to the job descriptions for all Board positions. You can find current descriptions in the Bylaws document on our website: <https://lwvia.org/about/publications/>

If you have an interest or have someone in mind who would be a great addition to our Board, or just have any questions, please contact me at nancyh.lwvia@gmail.com or 515.231.3746. The Nomination team looks forward to hearing from you.

Lecture series to begin Oct. 12 - *Ballot Basics: Voting Matters*

Election law changes in Iowa mean new procedures for voters to prepare and vote in the Midterm Election on Nov. 8. Find out what it takes to be ready to vote by absentee ballot or in person, and more voting matters.

All are welcome to attend an in-person program, *Ballot Basics: Voting Matters*, presented by Travis Weipert, Johnson County Auditor, and Kati McVay, Inside Out Reentry Community coordinator.

The program, hosted by the League of Women Voters of Johnson County and the Iowa City Public Library, will be held Wednesday, Oct. 12, at 7 p.m. in Meeting Room A, B, and C at the Iowa City Public Library, 123 S. Linn Street, Iowa City.

The program is the first in a three-part League lecture series. The second and third programs will be held in January and March 2023.

This hybrid presentation will also be live streamed by Iowa City Public Library channel on the League's [Facebook page](#), and website, lwwjc.org. Rebroadcasts of the presentation will be offered on the ICPL YouTube channel.

There's excitement occurring on the east coast of Iowa!

By Holly Oppelt, LWWIA Board of Directors and League of Women Voters of Muscatine County President

A new league is being formed in Southeast Iowa. Approximately fifty citizens of Burlington and Fort Madison met on Thursday, September 15, with the intention of forming the League of Women Voters of Southeast Iowa.



Sue Johannsen, Polly Horton, Gaylen Wobeter, Diane Duncan-Goldsmith, and I attended the "Get to Know the League" open house representing LWWIA.



Martha Wolf is the dynamo behind this organization, and she is so fun to work with. A lady from the Chamber and the Auditors from Des Moines and Lee Counties addressed the audience.

The enthusiasm in the room was exciting as people volunteered to serve on the Executive Committee and other committees.

If you have any family or friends in this area who would enjoy joining League, please do not hesitate to send their information to Martha Wolf at wolfgang245@msn.com or me at hoppelt@me.com.



Understanding the Gun Amendment Webinar

A coalition of local Women Religious and Divine Word College have organized an informative virtual webinar on the upcoming Gun Amendment proposal which will be on Iowa ballots this November. The free session requires pre-registration which is easily accomplished by clicking this link: <https://bit.ly/3Lffb4M>.

Please mark your calendars for 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 6, for this Zoom Webinar. You will receive a Zoom link as a response to your registration.

Thank you.

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CNV acts to address the crisis of weapons of violence in order to create
a more peaceful and nonviolent community.

Follow us on Facebook at
<https://www.facebook.com/DBQCNV>

ERA update and 3 simple action steps you can take

By Doris Kelley, League of Women Voters of Iowa ERA Committee

If the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) became law, it would prohibit the United States or any state from denying or abridging equal rights under the law on account of gender. This sounds fair to me. How about you?

Women have been waiting 99 years for the ERA to come to fruition, but three simple action steps can be taken now - yes, by you and every supporter of gender equality you know - to do, as comedian Larry The Cable Guy would say, "get `er done."

For the past five months I've been working with AJ Conroy, an attorney with the ERA Coalition (www.ERACoalition.org), on what we can do **now** to make our 99 year wait worthwhile. But first, the good news: Iowa Attorney General Tom Miller (Dem.) has joined other states in support of publishing the 28th Amendment, affirming ratification of the ERA.

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Ms. Conroy has provided me with a sample letter to send to AG Miller seeking his opinion on whether the members of Iowa’s General Assembly should consider the 28th Amendment when drafting and debating new legislation. Sen. Bill Dotzler (Dem.-Waterloo) is my champion, has received the sample letter and is working with staff to submit the letter to AG Miller with his and fellow Dem. leaders’ signatures affixed. The letter asks AG Miller for an advisory opinion as to whether gender is now subject to “higher scrutiny” (i.e., Iowa Constitution and U.S. Constitution). In the absence of case law, an advisory opinion from AG Miller may carry precedential value – down-the-road should court case appeals be necessary -- as they are a public record and can be cited by lawyers, judges and journalists.

