



Fall Newsletter from President Julie Rohwein

Summer is coming to an end, and fall is upon us. It is a time for our League to ramp up as the air cools and the leaves turn. Before turning to our fall activities, I would like to pause for a moment to consider an important event from this summer: the Convention of the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts. This summer was hot. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) reported that July of 2019 was the hottest month on record for the planet. The convention venue was air-conditioned, but the heat of the summer and the heating of our planet were a focal point of the conversation.

LWVMA Convention

The state convention was held June 7-8 in Westford, Massachusetts. LWVCC was well represented by a contingent of 10 members. In addition to conducting the necessary business of the biennial meeting, attendees were able to hear from speakers on a variety of topics, and to talk with delegates from other local Leagues.

The first panel of the convention was moderated by LWVCC member Judy Zaunbrecher on the topic of election technology. The panelists were Michelle Tassinari, Director and Legal Counsel for the Elections Division of the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Charles Stewart III, Professor of Political Science at MIT and director of the MIT Election Data and Science Lab, and Whitney Quesenbery, co-director of the Center for Civic Design at the University of Minnesota and an expert in the design of ballots and voting systems. The panelists spoke about the possible future of voting technology and the need to secure elections and election systems. Quesenbery emphasized the importance of well-designed ballots and supporting systems for accurate and accessible voting for all. Improving cybersecurity awareness and providing training for all election workers was discussed. The panelists took the collective view that meeting the challenge of protecting election infrastructure, in all its parts, is necessary to preserving the integrity of the process.



LWVCC members at LWVMA

Friday evening, the convention heard from writer, environmental activist, and founder of 350.org, Bill McKibben. McKibben centered his presentation on a recent expedition he undertook with two young poets to a rapidly dwindling glacier in Greenland. The poets were Aka Niviana, a native of Greenland, whose poem spoke of the ice disappearing from her home and taking traditional ways of life for her people with it, and Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner, a native of the Marshall Islands. Her poem depicted the rising ocean that is sweeping across the beaches of her home, into the houses of friends and family, and ultimately, over the entirety of the island group.



Bill McKibben speaks at LWVMA

McKibben spoke of the experience of hearing their poems on the melting glacier, noting that moving people to action requires reaching the heart as well as the mind. McKibben observed that global societies have an “action deficit” when it comes to responding to the climate crisis. He also pointed out that the League of Women Voters can play a special role in this fight as a respected

organization with a 100-year history of advocating policies for the public good and strengthening democracy.

On Saturday, the convention heard from a panel of state legislators, moderated by Nancy Brumback. Senator Rebecca Rausch, and Representatives Tram Nguyen, Mindy Domb, and Nika Elugardo expounded on a long list of priorities for this session: housing, health care, immigration, environment, revenue, taxes, fossil fuels, renewable energy, sewage overflow, water, student loan debt, voting, social justice, good government, sanctuary, and education funding. Reproductive rights were also listed as a top priority, and each legislator encouraged the LWVMA audience to contact their state legislators.

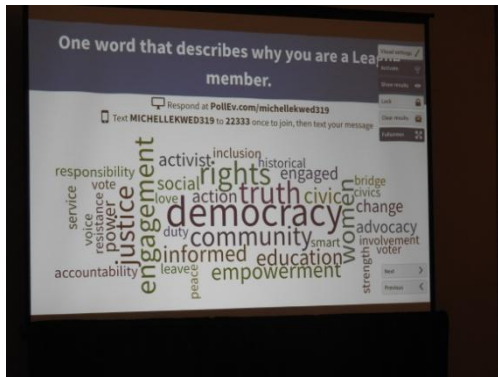
The featured speaker on Saturday was Evelyn Brooks Higgenbotham, Professor of History and African-American Studies at Harvard. Her presentation drew on material from her recent book, **Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church: 1880-1920**. She challenged the audience’s perception of the history of African-American suffrage in the U.S., beginning with the significant interaction between the movements for the abolition of slavery and the fight for women’s rights. Her history then took in the omission of women’s suffrage from the 15th Amendment, and the later sidelining and exclusion of African-American women from the movement for women’s suffrage. She described how African-American women responded to that exclusion by building their own institutions.

