

THE VOTER

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

A MESSAGE FROM CO-PRESIDENT TERESE GRANT

This is our first Voter in the New Year 2024. The Iowa Legislature is in session and many of us are busy contacting our Legislators. Local Leagues are hosting Forums with their Legislators to discuss issues that are important to their communities as well as our Legislative Priorities.

On January 6, many local Leagues hosted an event to educate everyone about the important work done by election workers to ensure that our elections are run safely and securely. At this event the film, No Time to Fail, was shown. This film focused on the 2020 elections and election workers in Rhode Island. After the film, many local auditors and election workers held panel discussions and discussed the work they do here in Iowa. It is hoped that bills will be introduced during the Legislation Session to protect our elections and election workers here in Iowa.

On January 8, the first day of the Legislative Session, I attended a rally at the Capitol, The People's Agenda: Freedom, Opportunity, and Respect. This event was hosted by Connie Ryan of Interfaith Alliance. The purpose of this rally was to hold our elected officials accountable to the values of Freedom, Opportunity and Respect so every Iowan can thrive. Representing the League of Women Voters of Iowa, I was one of many speakers that spoke that day and my prepared remarks were about gun safety.

There are certainly a variety of bills that are being introduced in the Legislative Session that demand our attention and are a part of our Legislative Priorities for 2024. One of these is the bill to completely overhaul the many services that our AEAs provide to our schools, teachers, and students with special needs. The response from people across Iowa has been overwhelming and has caused a pause in the bill's efforts to cut services to the AEAs and to dismantle its current system of funding. We all need to continue to contact our Legislators as well as the Education Committees in the House and the Senate and tell them not to support HSB 542 and SSB 3073. We need to do all we can to protect the AEAs.

There will be many more bills introduced in the House and Senate this year that will need us to advocate either for or against. We cannot expect our Lobbyists to do this work alone. To have any effect on our Legislators, it will take ALL of us sending messages, calling, and attending the local League forums. Please do your part to advocate and make us proud to be Iowans.

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IN MEMORIAM: DR. DEBORAH ANN TURNER

By Karen Person, Friend of Deb and the League member who asked Deb to join the League in 2010



“There’s only one race, the human race,” were words said to my friend Deborah Ann Turner by her mother when Deb was a child. Her mother’s family had roots in Buxton, a now defunct coalmining community in southern Iowa that was remarkable for its integration and harmony among a mix of people of differing races and ethnic groups. These words from her mother became a part of the fabric of Deborah Ann Turner.

My friend, “Deb,” was so proud of growing up in Mason City, Iowa. She often spoke of the encouragement from her teachers, and the wonderful friends she made while there.

She loved the Girl Scouts and learned to canoe. Deb would often start a presentation with, “I’m just a cornfed, Iowa girl.” But not every cornfed Iowa girl becomes the first African American female to integrate the sorority system at ISU (of course Deb went on to become her sorority president).

Not every cornfed Iowa girl has a medical degree and becomes the first African American certified as a gynecologic oncologist by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology in the nation. Not every cornfed Iowa girl decides that doctoring is not enough and goes on to earn a Juris Doctorate degree from Drake Law School. Not every cornfed Iowa girl serves on the Iowa Board of Regents.

Not every cornfed Iowa girl uses her vacation days to do numerous medical missions to Tanzania. Not every cornfed Iowa girl joins the League of Women Voters and becomes president of the local League, and then the state League, and then the President of League of Women Voters of the United States. I could go on . . . but you all know her and know her dedication to caring about her community, her country, and her world. There are good reasons why Deborah Ann Turner was inducted into the Iowa Women’s Hall of Fame in 2013.

How did this trajectory to greatness happen? Not only did Deborah Ann believe in herself, but she also believed in all of us. She had an innate kindness that seeped through her pores. She communicated her caring to her family, her patients, her friends, her students, and her fellow League members. She enthusiastically embraced the League of Women Voters policy of “DEI: Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion.” She greeted everyone with an infectious smile, and she listened with empathy. She gave optimism to those who felt discouraged. She encouraged each of us to tell our stories so they would not be lost to history – because she believed we each had an important story to tell. “Keep on keepin’ on,” were often her final words . . .

