

THE VOTER

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

CO-PRESIDENTS' REPORT

By Terese Grant and Holly Oppelt, Co-Presidents

The 2025 Legislative Session just finished its third week as we write this report. Already there are many bills being introduced that would have negative impacts on Iowans.

It is very important for our local Leagues to maintain relationships and communication with their Senators and Representatives by hosting a Legislative Coffee or similar kinds of events during the Legislative Session. These types of events offer a great opportunity to learn about the bills being introduced at the Capitol and ask questions of the Legislators. Individuals can also communicate with their Representatives via email or phone calls.

There will be a great opportunity for League members to attend this year's Lobby Day/Capitol Day on February 12 beginning at 9:00 am at the Capitol. The League of Women Voters of Iowa has been invited to join the American Association of Women, AAUW, at the Capitol. We will all meet in Room 305 for a short session before meeting with individual Legislators.

We encourage all members of the League across the state to keep up their efforts of communicating with their Legislators to have an impact on the decisions being made at the Capitol. We need to remember the words of our past President, Dr. Deborah Turner, to "Keep On Keeping On."

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SIGN UP FOR FEBRUARY 12 LOBBY DAYS

LWV of Iowa will join AAUW in hosting Lobby Days on February 12, 2025, which includes training and visits to legislators at the Capitol to advocate for our priority issues. Linked below you will find detailed information as to the location and talking points for you. Please let us know if you plan to attend Lobby Days on Wednesday, February 12.

[Sign Up Form](#)

[A list of the LWVIA 2025 Legislative Priorities](#)

[Tips for Effective Lobbying](#)



MONTHLY DONATIONS IMPORTANT IN THIS CURRENT CLIMATE

Dear League members,

I need your help to support the League of Women Voters of Iowa. I am personally asking you to become a monthly donor to the League. My goal is to get ten new monthly donors by the end of February to continue the vital programs that will support the League through some of our most challenging days. If you are interested in signing up for monthly donations, please contact Treasurer Shannon Patrick at lwvia.treasurer@gmail.com for details.

As you evaluate your 2025 resolutions and subscriptions, we hope you can add one that can help support us. **[Please become a donor today.](#)**

When we think of being committed to New Years Resolutions, we would be remiss if we did not give a huge shout out to Martha Wolf who has supported the LWV of Iowa strongly this past year. Martha Wolf is leading a fundraiser as a way of giving back.

"I believe in the LWV more than ever, especially in this current climate. It is important to support at your local chapter level, but also at the state level. Consider donating 3 or 4 cups of coffee each month. With PayPal, set up automatic draws for \$10 or \$15 per month. You feel good and your donation helps the state league print brochures, hosts speakers, or fund new leagues," says Martha.

With your support today, The League of Women Voters of Iowa can provide even more support to our projects.

Holly Oppelt, Co-President

ANNOUNCING THE HONOREE AND SPEAKER FOR THE DEFENDING DEMOCRACY DINNER



The League of Women Voters of Iowa is awarding Rekha Basu the 2025 Defending Democracy Award. The Award is given to an individual/organization who exemplifies leadership in our state. Rekha Basu has worked as a full-time reporter, editorial writer, and columnist at newspapers in New York, Florida, and Iowa.

For 30 years, her syndicated columns on national and local issues related to race, gender, immigration, and social justice were staples in The Des Moines Register (USA Today Network), where her work still appears on occasion. She writes weekly at basurekha.substack.com.

Rekha Basu has been generous with her skills as a journalist to act as a champion for the unheard and unseen around us.

Caleb “The Negro Artist” Rainey is an author, performer, and producer from Iowa City. Rainey is the author of “Look, Black Boy” and “Heart Notes.” He has been featured on Iowa PBS. In 2024, Nik Heftman and The Seven Times production company created a documentary about Caleb titled, “The Negro Artist.” Rekha Basu interviewed Caleb and filmmaker Nik Hartman and wrote “... new film introduces an Iowa treasure who tells tough truths through poems. He’s soft spoken, but Iowa City spoken word poet Caleb Rainey’s words are profound and can be jolting.”

Now Available: Tickets to the Defending Democracy Award Celebration

Date/Time: Thursday April 24, 2025, 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Location: Jasper Winery, 2400 George Flagg Pkwy, Des Moines.

Tickets: \$75/person (cash bar available). With the tax and processing fee of \$6.88 the total cost per ticket is \$81.88.

Buffet dinner by Baratta’s

[Go here](#) to purchase tickets. The last day to purchase tickets is April 15, 2025.

UPDATE: CRIMINAL AND JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMITTEE DISBANDED

After 23 years, the Criminal and Juvenile Justice Committee has disbanded.

In the 2002-2003 program year, a small number of people in the Blackhawk-Bremer League met to discuss how League's voice could be heard on matters of justice, particularly around sentencing reform and the death penalty. Jo Ann Finkenbinder and Karen Person called a public meeting with good response from public officials who were also concerned. One of them said that if the new "get tough" on crime policy played out, there wouldn't be anywhere near enough room to house all the convicted persons.

