

THE VOTER

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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Holly Oppelt

I think Spring has officially sprung!!!

I want to remind our members that the League of Women Voters of Iowa has our annual fundraising event coming up in April. Our Defending Democracy Award Celebration will be held Thursday, April 23rd at the Jasper Winery, 2400 George Flagg Parkway in Des Moines IA. Cost is \$75 by mailing a check to Treasurer Shannon Patrick or you can order directly through [Eventbrite](#) with an additional \$6.88 Eventbrite fee.

Just a thought! Have you ever realized that the LWW of Iowa organization thrives because of the dedication and commitment of our individuals and members? It's the passion and hard work of our volunteers that truly make our organization successful and impactful throughout the state. Our efforts ensure that our mission continues to grow and reach communities in meaningful ways.

And finally, I would like to thank Judy Baldwin, the communications chair of the Iowa Voter, for all her patience and advice that she has shared in the past years. Unfortunately for us, Judy has submitted her resignation effective April 17th.

Our newsletter has always had a professional flair to it. She has been a strong supporter of the LWW of Iowa and will be missed.

If you are aware of anyone with the similar talents that Judy has provided us, please let me know. I will be happy to send a copy of our job description to any interested applicants. Have you ever realized that the LWW of Iowa thrives because of the dedication and commitment of individuals like Judy? It's the passion and hard work of our members and volunteers that truly makes our organization successful and impactful throughout the state. Their efforts ensure that our mission continues to grow and reach communities in meaningful ways.

Thank you again Judy!

Holly Oppelt, President

CAPITOL DAY 2026



Gubernatorial candidate Rob Sand chats with Capitol Day attendees



Lobbyist Amy Campbell and Johnson County Chapter member Tita Coffman



League of Women Voters of Johnson County (LWVJC) members with 2 of the Johnson County legislators: L to R: Maurine Braddock, Rep. Elinor Levin, Kathy Wandro, Jennifer Patel, Diane Duncan-Goldsmith, Cathy Eisenhofer, Rep. Dave Jacoby, Tita Coffman, and Vicki Aden.

CAPITOL DAY, CONTINUED



LWVJC members Maurine Braddock, Tita Coffman, Kathy Wandro, and Jennifer Patel in discussion with Rep. Dave Jacoby

Secretary of State Paul Pate and LWVIA President Holly Oppelt



LWVJC President Vicki Aden with LWVIA President Holly Oppelt

SE IOWA CHAPTER BUSY

By Martha Wolf, LWV of Southeast Iowa

The Southeast Iowa chapter has been busy these past two months. We had another well attended Social gathering in February. We were updated on the bills that made it through the first funnel of the Iowa Legislature. Burlington Library director, who is also a LWV member, alerted us to the alarming bills that will impact libraries across the state. We will continue to issue action alerts and encourage members to keep informed and continue to make the calls and send emails. We also distributed the 6000 + names of purged voters in Lee and Des Moines counties. Over the next 2 months, our members will cull the lists for voters who should still be registered. In late May, we will send those voters postcards to alert them to their status on the purged list and help them to reregister. Last but not least, the 6000 square foot home was extraordinary along with the food. It was a great night topped off with four new members joining!

We were also fortunate to have a program at the Burlington Library a week ago on "Civil Engagement." We had a great turnout and were thrilled with the participation of citizens as well as league members. There are plans to have a follow up meeting to continue the conversation of what our community would look like if trust, respect, and shared responsibility were at the center of how we show up together.

The Defending Democracy Tablescape committee members (3 LWVSEA members) have once again created incredible table decorations. I hope you have made your reservation to attend this year's Award dinner honoring Rita Bettis Austen. Join us to help raise money for the LWVIA, thank Rita for her incredible work with ACLU, hear Tim Glaza, from Iowa CCI on the work they are doing across Iowa, network with other members from around the state, and have a great Italian meal and yummy dessert! [Here is the link](#) for tickets in this issue of The Voter. See you there.

Southeast Iowa has two primaries that we are scheduling forums for in May. Our reward for all these activities? A LWV May Social overlooking the Mississippi River from the bluff of a gorgeous home in Ft. Madison. Members as well as those interested in finding out more about our League are invited. Come join us if you are free May 7th from 5 - 7pm..



League member, Angie Sodey talked with a voter at No Kings rally in Burlington as the SE Chapter registered voters.

ATTEND ONLINE LEGISLATIVE CHECK-INS



If you read Amy Campbell's [policy blog](#) on our website or follow the LWVIA on Facebook, you may have noticed the announcements about the weekly 30-minute online legislative check-ins available that you can participate in or view. [Registration](#) is required.

There are two more 30-minute online legislative check-ins presented by Amy Campbell. You can register [here](#) to view these online presentations here.

Prior to attending an online check-in, we just ask you take a look at the [Bill Tracker](#) and be prepared to ask questions about the bills important to you, your family, your community, and your local League!

