



 Mass Cultural Council This program is supported in part by a grant from the Hamilton Wenham Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency. For more information, visit [massculturalcouncil.org](http://massculturalcouncil.org).

**CIVICS 101**  
**GET ENGAGED!**  
**STRATEGIES AT THE FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL LEVEL**

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF HAMILTON-WENHAM  
2023-2024 Speaker Series  
September 28, 2023  
Hamilton-Wenham Library

# League of Women Voters – National and State

## League of Women Voters of the United States (National League)

a nonpartisan grassroots network and membership organization - advances the belief that **civic information** and **involvement** are key to a healthy democracy

Empowering Voters – Defending Democracy



## League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (State League)

### Voter Service / Citizen Education

- Provide impartial, nonpartisan information

### Action / Advocacy

- Advocates for or against particular policies on areas of public interest which the State League has studied and adopted a position in the public interest

# League of Women Voters of Hamilton Wenham

## Mission Statement:

Established in 1959, our local League has been a positive force in our two towns – a nonpartisan political organization encouraging informed and active participation of local citizens in their government. We work to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influence public policy through voter education and advocacy.

## **Activity Highlights - LWVHW:**

- Newsletter / Follow us on Facebook!
- Civics Bee
- Volunteer Fair
- Guide to Running for Office Hamilton & Wenham
- Voting Information
- Candidates Night

# League of Women Voters of Hamilton Wenham

## Speaker Series (New for 2023-2024):

This new program is intended to address topics that affect the community and to advance the League's mission: **"to promote and protect voting rights and educate voters"**

### ❖ **Civics 101**

➤ September 28, 2023

### ❖ **Local Print Journalism as a Cornerstone of Democracy**

➤ October 19, 2023

### ❖ **Sustainability**

➤ November 16, 2023

### ❖ **Affordable Housing**

➤ January 18, 2024

### ❖ **Media Literacy**

➤ February 15, 2024

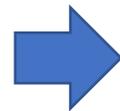
### ❖ **Water Resources & Conservation**

➤ March 28, 2024

# What is Civic Engagement?

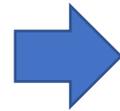
Working to make a difference in the civic life of one's community

**LEARN**



Know how Government works

**BE INFORMED**



Find ways to get reliable information

**GET ENGAGED**



Take action, get your voice heard

# Indicators of Civic Engagement\*\*

## Civic Indicators

- Community problem solving
- Regular volunteering for non-electoral organization
- Active membership in a group or association
- Participation in fund-raising run/walk/ride
- Other fund raising for charity

## Electoral Indicators

- Regular voting
- Persuading others
- Campaign contributions
- Volunteering for candidate or political organization

## Political Voice Indicators

- Contacting officials
- Contacting media / Opinion piece
- Protesting
- Petitions (email or written)
- Canvassing
- Boycotting

\*\* The Civic and Political Health of the Nation: A Generational Portrait (Link to source material in Appendix)  
(funding provided by Pew Charitable Trust)

# Levels of Government (Federal, State and Local)

## Federal

- Produces currency, regulates taxes, establishes federal welfare programs and foreign policy
- Oversees defense of the country and makes laws that affect the nation as a whole
- Ensures cooperation of state and local governments by providing funds to operate federal programs

## State

- All powers not granted to Federal Government are reserved for the States (10<sup>th</sup> Amendment to Constitution)
- Oversees the affairs within state borders
- Raises income taxes and oversees state welfare programs
- Control the state criminal code, maintains state roads and carries out federal programs at the state level

## Local

- States are divided into areas which carry out state laws within a specific geographic location
- Cities, towns and counties are granted specific powers by the state
- Local government responsibilities include managing public services, such as parks, libraries, schools, police and fire services

# Federal Government Structure

The US Constitution divides Federal Government into three branches:

## Executive Branch

- President, Vice President and the Cabinet – and various departments and agencies
- Responsible for enforcing the laws of the land

