



BULLETIN, April, 2021

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEXINGTON

APRIL FIRST FRIDAY FORUM, APRIL 9, 2021: **CLEAN HEAT: REBATES AND INCENTIVES**

The First Friday Forum for April is scheduled for April 9, in deference to Good Friday.

Last November, the Town's Special Town Meeting approved a citizen warrant article acknowledging a Climate Emergency, and urging the Town government to consider issues of climate change and sustainability in all decisions going forward.

On March 22, 2021, the Annual Meeting took a step in this direction by approving Article 29, which directed the Select Board to submit a "home rule" petition to the State for authorization to draft a Town bylaw that would require new construction and major renovations in Lexington to provide for heating and cooling from non-fossil fuel sources. If such a bylaw is ultimately drafted and passed by Town Meeting, it is intended to cover commercial construction and large home renovations, exempting smaller homes and projects. It is a step toward Lexington's goal of cleaner, healthier, more sustainable heating and cooling, with net zero emissions by 2035.

With this trend toward greater sustainability in mind, the League's April First Friday will feature numerous incentives and rebates available to homeowners to offset the costs of moving to cleaner energy systems.

- Meg Howard, Program Director of the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, will describe rebates and incentives available from the Massachusetts Department of Energy and Resources, Mass Save, and Eversource, for homeowners planning new construction, major renovations, or transitioning away from fossil fuel combustion in their homes.
- Cindy Arens, of the Clean Heat Lexington Alliance, will discuss the provisions of Article 29 and the Alliance's plans for further outreach.
- Lexington's State Representative Michelle Ciccolo will explain how home rule petitions work and what to expect of the process.

The forum will be conducted on Zoom at 9:30 AM, and will be live streamed on Facebook, LWV Lexington MA. As always, it will be recorded by LexMedia and made available on demand. For more information on how to join the meeting, go to <http://www.lwvlexington.org/FirstFriday.html>.

This is the seventh in the 2020-2021 First Friday series hosted by the League of Women Voters of Lexington to promote awareness and understanding of public policy issues. The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan organization dedicated to the principles of self-government established in the Constitution of the United States. The League promotes political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government. For more information contact our League Convener, Margaret Coppe, at mecoppe@gmail.com.

MAY FIRST FRIDAY FORUM, MAY 7, 2021: **RECREATION PROGRAMS IN LEXINGTON**

On Friday, May 7, 2021 at 9:30 AM, the First Friday Forum will offer information about recreation in Lexington in the coming year. Melissa Battite, Director of Recreation & Community Programs for the Town of Lexington, will provide an update on programs, services, capital plans, and reopening plans for 2021. This will include the outdoor recreation facilities such as fields, courts, golf, and swimming opportunities in addition to indoor programs at the Community Center. Ms. Battite will also share an overview of the Town's new initiatives and successes achieved despite the impacts of the pandemic.

This program will be the eighth in the 2020-2021 First Friday Forum series. As always, there will be time for Q & A following the presentation, and the webinar will be live streamed on Facebook, LWV Lexington MA. It will also be recorded and available on LexMedia at a later date. For more information about the webinar, assistance using Zoom, or more information about the League please go to <http://www.lwvlexington.org/FirstFriday.html>.

LEXINGTON LEAGUE ANNUAL MEETING

An early alert for Lexington's Annual Meeting, which will be held this year on Monday evening, June 7, at 7:00 pm, on Zoom. We will conduct our annual business meeting, including approval of a budget and election of officers and members of the board, from 7:00 - 7:30 pm.

At 7:30 pm we will welcome Dr. William Moomaw, Emeritus Professor of International Environmental Policy and Co-Director of the Global Development and Environment Institute at Tufts University. While Dr. Moomaw's work encompasses global policy, at our meeting he will look closer to home, focusing on the importance of Massachusetts forests and their role in addressing climate change and stemming biodiversity loss. The climate

legislation recently signed into law by Governor Baker calls for Massachusetts to be zero net carbon by 2050, which will require our forests and other natural systems to accumulate more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than we are adding from any remaining fossil fuel use and industrial processes. Dr. Moomaw's topic will be: "Massachusetts forests are essential for meeting our climate goals: Are they up to the task?" As always, time will be allowed for question from the audience.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS

LWVMA EVENTS

"Democracy Challenge" Student Video Contest

This year's video question asked Massachusetts students in grades 9 through 12 to respond to the question: "What did you learn about our democracy in 2020?" which we hope will trigger a range of responses after the uniquely eventful past year. Suggested areas of focus included *racial protest and racial justice, the process of conducting a presidential election, and gerrymandering and voters rights*. The deadline for students to submit their videos was April 2, and judging is taking place between April 5 and April 23. Winners of the contest will be announced on April 30. If you have some time to enjoy the perceptiveness and creativity of local students, it is not too late to sign up as a judge. [Contact Taylor Grenka at tgrenka@lwwma.org](mailto:tgrenka@lwwma.org).

