



THE VOTER

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

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President's Message

By Terese Grant, LWVIA President

This is my first message at the beginning of the New Year 2023. January always begins the new Legislative Session, and this one promises to be one of the most challenging Legislative Sessions we have faced in many years.

The Governor recently signed the private school scholarship bill into law. This bill was introduced right after the opening of the Legislative Session. From the beginning, organizations like the League of Women Voters and individuals voiced their

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opposition to this bill. In our advocacy, we attended subcommittee and committee meetings, attended an Open Hearing and wrote comments, wrote letters and emails to Legislators, made phone calls, held Legislative Forums, and submitted letters to the editor. With the passage of HF 68 and SF 94, it seems that hundreds of League members, multiple organizations, and thousands of Iowans were ignored.

To say that we are disappointed is a gross understatement to the feelings we share as a result of this outcome. As Iowans, we care deeply about our public schools, about the ones we attended growing up, about the schools our children attended, and the ones in our communities today. We value our teachers who taught us, the ones who taught our children, and the ones who are doing their very best to educate students today in spite of the lack of funding and resources, in spite of the lack of mental health support for the students, in spite of the low pay, in spite of the increase in the number of students and the increase in responsibilities.

I am confident that the members of the League of Women Voters of Iowa will continue to support our public schools as they face an uncertain future. I offer a huge thank you to all of the League members for the tremendous amount of work and effort you all did to try and convince our Legislators to oppose the "voucher" bills. Your extreme determination and efforts truly make me proud to be a part of this League and to be the President.

With the makeup of the House and Senate this year, we can continue to expect many challenges ahead with all of our Legislative Priorities. (See page 3.) Please continue to advocate your Legislators on the issues that are important to the League and to you. We must continue to do the work that we are called to do as we "Empower Voters and Defend Democracy."

Looking ahead, there are many bright spots in the future of the League. On April 13, our Defending Democracy Award will be presented to the Iowa Freedom of Information Council. (See page 5.) Accepting the award will be its Executive Director, Randy Evans.

The League of Women Voters of Iowa Convention will be held in Dubuque this year on June 9 - 10. (See pages 3 and 4.) This promises to be a special weekend to focus on League as well as to enjoy the wonderful city of Dubuque.

Being a member of the League of Women Voters has always brought many challenges, and also a commitment to make our communities and our institutions better for all Iowans. We will continue those efforts in the days ahead as we all work together to accomplish our goals. Thanks to every single one of you League members for all you do to make Iowa a better place to live for all.

In League,

Terese Grant
President, LWV of Iowa



VOTING

Promote equal access to voting and ensure all votes are counted. Iowa should adopt automatic voter registration and pass a constitutional amendment allowing Iowans with felony convictions to vote after time served.



TRANSPARENCY

Demand government accountability and transparency by requiring all amendments and bills discussed in committee to be available to the public prior to a vote. Encourage direct citizen participation by continuing virtual committee and subcommittee meetings.



EDUCATION

Keep public money in public schools, fully fund public schools, and continue to expand access to affordable childcare.



2023 State Public Policy Priorities



REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Guarantee access to the full range of women's reproductive health services, make contraception available without prescription, and ensure Medicaid services are comprehensive and accessible.



HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Prevent human trafficking in all of its forms, support its victims, and enact "Safe Harbor" legislation to protect human trafficking survivors from criminal prosecution.



ENVIRONMENT

Increase funding for environment and water quality initiatives, including REAP, and develop state climate change strategies.

Convention 2023

By Mary Rae Bragg, LWVIA Past President

If there was ever a reason to love February in Iowa it would be because in just four more months it will be June!

And June of 2023 will be time to celebrate with the League of Women Voters of Iowa ... in Dubuque!

Yes indeed, June 9 and 10 is LWVIA's state convention and your chance to see for yourself how Dreams Come True ... in Dubuque!!

Mark your calendar now, tell your spouse to get ready for a road trip to Iowa's East Coast, and prepare to spend a few days hangin' with Iowa's coolest activists in the state's most happenin' city!

Come for convention; Stay for the fun!

League of Women Voters of Iowa T-Shirts

Everyone should order one (or more!) of our fantastic League of Women Voters of Iowa t-shirts!

A variety of colors and styles are available.

Order yours today at:
https://stores.inksoft.com/league_of_women_voters

Wear your LWV pride!

A Beautiful Basket Case

A high point of LWVIA's 2023 convention will be the selection of amazing silent auction items waiting for you to bid on, raising cash for your beloved League of Women Voters while you buy some really cool stuff to enjoy for days, months and years to come!

Always a delight to behold, each local League across the state is invited to offer a basket of goodies made especially in their part of Iowa.

Which local League will have the most tantalizing treats to offer?

Which basket will draw the highest bid?

Let the temptation begin!