. . . and so we will “keep on keepin’ on” for you, Dr. Deborah Ann Turner. Our deepest condolences go to your husband, David Connolly, son Daniyel, niece Danielle, and all those who deeply mourn your loss in their lives.



JOIN THE CRIMINAL AND JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMITTEE

The Criminal and Juvenile Justice Committee is emphasizing changes that can be made without legislative action. The committee develops information that can support local leagues as they seek ways to improve Iowa's justice system on the local level. Watch for soon-to-come information on three items:

- Support of SF1004 – a bill to reduce incarceration time for participation in education or work programs.
- Criminal Justice action that can be taken at the local level such as “Ban the Box” opportunities, efforts against profiling, and others.
- Efforts to remind Iowa citizens that persons in the justice system, both charged or convicted persons, and the probation, parole, and other officers within the Department of Corrections, are “real people” who most often focus on moving convicted persons beyond the system and back into productive, responsible lives. Neither the convicted nor the officers should ever be stereotyped in any other way.

Everyone interested in good justice in Iowa through LWV action is invited to join the CJJC. The committee meets the 3rd Thursday of each month via Zoom, from 9:30 to 10:30. Contact Myrna Loehrlein, Chair at myrnaloehr@gmail.com.

MAKE ANNUAL IRA DISTRIBUTIONS TO HELP LWVIA

By Holly Oppelt, Co-President

I am sure you have heard me talk about making your annual IRA distribution payable to the League of Women's Voters of Iowa Education Fund. Here is some information that may be applicable to your tax situation.

Starting at age 73 the IRS mandates IRA owners to take annual income withdrawals, known as Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) or Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD). Failure to take these withdrawals could subject IRA owners to stiff penalties.

Retirement-age individuals and couples may not want to take an RMD for various reasons. They may have other sufficient sources of income for certain years. Also, the withdrawal, which is subject to ordinary income tax, may push them into a higher tax bracket, which can have adverse impacts on Social Security payments and Medicare benefits.

Qualified charitable distributions (QCD) are made directly to the eligible charity, i.e., LWVIA Education Fund, from a traditional IRA, inherited IRA, inactive Simplified Employee Pension (SEP) plan and inactive Savings Incentive Match Plan for Employees (SIMPLE) IRAs. (Inactive SEP and SIMPLE IRAs are accounts that no longer receive employer contributions.) We would be happy to provide you with wire instructions, addresses, and the Tax Identification Number for the Education Fund.

IRA Contributions, continued

The money is a direct transfer to the charity that never passes through the hands of the IRA holder. Instead, the IRA custodian can either send an electronic transfer of funds or a check directly to the charity.

For a QCD to count toward your minimum annual IRA distribution, it must be made by the same deadline as a normal distribution, which is usually Dec. 31 of the tax year in question. However, your distribution may be taken at any time during the tax year.

There are several other ways to make an annual QCD. If you are interested in making this type of distribution talk to your IRA Broker or Financial Planner. We would be happy to provide them with wire instructions, addresses, and the Tax Identification Number for. Education Fund. Contact our Treasurer Shannon Patrick at LWVIA.treasurer@gmail.com.

Thank you for thinking of the League of Women Voters of Iowa Education Fund.

ADVOCACY TAKES A TEAM ...YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AN ATHLETE TO PARTICIPATE

"If you want to go fast, go alone; but if you want to go far, go together." Sen. Cory Booker, D-New Jersey, made the statement at the Democratic National Convention in 2016.

The quote highlights the importance of collective action and collaboration to advocate for legislative progress that leads to a greater and more lasting impact.

It takes a village – to advocate for legislative progress.

LWVIA works with other nonprofit organizations to lobby legislators for and against proposed legislation. "There is strength in unity," LWVIA Co-Presidents Terese Grant and Holly Oppelt say. We recognize partnering with like-minded organizations highlights the importance of forming alliances and collaborating with others who share similar goals. This approach allows for a broader and more effective influence on lawmakers.

"The goal is not only to inform and engage League members but also to encourage them to actively participate in discussions with legislators." Advocacy members actively research bills, identify key lawmakers, prepare talking points, and coordinate advocacy efforts in the League's seven public priority areas.