"She Shapes History" Walking Tour: Town of Florence, MA

The Northampton Area League extends a warm invitation for all League members to come for a walking tour through Florence to see "She Shapes History," a historical exhibit of the suffrage movement covering the impact of activist women over two centuries, up to the Woman's March of 2016. The exhibit, on loan from the Berkshire Museum, is in storefront windows on Main Street, will run through April into early May. It showcases the stories of unsung heroes, including local suffragists Elizabeth Freeman (Mumbet) and Sojourner Truth. Also included are the foot soldiers, including those from African American women's suffrage clubs, immigrant women, Native American women, factory workers and labor union organizers. Florence (northern Northampton) is a natural venue for this exhibit, as the town provided safe passage along the Underground Railroad, and was home to many African American suffragists, including Sojourner Truth, whose statue stands along the route.

Webinars of Interest

Redistricting for the Next Ten Years

As soon as the results of the 2020 Federal Census are available, all state legislative and congressional districts in Massachusetts are being re-drawn as they will be for the next decade. Our goal is to ensure a fair and transparent process that guarantees equity for all voices in the Commonwealth. The LWVMA aired a webinar on March 31 outlining the basics of redistricting, why it matters, and concrete action steps that can be taken. You can view it on YouTube at: youtube.com/watch?v=6452BNK3VTY.

Demystifying the State Budget: How the Sausage Is Made

A presentation on the creation of the state budget, created by Beacon BLOC and the Young Professionals Network of the Urban League of Eastern MA, is available for viewing on the League YouTube channel: Check it out at youtube.com/watch?v=NeoHKE6-QwY.

LWVMA VOTER SERVICE

The VOTES Act: "An Act Fostering Voting Opportunities, Trust, Equity and Security"

As a number of states across the country are proposing new laws to narrow access to voting, Massachusetts is attempting to expand voting opportunities by making emergency voting reforms applied to last fall's election permanent. Legislation is pending in both the House and the Senate ([HD.1536/SD.1002](#)) to expand both in-person early voting and voting by mail. The VOTES Act allows same-day voter registration. It provides that voters who have applied for a mail-in ballot in one election can have mail-in ballots sent to them for each election thereafter until they cancel, without further application. It also provides for drop boxes, an online portal for mail-in ballot applications, and prepaid postage for applications and ballots. It continues practices which make elections officials' offices more efficient, including processing mail-in ballots as they are received, ahead of election day.

Most bills do not get voted on in the House and Senate until the second year of the legislative session, but it is important to get action on the VOTES Act this summer, in time for the fall's municipal elections and all Massachusetts elections in the future. Please email your Senator and Representative and ask them to urge the Senate and House leadership and the chairs of the Joint Committee on Election Laws to move this voting reform bill quickly so these important changes can be implemented..

LWVMA ADVOCACY

Recap of LWVMA Advocacy in the 2019-2020 Legislative Session

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts celebrated several major legislative victories during the 2019-2020 formal legislative session.

Three legislative priorities from our Day on the Hill lobby day were successful. The [Student Opportunity Act](#) bringing much-needed change to the foundation funding formula used to allocate educational funds in the state in November 2019. Another priority, provisions of the [ROE Act](#), to codify and extend access to abortion rights in the state, was a nail-biter, passing the month before the session ended as part of the budget, prompted by increased concern that the U.S. Supreme Court might overturn federal abortion law.

A third priority, strong [climate change](#) legislation, passed the legislature at the last minute, only to be vetoed by Governor Baker after the session ended. However, the legislature took the bill up immediately after the 2021-2022 session started January 6, passed it, and sent it to Governor Baker with a veto-proof majority. He signed it into law on March 26, 2021.

Improved election laws are always a key League priority, and in the past session, we supported a law permitting election day registration. The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, however, shifted our election focus to pandemic election reforms designed to make voting safer and more accessible. We supported, and the legislature passed, a bill that greatly expanded access to mail voting in the state, expanded in-person early voting hours, and allowed election officials to process mailed ballots early and recruit election workers from a broader pool of citizens. As noted above, we are working to support the VOTES Act in the current session, which will make these reforms permanent.

