



League of Women Voters[®] of Falmouth Bulletin

March 2025

Steering Committee Report

There is an old curse, “May you live in interesting times,” that we seem to be inhabiting today. The social safety network created over decades by bipartisan cooperation is being dismantled in the name of efficiency to create tax breaks for the rich. The agencies being targeted are often those that regulate the wealthy and their industries. It sometimes seems as if the motivation for these moves can only be to make life harder and more uncertain for the maximum number of individuals.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs and the rights of women are particular targets. There are still people who see these changes as positive, but it is hard to imagine they will continue to think so over the next few years as food, energy, housing, and medical costs continue to increase and consumer and personal protections erode. Many states are limiting what may be taught in schools or included in libraries, favoring a less critical/informed electorate. Much will depend on independent media coverage, another institution hanging by a thread.

Are these sentences I’ve just written partisan? Many will think so. The League mission is to see that all who are eligible and desire to vote may do so. Fewer than two-thirds of

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registered voters chose to vote in the last national election. We need to figure out why those others chose not to vote and how to get them out in the next election. Another aspect of the League mission is to educate the electorate on the issues. This will likely be seen as partisan by many who do not share our values. So be it; I’m not sure we would ever be seen as non-partisan by those whose values are so different. Diversity, inclusion, equality, belonging, and equal rights for women are wonderful things to which we aspire, not programs to be destroyed.

— ***Richard Johnson***
Steering Committee

Member News



In Memoriam

Sue Gnospelius

December 26, 1939–March 8, 2025

Economic Blackouts

In response to the rollback of DEI initiatives by many companies, the LVWUS participated in an “economic blackout” on February 28. The League of Women voters of Colorado explained on its website as follows:

“Economic justice requires action, and collective spending power is one of the most effective tools for change.

“From March through May, targeted economic blackouts will challenge major corporations to address issues of equity, labor practices, and corporate responsibility.”

If you wish to participate in additional planned blackouts to show your support for ethical and inclusive business practices, the list of planned dates is below.



In Memoriam

Peter Collom

March 31, 1939 –February 11, 2025

ECONOMIC BLACKOUT TOUR:

February 28th
Economic Blackout

April 21 - 28
General Mills Boycott

March 7 - 14
Amazon Boycott

May 6 - 12
Amazon Boycott 2

March 21 - 28
Nestle Boycott

May 20 - 26
Walmart Boycott 2

April 7 - 14
Walmart Boycott

June 3 - 9
Target Boycott

April 18th
Economic Blackout 2

June 24th - 30
McDonalds Boycott

July 4th
Independence Day Boycott

Civics Observations in Falmouth Classes

Every school year, Bob Haskell and I meet a few times with Michael Feeney, Social Studies Department Chair at the High School. Mr. Feeney has been exceptionally busy this year filling in for teachers in the classroom, but we were fortunate to have some time with him on a day when he was between in-class assignments.

Each year we at the Falmouth League offer to visit Falmouth High classrooms when the sophomores present their civics projects. Under Massachusetts law, all Massachusetts High School students must complete a civics project, which involves thinking of a social problem that is of interest and working toward a solution. Here in Falmouth, when the projects are completed the students make in-class presentations. For each set of presentations, one or two members of the Falmouth League have the good fortune to attend a class and serve as an audience. I believe that our visits encourage the students and stress the importance of their work. Classes at Falmouth High School start early so these sessions may be in the early morning or in the afternoon or sometime in-between.

This spring, there will be 10 classes that Falmouth League members can visit as part of our Civics project. We cannot have more than two members observing a presentation in the classroom. Therefore, we have 20 potential slots.

We expect that the presentations will take place April 14-17, with possible additional presentations on April 28 and 29, after spring break. We may not know the actual dates until almost the last minute; I will check with Mike Feeney about class times and the specific days of the week they occur. When we get a schedule of presentations, we will email it to Falmouth League members and provide a way to sign up to attend one or more presentations. Attending a session is a rewarding experience, and it is nice to be able to promote civic engagement within this population of future voters.