An anecdote about the legislative server crashing last session due to the overwhelming number of emails during discussions about private school vouchers illustrates the power of collective action. It emphasizes that when people come together to voice their opinions and concerns, they can have a tangible impact on the legislative process.

If you are willing to write or call legislators, please let your League president know so they can connect you with LWV of Iowa Advocates.

Terese and Holly say our philosophy is collective action, collaboration, and community engagement are essential elements in advocating for legislative change. "We can go far ... together."

LOCAL WRITERS ADDRESS IOWA'S PATH TO SUSTAINABILITY

By Linda Schreiber

Water pollution, flooding and drought, soil erosion, and extreme weather events are grabbing increasing attention across Iowa. What is going on – and what can we do about it?

These and other Iowa environmental problems – and their solutions – will be the focus of Project GREEN and the Iowa City Public Library's Second Sunday Garden Forum 2024, on Sunday, Feb. 11, from 2 -4 p.m. The forum, which is free and open to the public will also stream live on Iowa City Public Library's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/thelibrarychannel>

The forum's discussions will be based on the book *Tending Iowa's Land: Pathways to a Sustainable Future* (University of Iowa Press, 2022), which includes chapters by 28 Iowa premier scientists and environmental activists. Book editor Connie Mutel will lead a panel with five authors who contributed chapters on soil, water, climate, and biodiversity problems. Ample time will be allowed for audience participation and questions.

Cindy Parsons, co-president of Project GREEN, said she is pleased Connie will return to present her newest book with colleagues and fellow writers. "Connie is Iowa's Aldo Leopold. She combines her passion and knowledge of the environment with excellent writing and editing skills to remind all of us of our moral responsibility to care for Iowa's land."

Tending Iowa's Land synthesizes the details of today's interacting environmental dilemmas. This hopeful and action-oriented book proposes that Iowans can foster the state's native resilience by nurturing elements of tallgrass prairies – the complex plant communities that dominated our state into the early 1800s. *Tending Iowa's Land* received the 2023 Midwest Book Award for Nonfiction – Nature.

Mutel is the author or editor of 14 books. Seven of these focus on Iowa's natural environment. Her books, as well as other writings and educational efforts across the state, have established her as a devoted advocate for nature in Iowa. Before retiring, she was a Senior Science Writer at IHR-Hydroscience & Engineering in the UI College of Engineering.

Ecologist Pauline Drobney guided the initial restoration of Iowa's 8,654-acre Neil Smith National Wildlife Refuge on former farmland. Until her retirement, she directed midwestern prairie and savanna research for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. She will describe the prairie's amazing abilities to create a self-sustaining landscape, and the benefits and techniques of re-introducing diverse native plantings throughout our agricultural landscape. Pauline wrote the chapter on the tallgrass prairie.

Iowa State Geologist Keith Schilling serves as Director of the Iowa Geological Survey at the UI. His broad and prolific research on soil- and water-related issues is reflected in his chapters on soil erosion and water pollution (with Christopher Jones). Schilling will discuss soil erosion and regenerative agriculture techniques that address this problem as well as problems with soil degradation, water pollution, carbon emissions, and biodiversity loss.

Jerald Schnoor, UI Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, former department chair, and the winner of numerous awards, has for decades focused his teaching and research on water quality and environmental health. His publications and students have advanced climate change efforts and water sustainability around the world. With his passion and creativity, Schnoor was the perfect author for the final book chapter "Regenerating Our Future: A Call to Action," which he will discuss.

Local writers, continued

Award-winning organic dairy farmer Francis Thicke considers greenhouse gas emissions with every farming decision he makes, from how and what he feeds his cows to where he sells milk products. Thicke earned his doctorate in soil science and previously worked as a USDA Soil Science Program Leader for the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. He will talk about how both his academic and farming experiences fed into his chapter on using agriculture to help control climate change.

As the UI IHR-Hydrosience & Engineering Director, Professor Larry Weber has created multiple Iowa initiatives to examine flooding, water pollution and landscape sustainability. Through his efforts with the Iowa Flood Center and Iowa Watershed Approach (IWA), Weber has developed a broad understanding of our state’s complex water issues and their solutions, which form a basis for his chapter and description of “Water-Centered Land Management.”

