

**VOTER**

**Board of Directors - FY2024**

Co-President—Miriam Timmer-Hackert

[lvjcpresident@gmail.com](mailto:lvjcpresident@gmail.com)

Co-President – Paula Vaughan

[vaughanp893@gmail.com](mailto:vaughanp893@gmail.com)

Vice President – Vicki Aden

[vickiandleon.aden@gmail.com](mailto:vickiandleon.aden@gmail.com)

Secretary – Sally Stutzman

[sstutsma@sharontc.net](mailto:sstutsma@sharontc.net)

Treasurer – Hazel Seaba

[hazel-seaba@uiowa.edu](mailto:hazel-seaba@uiowa.edu)

Jeanne Bancroft

[jnn.bancroft@gmail.com](mailto:jnn.bancroft@gmail.com)

Rebecca Conard

[rebeccaconard@gmail.com](mailto:rebeccaconard@gmail.com)

Diane Duncan-Goldsmith

[ddgoldsmith.icia@gmail.com](mailto:ddgoldsmith.icia@gmail.com)

Bea Hicks

[beacruz@aol.com](mailto:beacruz@aol.com)

Kathleen Kamerick

[kckamerick@gmail.com](mailto:kckamerick@gmail.com)

Shannon Patrick

[shannonpatrick@gmail.com](mailto:shannonpatrick@gmail.com)

Silvia Quezada

[smq130@hotmail.com](mailto:smq130@hotmail.com)

Voter editor—Vicki Aden

[vickiandleon.aden@gmail.com](mailto:vickiandleon.aden@gmail.com)

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LWVJC | P. O. Box 5452 |  
Coralville, IA 52241

**August 2023**

***Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy***

**Can autocracy happen in the U.S.?**

Several media outlets recently discussed Donald Trump’s announced plan to install an autocratic-style government should he be re-elected as President in November 2024. This is in keeping with his failed takeover of the Capitol on January 6, 2021, and his admiration for strongman dictatorships. Autocrats consolidate power in the executive branch, dismantle government agencies, and replace civil servants with appointees who serve at the pleasure of the executive leader. These are hallmarks of authoritarian governments, not democracies. Other candidates, too, are telegraphing beliefs in the “efficiency” of autocracy.

Autocratic capture of democracies occurs in the same way throughout the world. Autocrats boldly tell voters up front what they intend to do, they do not hide. History shows us that people do not take the messages seriously, they don’t believe it will happen in their country. For a perspective read “How Democracies Die” by Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018.

If you value democracy, make it clear to candidates and other voters that autocracy is not acceptable. The League highly values transparency and believes that our government should give notice, have open meetings, and provide records when requested. The League believes in balancing power between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government with competent staff dedicated to the rule of law, not loyalty to one person. For more information, read the principles section of the League of Women Voters Impact on Issues: <https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues>.

We will kick off the Election Season with our Annual Fall Reception and Membership Drive, August 31, 5:30-7:30 p.m. at Unitarian Universalist Society. Christian Bohannon, UI law professor, will present the timely topic, *Voting in Iowa: The Shifting Legal Landscape and Potential Effects on Voter Turnout*.

Invite friends and family members to this free event. Details coming soon via email.

*Paula Vaughan and Miriam Timmer-Hackert*  
LWVJC Co-Presidents

The *Voter* is issued the last Friday of the month to provide members advance notice of activities.  
**The September Voter deadline is August 21.**

## Education Committee

The Education Committee met on June 15, 2023, to select lecture topics for the coming year. Paula Vaughan, who is organizing Making Connection meetings for 2023-2024, joined the committee so we could coordinate efforts. After discussing a long list of potential topics, the committee selected three for this year's lecture series: (1) the new school voucher program, (2) economic justice, which is the subject of a current LWVIA study, and (3) voter apathy.

Two events are already calendared. Randy Evans will lead a workshop on preparing Freedom of Information requests on Saturday, September 23, 1:00-3:00 p.m., at the Iowa City Public Library. And Joanne Ramos, author of "The Farm", will give the keynote address for One Community One Book 2023. She will speak on Sunday, October 8, 1:30-2:30 p.m., at C20 Pomerantz Center at the University of Iowa. LWVJC is a co-sponsor of this event. "The Farm" is a novel about commercial surrogacy. In an imagined place, a high-end retreat for surrogate mothers called The Farm, Ramos explores a range of views on surrogacy, from altruism to exploitation.