The convention also heard from LWVUS Chief Executive Officer Virginia Kase, who focused her remarks on the power of women. She described her personal experience representing the national League at a protest during the confirmation hearings of Brett Kavanaugh, recounting the process by which the national board decided she would



LWVUS CEO Virginia Kase

participate, and her arrest during the protest. She emphasized that we must fight for good government.



LWVMA word cloud

LWVMA Executive Director Michelle Kweder began her remarks by having the audience help her generate a word cloud around the question “Why are you a League member?” She then provided some highlights of her background and spoke of the new focus at LWVMA on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, as well as the upcoming celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the League. Kweder reminded League members to stick to their policy positions, which have been honed and polished over time, as a bulwark against claims of partisanship.

The business of the convention was conducted in two plenary sessions. A new position entitled “The Initiative and Referendum Process in Massachusetts” was developed this Spring, following the recent LWVMA study of the process for statewide citizen-initiated ballot questions. This position was approved by the Convention. You can find the text of the new position at: <https://lwvma.org/the-lwvma-study-on-the-massachusetts-ballot-question-process/>.

Delegates also approved a position on immigration policy at the state level, adopting by concurrence a position of the League of Women Voters of Illinois. This position complements the national position on immigration adopted by LWVUS in 2008, which primarily addresses policy on the federal level. The text of the adopted state position may be found here: <https://lwvma.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/LWVMA-Immigration-Position.pdf>.

Two resolutions were offered. The first was the Climate Emergency Resolution, found here: <https://lwvma.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Climate-Emergency-Resolution.pdf>. This resolution was adopted unanimously. The second proposed changing the name of the League of Women Voters to render it gender-neutral. The Resolutions Committee ruled this was not appropriate for consideration, and the Convention voted not to consider it. Following the remarks of the new co-Presidents, Mary Ann Ashton and Judy Zaunbrecher, the newly-elected Board of Directors took directions from the members on the floor. Finally, the convention was adjourned.

LWVCC made its donation to the state League this year in honor of Marian Thornton, Concord resident and lifetime member of the League, who died in early 2019. We remember Marian for her lifelong dedication to conservation. She was a founder of Concord Reusit (Rescue the Environment and Us from being Smothered in Trash). She chaired the Concord Conservation Commission and the Concord Land Trust, and served on the boards of the Massachusetts Audubon Society and The Trustees of Reservations. Among many awards for her work, she was



Nancy Beeuwkes, Michelle Kweder, and Mary Ann Ashton with the donor recognition for Marian Thornton

named Honored Citizen of Concord in 2008. Her voice, remembered for reasoned argument and heartfelt opinion, is missed in our community.

Coming This Fall

Fall Membership Gathering

On **Wednesday, September 25, 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.**, at **Concord Greene Clubhouse**, we will hear from the Concord and Carlisle Town Clerks about their views on the 2020 US Census and its impacts on Concord and Carlisle. Kaari Mai Tari, Concord Town Clerk, Mary de Alderete, Carlisle Town Clerk, along with LWVCC President Julie Rohwein, will discuss how the 2020 Census is different from past years, how the Census is used, Concord's and Carlisle's past participation levels, and plans for this upcoming Census effort. Please join us at the Concord Greene Clubhouse, 1024 Main Street, Concord, for a wonderful program on the importance of the US Census and a chance to reconnect with League friends.

Book Group September Meeting: Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson

Bryan Stevenson was a young lawyer when he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and children trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system.

Two Meeting times, both at the Main Library in Concord:

September 18, 7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Lower Level Meeting Room

September 19, 9:30 a.m. – 11 a.m. Trustees Meeting Room

For more information, contact Mary Sterling at bookgroup@lwvcc.org.

