

THE CAPE COD VOTER

APRIL 2021 VOLUME 60 ISSUE 8

CALENDAR

BOARD MEETING

TUESDAY April 6 | 9:30 a.m. **Zoom conference by invitation**



Suicide Prevention: Understanding The Mental Health Needs Of Older Adults And People Of Color.

THURSDAY April 29 2021 | 7:00 p.m.

Location: Your computer, tablet, or phone

UPCOMING

BOARD MEETING

TUESDAY May 4 | 9:30 a.m. **Zoom conference by invitation**

LWVCCA ANNUAL MEETING

THURSDAY, May 13 | 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Location: Your computer, tablet, or phone

Go to

https://tinyurl.com/LWVCCA-calendar

to see our entire Google calendar. Click on any calendar listing to see more detail.



LWVCCA PRESIDENT'S GREETINGS

League Members,

Spring was definitely in the air yesterday. Today it's back to semi-winter! But, the good news is, with daylight savings rolling in we get some additional brightness to lengthen our day. The interesting thing about temperature fluctuations and time changes..... it mirrors the ebb and flow of the world around us in so many ways. Thinking back on all of the changes we have experienced over the past few years makes me appreciate the beauty of the world around us and the possibilities for change. Granted change can proceed in many ways, some positive, some not so. The trick is to identify the changes needed and move in that direction. Just like a plant seeking the sun's warmth, humans tend to get drawn towards a path rather than decide to go there.

Over this past year, the terrific team that I have worked with has made purposeful movements toward areas of need. Our journey to address racism and equity issues on the Cape has only begun. League members, along with a coalition of many other organizations, will continue to build on the first steps and explore new avenues for change. We have once again opened up a dialogue necessary to address Climate Change here on the Cape and will continue to explore ways to educate the public and to engage their support in order to reduce the damage that may be coming. And next month, our League will be opening a dialogue surrounding an ongoing Cape Cod issue, Suicide and Mental Health. While this issue has been ongoing here, the stresses placed on all communities over this COVID year only highlight this area of need.

www.lwvCapecod.org

http://www.facebook.com/LWVCCA/

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Everywhere you look on Cape Cod, you can see the incredible beauty and harmony of nature. But as League members, we often are required to gaze deeper, below the beauty, to identify the areas of neglect that have been festering for a long time. People are often attracted to a place for various reasons and usually see only the positive aspects of that community. The longer one lives in a place, the easier it is to lose sight of the flaws. Every once in a while, it is important to take a different walk, or to paint a room a different color, or engage with a new crowd so that we gain a different perspective. As League members, we need to continue to look at our communities with open minds and fresh eyes and find the places that we can best move in to in order to encourage change and growth in more positive and diverse ways.

There is always work to be done and since spring is just around the corner, we can be outside and interact with each other once again. Put on your thinking caps, take a more adventurous walk and join us in moving forward.

Peace, Suzanne

Suzanne Brock, LWVCCA President

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MARCH 9 BOARD MEETING

- Minutes of the February 2 Board meeting were approved.
- The Budget Committee results show that we will have larger deficits than anticipated. We may need to go back to splitting member contributions between LWVCCA and the Ed

Trust. We will send out a fundraising letter to businesses in the summer as we have done in previous years.

- The Board reviewed local and LWVMA
 Program Planning goals. A final proposal will
 be prepared and presented to the Annual
 Meeting in May for approval.
- Final, approved minutes will be posted on the Members Only pages of the website.

VOTER SERVICE and LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES

Have You Heard About the Massachusetts VOTES Act?



Remember last year's popular voting changes? Mail-in ballots, pre-paid postage, early voting, a secure outdoor dropbox for your ballot, and an online site to check your ballot status?

The LWV of Massachusetts has joined with longtime voter advocacy groups and state legislators to make those reforms permanent in Massachusetts. Senate Majority Leader Cindy Creem and Representative John Lawn have filed a bill called The VOTES Act-- An Act Fostering Voting Opportunities, Trust, Equity, And Security—SD 1002 and HD 1536. This bill bundles many of last year's voting reforms into one comprehensive package that now has more than 90 co-sponsors.

