

VOTER

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January 2024

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy

2024 - Off to a Running Start

Happy New Year! The days are getting longer, and we find hope where we can and keep working to empower voters and defend democracy.

The Iowa Legislature convenes on January 8, 2024. We expect further tax reform; government reorganization, including the issue of gender balance on state boards; Medicaid funding; and workforce development. The Advocacy committee has been preparing for the session and will send alerts for timely action. Will the state try to change the Iowa Constitution to ban abortion? Sign up for alerts from Advocacy Chair Shannon Patrick shannonpatrick@gmail.com so you will know.

The League Legislative Forums are January 27, February 24, and March 30 from 9:30-11:30 am. Come, ask your questions and hear directly from your representatives in Des Moines. All legislators covering part of Johnson County are invited.

The Education Committee is presenting *House File 68: Challenges and Changes for Public Schools* with Matt Degner the evening of January 25 at Iowa City Public Library.

We have a couple of literary events this month. On Saturday, January 6 statewide leagues are all showing the documentary, *No Time to Fail* about Rhode Island election workers having to quickly change to allow mail-in voting in pandemic. Park on the lower level and join us in Meeting Room A at Coralville Public Library, 10 a.m. - noon. Afterwards we will discuss safeguarding elections with local county election staff Alex Stanton and poll workers.

Sunday January 21 at 2 p.m. we encourage attendance at the James Theatre in Iowa City for a one-woman play, *What the Constitution Means to Me*. It weaves details of her personal life, her family history, and the personal life of Justice William

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The *Voter* is issued the last Friday of the month to provide members advance notice of activities.
The February Voter deadline is January 22.

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Douglas into discussion of the Constitution. The producers of the play are also having a panel discussion after a FilmScene showing of Erin Brockovich on Monday January 22. We hope to get more details soon.

It's caucus time in Iowa. You must be registered with the party you want to caucus with. Republicans are holding traditional caucuses on January 15. For information, times and locations see <https://www.iowagop.org/> Democrats are holding a mail-in primary with a Presidential Preference Card. You have until February 19 to request a card; cards will be mailed out starting January 12. If you are interested in being a convention delegate or a volunteer, you must attend the January 15 caucus in person. For information go to <https://iowademocrats.org/2024-caucus-2/> Libertarians will hold their caucus for Johnson County on January 15th from 6:30 – 8 p.m. at the Coralville Public Library. For more information go to <https://lpi.org/event/caucus2024-2024-01/>

All events are listed on the LWVJC calendar on the last page of the Voter.

*Paula Vaughan and Miriam Timmer-Hackert
co-presidents*

Fundraising

The LWVJC 2023-24 Fund Drive

The League of Women Voters of Johnson County has an ambitious goal of \$8,000 for its annual fund drive. 2024 is an election year, and we are planning a wide range of events. Many thanks to those who have already made a contribution!

Without your generous donations, we could not continue to engage in all our activities: your dollars pay for our web site, rent halls for legislative and educational forums, fund printing for voter registration materials, bring in speakers on critical issues, and more.

These activities are the grassroots of democracy and the LWVJC's nonpartisan work for democratic government at local, state, and

national levels is needed more than ever. Your donation makes a difference.

The LWVJC operates very frugally, so every dollar is spent with care. Membership fees in the League go primarily to state and national operations. For important work at the local level, the LWVJC relies on your donations.

Thank you to everyone who has already contributed so generously. Without your help, the LWVJC could not succeed in its critical activities of advocating for fair and transparent government, working for voter rights and education, and making democracy work in Johnson County. Donations can be made by **check** and mailed to: LWVJC, P. O. Box 5452, Coralville, IA, 52241 Donations can also be made **online** at the LWVJC web site: <https://lwwjc.org/donate/>

*Kathleen Kamerick
Fundraising Chair*



Advocacy Update

With 2023 winding down and the new legislative session looming, Advocacy has been busy with pre-session education and, indeed, some advocacy.