If you think you might like to attend a presentation, please use this link to download a CO-RI form giving you clearance to be present in a classroom: https://falmouthvips.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/cori_form_2015_final.pdf.

You can fill it out ahead of time and then bring it to any one of the Falmouth schools along with a picture ID. You can also just go to a school, pick up a CORI form, and fill it out right there. Be sure to allow enough time before the observation to have the form processed.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone at 508-548-1339 or email at judith_ziss@comcast.net.

— **Judy Ziss**
Civics Committee

**The Falmouth Annual Town Meeting will be held starting at 7 p.m.
on Monday, April 7, in the Lawrence School Auditorium.**

Natural Resources

At the invitation of LINKCapeCod, a non-profit group whose purpose is to link indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge, Sherri Mitchell spoke on “The Rights of Nature,” March 1, at Mashpee High School. Sherri is an attorney specializing in indigenous people legal issues, an activist, and the author of “Sacred Instructions,” from which much of her message was taken. She is Penobscot and is the founding Director of the Land Peace Foundation, an organization dedicated to the preservation of Indigenous rights and the protection of the Indigenous way of life.

Sherri began by reminding the audience that indigenous people’s world view is that they are a part of the natural world and intricately linked with place, soil, water, and other life forms. For centuries, indigenous cultures nurtured their relationship with specific places and ecosystems, harvesting plants and animals needed to survive, but never in amounts that would damage or destroy the communities of non-human beings existing in that place. The western world view is more often imbalanced, considering the natural features/species of a place as resources to be exploited for the dominant culture’s benefit without regard to destruction of place and indigenous animal and plant life: it is a culture of colonization. Sherri observed that the land areas of the world still in indigenous people’s control are the healthiest ecosystems in existence.

A central concept is that of “rematriation” as

an antidote to colonization, restoring one’s reciprocal relationship with place and non-human organisms. This involves responsibility toward the land; respect for all living beings and one another; relationship and balance rather than control; reciprocity; reparations to correct past harm; redistribution to rebuild foundational relationships and a return to kinship with our environment and fellow creatures. This requires emotional intelligence and heart-based knowledge, not just scientific knowledge. It also requires time to consider deeply and act with long-term intent to create a more ideal and sustainable world.

The audience was very engaged, and a lively question and answer period followed. Part of that discussion involved the need to accept and understand that we each have masculine and feminine qualities that are essential for heart-based understanding. The value of shared storytelling to pass on moral and correct values across generations was discussed. There was also discussion of evil and how best to react to it by preventing harm while realizing that perpetrators of evil are wounded and in need of care, not just condemnation.

More information is available at LINKCapeCod.org, Sacredinstructions.life, and landpeacefoundation.org.

— ***Richard Johnson***
and Denise Morreale

Natural Resources Committee

Meet Your Legislators

On the evening of March 11, more than 50 local residents gathered in the Hermann Room of the Falmouth Main Library to meet their legislators face to face. State Senator Dylan Fernandes and State Representative Thomas Moakley were both present; unfortunately, State Representative David Vieira was unable to come. The meeting was the result of extensive planning by members of the legislative committee,

including Margaret Cooper, Kerry Walton, Helen Bresnahan, Colleen Cunningham, and committee chair Judith Ziss



Judy Ziss, chair of the legislative committee, kept the meeting running smoothly.

The meeting was in three sections.

During the first section, the legislators were asked five questions generated by the committee. The first was if they support continuing hybrid meetings. Both legislators agreed, pointing out that hybrid meetings not only helped voters participate during the Covid pandemic, but also allowed the elderly and those with disability to participate more fully.

A second question also brought agreement, about the need for guardrails for the ever-increasing use of facial recognition technology, by police and other law enforcement.