Here's a partial list of the provisions of the Act:

- No-excuse mail voting in all elections, in place of absentee voting.
- Early voting in person for at least 2 weeks before regular state elections, 1 week before state primaries and special elections. Local officials may provide more hours and more sites, if needed.
- Voters can apply for mail ballots to be sent permanently until they cancel.
- Drop boxes at local option, or at early voting site.
- Pre-paid postage for applications and ballots.

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- Local officials may appoint poll workers without regard to political party membership, voter status, residence in the city or town, as needed.
- Same-day registration (SDR) within early voting period, or on Election Day, with identification and proof of residence.
- Voting information and provision of statesanctioned voting materials to eligible voters at jails and prisons before every regular state, primary, and general election.
- Improved audit procedures--risk-limiting audits after all regular state, primaries, and general elections.
- Secretary of the Commonwealth to join ERIC (a 30-state coalition to improve voter registration data) by June 30, 2022.
- Fix the state's mail application portal by June 30, 2022.

If you'd like to see Massachusetts enact these reforms, contact your state legislators to urge them to support The VOTES Act. A quick phone call, an email, a letter—whatever works for you—will help. Check Find My Legislator for contact information. Let's pass the VOTES Act and help make Massachusetts a national example of voting access, equity, and election modernization!

LWVUS Cheers Passage of HR 1 For the People Act in House of Representatives



The US House of Representatives recently passed HR 1—For the People Act—with a party-line vote. League of Women Voters of the United States CEO Virginia Kase applauded the action.

"...The League of Women Voters is proud to support this bill that will end partisan and racial gerrymandering, remove dark money from our elections, and restore transparency in our government. We applaud the House for passing the *For the People Act*, and we urge the Senate to do the same."

This federal bill includes sweeping national reforms in redistricting, campaign finance, ethics, and voting rights. Now it advances to the Senate where it faces a divided membership. Read the LWVUS statement here.

MEET YOUR CAPE COD LEGISLATORS --

March 26, 2021

League of Women Voters of the Cape Cod Area, Cape Women's Coalition, Cape Media Center

Legislators present: State Senator Susan Moran, State Representative Tim Whelan, State Representative Kip Diggs, State Representative Sarah Peake, State Representative Steven Xiarhos, State Representative Dylan Fernandes.

Legislators not present: State Senator Julian Cyr, State Representative David Vieira

Introduction and Welcome—Moderator Nancy Brumberg, Legislative Specialist, LWVMA.

Format includes 1- minute opening statement by each legislator, discussion of Affordable Housing and Voting Rights Legislation, and a 2-minute closing statement by each legislator. Speaking order determined by voting district.

Opening Statements

Rep. Tim Whelan—has represented Barnstable's 1st District since 2015. Glad to work in a bipartisan way with the Cape delegation and "...leave politics at the door..." He is the new Ranking Republican on the Joint Committee on Elder Affairs working with Vice-Chair Senator Julian Cyr. Wants to listen to the needs expressed by seniors. Supports legislation that would provide needed assistance to police, first responders, and essential workers.

Rep. Kip Diggs—newly elected to Barnstable's 2nd District. Expressed deep appreciation for his community's support when his son was killed in a car accident and wants to "give back" by helping his district. Committee assignments include Education, Housing, Health Care Financing, Tourism, and Redistricting. Will serve with "...love and hard work".

Rep. Sarah Peake—serving her 8th term representing Barnstable's 4th District. Remarked on

the past "unique" year with lots of legislation stemming directly from the pandemic. Has worked to support every aspect of government that affects residents' lives. Expressed appreciation for former State Reps Hunt and Crocker and welcomed Cape Cod's new legislators.