Time is Ticking Away to Get Your Tickets



Get your tickets now for the April 23, 2026 Defending Democracy Award Celebration. Buy tickets at Eventbrite. Tickets are \$75 with a \$6.88 Eventbrite fee (\$81.88 per person) when you buy online. Want to pay by check? The price by check is \$75.00 per person. The contact person is Shannon Patrick, the Treasurer for LWV Iowa. Email him at lwvia.treasurer@gmail.com to pay by check. Buy tickets online at <https://bit.ly/4u9LYy8>

NEW REPORTS CONTEXTUALIZING CANCER & ENVIRONMENTAL RISK FACTORS IN IOWA

This article shared by Teresa Bomhoff, Board Director

March has been a big month for cancer in Iowa information. Two new comprehensive reports have been released that may be of interest to Iowa Cancer Consortium partners regarding cancer and environmental risk factors in Iowa.

- Iowa Environmental Council and The Harkin Institute's "[Environmental Risk Factors and Iowa's Cancer Crisis](#)" covering pesticides, PFAS, nitrate, radon, and other industrial pollutants
- Iowa Cancer Registry's "[2026 Cancer in Iowa Report](#)" featuring findings from the Agricultural Health Study and resources related to pesticide exposure and drinking water contaminants

These reports expand upon what we know and what is left to find out about the contribution of environmental exposures to cancer risk in Iowa. For next steps on education and action, you can refer to the following prevention and risk reduction priorities in the Iowa Cancer Plan:

- [Priority 6](#): Reduce exposure to environmental carcinogens
- [Priority 7](#): Decrease exposure to radon
- [Priority 8](#): Reduce exposure to UV radiation from the sun and indoor tanning devices

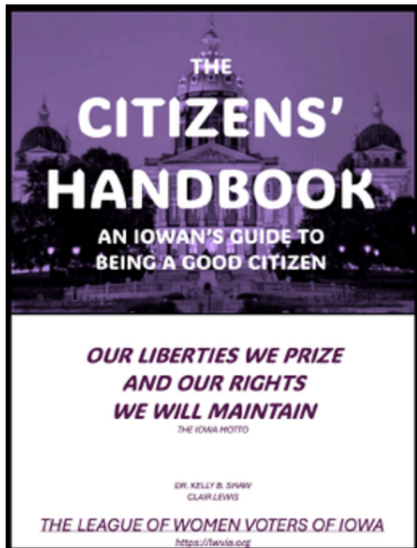
As we continue to work together to practice cancer control through an environmental health lens, and environmental health through a cancer control lens, I leave you with a quote I find myself coming back to again and again. As we develop a shared understanding of how Iowa's environments serve as sites of cancer prevention or cancer promotion depending on the exposures, resources, and policies they consist of, these reports remind us that *environmental risk factors are modifiable*.



Chart courtesy of the Iowa Cancer Consortium

TAKING THE CITIZENS' MANUAL ON THE ROAD

Linda Serra Hagedorn, Ph.D., LWV of Ames and Story County



Across Iowa, the League of Women Voters is committed to empowering voters and defending democracy through nonpartisan education and engagement. One of the newest tools in this effort is the Citizens' Handbook for Iowa, a clear, accessible guide designed to help Iowans understand how their government works and how they can actively participate in civic life.

The handbook walks readers through the basics of our political system—national, state, and local—explaining who does what in government, how laws are made and implemented, and where ordinary people can plug into the process. It includes sections on the U.S. Constitution, Iowa's state government and courts, local government, and, of course, voting and voting rights in Iowa. Written in plain language, it is meant to be used by students, new voters, newcomers to Iowa, and long-time community members who simply want to be more effective citizens.

The manual's purpose is straightforward but vital: to demystify government and show that civic participation is for everyone, not just for experts or political insiders.

By helping Iowans understand where decisions are made and how to make their voices heard, the handbook supports the League's core mission of building a more informed and engaged electorate.

The League of Women Voters of Ames and Story County (LWV-ASC) is now taking this resource "on the road" with an ambitious new project in Story County. Beginning this spring, LWV-ASC volunteers are planning to visit every high school in Story County to help register eligible high school seniors to vote and to introduce them to the Citizens' Handbook for Iowa. This outreach effort has been in the planning stages for some time and is grounded in a simple idea: the earlier young people see themselves as participants in democracy, the more likely they are to stay engaged throughout their lives.

For each school visit, LWV-ASC teams will coordinate with administrators and teachers to schedule times during the school day when seniors can register to vote. Volunteers will provide registration forms, help students confirm their eligibility, and answer questions about the registration process, voting options, and what to expect the first time they cast a ballot. The goal is not only to increase the number of registered young voters, but also to make the process welcoming and straightforward.

In addition to voter registration, LWV-ASC volunteers will offer a brief, age-appropriate presentation on what it means to be a citizen today. This short program will connect directly to topics covered in the handbook—such as rights and responsibilities, the different levels of government, and the many ways people can participate beyond voting. The emphasis will be on citizenship as an ongoing practice: staying informed, asking questions, engaging respectfully with others, and taking action on issues that matter in one's community.