Global Climate Strike, September 20

The adoption of the **Climate Emergency Resolution** by LWVMA has been followed closely by an initial action plan, available here: <https://lwvma.org/action-plan-on-climate-emergency/>. As a first step, local Leagues are urged to support and promote the youth-led **Global Climate Strike** on September 20. LWVMA is now an official sponsor of the Boston Climate Strike. Register here for more information: <https://www.facebook.com/events/349500849297711/>.

First Friday Series, October 4: Transportation

Last year, the monthly First Friday series presented very well-attended programs on Affordable Housing and on Climate Change and Local Action. In all of these discussions, it became clear that the need for rethinking transportation is of vital importance. So, First Friday will begin its series this fall with a program to discuss the possibilities and parameters of improving local and regional transportation. The program will be held 9:15 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. in the Concord Town House Hearing Room. Light refreshments will be provided.

Day on the Hill, October 17

This fall, all League members are invited to participate in **Day On The Hill**, to be held on October 17 at the State House in Boston. Attendees will hear from the state league legislative specialists on legislation being offered and League priorities. The featured speaker will be Senator Karen E. Spilka, President of the Senate. After the formal presentations, there will be an opportunity to meet with our legislators. The event is open to all League members, and

there will be car-pooling from Concord-Carlisle. For more information, or to sign up, please contact Nancy Beeuwkes, the board member for State Program and Action, or Julie Rohwein at President@lwvcc.org.

LWVCC Committee Plans for the Fall

Committee meetings are open to all interested League members. The contact person listed for each will be happy to answer your questions and welcome you to their work.

100th Anniversary

This year marks the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the League of Women Voters and the Ratification of the 19th Amendment, giving women the vote. This newly formed committee will be planning our celebrations, including at least one parade appearance next year. If you are interested in helping with the plan, please contact Julie Rohwein at President@lwvcc.org. **The first committee meeting of the fall is scheduled for Sept. 11 at 3 p.m. in the meeting room at the Fowler Library in West Concord.**

Environment

Concerned about the climate? Worried about sustainability? This is the place for you. The Environment Committee will be focusing on helping Concord and Carlisle residents take action in the fight to improve our environment. Help our League implement the new LWVMA Climate Emergency Action Plan in our community. Support the Global Climate Strike on September 20. Learn how to lobby your legislators effectively on environmental issues. Janet Rothrock and Alice Kaufmann are the co-chairs. **The next meeting of the Environment Committee will be Sept. 10 at 12 p.m.** See MMN for additional meeting information or contact Janet at environment@lwvcc.org.

Observer Corps

The Observer Corps follows the work of town committees, gathering information that is used in much of our work. The Observer Corps is always looking for League members to participate. It is a fantastic way to become familiar with the details of town government. There are several openings for observers of major committees at present, including the Finance, Historic Districts, Middle School Building, and School Committees. No experience is necessary to get started. Observing assignments can be shared between more than one person, and many meetings can now be observed from the comfort of home, as they are available on Minuteman Media Network. The Observer Corps is a vital link in our work in local government. Please consider helping! For more information, contact Diane Proctor (observercorps@lwvcc.org). **The first meeting of the Observer Corps will be held Sept. 16, 7:30 p.m. at Diane's home.** All are welcome.

Concord Town Government

The Concord Town Government Committee is one of our most active. This is the place to come if you are interested in discussing the problems of Concord and its government. Among the topics of interest this year are the new town manager, encouraging better planning for capital projects, and monitoring compliance with the Open Meeting Law. This committee also plans the First Friday series at the Fowler Library. All League members are invited to attend

and participate in the monthly meetings. This is an excellent way to become better informed about what is happening in Concord's government and advocate for League priorities. **The next meeting will be on Sept. 26, 2-4 p.m. in the Trustees Room at the Main Library in Concord.** For further information, please contact co-chair Dorrie Kehoe at towngovernmentconcord@lwvcc.org.