Rep. Steven Xiarhos— "...loves this" chance to speak to voters. Described his 40 years in law enforcement as a police officer and a Deputy Chief of Police and his New Bedford childhood—a "triple-decker kid". He is concerned for the opioid epidemic. Mentioned loss of his own son, along with Rep. Diggs' son. Serves on Committee on Elder Affairs.

Rep. Dylan Fernandes—serving his 3rd term representing Falmouth and the Islands –a unique district. Was first in family to attend college and wants to "give back" to his community. Believes that Cape needs help in housing, climate change (which may affect the Cape area more than any other place in the nation), and Covid issues, especially for seniors. Knows that the Cape Cod delegation will be working hard this session.

Sen. Susan Moran—welcomes this "terrific opportunity" to speak to voters and observed that the delegation has worked well together. Her concerns are maintaining the COVID Consortium, economic development, and following progress on Cape Cod bridgework. She is worked on a bill to address universal childcare called Common Start.

Affordable Housing—What are the challenges? What Should We Be Doing?

Rep Fernandes—Housing is at a crisis point. Young people are leaving the Cape, working people and seniors cannot afford to live here, businesses rate this a #1 issue for their workforce. Need for more local zoning reform to encourage housing while preserving open space. Supports housing in downtown areas, close to businesses, transit, jobs. Need to provide funding for building costs which have skyrocketed, especially on the Islands. Supports a minimal transfer tax on multi-milliondollar homes, more than \$1 million.

Rep. Whelan—mentioned his childhood in Worcester, also in a "triple decker". Observed that many young people, including his children, cannot afford to live on Cape Cod. Believes that certain

towns are making progress in tackling the housing problem—supports housing for veterans, Yarmouth Commons, and building rental units. Believes there must be a shift in funding and better balance in funding for open space vs. affordable housing.

Rep. Diggs—Expressed concern over single parents and their ability to keep their jobs and find affordable housing and childcare. Supports the Common Start bill to address those needs.

Rep. Peake—mentioned challenges and importance of working with town officials to earmark funds for affordable housing, acquiring state land for housing construction, and returning some portion of rental income to towns specifically to support affordable housing.

Voting Legislation—The VOTES Act— Moderator thanked Co-Sponsors who were present

Sen. Moran—The last election brought record voter turnout—many Cape towns voted in the 80+ percent - thanks to early voting and, especially, mail-in voting. Last year's changes assisted working voters, seniors, those with childcare challenges. Important to give voters "more opportunities" to participate in elections. Must be "vigilant" to protect voting rights.

Rep. Peake—After recent GA legislation, it is important to discuss voting access, encourage participation, make it easier to vote. Mail-in voting has been shown to be safe, reliable, and promotes higher participation. "Drop boxes must be outdoors." Supports Massachusetts joining the ERIC program to make voting lists more accurate and updated. Supports Same Day Registration to prevent disenfranchising voters who relocate and believes that SDR challenges can be resolved.

Rep. Xiarhos—believes that promoting voting is important. Encourages people to run for elected office. Recounted the excitement of the day, January 6, he was sworn in—along with Rep. Diggs—in Boston and the contrast with Washington DC that day.

Rep. Fernandes—applauded MA's record voter turnout, due to early voting and voting by mail. We are "not going back." Observed that giving people the time at home to review their ballot encourages a

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more informed voter and allows voters to give attention to the "down ballot"— not merely to the candidates at the top of the ballot.

Closing Statements—Common Start Legislation (universal childcare) and transparency in government.

Rep. Whelan—Economic recovery is the most important issue now. Need for small business support, fast tracking tax forgiveness on specific PPP grants, and supporting a strong tourism season.

Rep. Diggs—sees mental health issues as a major concern. Need to be proactive and prepared to deal with anxiety of kids, teachers, school leaders. We must feel safe and comfortable in preparing for tourist influx.

Rep. Peake—Mentioned new role as Assistant Majority Leader and has filed bills on climate change (recalling her experience in environmental advocacy), so important to the Cape. She is cochairing the Transit Caucus. Urges people to sign up for bill alerts, hearings will be livestreamed.

