

# THE VOTER

**Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.**

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## CO-PRESIDENTS' REPORT

By Terese Grant and Holly Oppelt, Co-Presidents

The local Leagues in Iowa deserve lots of recognition these days for all their work hosting their Legislative Senators and Representatives at forums. These sessions provide opportunities for Legislators to share what is happening at the Capitol and for League members and attendees to ask questions. These are such important events for everyone, and this is just one example of the important work that our local Leagues do across the state.

In addition to the Legislative Forums, local Leagues and their members follow what is happening at the Capitol in both the House and Senate to advocate for bills. This year we have been disappointed with many bills that have passed. In particular, it was very upsetting that one of the earliest bills that passed removed many rights for the members of the trans community in Iowa. Currently, there are bills moving through the House and the Senate that remove DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) throughout our educational institutions in Iowa. These are just a few examples that the League has opposed.

Our Lobbyist, Amy Campbell, provides information about bills in both the House and the Senate on a Policy Blog that is found on the LWV of Iowa website. This Public Policy Blog has a bill tracker as well as detailed information about bills. There is also a form to leave comments along with your name and email address.

We are all looking forward to the Defending Democracy celebration that will be on April 24th to recognize Rekha Basu at the Jasper Winery in Des Moines. In June, we will travel to Mason City for the 2025 Convention where delegates will gather to review the events of local Leagues, approve a budget, elect new officers, and so much more. We hope to see League members from all 12 local Leagues at this year's Convention!

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## YOU'RE INVITED TO THE DEFENDING DEMOCRACY DINNER

A Message from Polly Horton, Member, Defending Democracy Committee



The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization with expertise in voting and elections. Our mission is to empower voters and defend democracy. For more than a century the League has stood in the gap when the government falls short of its duty. The League will work to protect voters and free, fair, accessible elections. The League currently will be working with our partners and legal advocates to fight back against the unlawful executive order, "Preserving and Protecting the Integrity of American Elections" that threatens Americans' freedom to vote and tramples states' constitutional authority to run their own elections.

The Defending Democracy Award is a League of Women Voters (LWV) of Iowa award, given to an individual or organization who exemplifies leadership in our mission to protect voters and maintain free, fair accessible elections. The Celebration is the only fundraising event for the LWV of Iowa. Please join us at the Jasper Winery to honor Rekha Basu. If you are unable to attend, please consider a donation to LWVIA.

This year the League 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](http://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.

The guest speaker will be Caleb "The Negro Artist" Rainey, 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."

## Time is Running Out to Buy Tickets to the Defending Democracy Award Celebration

The last day to purchase tickets is April 15, 2025.

**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.

## BIRTHDAY WISHES FROM THE FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

### A Message from Martha Wolf, Fundraising Committee

The Fundraising Committee is always looking for ways to add dollars to the Iowa League budget to cover our expenses. Our portion of the dues, some donations, and the one fundraiser for the year doesn't cover all the expenses. We have a part-time media specialist, part-time lobbyists, brochures, advertising, the normal costs associated with doing business, etc.



Just asking for a friend: Have you signed up for this Year's Defending Democracy Award Dinner 4/24 yet? Here's [the link to buy tickets](#) for the Defending Democracy Award Dinner. If you can't attend, please think about donating to the League of Women Voters of Iowa [at this link](#).



So back to the point of this article. The committee was brainstorming and thought about the Facebook Birthday Fundraiser. My birthday was coming up, so we decided I would be the guinea pig and give it a whirl. It was so easy. Within Facebook ask your followers to donate to the League of Women Voters of Iowa. You literally click the button, find the LWVIA on the list of non-profit organizations, and you are in business.

Facebook wrote a little article about my birthday fundraiser and even set my amount to raise as \$200. This article was listed for two weeks. At the end of the first week, I made a comment on the post to revive it a bit. Folks, I raised \$500!

Honestly, I was flabbergasted. The money came from a high school classmate in VA, a niece in Chicago, a brother in Montana, a cousin in Texas, etc. I was initially embarrassed to do it, but I made contact with the donors and they were all excited to support the League and loved that they also wished me a Happy Birthday. I am older, not a tech person, so I know if I can do it, You can, too. The Iowa League has 840 members ~ even just \$100, brings in \$8400.

In addition to the money, think of the publicity that went to my people, their people, etc. It is a win, win! Help us continue to spread the word, keep Defending Democracy and Educating Voters! If not now, When? Reach to me if you have questions or need more information at [wolfgang245@msn.com](mailto:wolfgang245@msn.com) or 319-371-4590.



## LOBBY DAY REPORT FROM HOLLY OPPLET, CO-PRESIDENT

I was fortunate to have the experience of attending LWVIA/AAUW Lobby Day in Des Moines on Tuesday, March 18<sup>th</sup>. There were approximately 30 in attendance with 17 of those LWV of Iowa members. Representatives of the League of Women Voters, American Association of University Women, Association American Civil Liberties Union, and the Iowa Federation of Labor were invited to participate. The focus of the day included discussion of the various bills which are passing through the legislature relating to our Public Policy Priorities.

Invitations were sent to the House and Senate members to attend. Representative Dave Jacoby and Representative Amy Nielsen, both of Johnson County, addressed the group. Topics included promoting a powerful system of public education and adequate funding, achieving economic security for all women which includes pay equity and fairness in public and private employment, increase in the minimum wage, collective bargaining rights for public and private sector employees and the right of workers to unionize. We also discussed vigorous enforcement of laws against human trafficking and support for the victims of human trafficking, the environment, and the proposed gun safety law. Around noon we recessed to visit with our district members of the Senate and House of Representatives. That was a learning experience. We are planning to do this again next year and I have asked this year's attendees for suggestions on what to do again or different.

The day was extremely long and hot, but I enjoyed every minute of it. However, I do plan to wear more comfortable shoes! I hope some more of you will join us next year!

## SAVE THE DATE: LWVIA CONVENTION

LWV North Iowa invites you to Save The Date for the League of Women Voters of Iowa Convention.

Details:

- League of Women Voters Convention
- Historic Park Inn Hotel, Mason City, Iowa
- June 20th-21st, 2025
- Watch for additional details and registration information in the next newsletter.



**DEMOCRACY DOESN'T DEFEND ITSELF. THAT'S OUR JOB**

Democracy isn't just an idea – it's a living, breathing fight. And right now, that fight is at a breaking point.

- We are on the ground. In the chambers of the Iowa Capitol, in the courts, and in the community.
- We are creating action alerts, voter guides, and critical materials to inform and mobilize.
- We are hosting conversations, leading task forces, and standing shoulder to shoulder with partners who believe, as we do, that democracy is worth defending.

But none of this happens without resources, funding, and people like you.

Every day, we push back against misinformation, attacks on voting rights, and efforts to erode democracy.

Every day, we make sure the voices of Iowans are heard.

- If you want change, fuel it.
- If you believe in democracy, defend it.
- If you're ready to act, the time is now.

We've been fighting for 105 years. Stand with us today.



[DONATE NOW](#) – DEMOCRACY CAN'T WAIT

*Thank You* Thanks for reading, listening, and taking action.