In League,

Mary Rae Bragg

CJJC Book Club

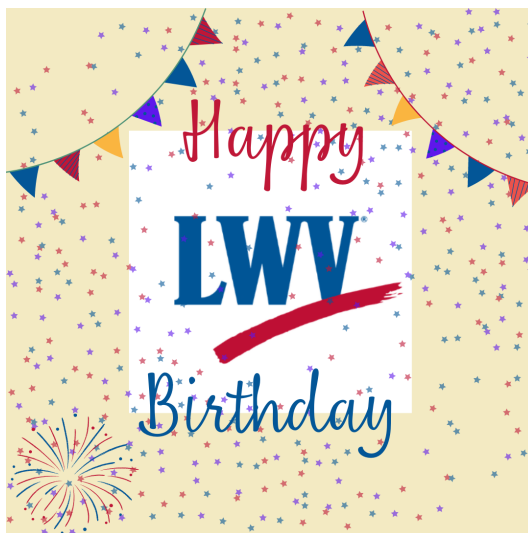
By Myrna Loehrlein, CJJC Committee Chair

The book club will be meeting via Zoom on February 23 at 5:00 p.m. We will discuss the book "The Good Neighbor." If you haven't read the book, and don't care to – No Worries. Just meet us on Zoom and help us choose our next book.

Email Myrna at myrnaloehr@gmail.com for your Zoom invitation.

League of Women Voters Turns 103!

Happy Birthday
to the
League of
Women Voters
on February 14!



Voting is my love language.

Happy Valentine's Day from
the League of Women Voters

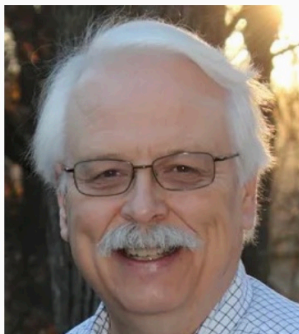


Save the Date:

Thursday, April 13, 2023, 4 - 7 p.m.



Defending Democracy Award Dinner



Award Honoree:
Randy Evans

Executive Director of
the Iowa Freedom of
Information Council



Guest Speaker:
Kathie Obradovich

Editor with the
Iowa Capital
Dispatch



At Jasper Winery, Des Moines
Dinner buffet catered by Baratta's - Cash bar
5:15 p.m.: Program & Award Presentation
Tickets \$75 per person
Fundraiser for the LWVIA

Criminal and Juvenile Justice Committee (CJJC) Update

By Myrna Loehrlein, CJJC Committee Chair

Reinstatement Again Proposed for Iowa Death Penalty

The death penalty was abolished in Iowa in 1965. Since then there have been many unsuccessful attempts to reinstate it.

Current effort

This year the effort is led by Senator Brad Zaun of the West Des Moines area.

1. Death penalty for persons over 18 at the time of crime for 1st degree murder, kidnapping, and sex abuse with respect to the same victim when that victim is a minor.
2. Defendant must not be mentally ill or intellectually challenged or have shown manifest indifference to human life.
3. Indigent persons will be supplied with two attorneys.
4. Iowa Supreme Court will establish standards of competency.
5. Iowa public defender will establish team of qualified counsel and will conduct or sponsor training to those who represent persons who may be executed.
6. Jurors may be instructed to consider race, color, religious beliefs, national origin, sex or other protected classes
7. Fact finder to answer two questions:
 - a. Do aggravating circumstances outweigh mitigating circumstances?
 - b. Should defendant be sentenced to death?

LWVUS adopted a position opposing death penalty in 2006 and many state leagues have such positions as well. Others who oppose include faith related groups, mental health groups, ACLU, and others.

Arguments against Death Penalty

1. Innocent persons have been executed
2. Discrimination on basis of race, and economic status
3. Much greater costs
4. Violation of US 8th Amendment

Iowa History

Support for abolition of death penalty was led by Governor Robert Lucas in 1838. The penalty was included in 1847 constitution, but abolished in 1872 and reinstated in 1878. Governors Harold Hughes and Robert Ray also opposed it even after their time in office. Governors Vilsack and Culver also opposed it. Governors Branstad and Reynolds support reinstatement.

Current Proposal

The current proposal reinstates the death penalty for very limited circumstances, but any reinstatement opens the opportunity to add crimes over time.

League members who oppose capital punishment should contact their state legislators and urge them to vote against it. More information can be found at the ACLU and Iowans Against the Death Penalty web pages.



Reserve the date: Saturday, February 18, 10 am - noon

League's Annual Book Discussion by Zoom

Punishment Without Crime

*How Our Massive Misdemeanor System Traps the Innocent
and Makes America More Unequal*

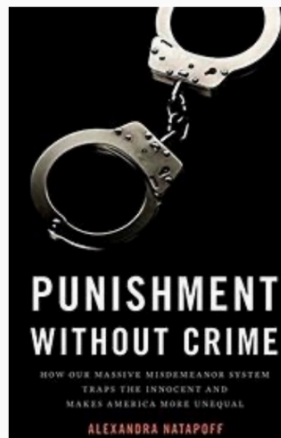
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"Every year, approximately 13 million Americans are charged with misdemeanor offenses. Those cases make up the vast majority - over 80% - of the US criminal system. While the crimes are typically minor, the punishments often ruin people's lives. . . making the poor poorer and widening our nation's racial divide. Presenting a profound new perspective on American criminal justice, *Punishment Without Crime* demonstrates how our enormous misdemeanor system operates as a powerful engine of error, injustice, and inequality."

Special Guest Kimberly Graham

Newly Elected Polk County Attorney

to speak at 11:00 am on the impact of the misdemeanor system
on Polk County residents. Q & A to follow.



Buy or
reserve your
library book
now for this
book
discussion.



Kimberly Graham

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<https://www.lwvmetrodsm.org>