Rep. Xiarhos— Supports full transparency in government. Has co-sponsored about 200 bills and filed 23. Supported police reform, the "Diaper Bill', Nero's Law to allow paramedics to help injured police K-9 animals. "...loves this" forum.

Sen. Moran—Visit the Common Start website—commonstartMA.org—to learn about the bill. Women have been hard-hit by pandemic with schooling, childcare, loss of pay parity and career paths off track—basically, economic, social, and mental health challenges. Bill will subsidize childcare costs, including after school programs, improve the expertise of the childcare workforce, and help restore the economy.

Rep. Fernandes—echoed importance of the childcare issue and Common Start legislation. As Vice-Chair Committee on Tourism, Arts, and Culture Development, knows that the arts, especially performing arts, have been hit hard by pandemic and are critical to the health of the economy. As member of the Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy, he supports MA becoming a leader in offshore wind development to protect the environment and provide good, year-round jobs for Cape residents.

Closing—Nancy Brumberg thanks all participants and the co-sponsors of today's program. Encourages voters to communicate with their legislators. They want to hear from you!

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE THANK YOUS from Renate Sands

- We thank Cape Cod Media for doing the webinar, recording and posting it on their website.
- Thank you to Cape Women's Coalition for cosponsoring.
- Thank you to Nancy Brumback from the LWVMA for moderating.
- Thank you to Jeffrey Soares from Sen Cyr's office for his help.
- A huge thank you to Rosemary for organizing the webinar and outreach to organization and media.
- Thank you to Richard Utt for his help with the tech component.
- Thank you to Caroline Young-Kleinfeld for her writing skills in doing the summary.

This article was submitted by Carole Young-Kleinfeld

Voter Service and Legislative Committees

WELCOME to NEW MEMBERS

"I have my current serious concerns about voting rights in this great nation."

Mary Reardon Johnson

Mary Johnson was the second oldest of six children in her family. Her family moved nine times by the time she was ten years old due to her father's job as a construction equipment sales agent. Some of the places where her father prospered while providing for his family were the Greater Boston Area, Ohio and New Jersey. Later her family returned to Springfield, Massachusetts near where Mary had been born. Today Mary Johnson wants the world to know she raised two children Beth 42 and Dan 40.

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Mary is a 1972 graduate of Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas. At the time of her graduation, it was the largest university for women in the United States. The fact that she chose to be a social work major at age eighteen (and never wavered in her decision) addresses her high standard of established commitment to the profession of social work throughout her life. She had observed that during her college campus years in Texas that most of her college classmates had grown up in segregated school systems prior to entering college. Mary also witnessed the opposition to integration proposals during the 1970s and 1980s e.g., ABC Houses and METCO. Her early post-graduation years were times of sweeping socio-political changes in the United States. One year after her graduation Mary obtained a job with the Massachusetts Department of Social Services. She received her Master's Degree in Social Work from the University of Connecticut in 1983.

Mary Johnson's career has led her to working with both public and private agencies while addressing the socio-economic needs of diverse populations (the homeless, teen mothers, troubled youth, the abused).

Her accomplishments as an outstanding professional social worker involved her leadership as Executive Director of the YWCA of Western Massachusetts in Springfield. During her thirty-five years with the YWCA Mary's service adhered to the mission of the YWCA: "Elimination of racism. Empowerment of Women." By the time Mary Johnson left the YWCA, under her administration its \$500,000. per annum budget had grown to 7.2 million dollars.

During her years of working in the YWCA Mary Johnson had the opportunity to travel as a delegate to international conferences in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Japan, China, Australia, India, Denmark, Sweden and Germany. It was during her participation in international conferences that she observed on-going programs designed to improve the conditions of women and girls.

Prior to her retirement in 2016, the YWCA built a new forty- eight bed battered women's shelter

in Springfield, Massachusetts at the cost of 7.5 million dollars. In addition to the structure being innovative in its design, new concepts in the treatment and services for homeless abused women and their children were established and implemented. At the same time a much needed office space was constructed for the Western Massachusetts YWCA.

