

# THE VOTER

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

## A MESSAGE FROM CO-PRESIDENTS

Spring is one of my favorite times of the year. For most local Leagues, this is the time of year for Annual Meetings and an opportunity to look back at all the accomplishments of the past year. There were opportunities to register voters and ensure that everyone had the chance to vote. Candidate Forums were held in the fall and Forums with Senators and Representatives were held during the Legislative Session. We can all be proud of the accomplishments of all the work our Leagues do across the state of Iowa.

This spring the LWV of Iowa's major fundraising event was the Defending Democracy Dinner and Presentation held on April 11, 2024. The League of Women Voters of Iowa honored Connie Ryan, Executive Director of the Interfaith Alliance of Iowa with the Defending Democracy Award. Led by Ms. Ryan, Interfaith Alliance of Iowa is the leading voice across Iowa engaging people from diverse religions and non-religious perspectives to work together for the common good. The keynote speaker was Deidre DeJear, the 2022 Democratic nominee for Governor of Iowa and the 2018 Democratic nominee for Iowa's Secretary of State, making her the first African American in Iowa to be nominated by a major party. Plans have begun for next year's event.

The League of Women Voters of Iowa was honored with the Partner Organizations Award on June 6 at the 2024 Award Celebration of the Interfaith Alliance of Iowa. The LWV of Iowa has worked collaboratively with Interface Alliance of Iowa on several issues. For example, they helped us to obtain signatures on our voting petitions that were presented to the Legislature to object to changes in voting laws. We were a part of the coalition in opposing the Gun amendment. In addition, we joined Interfaith Alliance, and several organizations in supporting Reproductive Rights. Over the past several years we have worked collaboratively on many legislative issues as well. Holly and I were honored to accept the award on behalf of the LWV of Iowa.

On June 8, the LWV of Iowa held Council 2024 in Grinnell at the Joe Rosenfield Center. We also reviewed the past year and heard from a variety of speakers. A portion of our business meeting included approving the Budget, the Nominating Committee report, and the revised Bylaws. Our Keynote Speaker was Charity Nebbe, host of "Talk of Iowa" on Iowa Public Radio. The focus of her address was "Amplifying Voices and Deepening Democracy." We enjoyed seeing League members from around the state gathering in Grinnell.

The future summer months will give all of us a chance to recharge and prepare for the upcoming election season as we continue to "Empower Voters and Defend Democracy."

Terese Grant and Holly Oppelt  
Co-Presidents

## Board of Directors

### Co-Presidents

Terese Grant  
[tag.lwvia@gmail.com](mailto:tag.lwvia@gmail.com)

Holly Oppelt  
[hoppelt@me.com](mailto:hoppelt@me.com)

### Officers

Vice President: Dr. Linda Serra Hagedorn

Secretary: Jessica Tierney

Treasurer: Shannon Patrick

### Directors

Teresa Bomhoff  
Nancy Halverson  
Polly Horton  
Peg Lazio  
Jean McMenimen  
Jennifer Ramaeker  
Janet Boddicker Rampulla  
Susan Van Woert  
Maureen White  
Sue Wilson  
Martha Wolf

## Newsletter Highlights

A Message from Co-Presidents

Revised Bylaws Approved

2024-2025 Budget Approved

2025-2026 Slate Approved

Legislative Review Report

Celebrating 50 Years of Male Membership

Summer Fundraising

LWV of Iowa Honored by Interfaith Alliance of Iowa

UMRR Celebrates Upper Mississippi River Fish and Wildlife

UMRR Needs Volunteers

Pure Iowa Water Exhibit Tours Upper Mississippi

## LWV OF IOWA HONORED BY INTERFAITH ALLIANCE OF IOWA



Thursday, June 6, 2024 the co-presidents of the League of Women Voters of Iowa, Terese Grant (holding award) and Holly Oppelt (next to Terese), were honored by the Interfaith Alliance of Iowa with the Partner Organizations Award.

Here is the acceptance speech delivered by Terese Grant as she accepted the award on behalf of the LWVIA.

My name is Terese Grant and with me is Holly Oppelt, and we are Co-Presidents of the League of Women Voters of Iowa. We are extremely honored to be chosen for the “Partner Organization” award from the Interfaith Alliance of Iowa this evening. Interfaith Alliance is an extraordinary organization that is a leader in so many ways. We have worked together on a variety of issues in the past - voting rights, gun safety, reproductive rights and so much more.