Project GREEN (Grow to Reach Environmental Excellence Now) was launched in 1968. The nonprofit supports efforts to educate citizens about the importance of conservation practices and preserving the natural environment. The organization celebrated 55 years of service to the community last year.

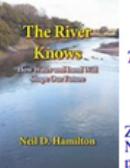
REGISTER FOR WATER QUALITY BOOK DISCUSSIONS

The League of Women Voters of Upper Mississippi River Region ILO and League of Women Voters of Metro Des Moines are inviting you to participate in two Zoom book discussions on water quality and environmental issues in Iowa.

The February 3, 10 a.m., discussion will be on *The Swine Republic; Struggles with the Truth About Agriculture and Water Quality*, by Chris Jones. The March 2, 10 a.m., discussion will be on *The River Knows: How Water and Land Will Shape Our Future*, by Neil D. Hamilton.

The authors will be presenting as a part of the discussion on the books. Those interested in getting a discount on the books, can do so at <https://icecubeypress.com/> and use the code LWV5 when you order to receive a \$5 discount per book. **Zoom meeting links will be sent to interested individuals who email drvot2@gmail.com.** Besides LWVUMRR ILO and LWVMDM, the Des Moines Chapter of Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) are sponsoring the two online Zoom meetings.

You are invited to participate in Two Zoom Book Discussions on
Water Quality and Environmental Issues in Iowa . . .

 <p>Saturday, February 3, 10 a.m.</p> <p><i>The Swine Republic; Struggles with the Truth About Agriculture and Water Quality</i> by Chris Jones</p> <p>Zoom includes a conversation with Chris Jones. Jones is retired from IHR-Hydrosience & Engineering at the University of Iowa. Prior to working at UI, Chris worked for the Des Moines Water Works, Iowa Soybean Association, and was a consultant for water and wastewater utilities. Zoom Link for Swine Republic: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82516507302?pwd=PCB9NdkxOTUkZnFicEoJc0kwpMns9.1</p>	 <p>Saturday, March 2, 10 a.m.</p> <p><i>The River Knows: How Water and Land Will Shape Our Future</i> by Neil D. Hamilton</p> <p>Zoom includes a conversation with Neil Hamilton, who is an emeritus professor of law and the former director of the Agricultural Law Center at Drake University in Des Moines. This book, his sequel to “<i>The Land Remains</i>,” examines our relationship with water by considering its role in our culture, society, and political economy. Zoom Link for The River Knows: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81960708722?pwd=TElE.O1n3G7d6R6ZpTKh7Qw7cmErzS.1</p>
<p>Sponsoring Organizations:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF METROPOLITAN DES MOINES</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Des Moines Branch</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER REGION</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>WILPF</p> </div> </div>	
<p>Go to Ice Cube Press at https://icecubeypress.com/ to order either book. Use code LWV5 and \$5 will be taken off each book</p>	

FILMSCENE COMMUNITY COLLABORATION SERIES

FilmScene at the Hotel Chauncey (Iowa City, Iowa) is showing the documentary film *I, Too* on March 25, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. in its Community Collaborations* series. Join the LWV of Johnson County, LWV of Iowa and the Bertelsmann Foundation for this screening and discussion event exploring the impact of history and accountability in strengthening democracy.

In 2020, the LWV of Iowa worked together with the Bertelsmann Foundation on the screening on *Uncivil War* at the Flix Theater during the Democratic Primary season. The Bertelsmann Foundation has reached out to LWVIA to collaborate again on a screening and discussion event in 2024.

The new film is *I, Too*, featuring Dr. Carol Anderson, New York Times bestseller author and Chair of African American Studies at Emory University. *I, Too* explores the connection between America's history (through the lens of little-known episodes from the past), and the current challenges to American democracy. It examines the question "Who could believe this could happen here?" regarding the January 6, 2021 insurrection.

The *I, Too* screening will be at FilmScene at the Hotel Chauncey, 404 E College Street. There is an attached parking ramp at The Chauncey and it is free after 6:00 pm.

Community Collaborations is an ongoing series of engaging cinematic events in partnership with nonprofits, advocacy groups, passionate individuals, and community organizations to generate conversation and action inspired by film.