In 2010 the YWCA built a twenty apartment facility for battered women, their children and teen mothers. During Mary's service with the YWCA, the Massachusetts YWCA has become the largest provider of services to abused women and teen mothers in Massachusetts. Mary Reardon Johnson, MSW is a happily retired social worker (par excellence) on Cape Cod!

Mary Johnson

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"I joined the League because I have lived with diversity all of my life. I strongly believe that all of my life's experiences make me who I am today." Kari Hoffmann

Kari Hoffmann had no idea that the small community preschool she helped to start in Malden during the Fall of 1977 with 15 preschoolers would steadily grow and last for 42 years. She stayed with that early childhood program for 17 years even during the one year while she commuted to Newton to work with an after school program involving elementary school students. The Malden preschool program developed into a full day program and Kari eventually became its Director.

Thirty-five years ago, Kari and her husband Richard created their internationally diverse family as they adopted 2 infants who had been born in Korea (a daughter and a son). Their son had been born developmentally delayed with

special needs due to brain injury sustained in utero. This was the factor that steered the direction of her professional focus, and her strong parental advocacy. Her son's special needs gave absolute purpose to her three and a half decades of activism in the struggle to obtain government recognition and support for appropriate educational services for students having special needs. Her journey has taken her as a dedicated parent and strong voice for Massachusetts students with special needs, from school committees to community

collaborative organizations and to the Massachusetts State Legislature.

Her many years of devoted work and advocacy have rendered progressive results for her son and thousands of students with special needs in Massachusetts. Kari Hoffmann has recently stated how her community was so very supportive as she sought services and help for her son. Like so many children with

special needs thirty years ago her son was wait-listed for early intervention services. Between residing in Melrose and moving on to Andover Kari became instrumental in organizing extensive coalitions of parents of students with special needs. The school districts and communities involved were Haverhill. Andover. North Andover, Lawrence, and Methuen. In retrospect Kari Hoffmann now surmises that legislative bills regarding special education that were being presented in the Massachusetts State Legislature were much stronger than federal bills that existed simultaneously in Washington. She served as a founding member of a Special Education Working Group. The Working Group included special education administrators and parents of children with special needs of Merrimac Valley. The Working Group meetings were held in the Andover Public Library with Massachusetts State legislators in regard to structuring the House Special Education Bill. Kari explains her personal success with working proactively within diverse groups of people: Her strategy has always been rooted in what she calls "bridge building" rather than promoting adversarial relationships. As part of The Special Education Working Group Kari Hoffmann has testified before the Education Sub-Committee at the State House. Even though she was not a voting member, Kari Hoffmann attended the Special Education Task Force meetings established by Governor Weld

in 1995. The Governor's Task Force was charged with refining the Special Education Bill.

Kari Hoffmann has been an empowered proponent for improvement in Massachusetts state regulations and services for students having special needs. Much of the reason for this has been embedded in her love for her son, her professional experience as an educator, and her exceptional professional preparation. She holds multiple

Massachusetts Certifications in Education as both teacher and administrator. She earned her Master's Degree in Family Studies/Counseling from Wheelock College. Her Certificate in Advanced Graduate Studies is in school psychology and school counselling. She has been involved with *The Federation for Children with Special Needs* (a private non-profit organization). She has been a kindergarten teacher, an elementary school counselor for ten years, and a Special Education Chairperson.

Kari and her husband moved to the Cape in 2010. She was elected to the Brewster Planning Board in 2015 as she indicates that her membership on the Planning Board was a way for her to "give back". She is also on The Brewster Vision Planning Committee and helping to develop Brewster's Local Comprehensive Plan. Among Kari Hoffman's current concerns are the environment and affordable housing (especially for seasonal

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workers) on the Cape. She firmly believes that community-minded projects need everyone on board.