## Legislative Branch

- Congress (Senate and House of Representatives) and the agencies and offices that provide support services to Congress
- Makes all laws, declares war, regulates interstate and foreign commerce and taxing and spending policies

## Judicial Branch

- US Supreme Court and the Federal Judiciary
- Interprets Laws

# U.S. Government Information Resource

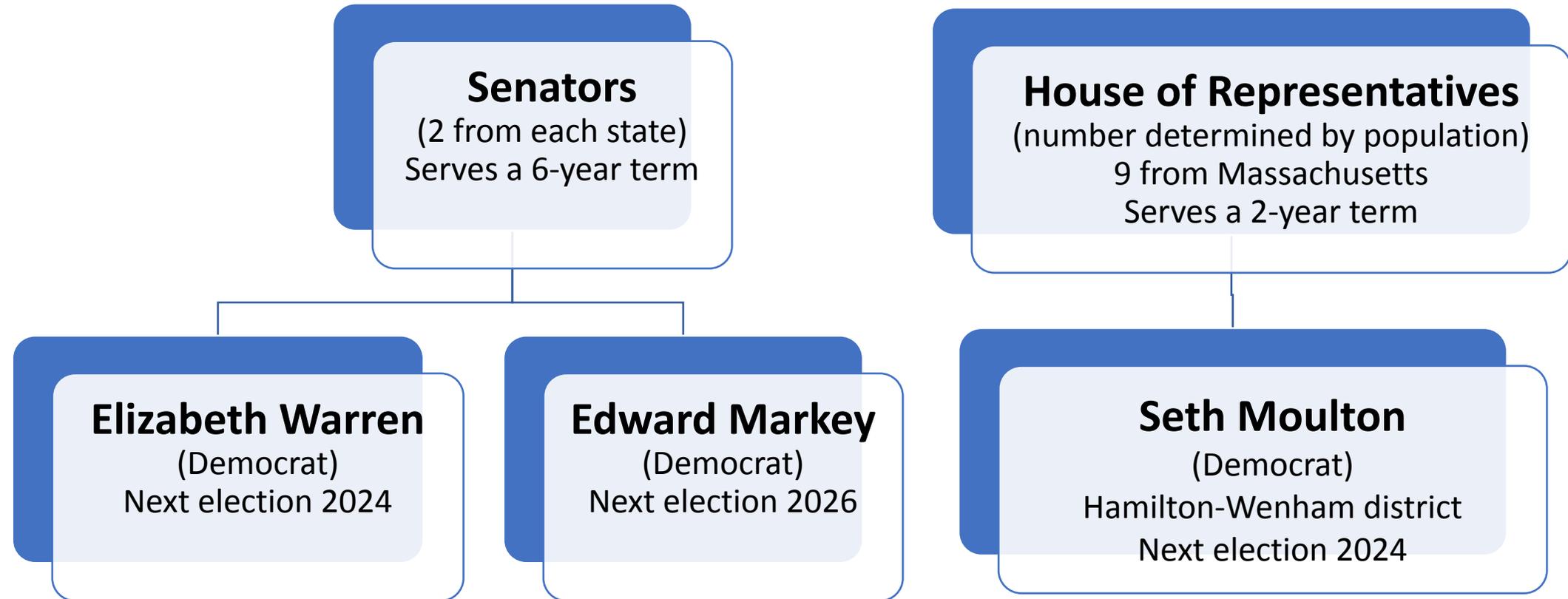
Official Website of the U.S. Government: [USA.gov](https://www.usa.gov)

**Mission:** *To make it easier for people to find and understand the government services and information they need – anytime, anywhere, any way they want*

## **Information Available:**

- Locate and understand government benefits, programs and information
- Learn about the US government and your elected officials
- File a complaint involving a federal government agency
- Disability Services
- Disasters and Emergencies
- Education – Federal Student Aid
- Jobs, Labor Laws, and Unemployment
- Scams and Fraud – how to report identity theft