We share a common mission with our organizations - “Defending Democracy.” The League has worked with Connie Ryan, the Executive Director of Interfaith Alliance, with our shared priorities at the Capitol during this Legislative Session and many of those in the past several years as well. Our efforts have not always produced the outcomes we would like, but that just makes us more determined the next time.

As Co-President I have established a good relationship with Executive Director, Connie Ryan. She contacted me a few years ago to interview me about the League’s role in voting rights. After that initial encounter, the League began to collaborate more with Interfaith Alliance. It was perfect timing, because we were beginning to realize that the League could no longer act alone, but we needed to work with other organizations to have all our voices heard. This has been such a valuable cooperative effort that we will continue to work with Interfaith Alliance as much as possible in the future.

On behalf of the League of Women Voters of Iowa, Holly and I are extremely honored to accept the “Partnership Organization” Award from the Interfaith Alliance of Iowa. Thank you.

At the June 8, 2024 LWV of Iowa Council in Grinnell, the keynote speaker at the was Charity Nebbe, host of “Talk of Iowa” on Iowa Public Radio. The focus of her address was “Amplifying Voices and Deepening Democracy.”



## REVISED BYLAWS AND 2024-2025 BUDGET APPROVED AT JUNE 8, 2024 COUNCIL MEETING

Revisions to the LWVIA bylaws were approved at the June 2024 Council meeting. [Go here](#) to see the revisions to the Bylaws, which are highlighted in yellow.



The 2024-2025 LWVIA budget was approved. [Go here](#) to see the details.

## 2024-2026 SLATE APPROVED

The 2024-2026 LWVIA officers were elected at the June 8, 2024 Council meeting.

These officers began their role on June 8, 2024:

- Vice President Dr. Linda Serra-Hagedorn – Ames-Story County
- Treasurer Shannon Patrick – Johnson County

These officers are continuing terms that expire in 2025:

- Co-Presidents Holly Oppelt – Muscatine and Terese Grant – Grinnell
- Secretary Jessica Tierney- North Iowa
- Elected Director Jennifer Ramaeker – North Iowa

The appointed directors are:

- Sue Wilson – Dubuque
- Teresa Bomhoff – Metro Des Moines
- Maureen White – Black Hawk-Bremer
- Peg Lazio - Ottumwa
- Martha Wolf - SE Iowa
- Polly Horton - Johnson County
- Janet Boddicker Rampulla and Susan Van Woert -Linn County

There is a Board vacancy for Sioux City that is to be determined.

## REPORT AND REVIEW OF 2024 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FROM AMY CAMPBELL, LOBBYIST FOR THE LWV OF IOWA

Amy Campbell, the LWVIA lobbyist, created a report that summarized the LWVIA priorities for 2024 Iowa Legislative session. Here is her report.

### *Session Review*

- Legislators adjourned session in the early morning hours of Saturday, April 20.
- It took them just 104 days to introduce 1,617 new bills and pass an \$8.9 billion budget.
- 1 out of every 10 bills introduced made it through to the Governor.
- Budget is a modest 4% increase over current year budget.
- Legislators spent far less than the 99% spending limit, putting money away into reserves.
- Currently have \$5.5 billion in reserve, including \$2.8 billion marked for tax cuts.
- They accelerated the income tax cuts passed in 2022, moving to a flat 3.8% income tax rate in 2025. They also adopted a resolution to change the constitution to protect the flat tax and require a supermajority (2/3) vote to raise taxes. This will need to be approved again in 2025 or 2026.

### *Voting*

- The good news is they did NOT pass a bill that makes voting early harder. HF 2610 passed the House on a party-line vote (62-35) but died in the Senate. It would have (so could not be reused), required a voter to put their voter ID number on the return envelope, required ballots to be received by 5 p.m. the night before the election, and banned ranked choice voting. The bad news is it will be back next year.
- Other attacks on voting failed – including citizenship verification before being registered to vote.

### *Transparency*

- Getting rid of citizen-led boards and commissions and consolidating/reducing membership is anathema to transparency. This is how Iowans ensure their government operates efficiently and in accordance with the law. (SF 2385)
- Ending gender balance (SF 2096) on state and local boards and commissions will impact the diversity of voices heard on boards and commissions.
- The Governor vetoed a bill that would have increased penalties for violating open meetings laws (SF 2331). This bill passed with broad bipartisan support (37-9; 95-2), but the Governor said it would make the state's law more confusing.
- Budget subcommittees failed to meet regularly to delve deeper into the appropriation requests. While the House Justice Systems Budget did meet a couple of times to hear department testimony, the remaining budget subcommittees only met to review the Governor's budget and approve their final recommendations. This is a time when the public learn more about the budget requests and legislators can ask questions about details. Without these meetings, many legislators knew nothing about programs that were funded. In addition, there were several instances of single-source appropriations that were made, with no discussion about who the funds were going to and what they were being used to fund.
- On the positive side, the Senate continues to have open subcommittee meetings online, allowing the public to make comments without travelling to the Capitol. The House only allows the public to watch. All committees can be watched remotely.