League had a position on treatment rather than prison for persons with a substance disorder. (In those days, we called these persons addicts and alcoholics.) But we had no position on criminal justice and sentencing in general. Jo Ann and Karen and others were reminded that League cannot lobby on any issue without a study and position. They got busy with such a study. Pat Jensen trained them in proper League procedure and a study was produced. Once the study was accepted and a position established, all LWVIA members were assisted in their advocacy by Judi Hoffman who was our lobbyist for many years.

That work continued in one form or another for 20 years. One outstanding action was support of a return of the opportunity to vote, to persons who had been convicted of a felony. We didn't get the result we wanted, but we got one that works for now. The most recent action on criminal justice came in the form of our recently adopted position on the cost of being accused, and/or convicted within the justice system. Current legislature make-up makes it almost impossible for justice issues to be addressed or affected by league action, so action on justice is occurring at the local level.

I resigned my position as chair and am currently working to assemble artifacts and history of the CJJC to be sent to Women's Archives at the University of Iowa. If you have anything to contribute to this collection, please notify me (myrnaloehr@gmail.com) or President Terese Grant (tag.lwvia@gmail.com).

Thanks to everyone who has done so much over the years. LWVIA has a record on criminal justice that we can be proud of. When the time is right, we have a great foundation to build on.

Myrna Loehrlein

LWV IOWA ADVOCATES ARE BACK



The Iowa Legislature is in full swing after its January 13 opening. The Governor has outlined her priorities and bills are being written and submitted. Committees are meeting and a few hearings have already been held. During the 2023 session, a small group of LWV decided to track bills and advocate for LWVIA priorities. It was an overwhelming task for our small number, so we offered a series of “how to advocate” zoom sessions in the fall of 2023 and invited all Iowa League members

Our numbers grew and our shared goals motivated and kept us going during what was a tough legislative session for our education, voting rights priorities, and reproductive health. But we are persevering! Join us in meeting bimonthly via zoom. We are creating teams based on our seven priorities: Education, Environment, Voting Rights, Reproductive Rights, Transparency and Citizenship, Human Trafficking and Gun Safety.

We cannot realistically address all the related bills individually. (If you care about staying sane). But we can each focus on one or two areas, join with other LWV advocates as a team, and educate Iowans and legislators about the impact of proposed legislation.

There is strength and motivation in sharing advocacy with other passionate LWV members. It's not too late to get involved! Email Terese Grant or Holly Oppelt with your priority areas of interest and join in.

READ AMY CAMPBELL'S POLICY BLOG

Are you looking for information about the 2025 Legislative Session? Our Lobbyist Amy Campbell shares information on her Public Policy Blog that can be found on our [LWVIA website](#). Here you can read about the work of various committees in the House and the Senate. In addition, you can read about a variety of bills that have been introduced. There are also links to the League of Iowa bill tracker and more. This is a great way to keep up with what is happening at the Capitol.



“JOIN THE LEAGUE” PROMOTIONAL TOOL KIT

LWV New Membership System

Did you know that the League of Women Voters of the United States has designed a section on League membership in your community with our social media graphics and captions? While Leagues can share these graphics after the launch of [our new membership system, ChapterSpot](#), these graphics are also great to share throughout the year. Social media graphics, captions, and guidance for Leagues to use to promote recruitment online.

AMES LEAGUE HOSTS ANNUAL STATE OF THE COMMUNITY LUNCHEON

Over 150 people attended a luncheon on Friday, January 24, sponsored by The League of Women Voters of Ames and Story County, United Way, the NAACP, and local radio station KHOI.

This annual State of the Community event has grown in popularity and reputation over the several years it has been presented. Formerly hosted by the League only, the cooperation and partnership of other entities in the Ames community have enhanced its reputation and universal importance.

A panel of six local leaders included the Ames Mayor, the Provost of Iowa State University, the President of DMACC, the Ames Superintendent of Schools, a Story County Supervisor, and the President of the Mary Greeley Medical Center. This gathering offered a unique opportunity for the panel members to describe their collaboration and future plans for the Ames area.

Pre-determined questions were directed to each panel member, with a question and answer session after. Questions from the moderators included: what each leader felt were the primary opportunities at this time; how are they preparing for the challenges and opportunities of new officials and new budgets; how they plan to meet the needs of people they are obligated to serve; and what collaboration is planned to foster community leaders.

Continued...

CONTINUED, AMES LEAGUE HOSTS ANNUAL STATE OF THE COMMUNITY LUNCHEON

The audience's submitted questions overwhelming concerning the issue of DEI and what each entity is planning to counteract pressure to change their current policies. The attending Supervisor, Linda Murken, gave an impassioned statement encouraging people to not react in anticipation but to stick with the vision. Brian Deiter, President of Mary Greeley Medical Center, emphasized on "doing what is right" as the Center has always done. Superintendent Scott Grimes stated that the school is dedicated to meeting the needs of every student to help them feel included and valued. The general conclusion was that each leader intended to pursue the best path forward, as they have been doing, to include every citizen in their programs and in their services.

The benefit of this annual session with the local leaders is immeasurable, raising awareness and offering the panel members feedback from their constituents. The luncheon question and answer session is available on KHOI radio, 89.1 FM, and on the League of Women Voters of Ames and Story County Facebook page.

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/

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

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

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