



THE VOTER

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

Board of Directors

Co-Presidents: Terese Grant
 tag.lwvia@gmail.com
 Holly Oppelt
 hoppelt@me.com

Vice President: Nancy Halvorson

Secretary: Jessica Tierney

Treasurer: Shannon Patrick

Directors:

Teresa Bomhoff

Sue Wilson

Maureen White

Peg Lazio

Jean McMenimen

Linda Serra-Hagedorn

Jennifer Ramaeker

Amy DeGRoot-Hammer

Polly Horton



*LWVUS President
 Dr. Deb Turner
 addresses
 the 2023 State
 Convention*

League of Women Voters of Iowa UPDATE

Co-president Terese Grant

The summer months are usually a time of rest and relaxation, but June and July have been very busy for League members. In June we gathered for the 2023 Convention in Dubuque, which gave everyone an opportunity to experience this beautiful city. The Dubuque League members were excellent hosts and planned very well for this event.

During the Convention, we heard from local League presidents and a variety of committees. The topics discussed and presented included a State Study on Criminal Justice, a Johnson County Procurement Study, and a Geographic Information System (GIS) Study. (continued on page 2)

LWV Iowa President Terese Grant presents Carolyn Goodwin with the Carrie Chapman Catt Award at State Convention.



Amy Campbell, our lobbyist, gave a review of the legislative session titled “Everything Everywhere All at Once.” We learned about Ranked Choice Voting from Kehry Lane, a representative of Better Ballot Iowa. We honored Carolyn Goodwin with the Carrie Chapman Catt Award. Our keynote speaker was Dr. Deborah Turner, President of the LWVUS, who emphasized that we are a grass-roots organization and that our local Leagues need to be strong.

The Nominating Committee presented candidates who were elected for two-year terms. They include Co-Presidents Terese Grant and Holly Oppelt, Secretary Jessica Tierney, Elected Directors Polly Horton, Jennifer Rae-maker, and Amy Degroot-Hammer, and Appointed Directors Teresa Bomhoff, Sue Wilson, Maureen White, and Peg Lazio.

The 2023 Convention ended with Directions to the Board and the results of the Silent Auction. Next year’s Council will be hosted by the Grinnell-Jasper LWV and the 2025 Convention will be hosted by the North Iowa LWV.

On July 11, a special session of the legislature met to pass an abortion ban. The governor made this unusual call due to the Iowa Supreme Court’s split 3-3 decision to lift the block on the six-week abortion ban. League members contacted their legislators to encourage them to oppose the new abortion ban. Many League members attended the rally at the Capitol on July 11, and many of us spoke at the public hearing held by the House and Senate. In spite of strong opposition to this bill, it was passed later that evening, and the governor signed it into law.

However, the ACLU of Iowa, Planned Parenthood of Iowa, and the Emma Goldman Clinic legally challenged the law. A district court judge then blocked it from taking effect. And now the Governor has once more challenged the district court’s decision and is asking the Iowa Supreme Court to rule again. The LWV of Iowa will continue to monitor this situation and we will continue to support reproductive rights for all.

Election season is coming soon, and we are grateful to all the League members who register voters on a regular basis. We will continue to encourage all to fulfill their duties as citizens and to vote in this election and in all future ones as well as we continue “Empowering Voters— Defending Democracy.”



News of Justice – Art and Bail

Myrna Loehrlein

The Criminal and Juvenile Justice Committee brought an art show to LWVIA convention in June. The art was work done by prisoners in Iowa. Some of the pieces were part of a rehab program, some were simple self-expression. The message we hope it brought was two-fold. (continued on page 3)

First, incarcerated persons are persons – with hopes and emotions, abilities and the perseverance to develop them. Second, persons who work with those convicted of a crime, such as parole and probation officers, see their role as “change makers.” Contrary to what you may see on TV or read in crime stories, well-trained Justice Department staff are working to help prisoners change their ways of thinking and to become productive, involved citizens.

The CJC has been tracking cash bail; Illinois has become the first state to eliminate it. As many cities and counties have found, cash bail is simply a tax on poverty. It is almost always the poor who lose their jobs, place in the community, and often even families through long months of incarceration before they are tried or convicted of anything. Nearly 80% of prisoners in our jails are awaiting trial. They are prisoners but not criminals. They have not been convicted of the crime. One experiment with elimination of cash bail found that about 80% of accused persons released without bail appeared in court for trial as ordered. Eliminating cash bail also eliminates the need for all the administration related to it. Since cash bail is hardly ever paid (people can’t afford it and just sit in jail), eliminating the administration actually saves money.