*Rebecca Conard, Susan Enzle, and Patty McCarthy*  
Education Committee



## Voter Registration

Thank you for the warm welcome from members and the super transition from Vicki Aden. Let me start by noting that the Dog Days of summer are here, but dogged Voter Registration volunteers are turning out to table at July and August events in Iowa City!

July has the LWVJC tabling at the South District Market. So far, volunteers have taken in 14 new voter registrations, and our friends at the Johnson County Auditor's Office say, "Keep them coming!" We still have some slots open for the South District Market so check out the link below if you'd like to volunteer for a spot (07/29, 08/05, 08/12 – the last shift, 08/19). This market has live entertainment, food, and a shaded canopy.

August events are right around the corner with the National Night Out at Wetherby Park (08/01/23) and Corridor Community Action Network Community Engagement Fair at the Iowa City Ped Mall (08/27/23).

September promises to be a sparkling month for voter registration! The Northern District Court of Iowa reached out and confirmed 2023 will see a Naturalization Ceremony at the Hoover Presidential Library. Stay tuned for more details.

Volunteers have also suggested new tabling events at the North Liberty Recreation Center lobby (Barbara Beaumont) and United Action for Youth (Casey Cook), so if you have suggestions for additional events, please send me an email.

If you'd like to join the Voter Registration Committee, come on over!

Voter registration sign-up links: [LWVJC 2023 - Voter Registration: South District Diversity Market \(signupgenius.com\)](#);

[LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS JOHNSON COUNTY: National Night Out - Weatherby Park \(signupgenius.com\)](#)

*Silvia Quezada*  
Voter Registration Coordinator



## Advocacy Update

All of the Advocacy Committee's fine plans for the month of July were thoroughly disrupted by the announcement of the special legislative session to ban abortion in Iowa.

While this harmful and unpopular ban shows all signs of having been set on a fixed path before the session was announced, Johnson County advocates nonetheless sprang into action to both influence legislators and catch the public's attention. Members sent letters to newspapers, contacted legislators, submitted public comments on the bill, and traveled to Des Moines to protest.

Procedurally, all these efforts were dashed upon the majority party's decision to rush debate and refuse amendments or serious deliberation. However, from the speakers to the turnout at protests to the public comments (out of over 1,000 comments, 97% were against the bill), we did our part to show that Iowans overwhelmingly oppose this bill. Now we just need to help voters remember that at election time.

Our next event of note will be a presentation

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about how to use the state legislature's website on Thursday, August 17. This event will be held at 7:00 p.m. in the Iowa City Public Library and will also be streamed. It is open to the public, and we invite you to join us and to pass the word on to other groups or individuals who might be interested in it.

Finally, if you are missing your action alerts while our Advocacy committee has slowed for the summer, our members report that Progress Iowa ([progressiowa.org](http://progressiowa.org)) has an active and well organized letter-to-the-editor campaign that often aligns well with the League's sensibilities.

Shannon Patrick  
Advocacy Chair



## Membership

Active membership for League of Women Voters of Johnson County is currently at 157 members. The non-partisan work of the League is more important than ever. We appreciate your support.

The LWVJC has a common annual renewal date of June 30. Individual dues are \$70, Household \$105, and student \$20. Email notices have been sent to all active members. You can join online using the link below to the League website or you can complete the form and send with your check in USPS. Your promptness in renewing is very helpful. Thank you to everyone who has already renewed. It is greatly appreciated!! The email will come from [lwvjcmembership@gmail.com](mailto:lwvjcmembership@gmail.com), so you might check your spam folder if you have not received the notice. If you think you have already renewed but aren't sure, send me an email at the address below and I will check for you.

Most of our new members come because of a current member reaching out to a friend to consider joining. The Fall Reception and membership drive will be held on Thursday, August 31. It will be an excellent program

with University of Iowa Law Professor, Christina Bohannon, speaking on *Voting in Iowa: The Shifting Legal Landscape and Potential Effects on Voter Turnout*. A complimentary light supper will be served. Please invite one or more guests so they can learn about the work of the league. Current members can renew that evening and new folks can join.