Sen. Fernandes and Rep. Moakley responded to a question about a Death with Dignity bill to say that no one should be forced to suffer at the end of life. Both have had personal experience with people in this position and they felt strongly that Massachusetts should join other states to allow a terminally ill person to choose a peaceful death.

The Safe Communities Act was another area of agreement. This bill protects immigrant communities in the courts, requires written consent for questioning, and protects state and municipal law enforcement from being required to support

federal law enforcement, especially ICE. Rep. Moakley also mentioned another bill which would provide legal representation for immigrants during court proceedings if they were unable to pay for a lawyer.



Rep. Thomas Moakley is serving his first term as representative for Barnstable, Dukes, and Nantucket.

A fifth question was open-ended: What issue before the legislature do you want to address? Rep. Moakley mentioned the state budget, with particular attention to understaffed court systems. As a former Assistant District Attorney, he also argued that

Continued on next page

Meet Your Legislators, cont.

courts should be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act and should have a safe waiting space for victims and witnesses.



Former State Representative Dylan Fernandes is now a State Senator and chair of the Agriculture and Fisheries Committee.

Sen. Fernandes was interested in transportation. He expressed his desire to bring a train to Cape Cod which would connect a train line from Buzzards Bay to the South Coast Rail in Middleborough. He also discussed the problems of funding for the replacement of the two Cape Cod bridges, since the funding for even the Sagamore Bridge is not yet in Massachusetts.

For the second part of the program, each legislator had five minutes to speak. Both urged constituents to get in touch over issues important to them. Both were concerned with the need for affordable housing on the Cape.

Sen. Fernandes added that supporting health care was very important and pointed to the preservation of the Pocasset Mental Health facility as a success. As a member of the committee on agriculture and fisheries, he was also concerned with the vulnerability of our communities to climate change.

They pointed out that over seven thousand bills have been filed in the legislature so far!

The third part of the program was an opportunity for audience members to ask questions of their own. Questions concerned the following topics:

- How can Massachusetts protect the rights of LGBTQ+ citizens who feel under attack from the federal government?
- A bill to eliminate nonmedical exemptions from vaccines
- The skyrocketing cost of utility bills
- The issue of auditing the legislature
- Commuter parking near the bridges
- the Rail Trail
- Declining population in Massachusetts; encouraging immigration to compensate for the declining birth rate
- The disposal of the nuclear waste from Plymouth.
- Efforts to prevent recidivism in our local

Editor's Note: If you were unable to attend, you can view the meeting on FCTV. Find times at <https://fctv.org/watch>. You can also view it on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7hNprpmeek>.

Contact information for all our local Massachusetts legislators can be found on page 10 of this Bulletin. Rep. Moakley mentioned that he has an additional website for his constituents at <https://www.thomasmoakley.com>. The legislators repeatedly expressed a desire to hear from their constituents.

Light for Our Democracy

In response to President Trump’s address to Congress, the League of Women Voters of the United States CEO Celina Stewart called upon the Leagues throughout the country to demonstrate support for democracy. Read her words below:

“As an organization committed to empowering voters and defending democracy, the League is outraged by the current administration’s assault on the American people. This is why instead, the League of Women Voters, in solidarity with our partners, took action last night to bring Americans together. The League and our partners hosted 79 pro-democracy events at state capitols, city halls, and town halls to embody hope in action, demonstrate faith in justice, and show the power of our collective voices, in actions called Light for Our Democracy.”

On March 4, Janet Lauer led a group of 65 Falmouth residents in a “Light for Our Democracy” gathering at the Falmouth Library. Participants brought lights—flashlights, battery-operated candles, and cell phones—

to show their support. We were one of seven Leagues in Massachusetts to host such an event. Here is the agenda that the Falmouth group followed:

Opening Remarks

Tonight hundreds of people are gathering at this moment in Washington D.C., state capitols, cities, and towns across America to protest the agenda of this administration. We are here to shed a light on Democracy because we love our country.