First, following up on his invitation at the LWVIA Legislative Briefing, committee member Syndy Conger arranged for Senator Quirnbach to join our recent Advocacy committee meeting to present on state educational funding. Senator Quirnbach, who is a retired ISU economics professor, has calculated that the state's failure to fund our schools to match inflation has resulted in massive effective cuts to both K-12 and higher education since 2017. Committee members came away enlightened and alarmed and have since discussed how to arm school officials and other education stakeholders with this information.

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Next, 12/9 was our member meeting and legislative preview, and we were pleased to host four of our lawmakers, Sen. Weiner, and Reps. Jacoby, Levin, and Zabner for discussions of the League's priorities and related questions and issues. It is clear that there will be much for us to do in the next session, and there were some hopeful notes even in a political atmosphere that is overall challenging.

In other work, the committee discussed, clarified, and relayed the LWVIA action alert about the Medical Board's guidance on how to implement the abortion ban (or, rather, its lack of guidance). We are also working to see how we can get responses from our county's GOP lawmakers and to prepare for the legislature to look at the state's boards and commissions again.

Shannon Patrick
Advocacy Chair

MAKING
DEMOCRACY WORK®

Voter Services Committee

LWVJC Voter Services committee is planning the Winter Legislative Forums. The 2024 legislative forums which will be held on the last Saturdays of each month, January 27, February 24, and March 30 and will be held at the Iowa City Area Senior Center from 9:30-11:30 a.m. The forums will also be livestreamed on the League's Facebook page.

Focus areas for each of the forums have been identified. In January, our focus will be Education, Healthcare in February and Public Safety in March. Related legislative issues as well as the impact of ongoing tax cuts on these areas will be brought forward. This is a great opportunity for community members to ask questions of their elected officials so mark your calendars and do plan to attend.

Jeanne Bancroft
Voter Services Chair

Making Connections

How does the legal system create more debt for poor people? The League is working on a request from the LWVIA to review a study which they conducted recently. The study is *Bringing Economic Justice to the Justice System* and makes recommendations in two areas: Bail & Pretrial Alternatives and Criminal Justice Debt. Member, Kathleen Kamerick, is leading a group to review the study through a local lens here in Johnson County and determine concurrence with the study recommendations.

To learn more about our findings, you are invited to attend a Making Connections gathering on the topic at the home of Jeanne Bancroft on Thursday, February 15 from 5:30-7 p.m. at 2190 Port Talbot Place, Coralville. Light refreshments will be served.

Jeanne Bancroft



Education Committee

On Thursday, January 25, ICCSD Superintendent Matt Degner will offer an early assessment of House File 68, the Students First Act, and its effect on public schools. The event is being held at the Iowa City Public Library from 6:30 – 8 p.m. in Meeting Room A. The event will be live streamed on the ICPL website, and also recorded.

The committee is working with Project Green to bring the documentary *Common Ground*, sequel to *Kiss the Ground*, to our area for a free, public viewing. Check www.facebook.com/LWVJCIA later in the month for more information.

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Coming April 25: noted science writer Connie Mutel will round out the League Lecture Series with *Iowa, the Beautiful Land? Envisioning an Action Agenda for Nature and Agriculture*. Several co-sponsors are joining LWVJC to present a thought-provoking program that will probe the potential for solutions to Iowa's increasing environmental problems.

*Rebecca Conard, Patricia McCarthy, Susan Enzle
Education Committee*



Membership

LWVJC currently has 148 active members. Welcome to Carolyn Tolbert, a new member in November and Judith Quinn who joined in December.

Please consider attending our monthly Casual Coffees on the second Wednesday at 10 a.m. at Poindexter Coffee in the Graduate Hotel. Bring a friend who might be interested in joining. There is generally at least one board member in attendance who can answer questions about the benefits of membership in the League of Women Voters of Johnson County.

*Jeanne Bancroft
Membership Chair*

FilmScene Community Collaboration: Volunteers Needed

In 2020, the LWV of Iowa worked together with the Bertelsmann Foundation on the screening of *Uncivil War* during the primary season. They have reached out to LWVIA to collaborate on another screening and discussion event in 2024.

