

THE VOTER

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

CO-PRESIDENTS' REPORT

It is indeed a great pleasure to be able to publish our Voter once again. This is all possible due to our new Communications Coordinator, Judy Baldwin. We are so happy to have her in this role and resuming all of the duties this job entails.

It has been a very busy fall. Our Lobbyist, Amy Campbell, recently hosted an Issues Briefing where she was able to give more details about our Legislative Priorities for 2024. Amy also invited Sydney Gangstaad who spoke about messaging on gun safety and the various issues involved with gun legislation. We also heard from Mary Nell Trefz who shared information about the lack of postpartum services in Iowa and the need for these services for at least a year after giving birth. We will all need to advocate for these important issues as well as the other Legislative Priorities. We hope to be able to have a link to the recording of this event available soon.

The League is currently working with other organizations to sponsor legislation that would protect election workers and the election process. We are encouraging local Leagues to host an event on January 6th to present a film, No Time to Fail. This film takes a look at the critical role election workers play in our Democratic process. We will also focus on the critical role election workers play in our elections and encourage attendees to advocate for the protection of our election workers.

As the 2024 Legislative Session is fast approaching, we encourage everyone to have conversations with their Legislators. We need to be talking with them about our priorities and asking them about their opinions of these issues. In addition, we need to help educate our Legislators with information to win their support.

Thanks to everyone who worked during this past election season registering voters, holding candidate forums, and being an election worker. Thanks also to everyone who supports the work of the League and its mission to "Empower Voters and Defend Democracy".

Terese Grant and Holly Oppelt, Co-Presidents

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RYAN RECEIVES DEFENDING DEMOCRACY AWARD



Connie Ryan, Executive Director of the Interfaith Alliance of Iowa has received the 2023 Defending Democracy Award.

Each year the LWVIA honors an Iowan whose work exemplifies the organization's belief in the power of women and citizens to create a more perfect democracy.

Connie is a well-known voice in the public arena speaking out to protect religious freedom while ensuring it is not misused as a tool to harm or discriminate. She works to advance civil rights and fairness for those who are marginalized; and unite diverse voices to challenge extremist ideologies.

"I believe the best work is accomplished through collaborative efforts and coalition partnerships. I have spent many years building relationships with faith, civil rights, labor, education, and many other organizational partners including League of Women Voters of Iowa. I am grateful for their work and the partnership to create a more just Iowa," said Ryan.

"Connie receives this award because her work closely aligns with the mission of the LWVIA. She is a champion for democracy with an unmatched commitment to work through collaborative efforts and coalition partnerships to achieve social justice," said Terese Grant, President, League of Women Voters of Iowa.

Connie will receive the award on April 11, 2024 at the LWVIA Defending Democracy Award Dinner at the Jasper Winery in Des Moines, 4:00 to 7:00 p.m.

SAVE THE DATE FOR THE 2024 DEFENDING DEMOCRACY EVENT

On April 11, 2024, at the Jasper Winery in Des Moines the LWVIA will host our annual Defending Democracy event in Des Moines. This is our major fundraising event that honors a nominated person in the state of Iowa who supports our policies. The event will take place from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. Please be on the lookout for further information but meanwhile SAVE THE DATE!

LWVIA ADVOCATES NEEDS YOU

The 90th Iowa General Assembly will gavel to order on Jan. 8, 2024.

The flurry of legislation that passed the first week of the last session had LWVIA members busier than ever. That activity didn't slow down the rest of the year as League members registered voters and hosted numerous candidate forums for the fall 2023 City and School Elections held across the state.

We can expect the same level of activity again in 2024.

The League of Women Voters is doing important work to strengthen our democracy, and there's more work ahead. After the chaotic last session, we know the League's advocacy must be done with the speed of light if we are to distill myths and counter disinformation.

To be successful, the League must be proactive. League members throughout Iowa have pulled together and are developing procedures to address our 2024 Legislative Priorities. The LWV of Iowa Advocates plan to distribute to each League president, who will disseminate to their members, Action Alerts with talking points and legislators to contact who are working on specific bills.

There is strength in numbers. The more individuals or organizations you can rally to your cause the better.

We will need your help to advocate for and against legislation. You can assist by contacting legislators in your district and those serving on committees. You can write them individually or call the statehouse. We know these individual contacts make a difference in how lawmakers vote. We hope we count on you.

We'd also like to see elected officials from both parties attend our League Legislative Forums during the session to address proposed legislation and the bills they favor and oppose. When you speak with lawmakers, please encourage them to attend Legislative Forums. Iowans deserve to know where legislators stand.