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*Education*

- AEA reform (HF 2612) passed, gutting AEA autonomy, capping AEA administrator salaries, dividing funds for media sharing, growing the Department of Education (DE) with a new Special Education Division, and taking over professional development from AEAs. A task force will make recommendations on adjustments to the law for consideration in 2025.
- AEA funds were cut by \$22 million, with \$12.5 million going to the DE for the new division (\$10 million) and professional development services (\$2.5 million).
- Legislators did fail to pass a disturbing and medically inaccurate “Meet Baby Olivia” bill (HF 2617) that required all schools to use this video in human growth & development classes.

*Reproductive Rights/Women’s Health*

- Mostly good news in this category. Legislators required insurance to cover diagnostic breast cancer exams (HF 2489) and biomarker tests (HF 2668).
- Legislators also expanded postpartum Medicaid coverage to women from 60 days to a full year (SF 2251), making Iowa the 48th state to do this. Unfortunately, they also cut eligibility from 375% of the federal poverty level to 215%. Iowa had the highest income eligibility in the country, and the 215% puts us more in line with the national average and more closely aligned to neighboring states. Groups will continue to work on increasing the income limit.
- Now for the bad news. Legislators passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (SF 2095) that shields businesses that refuse to provide a service based on a religious objection.
- Other bills that League supported failed to make it through, including providing free period products in schools, requiring victim service grants to pay for emergency contraception, and allowing over the counter access to contraceptives.

*Human Trafficking*

- Legislators did not pass a bill that would have enacted all the recommendations of an interim committee, but did pass HF 2460, which makes victims of human trafficking eligible for victim services and gives them the same rights as victims of sexual assault or domestic violence, including access to victim counselors.

*Environment*

- No change in REAP funding but did increase funding recreational trails by \$1 million and public transit by \$500,000.
- HF 2364 required the DNR to look at ways to improve state park and recreation area accessibility to older and disabled Iowans, and the budget included \$1.3 million in new funds to start to improve accessibility.
- New \$250,000 appropriation to assess the volume of water Iowa has in its aquifers and its recharge rate and develop a model for its use (but nothing on water quality).

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## Gun Safety

- No good news in this area. Legislative efforts to make schools safer were adopted, but their idea of safety is to give teachers and school employees guns.
- Two bills passed – HF 2652 and HF 2586.
- They allow school employees to concealed carry guns if they have been properly-trained and give schools grants to help pay for firearm detection, early warning systems, and employee gun training.
- The bills also require larger school districts (> 8,000 students) to have a school resource officer or hire a private security firm for each attendance center. A school board can opt out of this requirement with a simple majority vote. Smaller schools are given the option for this. No additional funding is provided to do this.
- Of note, schools will likely lose their insurance coverage if they opt for school employee carrying, so the bill may not actually result in more guns in schools.

## CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF WELCOMING MALE MEMBERS

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the LWV vote to permit men to join the organization. Here is the content of the May 7, 1974 press release to announce the decision.

***SAN FRANCISCO, May 7, 1974 —The League of Women Voters agreed today to end its long-standing policy of barring full membership to men. The vote, by a margin of better than 2 to 1, came after a long and often bitter debate over whether women have enough self-confidence to work equally with men.***

***The 54-year-old league, one of the leading women's organizations in the country, rejected a similar policy change two years ago. By today's 969 to 433 vote, it became one of the first exclusionary clubs in the nation to open its membership to the opposite sex.***

***Before the historic vote, members heard acerbic and impassioned pleas that many women in the league still do not have the self-assurance to share their activities with men. Opponents of the proposal warned that members would, inevitably, bow to Male superiority "just as they do in the outside world," as one state president put it.***

***After the vote, an ecstatic president of the league, Lucy Wilson Benson, joined in standing ovation with the 1409 women gathered at the San Francisco Hilton Hotel for the group's 35th biennial convention.***

***"We did it," she cried jubilantly. "Welcome, ladies and gentlemen of the league."***

The League of Women Voters of Iowa is proud to recognize this important vote that occurred in 1974. We currently have approximately 90 male members with our two largest Leagues not reporting. They are active members helping with Voter Registration, attending programs and recruiting members. One of our local members said "I believe we work better together although I would also say that women have not been acknowledged for the discoveries that they may have discovered before men. Check out DNA discovery by Rosalind Franklin in the 1920's." Remember we still have not passed the Equal Rights Amendment! 50 years later maybe we can do it!