Next, Sen. Dotzler and peers have received another ERA Coalition written sample letter, which would be sent to Iowa’s non-partisan Legislative Services Agency requesting they create a report that identifies all the places in Iowa statutes and administrative code where “gender” appears. This ‘word search’ could be a useful tool – again, down-the-road -- to see where Iowa laws might differ based on sex.

TO DO #1: At candidate-for-office forums and debates, ask candidates their position on the 28th Amendment—are you in favor of or against the Equal Rights Amendment becoming the law of the land?

TO DO: Contact U.S. House of Rep. Cindy Axne (Dem.-Iowa; 205-225-5476) and encourage her to co-sponsor H. Res. 891 that was introduced in the House of Rep. on Jan. 28, 2022. H. Res. 891 expresses the notion the ERA has been duly proposed by Congress, ratified by the states and is therefore valid as the 28th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

TO DO: Contact Iowa Republican Sens. Charles Grassley (202-224-3744) and Joni Ernst (202-224-3254) requesting each to vote ‘yes’ on S.J. Res. 1, a congressional joint resolution for removing the timeline for the ratification of the ERA. You might like to know S.J. Res. 1 was introduced by U.S. Sens. Ben Cardin (Dem-Maryland) and Lisa Murkowski (Rep.-Alaska) with 51 co-sponsors.

FYI: 1) ERA was first introduced to Congress in 1923, 2) in 1972, 2/3rds of both Congressional bodies approved ERA and 3) in 2020, 3/4ths of state legislatures (38 of 50) ratified ERA.

T-h-a-n-k y-o-u for taking an hour out of one of your upcoming days’ to-do-list to fulfill the three TO DO’s identified above. I don’t know about you, but to me the Equal Rights Amendment . . . 1923-2022 . . . 99 years in the making . . . gender equality . . . it’s about time!

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Doris J. Kelley; 515-988-2344; DJKelley@cfu.net; 4116 Maryhill Drive, Cedar Falls, IA 50613-5781; Mon., Sept. 26, 2022

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Public Measure #1 – Frequently Asked Questions – November 8, 2022 ballot

Background: *Presently Iowa is 1 of 6 states which does not have a “right to bear arms” provision in the Iowa Constitution. However, the wording used in this amendment is **not** the Second Amendment language.*

Q: What is the difference between an amendment to the Constitution and a law?

The Constitution is the law of the land. No law can be passed that violates the Constitution. It sets out guiding principles. Laws are detailed rules passed by the legislature that follow those constitutional principles.

Iowa’s legislature passes and governor signs many laws each year. Iowa’s Constitution has been amended only 48 times in its 176-year history, and each amendment takes years to pass.

Q: Where is the amendment question on the ballot?

Voters must turn the ballot over (the back side) to vote on the proposed Constitutional Amendment.

Q: What is the wording of the amendment?

The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed. The sovereign state of Iowa affirms and recognizes this right to be a fundamental individual right. Any and all restrictions of this right shall be subject to strict scrutiny.

Q: What does a “Yes” vote mean?

A “yes” vote supports amending the Iowa Constitution so that Iowa has less ability to regulate firearms than would otherwise be allowed by the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Q: What does a “No” vote mean?

A “no” vote supports preserving Iowa’s ability to regulate firearms. Those regulations will continue to be subject to the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

Q: What does strict scrutiny mean, and why is this and other wording in the amendment problematic?

Strict scrutiny is the most stringent legal analysis. Courts use three levels (types) of analysis when determining whether a law infringes on a right: a) rational basis, b) intermediate scrutiny and c) strict scrutiny. *Strict scrutiny* is the highest and most stringent standard of judicial review (analysis) and is applied only to fundamental constitutional rights, rights like voting and free speech that are considered necessary for our democracy to function. When this level of scrutiny is used there must be a compelling state interest behind the challenged law, and the law must be narrowly tailored to achieve this interest.