The new film is *I, Too*, featuring Dr. Carol Anderson, New York Times bestseller and Chair of African American Studies at Emory University. It explores the connection between America's history (through the lens of little-known episodes

from the past), and the current challenges to American democracy. It examines the question "Who could believe this could happen here?" regarding the January 6, 2021, insurrection.

I am working with FilmScene (Iowa City) for a screening and discussion event this spring 2024. The Bertelsmann Foundation would cover the cost of the event but would rely on LWV Johnson County to bring in the audience and identify speakers for the post-film conversation.

I need help with speakers, partners, and promotion. Please reach out to me if you are interested and willing to help at pollyshorton@gmail.com or 319-621-1685.

Polly Horton



UMRR-ILO

League of Women Voters Upper Mississippi River Region-Interleague Organization (lwvumrr.org) is proud to announce Missouri wants to join with our four states: Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois. The official move will happen if we vote to include them at our Annual Meeting this spring. We already have a new member sitting on our Board from Missouri as an observer. These certainly are times when the more, the better when it comes to interacting to protect our environment, and our special needs for the Mississippi River. It is exciting when the word gets around, and people's interest and level of education spike.

A big change in our Bylaws is to add new Board members to help with all the activities. More changes for UMRR (as our Chair, Mary Ellen Miller, likes to call our environmental group) is the Revision of our Bylaws which will also be voted on this May. Did you know that Robert's Rules of Order is currently on revision 12? I certainly did not and, if I hadn't been chairing such a workaholic group to rewrite the Bylaws, I still wouldn't! Under the new Robert's Rules there is a consideration for the current way of doing business, that is,

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electronically. It appears Revised Bylaws are more common now. This means there are so many changes, we are really rewriting in entirety, not just amending.

Currently our Advocacy Committee is busy in the four active states writing letters to their Legislatures with concerns. We want people to join our Board. Think about it, then do it. Our big item this year on the National Level will be the Farm Bill.

The Mississippi River is a busy place. Because of our drought, the river has become more polluted with dangerous algae affecting the lower Michigan and Lake Erie Great Lakes. The Great Lakes area, with Congressional support, added an action plan long ago to help keep the lakes safe and flowing and the fish edible. That meant making sure land around the Lakes was returned to its natural state. This means reclaiming the wetlands and the grass water ways, and protecting the creatures that protect the water and its existence. We have built dams and pumps along the Mississippi River which cause damage to the animals and restrict the natural water flow, damaging the health of the Mississippi River with man-made changes.

The good news is that New Orleans did not have to put in new water pipelines to get water from farther up the Mississippi for drinking. We had a drought, but they had four inches of rain just in time to keep the Gulf from backing up into the river. The salt water from the Gulf would have corroded the lead water pipes making new pipes mandatory.

Stay tuned for more water news, check out the web sites that carry the information, www.lwvumrr.org and www.1mississippi.org, to keep informed and watch programs that are available. Join us and our mission to educate and inform and protect our waterways. Contact Nancy Porter, (nancy55555@icloud.com) for more information.

*Nancy Porter
LWV Representative to the Mississippi River Network*



2024 Caucus Information

The Iowa Republican, Democratic, and Libertarian caucuses are scheduled for Monday, January 15, 2024. It is against state law to participate in more than one party's presidential nomination process (i.e., you cannot attend the Republican caucus and also request a Democratic mail-in ballot).

The Iowa caucuses are not conducted by the county auditor's office, since they are not an election. The caucuses are meetings conducted by the three full status political parties (Democratic, Republican, and Libertarian), which set the rules, locations, and procedures. Information on the caucuses is included below. Specific questions should be directed to the respective party.

In general, to participate in a caucus you must be a legal resident of Iowa and registered for the party whose caucus you are participating in. You can register the night of the caucus – be sure to arrive early with a valid photo ID and proof of residence.