CJC will continue to track this and other developments in our justice system. If you’d like to join this friendly, knowledgeable, committed group that meets almost entirely on line, just let me know.

myrna.loehr@gmail.com.

MOONSHOT – A Difficult Task with Great Significance

Co-president Holly Oppelt

Thanks to LWV members, I had the opportunity attend the LWV Council this past June in Las Vegas. This gathering not only gave me the chance to attend educational meetings but meet leaders from other states. The information I learned was invaluable.

During the League’s 2022 Convention, LWVUS board president Dr. Deborah Turner announced the League’s next “moonshot” goal: abolition of the Electoral College, which falls under the campaign for [Making Democracy Work®](#) under Improving Elections. As an organization whose mission is to empower voters and defend democracy, the League of Women Voters has long supported the direct election of the president.

LWVUS has built out a framework to abolish the Electoral College, broken down into five phases stretched over the course of multiple decades. Leagues should expect to work in the current phase (Phase One) until 2030.

Phase One: Adopting the NPV Compact

The National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NPVIC) is an agreement among a group of US states and the District of Columbia to award all their electoral votes to whichever presidential ticket wins the overall popular vote in the 50 states + DC. This compact requires passage of the NPV bill in state legislatures and, once passed, the electoral votes in that state are added to the mix.

The [compact](#) is designed to ensure that the candidate who receives the most votes nationwide is elected [president](#), and it would take effect only when it would guarantee that outcome. As of July 2023, it has been adopted by 16 states and DC. These states/jurisdictions have 205 electoral votes. There is an appetite for change in the system, and voters might participate more in elections if the president were elected by national popular vote. To achieve our goal of abolishing the electoral college, we need to lay the groundwork to change hearts and minds about how elections can be more representative of voters. Education will be the key. (continued on page 4)

Phase Two: Public Response to One Person, One Vote

Securing the NPVIC gets us closer than we have been to “one person, one vote,” but in order to see how we might move the needle further we will need to observe the public response to the shift that will certainly come from electing a president by popular vote.

LWV will build on observation programs that currently already exist in many Leagues across the country (e.g., Wisconsin). Additionally, LWV will roll out a unified observation program with input from Leagues, as it is critical that we have sufficient time to observe and gauge public response. Since we anticipate legal challenges, we would want to establish target states to defend the NPV once in place.

Phase Three: Exploring Frameworks for Change

In this phase, we will gather resources – both domestic and international – to start to identify potential frameworks that would be viable in the United States. This work will likely include academic research (potentially studies) and polling to see what frameworks the League would promote as a potential next step for how elections could run in the US. To accommodate for the time research requires, leaders estimate this phase could take anywhere from 5-10 years to complete.

Phase Four: Announcing & Socializing a World Without the Electoral College

With observation data and academic research to support our recommendation, this phase encompasses a public campaign to promote alternatives to the electoral college. The public campaign would occur at all levels of League, and it would be important to continue any negotiations on federal advocacy and lobbying to achieve reform. The potential timeline is 6-10 years.

Phase Five: Formalizing Abolition of the Electoral College

By this stage, LWV will have done the work to determine an alternative to the Electoral College, have socialized it to change hearts and minds, and now will leverage the influence to achieve change at the federal level with the support of states stories.

This is an aggressive plan with a lot of work to be accomplished over the next 20 years. The first step is to educate our members!



Duane Hovorka Discusses Farm Bill

The Farm Bill is a piece of federal legislation that's reauthorized every five years, affecting everyone in the United States. Not only does it affect farmers through farm programs, but it includes the US food and nutrition programs, accounting for billions of dollars in spending. Will this Congress be able to pass the Farm Bill yet this year?