The national awakening to the systemic racism in our country triggered by the murder of George Floyd at the hands of the Minneapolis Police led to a demand for police reforms and accountability in Massachusetts. The League became a partner in the efforts of the Black and Latino Legislative Caucus and others to pass meaningful police reforms as a start to addressing systemic racism. A first-step bill on policing reforms passed in December and the LWVMA will continue to pursue this topic

- Other bills LWVMA supported became law in the 2019-2020 session: Changed state law to approve local zoning changes with a simple majority rather than a two-thirds majority, making it easier to build housing, especially the multifamily housing most needed across the state; provided \$626 million in bonding to support all types of new housing (included in the economic development bill);
- Created a commission to study ways to reduce racial inequities in maternal health and make recommendations for policy changes;
- Provided a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures during the pandemic emergency;

- Addressed sexual violence on higher education campuses;
- Provided for “breakfast after the bell” in schools;
- Require hands-free cell phone use while driving.

Below are some of the areas LWVMA was following last session and will continue to work on, along with new bills as the specialists identify them.

- Housing for low- and middle-income residents and rental support. Children and family issues: Needs of children and families deep poverty; how schools deal with meal debt; domestic violence training.
- Criminal justice reform: Continue to build on major legislation passed in the 2017-2018 session, including parole board reform, inmate visitation, and how the system deals with juveniles.
- Education: Follow implementation of foundation budget reform, support funding for higher education.
- Gun control: Require data on guns used in crimes.
- Health care: Support single-payer health care, license midwives.
- Immigration: Safe Communities act, drivers’ licenses for immigrants.
- Meeting basic human needs: Increasing state match for Earned Income Tax Credit, protections for people experiencing homelessness and living in deep poverty.
- Transportation: Support ballot initiatives for regional transportation projects; bills to experiment with variable tolls and revenue based on vehicle miles; zero-emission vehicles.
- Water resources: Drought management measures; creation of water resource funds.

In total, our Legislative Action Committee of 23 legislative specialists followed more than 160 bills during the 2019-2020 legislative session, submitting written testimony on all the bills and testifying in person at hearings on many of them. The League's monthly [Mass. League Action newsletter](#) and [Action Alerts](#), as well as organized lobby days, often with coalition partners, help to mobilize League members across the state to contact their own legislators in support of these bills. [See below for ongoing advocacy work.](#)

□ [VOTING RIGHTS](#)

[VOTES Act Lobby Day is May 11 from noon to 1:30 PM.](#) Plan to participate in a virtual lobby day to support the VOTES Act. Contact LWVMA Executive Director Pattye Comfort at pcomfort@lwwma.org for information on how to join the event.

□ CLIMATE CHANGE

[Take a Victory Lap: The Next Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy was signed into law by Governor Baker on March 26, 2021.](#)

This is the first major climate legislation to pass in Massachusetts since the 2008 Global Warming Solutions act, and represents the beginning of our transformation to a clean transportation and energy system. It has been developed as part of a "whole government approach" to work together with the Baker Administration's Decarbonization Roadmap and Interim 2030 Clean Energy and Climate Plan. This law and the Decarbonization Roadmap set the highest standards in the nation for addressing climate change, and identify clear targets for achieving reductions in emissions to ensure that we achieve net zero emissions by 2050 or sooner.

Just as significant, it is the product of bi-cameral and bi-partisan cooperation, reflecting contributions from many members of the Massachusetts Senate and House. A primary sponsor of the legislation and a leader of negotiations between the two houses is our own Senator Mike Barrett, who has labored tirelessly to further legislation addressing the climate emergency we face. He championed a number of policies which made it into the final bill, including sector-by-sector emissions sublimits, expansion of electric vehicle use, and energy efficiency standards for appliances. The new law also contains provisions addressing equity and environmental justice as well as job creation in clean energy fields to help build the next generation economy on a sustainable base.

The Massachusetts League has also worked hard to see this legislation advance and finally become law. The word from LWVMA is: "We need to celebrate our role in making this bill a law, take a deep breath, and then work together yet again to do all we can to ensure that its promise becomes a reality."

[Next Steps: The LWVMA Environmental Action and Advocacy Committee \(EAAC\) is seeking new members.](#)

Now that Massachusetts has passed significant climate legislation, public outreach and education become even more important in securing the cooperation and support of the public for emissions control measures and environmental policies. This is what the League does best. As the Biden Administration advances climate change policy at the national level, League members will continue to be foot soldiers in support of measures to address climate issues.