Affordable Housing

A stock of affordable housing appropriate to the needs of varied ages and stages of life is important to the long-term health of a community. The Affordable Housing group is currently a sub-committee under the auspices of the Concord Town Government Committee. Their work is to understand the current housing in Concord and to think about how it might be improved to meet the needs of our community. The Affordable Housing group meets once a month at the home of Dorrie Kehoe, and they are eager to welcome new members. Please drop in for a meeting, or for more information, contact Dorrie at affordablehousing@lwvcc.org.

Carlisle Town Government

The Carlisle Town Government Committee tracks the operation of town government and public affairs in Carlisle. Members from Carlisle have staffed a booth and marched in the parade at Old Home Day. This committee meets on the second Friday of each month at Carlisle Town Hall in the Nickles Room from 9:30-11a.m. **The next meeting is on Sept. 13.** For more information, contact Cindy Nock at towngovernmentcarlisle@lwvcc.org.

Education

The Education Committee keeps watch over the public schools of Concord and Carlisle. Last spring, Concord-Carlisle joined the Civics Bee sponsored by the Leagues of Sudbury, Wayland and Weston, fielding a team of students from Concord Middle School and CCHS. This year, they will be working with CMS to start a Civics Club. This club will provide the structure and focus for students who may want to participate in the Civics Bee in the spring. They will also be reaching out the Middle School in Carlisle to participate in the Bee team. The Education Committee also follows the work of the School Committees and will be monitoring the progress of the CMS Building Committee. The committee meets on the second Friday of the month from 9:30 am – 11:30 a.m. **The first meeting of the year will be on September 13.** For more information, contact Edie Lipinski at Education@lwvcc.org.

Immigration

The Immigration Committee studies the situation of immigrants in our country. This year's reading list includes **This Land is our Land: An Immigrant's Manifesto** by Suketu Mehta. Committee members have been learning about organizations in our community that work with immigrants. They have helped to register new citizens to vote in Lowell, trained to volunteer at the Bedford Sanctuary church, signed up to accompany immigrants to appointments, and contacted legislators on many issues supporting immigrants. The national League of Women Voters has a series of strong positions supporting immigrants, so there are many actions that members can take. The Immigration Committee meets on the third Thursday of the month at 2:00pm. **The next meeting will be Thursday, September 19 at 2:00 p.m. in the Fowler Branch Library.** For more information, contact Nancy Cronin at immigration@lwvcc.org.

Voter Service

The Voter Service Committee is looking for members and volunteers. This committee is a great way to encourage citizen engagement in the election process and provides a great service to the community. And, you can volunteer to suit your time availability—volunteering for one event or helping send e-mails or designing flyers to promote voting are just a few of the opportunities. This year, Voter Service plans to focus on increasing Concord's voter engagement in upcoming local, state, and national elections. This may include voter registration and education, tabling at back-to-school nights and other public events, candidate forums, and voter guides. Please e-mail Judy Zaunbrecher at VoterService@lwvcc.org if you would like to help!

Membership

Membership is busy planning the Fall Gathering and collecting dues. But look for an event in October for new members and members wishing to get more involved. Details will be announced in MMN. If you are interested in helping with Membership, please contact Anne Hayden at Membership@lwvcc.org.

Communications

Communications oversees all the ways that the League uses to spread information, including publicity for our events, the publication of the Bulletin, the LWVCC website, social media, and more. **Meetings are held the third Monday of each month beginning September 16th**, as announced in MMN. For more information, contact Karlen Reed at Communications@lwvcc.org.

Events

Every League event needs people to make sure that it runs smoothly. The Events committee takes care of all the many practical and aesthetic details for League programs and forums, such as finding and reserving appropriate spaces, arranging for refreshments and decorations, and making sure that all the resources needed for the event are in place. If you are interested in helping, please contact Stephan Bader at Events@lwvcc.org.

Respectfully,

Julie Rohwein
President
League of Women Voters of Concord-Carlisle
President@lwvcc.org

September 2019

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LWVCC members staff the voter service table at July 4th Picnic in the Park