Iowa Public Radio and the Midwest Newsroom collaborate on a podcast about the Iowa caucuses at <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/caucus-land/id1466305624>

Democratic Caucus

Do you want to vote for the Democratic Party presidential nominee? The Democratic caucus will be held on January 15, 2024, at 7 p.m. in each precinct, but the selection of the Democratic nominee will not be done that evening. Important party business will be done that night. Attendees will elect unpledged county convention delegates, committee members, and discuss platform issues.

The process for choosing the Democratic nominee for president will be quite different this year; the nominee will no longer be chosen at precinct caucuses. Instead, registered Democrats will request a presidential preference card from the Iowa Democratic Party. The card will be

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mailed to the voter, who will select their preference for the presidential nominee, and mail it back. The Iowa Democratic Party will announce the results of the mail-in vote on March 5. Delegates to the congressional district, state, and national conventions will be allocated based on the results of the mail-in vote.

You can request your presidential preference card anytime between now and February 19. Use this link, [Presidential Preference Card](#) to request your card. You can fill out your request online or ask that a paper request form be mailed to you. Ballots will begin to be sent out by February 12 and must be returned (or postmarked) by March 5. If you need help, you can call the helpline at 515-216-3893.

To view the locations of the Democratic Caucus, visit this link: <https://johnsoncountyiowa.gov/sites/default/files/Elections/2024DemCaucusSites.pdf>

For more information regarding the Democratic Caucus, visit this link: <https://iowademocrats.org/caucus/>

Republican Caucus

Do you want to help select the Republican Party presidential nominee? Then you need to

attend the Republican caucus. The Republican caucus will operate in the same way it has in previous years and will take place on January 15, 2024, at 7 p.m. at individual precinct locations in all 99 counties of Iowa. A straw poll is conducted for President by secret ballot. There is no absentee voting, you must attend the caucus in order to vote.

Use this link to view the Republican Caucus locations: https://www.iowagop.org/2024_caucus_locations#Johnson

For any more information about the Republican Caucus, visit this link: <https://www.iowagop.org/2024caucus>

Libertarian Caucus

Do you want to vote for the Libertarian Presidential Nominee? The Libertarians earned full party status in the 2022 election and will hold a caucus in 2024. Their caucus for Johnson County will take place on January 15th from 6:30 – 8 p.m. at the Coralville Public Library.

For more information regarding the Libertarian Caucus, visit this link: <https://lpia.org/event/caucus2024-2024-01/>

Jeanne Bancroft

Recognition

The Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics at Iowa State University is pleased to announce that Dr. Deborah Turner, president of the League of Women Voters of the United States, will be the 2024 Mary Louise Smith Chair in Women and Politics. Dr. Turner will present *Visionary Activism: How To Get From Here to There* on Tuesday February 13, 2024, at 7 p.m. in the Great Hall of the Memorial Union at Iowa State University. A reception will follow her presentation. Both events are free and open to the public.

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.

Photo Gallery

Scenes from the December Membership Luncheon



Above: LWVJC Advocacy Chair Shannon Patrick emcees the Legislative forum with Johnson County legislators, left to right Rep. Elinor Levin, Sen. Janice Weiner, Rep. Adam Zabner, and Rep. Dave Jacoby.

Below: Over 50 people attended the luncheon at the Radisson Hotel in Coralville.





Above: LWVJC Member Kathleen Kamerick provided a summary of the LWVIA state study on *Bringing Economic Justice to the Justice System*, and the LWVJC committee actions to review the study.

Below: LWVJC Co-Presidents Miriam Timmer-Hackert and Paula Vaughn, along with member Susie Corbin-Muir, checking in people as they arrived and managing the silent auction.



LEAGUE LECTURE SERIES

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF JOHNSON COUNTY, IOWA

**HOUSE FILE 68:
CHALLENGES AND CHANGES
FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**MATT DEGNER
SUPERINTENDENT OF ICCSD**

**THURSDAY JANUARY 25
6:30-8:00 P.M.
IOWA CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY
MEETING ROOM A**

**CO-SPONSORED BY TRAIL OF JOHNSON COUNTY, IOWA CITY EDUCATION
ASSOCIATION, IOWA CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY & LWVJC**

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF IOWA

2024 Public Policy Priorities

★ VOTING

Promote equal access to voting and ensure all votes are counted. Adopt automatic voter registration. Enact ranked choice voting. Pass a constitutional amendment allowing Iowans with felony convictions to vote after time served.