Kari Hoffmann

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Welcome also to

Virginia June Hager

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ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

There were recent reports in the Boston Globe (March 8) and the Cape Cod Times (March 6 and March 11) of a study done by scientists at Harvard University which found that several watersheds on the Upper Cape around Mashpee had 40 times more PFAS than new state laws allow. The compounds which a growing body of research has found can be harmful in minute amounts have been linked to cancer, low infant birth weights and suppression of the immune system. The results suggested that the chemicals are far more prevalent than previously believed.

Per - and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a diverse group of human-made chemicals used in a wide range of consumer and industrial products. Some PFAS have been more widely used and studied than others. Many PFAS are resistant to grease, oil, water, and heat. For this reason, beginning in the 1940's, PFAS have been used in a variety of applications including in stain- and water-resistant fabrics and carpeting, cleaning products, paints, and fire-fighting foams. Certain PFAS are also authorized by the FDA for limited use in cookware, food packaging, and food processing equipment.

The widespread use of PFAS and their ability to remain intact in the environment means that over time PFAS levels from past and current uses can result in increasing levels of environmental contamination. Accumulation of certain PFAS has also been shown through blood tests to occur in humans and animals. While the science surrounding potential health effects of this bioaccumulation of certain PFAS is developing, evidence suggests it may cause serious health conditions.

Between 2017 and 2019 the scientists tested six watersheds on the Cape. They collected samples from the Childs, Quashnet, Mill Creek, Marstons Mills, Mashpee and Santuit watersheds.

State environmental officials said they would review the findings. Andrew Gottlieb, executive director of the Association to Preserve cape Cod, said he wasn't surprised that the chemicals are more prevalent than previously thought. He expected that water districts across the Cape and elsewhere in the state will find more PFAS when they begin routine testing of the water next month. Gottlieb urged state and local officials to do more to protect drinking water.

Environmental advocates called for the legislature to pass a bill that would eliminate the chemicals from food packaging and a range of other consumer products. There are no such federal regulations. So, stay tuned!

I just signed up to be on mailing list of **Elders Climate Action**

https://www.eldersclimateaction.org/.

It's free. "Get Inspired by the members of Elders Climate Action who are taking action on climate change. We are parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, just like you, hoping to make a difference on climate action" Tuned into a call of people across the country – so many good ideas and actions everywhere!

<u>Grandmothers4aGreenNewDeal.org</u> created a recording "<u>THE GREEN NEW DEAL - a Path</u> <u>Forward</u>" and shared it to the LWVUS Climate Change Group.

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"It takes a deep dive into the connections between the climate crisis and racial and economic inequities in our society. The video is designed for a general audience, and we hope that it both informs and motivates viewers to become active in the struggle to mitigate the climate emergency. We're hoping to disseminate this video as widely as possible. Please view it and, if you can, post it on other listservs you're connected to."

Submitted by: Florence Seldin, chair of Environment Committee

HEALTH COMMITTEE REPORT

The Health Committee has organized a forum, to be held on April 29,

"Suicide Prevention: Understanding the Mental Health Needs of Older Adults and People of Color"

This forum will help family and friends, community members and health professionals recognize the mental health needs of older adults and people of color whose issues may present differently from other populations. Topics covered include:

- Recognizing the needs of older adults and program services for suicide prevention.
- Understanding the impact of bias and internalized racism on mental health and discussion of wellness for people of color.
- An overview of the new National Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Designation Act forecasting the creation of a new 988 lifeline number.

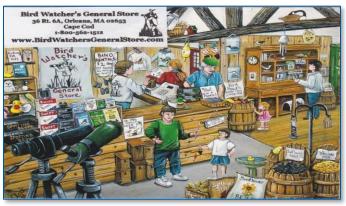
Details to follow soon!

Thanks to Health Committee co-chairs Sally Cahill and Pat Ryle for organizing this!



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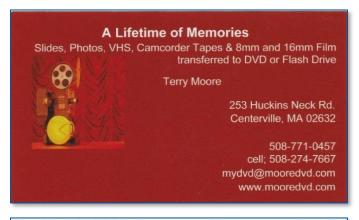




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