## SUMMER FUNDRAISING



As the vibrant colors of summer continue to bloom, the League of Women Voters of Iowa humbly seeks your support to continue our vital work in inspiring confidence in our electoral systems and DEFENDING DEMOCRACY.

We are reminded that fostering civic engagement is crucial during this election season. Your generous donation allows us to expand our voter education initiatives, advocate for fair and accessible elections, and amplify the voices of the underrepresented communities.

Together, let's sow the seeds of democracy and ensure every voice is heard. Please consider contributing a monthly donation to our cause this summer and join us in shaping a more inclusive and equitable future for us all.

You can donate online at <https://lwvia.org/contact-us/donate/>. You do not need a PayPal account to make the donation. PayPal is simply the system we use to process donations.

## UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER FISH AND WILDLIFE CELEBRATED BY UMRR

On Sunday, June 9th a 100th anniversary celebration was held for the Upper Mississippi River Fish and Wildlife. The event included celebratory music and a day of fun. The Upper Mississippi River Restoration (UMRR) program received a grant from Mississippi River Network to create a work of art that helps explain the Mississippi River and its importance will be the center of attention. The art was displayed at the celebration.

Chair of UMRR, Mary Ellen Miller, applied for the grant to help with the UMRR objective to have a visual presence.

## TOUR MOLINE WATER PLANT AT THE JULY 12 UMRR BOARD RETREAT

On Friday, July 12, the UMRR Board will hold a retreat. The group will tour the Moline Water Plant midafternoon. See <https://www.moline.il.us/144/Water> to learn more about the water plant.

If you are interested, the UMRR could arrange meal plans and see the Mississippi River water at work. Contact the UMRR's Nancy Porter at [nancy55555@icloud.com](mailto:nancy55555@icloud.com). Be sure to put "UMRR" in the subject area.

## UMRR NEEDS VOLUNTEERS

Nancy Porter says the UMRR needs several interested hands to work with UMRR. Nancy says, “There are so many constant activities that go on with UMRR environmental directives. We need workers. It is not work if you’re interested.”

“The last four years our groups have had adventures eating over the Mississippi River in Clinton, touring the National Mississippi River Museum in Dubuque, dining at a brewery, walking along the Mississippi and just enjoying each other’s company. I hope you can join us for one of our events,” said Nancy.

To volunteer please contact Nancy Porter at [nancy55555@icloud.com](mailto:nancy55555@icloud.com). Nancy says that among other projects, the UMRR could use volunteers for their July 12 retreat.

## PURE IOWA WATER EXHIBIT TOURS UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER THIS SUMMER

With help from a grant from the Mississippi River Network, LWV Upper Mississippi River Region ILO and artist Christine Curry will be showing up at venues up and down the river with this Pop Art display. The list of events is below. See the art display when it's in your area!

- Friday, April 12-20: Public Library, Galena, IL
- Monday, April 22-23: Public Library, Muscatine, IA, with a special Earth Day program
- Wednesday, April 24-25: Environmental Learning Center, Muscatine, IA
- Friday, June 6-9: Smokestack Event Center, Dubuque, IA
- Monday, June 10-16: Upper MS River Refuge Center, Thompson, IL
- June 27-30: LWVUS Biennial Convention, Washington, D.C.
- July 12-21: Nahant Marsh, Davenport, IA
- August TBA: IA State Fair, Des Moines, IA
- August 18-20: Conservation Districts of Iowa, Ames, IA
- September 9-11: Iowa Water Conference, Coralville, IA
- September 19-22: Public Library, LaCrosse, WI
- September 23-October 5: County Historical Society, Winona, MN
- September 25-TBA: St. Paul, MN
- October 9-10: Iowa Nature Summit, Drake University, Des Moines, IA
- October 16-17: Upper MS River Conference, Davenport, IA TBA

For updates visit [www.lwvumrr.org](http://www.lwvumrr.org). To learn more visit <https://mailchi.mp/d95a56ceb023/pure-iowa>