The goals of the EAAC are to inform members across Massachusetts on critical environmental issues and policies impacting our state, and to promote sustainable energy and environmental policy, regulation and local action. Reorganized in February, 2021, the Committee now meets by video conference on the third Monday of each month to continue this work. If you are interested

in joining the effort, contact Launa Zimmaro lzimmero@lwwma.org with your name, local League, email address, and a bit of information about your interests and relevant experience. You can also reach Launa at 617 429-2534.

□ HEALTH CARE

The LWVMA is continues to lobby in support of **Medicare for All** in Massachusetts, including **HD. 2656** in the House and **SD. 546** in the Senate. The House bill is co-sponsored by our Representative Michelle Ciccolo. The goal is to bring more legislators in both houses to support the pending bills and move Medicare for All toward becoming law.

□ IMMIGRATION

Two bills are pending in the legislature that the LWVM is following and supports.

The **Safe Communities Act (SD.532/HD.1165)** addresses state and local involvement in deportations, which discourages individuals and families from seeking medical care, emergency assistance, domestic violence protection, and police and court services, when they fear deportation. The bill has the support of some 200 organizations, such as the Massachusetts Medical Society and the Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, which view it as a public health measure. It is supported by Senator Mike Barrett, Senator Cindy Friedman, and Representative Michelle Ciccolo.

The Act would:

1. Ensure court and police officials do not inquire about immigration status unless required by law.
2. Require that persons in custody are informed in writing of the purpose of any ICE interview before it takes place, and have the opportunity to refuse and/or to have counsel present.
3. Ensure that everyone has access to justice in our courts without ICE taking custody of them before a court date or before a sentence of incarceration is completed.
4. End statutorily permitted agreements that require local officials, such as county sheriffs, to do the federal government's job, at state expense. Massachusetts is the only state with such agreements, which encourages racial profiling and is currently under legal challenge.
5. Require law enforcement training on SCA guidelines and provide state oversight, allowing complaints to be filed with relevant agencies which would be required to investigate.

The **Driving Families Forward Act (SD.273/HD. 448)** would enable all qualified state residents to apply for a standard Massachusetts driver's license or identification card, regardless of immigrant status, while keeping our Commonwealth in full compliance with REAL ID requirements.

The Act acknowledges that driving is essential to mobility in Massachusetts, in light of limited public transportation options, to allow people to procure food and services and to work. Enabling persons, whatever their immigration status, to be licensed, increases public health and safety by providing that drivers be tested and insured. Similar laws have been adopted in 16 states and the District of Columbia.

Legislation and League Advocacy Policy

The legislative specialists on the **LWVMA Legislation Action Committee (LAC)** are reviewing the more than 7,000 bills that have been filed for this session of the legislature, often working with partner organizations in their areas. If you are interested in a particular bill, we encourage you to let the LAC know, with details about the bill and why you think LWVMA should support it; contact LAC Chair Kathy Leonardson at kleonardson@lwvma.org. Note that our specialists try to focus on broader policy bills, and they need to limit the number of bills they follow based on the time they have available for this volunteer job. But they welcome suggestions and are happy to review them. LAC expects to begin posting the bills that LWVMA is supporting this session on the LWVMA website this month, as soon as the bills are assigned to joint committees and given "real" numbers instead of the filing or "docket" number indicated by HD or SD.

Local Leagues and League members are encouraged to support the bills that LWVMA has decided to back. To assure that the League speaks with one voice and does not offer conflicting messages to legislators, those are the only bills that local Leagues and individuals in their role as League members can advocate for. Members can, of course, take any actions they wish as individuals.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE UNITED STATES

LWVUS EVENTS

Expanding the Table: Making Democracy Work for Everyone FIRST CALL TO LWVUS CONVENTION ON ZOOM JUNE 26, 2021

The League's second annual convention to be conducted on Zoom will feature interactive break-out sessions on current topics, updates on local League initiatives, and important guest speakers, in addition to the annual business of voting a national program and passing the FY22-FY23 budget.

The LWVUS is soliciting one-minute videos from all local Leagues on their activities to contribute to a Local League Showcase.

For more information on the Convention contact our LWVMA Office at 857 452-1715.

LWVUS ADVOCACY AND VOTER SERVICE

People Powered Fair Maps

This is a national redistricting program launched by the LWVUS in 2019, following the Supreme Court's ruling in *Rucho v. League of Women Voters of North Carolina*. In that case the Court declined to intervene in a state redistricting process, ruling that no fair test exists to determine whether state gerrymandering is outside the law. The League responded with this project to create fair and transparent redistricting processes, and to eliminate partisan and racial gerrymandering nationwide. The project has four major focus areas:

Civic Engagement and Education: The League is working to ensure that the public recognizes what is at stake in redistricting and learns how and when to get involved, how to hold those who draw election district maps accountable.