Iowa League members are working to fulfill our mission as a nonpartisan, grassroots civic organization to encourage informed and active participation in government, increase understanding of major public policy issues and influence public policy through education and advocacy.

With over 100 years of experience, the League is one of America's oldest and most trusted civic nonprofit organizations. Together, we can make a difference.

Thank you,

Terese Grant

Holly Oppelt

Linda Schreiber

Carolyn Stephenson

Jessica Tierney

CRIMINAL AND JUVENILE JUSTICE MEETING REPORT

The Criminal and Juvenile Justice (CJJC) committee met on November 28, 2023 to discuss goals and actions for 2024.

The committee set these areas of attention.

1. The committee will track and support HF 349 (this bill number may change in the upcoming legislative session.) It is a bill to allow reduction of probation time based on participation in education programs.

The convicted person's time on supervision would be reduced by participation in approved education programs.

This bill passed the House last year 97 to 0. It is likely to fail in the Senate, but the committee will keep League members informed and let members know what they can do to help.

2. The committee will track the practice of charging room and board in county jails. It is often in the range of \$60.00 each day the person is incarcerated.

This fee can be reduced if an indigent person is convicted or found innocent. But – it stands if the indigent person's case is dismissed. Since the indigent person cannot pay, this debt grows with penalties and collection costs and begins a record of court debt that, in many cases, can never be cleared.

At least one Iowa county has eliminated this fee for indigent persons. The committee hopes more counties have done so or will do so. The committee will keep track of this and keep members informed.

Please let Myrna Loehrlein (myrnaloehr@gmail.com) know if you would like to join the CJJC. The committee meets the 4th Thursday of each month at 9:30 a.m. on Zoom.

LWVIA ANNOUNCES 2024 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

In November the LWA of Iowa announced its 2024 legislative policy priorities.



2024 Public Policy Priorities

★ VOTING

Promote equal access to voting and ensure all votes are counted. Adopt automatic voter registration. Enact ranked choice voting. Pass a constitutional amendment allowing Iowans with felony convictions to vote after time served.

TRANSPARENCY & CITIZENSHIP

Demand government accountability and transparency by requiring all amendments and bills discussed in committee to be available to the public prior to a vote. Demand timely processing of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. Encourage direct citizen participation by continuing virtual committee and subcommittee meetings. Preserve gender balance requirements for state boards and commissions.

EDUCATION

Increase oversight and track public funds being used for non-public schools. Require any non-public school receiving public funds to meet the same standards as public schools. Fully fund public schools. Continue to expand access to affordable childcare and four-year-old preschool.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Guarantee access to the full range of women's reproductive health services. Make contraception available without prescription. Ensure Medicaid services are comprehensive and accessible. Support new moms with 12 months of postpartum Medicaid coverage. Set policies that attract maternal health professionals and address the state's OB/GYN deserts.

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.

GUN SAFETY

Enact comprehensive common sense gun safety legislation to address increasing gun violence in the state. Enact background checks on all gun sales, close gun show loopholes, require gun safety locks, repeal "stand your ground" law, and resist efforts that expand carrying in public spaces and schools.



DONATE TO THE LWVIA

Have you ever thought about what more you could do to help the League of Women Voters of Iowa be a more successful organization?

If you donate to the LWVIA general fund this supports our daily working expenses and is a 501c(4) which is not considered deductible. However, if you donate to the LWVIA Education Fund this is deductible as a 501c(3). Your choice. But either way the funds are needed. Any donation may be sent to our State Treasurer Shannon Patrick, 652 Sandusky Drive, Iowa City IA 52240.

With the end of the year quickly approaching, you may want to donate to the Education Fund for your personal tax deductions. These funds are used to educate the public on upcoming elections, voter registration, and Legislative advocacy events. All of these are main directives of our League.

If you have any other suggestions as to how to support the LWVIA please feel free to contact me. It's so important!

Holly Oppelt, Co-President

BUY A LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS SHIRT OR TOTE BAG TO HELP FUND THE LEAGUE

The League sells t-shirts and polo shirts supporting the League with a nice profit going to our general fund. I am currently in the process of including a tote bag and a briefcase supporting our League. Other items will be added. Please check out the website at https://stores.inksoft.com/league_of_women_voters/.

Show Your Colors!



Logowear from the League of Women Voters is now available in a variety of colors and styles!

- Affordably priced
- Easy care, comfortable to wear
- Produced & sold in Iowa
- Makes a great gift
- Convenient, secure online ordering

Shop now! Visit our online store at:

https://stores.inksoft.com/league_of_women_voters/



All net proceeds from sales go to the League of Women Voters of Iowa