The phrase “*Any and all restrictions*” is also problematic. It would certainly apply to firearm restrictions by schools, courts, and other government actors. While it seems unlikely, it could also be interpreted to apply even to private actors, like storeowners who prohibit guns in their place of business.

Q: What does Public Measure #1 mean if passed?

This amendment will make it harder than ever to pass common-sense, popular gun safety laws such as background checks, permit requirements, minimum age requirements, and red flag laws. Gun laws already on the books could be challenged.

If this amendment passes, Iowans should expect their current gun regulations to be challenged in court and the Iowa Supreme Court to ultimately rule on which, if any, are allowed under the new standard.

Q: Have other states implemented amendments like this? If so, what has happened there?



Louisiana, Alabama, and Missouri have passed “strict scrutiny” amendments. All three states rank in the top 5 states for gun-related deaths. Louisiana and Missouri have seen challenges to their existing laws and have so far only upheld restrictions on firearm possession by felons. Iowa’s courts would not be guaranteed to do so.

Q: If the amendment is adopted and common-sense, reasonable gun laws are contested in court, who pays the costs to defend the challenges?

- Iowa taxpayers will pay the court costs for such challenges.

Q: Gun violence is on the rise. How does Iowa rank?

- Currently, Iowa ranks 38th in firearm deaths. However, the rate of gun deaths increased 56% from 2011 to 2020 compared to a 33% increase nationwide. It is notable that Iowa began de-regulating firearms in 2017.
- According to the Giffords Law Center, states with the strongest gun laws have the lowest rates of gun violence. Experts at the Center also research and grade state gun laws; Iowa’s current gun legislation was given an F.

Q: How will gun safety be impacted if the amendment passes?

- The amendment will make the work of law enforcement more dangerous and Iowans less safe.
- The amendment may give easy access to guns to those with mental health concerns who may be a risk to themselves and others (79% of gun deaths are suicides).
- The amendment threatens existing Iowa law regarding minimum age, secure storage, and sensitive area restrictions (on public campus, etc.).
- The amendment threatens existing Iowa law that prohibits domestic abusers from possessing guns.
- The amendment threatens existing Iowa law that prohibits felons from possessing guns.
- In 2020, homicides by gun increased by 80% in Iowa.

Q: Do Iowans support eliminating gun regulations?

Most Iowans consistently express support for a variety of gun safety laws that may be prohibited by this amendment.

- 91% support banning carrying a firearm while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- 85% support prohibiting felons from possessing firearms.
- 85% support requiring background checks on all gun purchases.
- 83% support requiring gun safety courses before the purchase of a handgun.

32 groups oppose this amendment including the League of Women Voters of Iowa.

American Association of University Women of Iowa | Americans for Democratic Action Iowa | Amnesty International of Iowa | Brady United Against Gun Violence Iowa Chapter | Catholic Peace Ministry | Common Good Iowa | Des Moines Faith Committee for Peace | Dubuque Coalition for Nonviolence | Episcopal Diocese of Iowa | Franciscan Peace Center-Sisters of St. Francis, Clinton | Great Plains Action Society | Interfaith Alliance of Iowa | Iowa Alliance for Retired Americans | Iowa Catholic Conference | Iowa Citizen Action Network | Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence | Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault | Iowa Coalition for Collective Change | Iowa Mental Health Advocacy | Iowa Unitarian Universalist Witness Advocacy Network | Iowans for Gun Safety | Iowans for Responsible Gun Laws | League of Women Voters of Iowa | March for our Lives Iowa | Methodist Federation for Social Action of Iowa | Moms Demand Action of Cedar Rapids | Moms Demand Action of Iowa | No Justice No Peace | Planned Parenthood Advocates of Iowa | Plymouth United Church of Christ Peace & Justice Committee | Progress Iowa | Women’s International League for Peace & Freedom of Des Moines