Independent Redistricting Commissions. The League supports the creation of these commissions in every state, and, in states that have such commissions, to encourage League members to apply for commission seats, and actively monitor and contribute to the map-drawing process.

[State Constitutional Options.](#) The League will work to protect "free and fair" clauses in state constitutions, and to promote transparency in the process.

[State Legislative Action.](#) The League will seek to identify legislation which will set standard criteria for drawing election district maps and to support the passage of such legislation.

[Federal Legislative Action.](#) At the federal level the LWVMA will continue to advocate for the full restoration of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and for legislation to protect the redistricting process from racial and partisan gerrymandering.

At this time the LWVUS has partnered with more than 1,000 organizations, coalitions and groups to build a popular movement for People-Powered Fair Maps. Since last fall, state and local Leagues have held more than 1,300 virtual and in-person events to further this effort.

[People Powered Day of Action—April 29](#)

LWVUS is hosting a People Powered Day of Action on April 29 as an opportunity for state and local Leagues and partners across the country to come together and affirm their commitment to prepare for redistricting and create fair maps in 2021. Educating and preparing ourselves to contribute to a fair and transparent process at the local and state level will help make sure Massachusetts districts provide for fair representation across the state.

[The For the People Act:](#)

Federal legislation to restore aspects of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and to make voting more accessible to all has passed the U.S. House of Representatives again and now goes to the Senate. It addresses some of the most pressing issues facing our democracy by:

- More fully restoring the Voting Rights Act of 1965;
- Modernizing our voter registration system;
- Restoring voting rights to formerly-incarcerated individuals;
- Curbing partisan gerrymandering; and
- Making campaign contributions more transparent.

Take time to thank Senators Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey and Representative Katherine Clark for their support of this legislation. See contact information below.

LWVUS Statement on Hate Crimes Against AAPI Community

The LWVUS and the League of Women Voters of Georgia have issued a statement in response to the rise in hate crimes against the AAPI (Asian American Pacific Islander) community:

"The League of Women Voters grieves the murders of the eight individuals who were killed on Tuesday, March 16th, and the countless other AAPI lives that have been tragically taken as a result of racially motivated violence. We mourn those who have lost their lives or been harmed, mentally or physically, as a result of anti-Asian xenophobia and racism.

* * * * "Together, the League of Women Voters of the United States and the League of Women Voters of Georgia call on law enforcement officials to seek justice for those murdered on Tuesday night. Additionally, we urge Attorney General Garland and FBI Director Wray to prioritize the investigation of anti-AAPI hate crimes. We cannot fight the racism, hate, and impunity that threaten the lives of AAPIs unless our leadership takes the necessary actions to denounce racist violence and demand accountability in its wake.

"The League stands in solidarity with AAPI communities. We are committed to listening to and amplifying AAPI voices and educating ourselves on the historic and ongoing systemic racism that plagues this country so that we can be better allies.

"We urge our followers to do the same, and to call on elected and appointed officials at all levels of government to demonstrate their commitment to keeping ALL communities safe. There can be no liberty in the face of racist and xenophobic violence."

Contact Information for Legislators

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren | 309 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510 202 244-4543 |
| U.S. Senator Edward Markey | 255 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510 202 224-2742 |
| U.S. Representative Katherine Clark | 2448 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515 202 225-2836 |
| MA Senator Michael Barrett | Mike.Barrett@masenate.gov 617 722-1572 |
| MA Senator Cindy Friedman | Cindy.Friedman@masenate.gov 617 722-1432 |
| MA Representative Michelle Ciccolo | Michelle.Ciccolo@mahouse.gov 617 722-2210 |

SAVE THE DATE

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|----------------|--|
| April 9, 2021 | April First Friday Forum |
| April 29, 2021 | People-Powered Day of Action for Fair Maps |
| May 7, 2021 | May First Friday |
| May 11, 2021 | VOTES Act Lobby Day |
| June 7, 2021 | Lexington League Annual Meeting |
| June 26, 2021 | LWVUS Annual Convention |

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We welcome Bulletin articles from members. If you'd like to submit an article for the May 2021 LWV LEXINGTON Bulletin, please send it to Wendy Manz at wendy_manz@yahoo.com prior to April 26.