# Federal Government - Massachusetts Elected Officials



# Constituent Services

**Constituent Services:** non-legislative activities provided by Members of Congress (may vary by member office):

- Federal Agency Assistance
- Federal Grant Information and Assistance
- Opportunities for Students: Internships
- US Service Academy Nominations (US Military Academy, US Naval Academy, US Air Force Academy, or US Merchant Marine Academy)
- Community Project Funding
- Assisting with Washington D.C. visits – US Capitol Tours, Capitol Visitor Center, White House Tours and Other Sites
- Commemorations and Recognitions
- Flag Requests – to obtain a US flag flown over the Capitol – for purchase

# Electing the President; the Electoral College

**The Electoral College** – decides who will be elected president and vice president

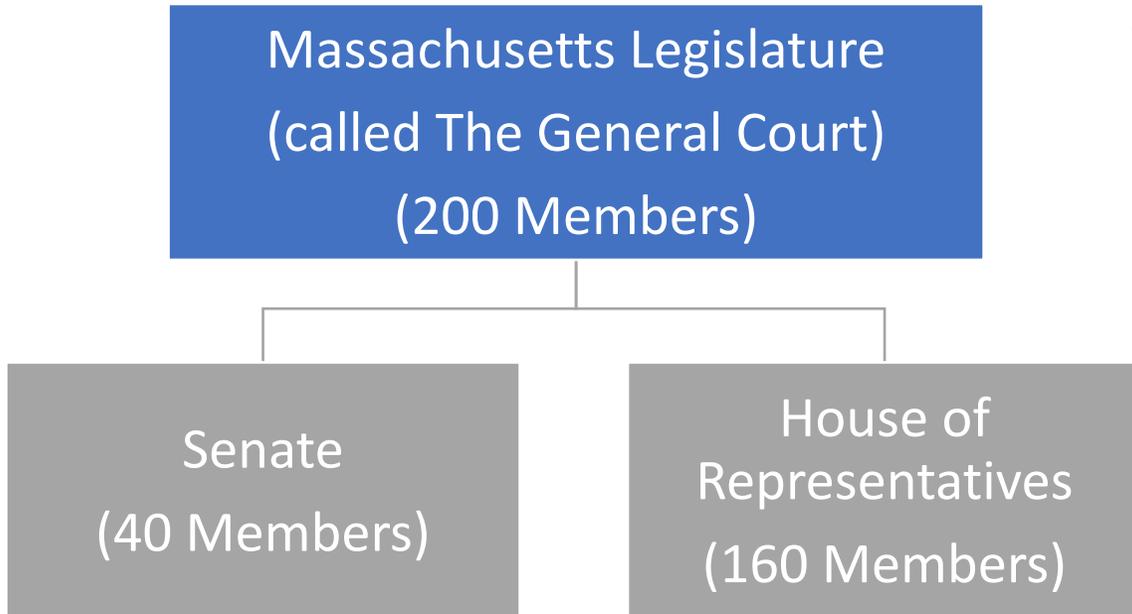
- Each state gets as many electors as it has members in Congress (Senate and House of Representatives)
- Each state's political parties choose their own slate of potential electors
- In Massachusetts – voters chose electors to represent them in the Electoral College via popular vote of the Candidate running for President/VP
- Massachusetts has 11 electoral votes in the Electoral College

# Engagement at the Federal Level

***Learn! Be Informed! Get Engaged!***

- Understand the Government Process
- Learn the Issues / Position of Your Representatives
- Contact Your Elected Officials
- Volunteer / Campaign
- Vote!
- Volunteer to be a Poll Worker