If you know someone now who would like to join the LWVJC but can't make the meeting, please share the link for the online membership form; [www.lwvjc.org/join-league](http://www.lwvjc.org/join-league).

Jeanne Bancroft, Membership Chair  
[lwvjcmembership@gmail.com](mailto:lwvjcmembership@gmail.com)

## Communications Committee

Are you a Facebook wiz or a web page guru? Are you a master of news releases? Love taking photos at events? Wish you could be editing this newsletter? If so, the LWVJC Communications team needs you! If you are interested in lending your talents to telling the LWVJC story, please contact Vicki Aden at the email address on the first page of this newsletter.

Vicki Aden  
Communications Chair



# Photo Gallery



Top and Bottom Left: League members Karin Franklin and Syndy Conger are ready to register voters at the South District Diversity Market on 7/15. Bottom Right: Karin Franklin assisting a voter with their registration.





Top Left: League members Casey Cook and Kathleen Kamerick are ready to register voters at the South District Diversity Market on 7/22. Top Right: League members Jennifer Patel and Susan Enzle also registered voters at the South District Diversity Market on 7/22.



Dogs wish they could vote too!





Top Left: Jane Wilch, Recycling Coordinator, shared information and updates on the recycling program in Johnson County with League members at the Making Connections event hosted by Hazel Seaba on July 27. Top Right: Gaylen Wobeter, Paula Vaughn and Joan Cook visiting at the Making Connections event. Bottom: Pictured (l to r) are Jane Wilch, Cathy Eisenhofer, Elinor Levin, Miriam Timmer-Hackert, and Eileen Beran, as Miriam poses a question about recycling.



## Calendar of Events

Date	Time	Location	Program
Thursday, July 27	5:30-7:00 p.m.	Hazel Seaba's, 2640 N Scott Blvd., #124	Making Connections: Jane Wilch, Recycling Coordinator-Updates on recycling in Johnson County
Saturday, July 29	3:00-7:00 p.m.	South District Diversity Market, Pepperwood Plaza, Iowa City	Voter Registration
Tuesday, August 1	5:30-8:00 p.m.	Wetherby Park, 2400 Taylor Dr., Iowa City	Voter Registration at National Night Out
Saturday, August 5	3:00-7:00 p.m.	South District Diversity Market, Pepperwood Plaza, Iowa City	Voter Registration
Wednesday, August 9	10:00 a.m.	Poindexters Coffee Graduate Hotel IC	coffee and casual conversation
Saturday, August 12	3:00-7:00 p.m.	South District Diversity Market, Pepperwood Plaza, Iowa City	Voter Registration
Monday, August 14	6:30-8:00 p.m.	virtual	LWVJC Board Meeting
Thursday, August 17	7:00 p.m.	Iowa City Public Library, and virtual	Advocacy Program – How to Use the Iowa State Legislature website
Saturday, August 19	3:00-7:00 p.m.	South District Diversity Market, Pepperwood Plaza, Iowa City	Voter Registration
Sunday, August 27	12:00-6:00 p.m.	CCAN-Con Community Engagement Festival, Ped Mall Iowa City	Voter Registration
Thursday, August 31	5:30-7:30 p.m.	Unitarian Universalist Society, 2355 Oakdale Road, Coralville	Fall Reception and Membership Drive
Wednesday, September 13	10:00 a.m.	Poindexters Coffee Graduate Hotel IC	coffee and casual conversation
Friday, September 15	1:30 p.m.	Herbert Hoover Museum, West Branch	Naturalization Ceremony; Voter Registration
Tuesday, September 19			National Voter Registration Day
Saturday, September 23	1:00-3:00 p.m.	Iowa City Public Library	Workshop on Preparing Freedom of Information Requests, led by Randy Evans
Sunday, October 8	1:30-2:30 p.m.	C20 Pomerantz Center at the University of Iowa	One Community One Book 2023; Keynote Lecture by Joanne Ramos, author of "The Farm"

### League of Women Voters of Johnson County

**OUR MISSION:** *Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.*

**OUR VISION:** We envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge and the confidence to participate.

**OUR VALUE:** We believe in the power of women and men to create a more perfect democracy.