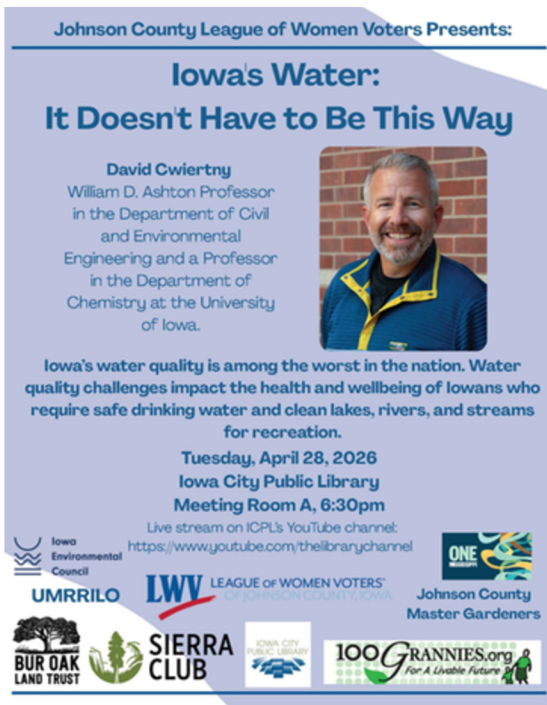
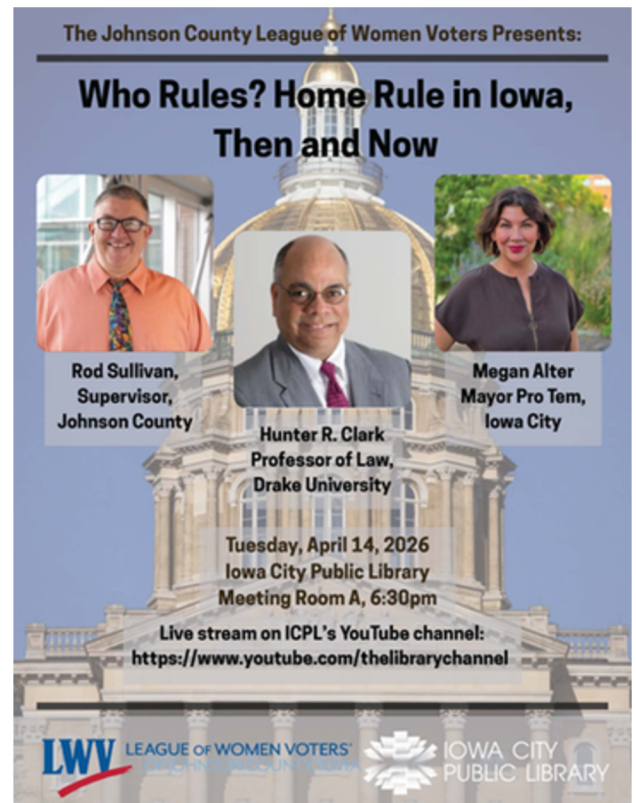
Students will be introduced to the Citizens' Handbook for Iowa and shown how they can access it online. Teachers and school librarians will be encouraged to use the manual as a classroom or reference resource, extending the impact of these visits well beyond a single day. Over time, LWV-ASC hopes that the handbook will become a go-to guide for students who want to understand elections, follow legislation, or explore public service across the entire state of Iowa.

By bringing voter registration and civic education directly into local schools, the League of Women Voters of Ames and Story County is demonstrating how a local League can turn a statewide resource into hands-on, community-centered action. "Taking the Citizens' Manual on the Road" is more than a catchy phrase—it captures a model that could be replicated by other Leagues across Iowa, ensuring that young Iowans not only have the tools they need to vote, but also a deeper sense of what it means to be an informed, engaged citizen.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE PROGRAMS IN IOWA CITY

Mark your calendars for some exciting education programs from the Johnson County League in April. LWVJC's Education committee of Rebecca Conard, Susan Enzle, Sami DeRagon, Maggie Elliott, Donna Hirst, Kathleen Kamerick, and Audrey Moeller have put together two excellent and timely programs in April relating to League priorities. And, if you can't make it to Iowa City, you can watch them on the Iowa City Public Library's YouTube channel.

Tuesday, April 14 at 6:30 p.m., Who Rules? Home Rule in Iowa, Then and Now is a panel discussion outlining the impact home rule has on our County and City governments. Featured speaker Professor Hunter R. Clark, Professor of Law at Drake University, will moderate this discussion with Rod Sullivan, Johnson County Supervisor, and Megan Alter, Mayor Pro Tem of Iowa City. This event is live and in-person, and will be streamed live on the [ICPL YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/thelibrarychannel).



On Tuesday, April 28, at 6:30 p.m., Iowa's Water: It Doesn't Have to Be This Way. Iowa's water quality is among the worst in the nation. Water quality challenges impact the health and well being of Iowans who require safe drinking water and clean lakes, rivers and streams. David M. Cwiertny, Ph.D. will provide an overview of the current state of Iowa's water resources, focusing on challenges at the intersection of water quality, public health, and quality of life in Iowa. He will provide examples of how Iowa's neighbor states are cleaning up their waters. This event is live and in-person, and will be streamed live on the [ICPL YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/thelibrarychannel).