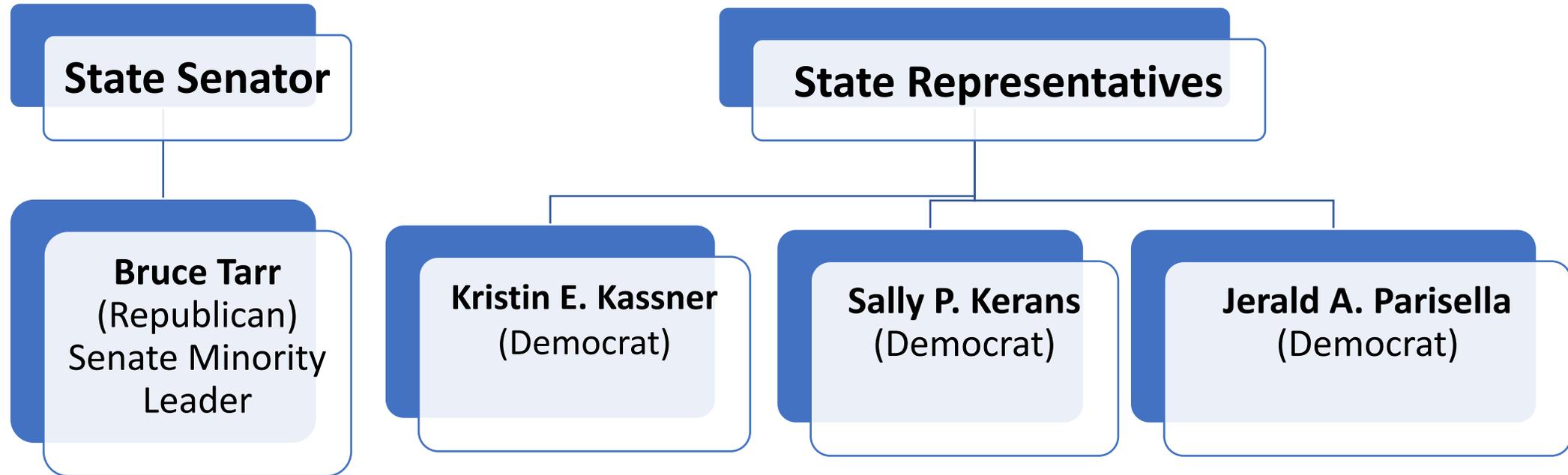
# Massachusetts State Government



## What does the Massachusetts Legislature do?

- Discuss and vote on proposed laws
- Approve State budget
- Establish the courts
- Oversight over State Agencies
- Can override governor's veto with 2/3 vote
- Legislators provide constituent services and support the cities and towns in their district

# Massachusetts State Legislature



# Engagement at the State Level

- **Citizen's Legislative Seminar**

citizen program designed to better educate the public on the functions of the Massachusetts State Legislature – 2-day program offered twice a year (Spring and Fall)

- Includes a simulated legislative hearing and a simulated Senate Session held in the Senate Chamber

- To attend – need to contact your state Senator  Bruce Tarr

- **Volunteer**

- **Contact your State Senator/Representative on issues**

**GET ENGAGED!**

## Resources at the State Level

### **MyLegislature** (visit [www.MALegislature.gov](http://www.MALegislature.gov) to create an account)

Platform created by the Massachusetts Legislature to provide constituents with access to information. Some of the features include:

- Follow a bill or hearing for easy access to details
- Allows you to get notified of scheduling changes for hearings
- Follow your legislators, follow their bills and committee memberships
- Get suggestions on what bills could be relevant to you based on your interest

**Be Informed!**

# Hamilton and Wenham Town Government

## SELECT BOARD

- The Board acts as the chief policy making body of the Town and directly supervises the activities of the Town Manager.
- May employ town administrators, including a town manager, to oversee the day-to-day business of the town
- Town Manager is responsible for supervising the day-to-day operation of all town departments falling under the direct control of the Select Board.
- Meetings are open to the public (some exceptions for sensitive matters)/ recorded by HWCAM

## TOWN MEETING (carryover from colonial period)

- The annual Town Meeting makes rules, adopts budgets, adopts bylaws and does a town's business
- Every voter in town may participate
- Agenda is called a warrant, and the elected town moderator conducts the Town Meeting
- Review the Citizen Guide to Town Meeting (link in Resource Appendix)

# Hamilton and Wenham Town Government

## BOARDS/COMMITTEES/COMMISSIONS

- Information can be found on the Town Website

## Committee and Board Openings

- Any resident of the town may apply to join a Town Committee
- Openings are posted on the Town website and announced at Select Board meetings
- Application information and deadlines – Town website
- Board and Committee Handbook
  - Town of Hamilton Handbook