At noon on August 7, LWV-UMRR will host Duane Hovorka, Senior Policy Specialist at the National Wildlife Federation. Duane is a lobbyist working on the Farm Bill, and he will share an update on where the Farm Bill is now and what the prognosis is for the Bill in days to come. Join us for this talk and discussion, led by LWV UMRR Chair Mary Ellen Miller. Duane's long involvement in Farm Bill development makes him very knowledgeable; this event will provide a great update on what's happening with this critical piece of legislation. **This webinar will begin at noon on August 7.** Everyone who registers will receive an email with start time when it is set. We will also send link to a video of the presentation and discussion to everyone who registers after the webinar is over. To register, click on this link: <https://www.lwvumrr.org/blog/briefing-on-the-farm-bill-by-duane-hovorka>

New LWV of Iowa Initiative

Carolyn Stevenson

As this last legislative session demonstrated, it often seems as if legislators do not particularly listen to citizen input. Many bills passed and were signed that a majority of Iowans opposed, from the funding of private education with public tax dollars, raising eligibility requirements for families receiving SNAP assistance, to the recent restriction of abortion in Iowa to about 6 weeks gestational age.

Iowa LWV members from across the state engaged with state legislators from the start of the legislative session to the special session called by Governor Reynolds. A small group of active advocates, led by state President Terese Grant, met weekly via zoom throughout the legislative session, strategizing on how to support the League's policy positions. The support and knowledge of this small group inspired the new statewide initiative LWV of Iowa Advocates.

We know there is power in joining our voices with others! After all, LWV members and other Iowans crashed the legislature's server with comments about the private school voucher bill! We know some Iowa Leagues are well organized in their legislative advocacy. However, other members may be one of the few in their chapter who choose this form of defending democracy. LWV of Iowa Advocates is a "support group" for those of us who want/need the support, training and organization of other Iowa LWV members from across the state in supporting LWV policy positions in the Iowa legislature.

Our goal is to be proactive ahead of the 2024 Legislative session rather than reacting to bills as they move through the House and Senate. We can expect the Iowa legislature to continue to restrict reproductive rights, ignore science-based measures of water quality initiatives, continue to defund public education, bring back the proposal to allow guns in locked vehicles on school properties, and avoid discussing their legislative goals with all Iowans.

This new initiative will kick off on August 17 from 7-8:30pm with a zoom session on "Navigating the Legislative Website," offered by Shannon Patrick of the Johnson County LWV. Other monthly Advocate Thursday training topics will include what to expect in the 2024 Legislative session and effective strategies for communicating with legislators.



Dubuque League of Women Voters President Tam Prenosil has received the Governor's Volunteer Award in recognition of her more than ten years of valuable volunteer work in many Iowa volunteer organizations, specifically as a Counsel at the Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP). But she has also served in many other volunteer positions and organizations: secretary and one of the originating founders of the League's Upper Mississippi River Region Inter-League Organization (UMRR-ILO), secretary and member of the Action Committee of UMRR-ILO, member of the Social Justice Committee at the Unitarian Universalist Church, board member of the Unitarian Universalist Witness Advocacy Network, and board member of the Friends of Dubuque's Carnegie-Stout Library.

Remember in November

MY VOICE MY VOTE

68% of U.S. adults who voted in the 2020 presidential election turned out to vote in the 2022 midterms (Pew Research Center). In July 2023, Iowa has 1.45 million active voters (SOS.Iowa.Gov.elections).

"Women deal with government in their day-to-day lives more than men do. Thanks to the feminization of poverty, women are more dependent on safety-net services such as food stamps and child-care subsidies than men are. Even among Americans who aren't poor, though, women are more likely than men to be primary caregivers, which means they spend more time with teachers, eldercare workers, healthcare providers and other folks who are employed, reimbursed or tightly regulated by the government. This additional exposure to government could make the potential outcomes of elections more salient."

Catherine Rampeli
The Washington Post

Gender is on the ballot in 2024. Women are engaged in politics, supportive of women elected officials, and tuned into conversations about hot-button issues such as reproductive rights and inflation. However, women are also burnt out, financially strained, and increasingly concerned about extremism in politics, according to American University, *She Votes Women at the Forefront*.

Women have registered and voted at higher rates than men in every presidential election since 1980, with the turnout gap between women and men growing slightly larger with each successive presidential election (CAWP *Women Voters and the Gender Gap*).

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Thanks for reading this issue of The Voter. I am your new Communications Coordinator and glad to be so! I've been a League member for four decades, and I'm glad to help spread the word about our work—never so important as it is right now. Please feel free to send articles, ideas for articles, comments, etc. Janet Carl, lwviowa@gmail.com