🏛️ TRANSPARENCY & CITIZENSHIP

Demand government accountability and transparency by requiring all amendments and bills discussed in committee to be available to the public prior to a vote. Demand timely processing of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. Encourage direct citizen participation by continuing virtual committee and subcommittee meetings. Preserve gender balance requirements for state boards and commissions.

🎓 EDUCATION

Increase oversight and track public funds being used for non-public schools. Require any non-public school receiving public funds to meet the same standards as public schools. Fully fund public schools. Continue to expand access to affordable childcare and four-year-old preschool.

👩‍⚕️ REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Guarantee access to the full range of women's reproductive health services. Make contraception available without prescription. Ensure Medicaid services are comprehensive and accessible. Support new moms with 12 months of postpartum Medicaid coverage. Set policies that attract maternal health professionals and address the state's OB/GYN deserts.

👤 HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Prevent human trafficking in all of its forms, support its victims, and enact "Safe Harbor" legislation to protect human trafficking survivors from criminal prosecution.

💧 ENVIRONMENT

Increase funding for environment and water quality initiatives, including REAP, and develop state climate change strategies.

🔫 GUN SAFETY

Enact comprehensive common sense gun safety legislation to address increasing gun violence in the state. Enact background checks on all gun sales, close gun show loopholes, require gun safety locks, repeal "stand your ground" law, and resist efforts that expand carrying in public spaces and schools.



Calendar of Events

Date	Time	Location	Program
Saturday, January 6	10 a.m. - Noon	Coralville Public Library	Film, <i>No Time to Fail</i> + Q&A with Johnson County auditor officials
Monday, January 8	6:30-8 p.m.	virtual	Board meeting
Monday, January 8			2024 Iowa General Assembly opening session
Wednesday, January 10	10 a.m.	Poindexter Coffee, Graduate Hotel, Iowa City	Casual Coffee
Monday, January 15		See Iowa GOP, Democrats, and Libertarian websites for locations	Republican, Democrat, and Libertarian in-person caucuses
Sunday, January 21	2 p.m.	James Theatre, Iowa City	One woman Play: <i>What the Constitution Means to Me</i>
Monday, January 22	6:30-8 p.m.	FilmScene, Iowa City	Panel Discussion and showing of <i>Erin Brockovich</i>
Thursday, January 25	6:30-8 p.m.	Iowa City Public Library	<i>House File 68: Challenges & Changes for Public Schools</i> with Matt Degner
Saturday, January 27	9:30-11:30 a.m.	Senior Center Assembly Room, Iowa City	Legislative Forum: Education
Monday, February 12	6:30-8 p.m.	virtual	Board meeting
Tuesday February 13	7 p.m.	Memorial Union, Iowa State University	<i>Visionary Activism: How to Get from Here to There</i> , Dr Deborah Turner, LWV President and Mary Louise Smith Chair in Women and Politics
Wednesday, February 14	10 am	Poindexter Coffee, Graduate Hotel, Iowa City	Casual Coffee
Thursday, February 15	5:30-7 p.m.	Jeanne Bancroft's home, 2190 Port Talbot PL, Coralville	Making Connections: Bringing Economic Justice to the Criminal Justice System
Saturday, February 24	9:30-11:30 am	Senior Center Assembly Room, Iowa City	Legislative Forum: Healthcare
Saturday, March 30	9:30-11:30 am	Senior Center Assembly Room, Iowa City	Legislative Forum: Public Safety
Thursday, April 11	4 - 7 p.m.	Jasper Winery, Des Moines	Annual LWVIA Defending Democracy event. Save the Date - Details soon
Wednesday, April 17	6:30 - 8 p.m.	Iowa City Public Library	Connie Mutel: <i>Iowa, the Beautiful Land: Envisioning an Action Agenda for Nature and Agriculture</i>