**GET ENGAGED! CONSIDER RUNNING FOR OFFICE**

# Making an Impact by Voting

[Election Management](#) – Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts - William Francis Galvin

## Voter Information:

- Register to Vote or Update Voter Information
- Upcoming Elections
- Information on Voting by Mail, Absentee Voting
- Track My Mail-In Ballot
- Provisional Ballots
- Military & Overseas Voters

## Candidates & Petitioners Information:

- How to Run
- Guide to State Ballot Question Petitions
- Election Recounts

## Election Results and Statistics

# Making an Impact by Voting

**VOTE411.org:** Launched by League of Women Voters Education Fund as a “one-stop-shop” for election related information. Provides nonpartisan information to the public with both general and state specific information:

- Absentee ballot information
- Ballot measure information (where applicable)
- Early voting options (where applicable)
- Election dates
- Factual data on candidates in various federal, state and local races
- General information on such topics as to how to watch debates with a critical eye
- ID requirements
- Polling place locations
- Registration deadlines
- Voter qualifications
- Voter registration forms
- Voting machines

# Massachusetts – Making an Impact by Voting

## Voters' Bill of Rights

- Jointly signed by the Secretary of the Commonwealth William F. Galvin and the President of the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts – to establish clear voting rights available to all qualified registered voters in Massachusetts

Lists rights of all Massachusetts voters – including:

- Right to vote in privacy
- Right to cast a provisional ballot if you are not on the voters' list
- Right to a replacement ballot if an error is made while marking a ballot

**Be Informed: Review the Voters' Bill of Rights and know your rights!**

# Making an Impact by Voting

Election Administration - handled at the Town Level

Hamilton

Town Clerk

Carin Kale

[ckale@hamiltonma.gov](mailto:ckale@hamiltonma.gov)

[www.hamiltonma.gov](http://www.hamiltonma.gov)

Wenham

Town Clerk

Kirsten Alexander

[townclerk@wenhamma.gov](mailto:townclerk@wenhamma.gov)

[www.wenhamma.gov](http://www.wenhamma.gov)

- Check you voting status / location
- Update your voter registration
- Help others register to vote – Get out the Vote Campaigns
- Volunteer as a poll worker in your town
- Know voting deadlines – to register, vote by absentee ballot, early voting, election day

***GET ENGAGED***

# Engagement at the Local Level

Get Engaged at the Local Level:

## ➤ **LEARN**

- Learn more about our Town Government and its Boards and Committees

## ➤ **BE INFORMED**

- Attend Select Board Meetings
- Review meeting minutes that are posted on the Town Website

## ➤ **GET ENGAGED**

- Voice your opinion at Meetings
- Run for an Open Position

# **Special Thanks!**

## **Our Speaker – Nick Ristaino**

### **History Teacher: Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School**

Nicholas Ristaino is a history teacher at Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School. He has held this position since 2007. In that time, he has sat on the School Council, advised Student Government, chaperoned numerous trips overseas, spent 8 years as the JV boys' lacrosse coach, and is currently the president of the Hamilton-Wenham Regional Education Association. He resides in his hometown of Portsmouth, NH with his wife, his favorite hobbies are reading and keeping up to date on the latest policy proposals at the federal, state, and local levels!

## **Hamilton-Wenham Public Library**



## **Hamilton Wenham Cultural Council**

 **Mass Cultural Council** This program is supported in part by a grant from the Hamilton Wenham Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency. For more information, visit [massculturalcouncil.org](http://massculturalcouncil.org).