DEIDRE DEJEAR FEATURED SPEAKER AT DEFENDING DEMOCRACY DINNER AND PRESENTATION



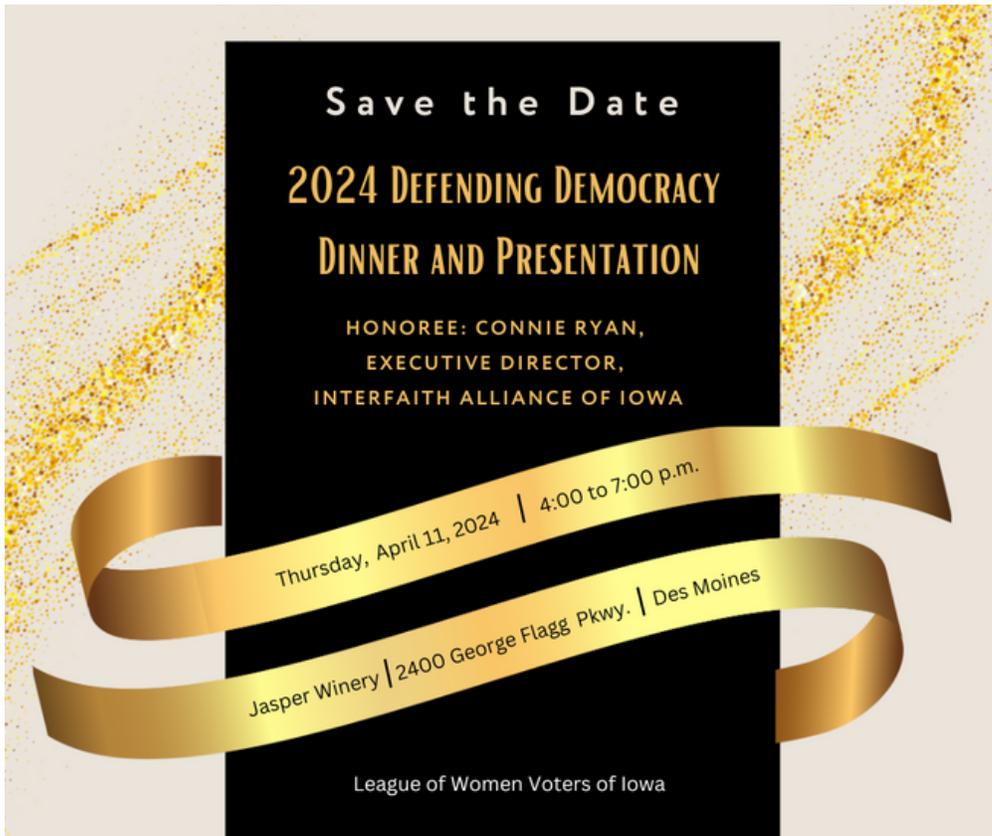
The speaker for the Defending Democracy Dinner and Presentation will be Deidre DeJear, the 2022 Democratic nominee for Governor of Iowa. In 2018 she was the Democratic nominee for Iowa's Secretary of State, making her the first African American in Iowa to be nominated by a major party.

Ms. DeJear is a small business owner and voting rights advocate who is driven by her passion to create equitable, inclusive, and accessible opportunities for all. She started her business in 2008 during her senior year at Drake, with a mission of helping other businesses grow and thrive.

Ms. DeJear founded Vision Leads and co-founded Back 2 School Iowa and LadyLike. She is also a member of the Des Moines Chapter of the Links, Inc., board chair of Count the Kicks, board member of The Directors Council, City of Des Moines Housing Services Board, and Interfaith Alliance.

The Defending Democracy Dinner and Presentation will be Thursday, April 11 from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Jasper Winery, 2400 George Flagg Parkway, Des Moines, IA.

SAVE THE DATE FOR THE DEFENDING DEMOCRACY DINNER AND PRESENTATION



LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR DATES OF NOTE

February 16, 2024

First funnel of bills to be out of the originating committee

April 16, 2024

Last scheduled day of the legislative session.
No pay for legislators after this date.

May 16, 2024

30 days after the session closes; the date the Governor must either sign or veto a bill.