# Appendix – Contact Information

- League of Women Voters of Hamilton-Wenham: [LeagueHW@gmail.com](mailto:LeagueHW@gmail.com)
- US Senator – Elizabeth A. Warren (online form): <https://www.warren.senate.gov/contact/shareyouropinion>
- US Senator – Edward Markey (online form): <https://www.markey.senate.gov/contact/share-your-opinion>
- US Representative – Seth Moulton (online form):  
[https://moulton.house.gov/address\\_authentication?form=/contact/write-to-me/write-to-me-form](https://moulton.house.gov/address_authentication?form=/contact/write-to-me/write-to-me-form)
- MA Senator - Bruce Tarr: [Bruce.Tarr@masenate.gov](mailto:Bruce.Tarr@masenate.gov)
- MA Representative - Kristin Kassner: [Kristin.Kassner@mahouse.gov](mailto:Kristin.Kassner@mahouse.gov)
- MA Representative - Jerry Parisella: [Jerald.Parisella@mahouse.gov](mailto:Jerald.Parisella@mahouse.gov)
- MA Representative - Sally Kerans: [Sally.Kerans@mahouse.gov](mailto:Sally.Kerans@mahouse.gov)
- Hamilton Town Clerk – Carin Kale, [ckale@hamiltonma.gov](mailto:ckale@hamiltonma.gov)
- Wenham Town Clerk, Kirsten Alexander, [townclerk@wenhamma.gov](mailto:townclerk@wenhamma.gov)

# Appendix: Additional Resources

## League of Women Voters

- National – <https://www.lwv.org>
- Massachusetts - <https://lwvma.org>
  - The Citizen Lobbyist Handbook: information and tools to become a citizen lobbyist.  
<https://lwvma.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Citizen-Lobbyist-LWVMA.FINAL.pdf>
- Hamilton-Wenham - <https://my.lwv.org/massachusetts/hamilton-wenham>
  - Guide to Running for Office Hamilton & Wenham  
<https://my.lwv.org/massachusetts/hamilton-wenham/thinking-running-office>

## Federal Government Information

- WH.GOV - <https://www.whitehouse.gov>
- USAGOV - <https://www.usa.gov/about>  
Official website of the U.S. Government –
- Senate:: <https://www.senate.gov>
- House of Representatives: <https://www.house.gov>
  - Can watch live proceedings: using “live.house.gov”

# Appendix: Additional Resources

## Commonwealth of Massachusetts

- Official Website of Commonwealth of Massachusetts with information on organizations, offices, and state entities: <https://www.mass.gov/massgov-site-policies>
- Massachusetts Legislature: <https://malegislature.gov>
  - Sign up for MyLegislature Account: <https://malegislature.gov/MyLegislature/About>
  - Citizen Information Service: <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/divisions/cis/citizen-information-service.htm>

## Town of Hamilton

- Town of Hamilton: <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>
- Town of Hamilton Handbook for Members of Town Committees, Boards, Commissions  
[https://www.hamiltonma.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/2023\\_06-Board-Committee-Handbook.pdf](https://www.hamiltonma.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/2023_06-Board-Committee-Handbook.pdf)

## Town of Wenham

- Town of Wenham: <https://www.wenhamma.gov>

## Additional Resources

- Citizen's Guide to Town Meetings: [https://www.sec.state.ma.us/cis/cispdf/Guide\\_to\\_Town\\_Meetings.pdf](https://www.sec.state.ma.us/cis/cispdf/Guide_to_Town_Meetings.pdf)
- The Civic and Political Health of the Nation: A Generational Portrait:  
[https://circle.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/2020-02/civic\\_political\\_health\\_nation\\_2002.pdf](https://circle.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/2020-02/civic_political_health_nation_2002.pdf)

# Additional Resources

## Election Information

- Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts – Election Division  
<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/divisions/elections/elections-and-voting.htm>
- Update Voter Registration: <http://www.registertovotema.com>
- Massachusetts Voters' Bill of Rights:  
<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/divisions/elections/publications/voters-bill-of-rights.htm>
- U.S. Voting and Election Resources - <https://www.archives.gov/electoral-college/links>
- Electoral College: <https://www.archives.gov/electoral-college>
- The Electoral College and Massachusetts Law:  
<https://www.mass.gov/news/the-electoral-college-and-massachusetts-law>
- VOTE411.org: <https://www.vote411.org>