Pledge of Allegiance

We will begin with a pledge of allegiance to the flag. But first a few words about this. We are not pledging allegiance to a person or president. We are pledging to those 50 stars representing the United States of America. We are stronger together and everyone should be treated fairly and equal. Please join me in reciting the “Pledge of Allegiance.”

Continued on next page



Light for Our Democracy, cont.

(All recite the pledge.)

America the Beautiful

In 1893, former resident of Falmouth, Katharine Lee Bates, at the age of 33, penned the poem, "America the Beautiful," which was later set to music. We honor her memory here in Falmouth.

(All sing "America the Beautiful")

Oath of office to defend the Constitution

The oath to the Constitution is a pledge to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. It is taken by government officials, immigrants becoming citizens, and members of the military. The President took this oath on inauguration day.

All recite: I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God.

One minute of silence at 9 p.m.

Save the Date

Film viewing and Discussion:
Harlem Rising:
A Community Changing the Odds
April 19, 2 p.m.

Candidates Night
Wednesday, April 30, 7 p.m.

LWVF Annual Meeting
Saturday, May 17, 9:30 a.m.

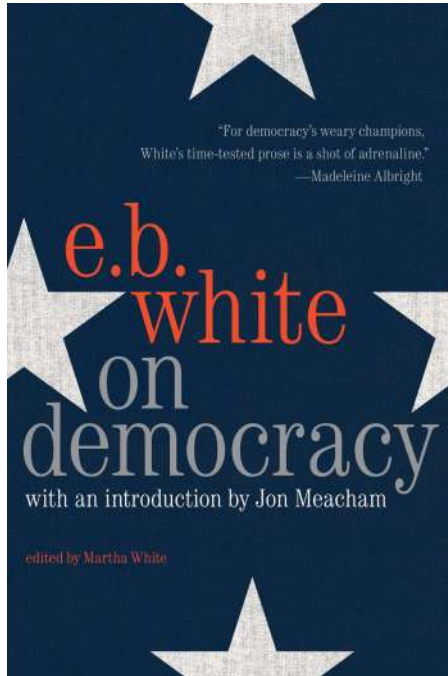
NEEDED: New Videographers

The League of Women Voters Falmouth is a member of Falmouth Community Television (FCTV), and we are looking for interested League members to learn to film, edit, and produce programs to benefit ourselves and our community. As a Community Partner, we are able to use the facilities and expertise of FCTV to share who we are and what we do.

Learning to use a portable video camera seems daunting, but (trust us!) it's relatively easy and quite empowering. We can broaden our reach and increase the community's knowledge base by filming and broadcasting programs and interviews of interest to our membership and to our town. If we have piqued your interest, please contact Lynne Rozsa at lynrozsa@gmail.com.

Book Review: *On Democracy* by E. B. White

E.B. White is most widely known for his children's books *Charlotte's Web*, *Stuart Little*, and *The Trumpet of the Swan*. White was also a brilliant essayist, as evidenced by his contributions to the magazines *The New Yorker* and *Harper's*.



As author and historian Jon Meacham notes in his introduction to *On Democracy*: “White lived and wrote through several of the most contentious hours in our history ... the Great Depression, World War II, the McCarthyite Red Scare, the Cold War, the civil rights movement...all unfolded under White’s watchful eye....He was especially gifted at evoking the universal through the exploration of the particular, which is one of the cardinal tasks of the essayist. His work touched on politics but was not, in the popular sense, political...”

We have his granddaughter, Martha White, to thank for compiling some of his essays and poems published between January

1928, and July 5, 1976, on the occasion of the country’s 200th birthday.

Although many of the essays and poems are 100 years old, their relevance today is striking. An essay attributed to White in the “Notes and Comment” section of the *New Yorker* for July 3, 1943, was enjoyed and read to audiences by President Franklin Roosevelt.

I found these observations especially pleasing: “Democracy is the recurrent suspicion that more than half the people are right more than half the time. It is the feeling of privacy in the voting booths, the feeling of communion in the libraries, the feeling of vitality everywhere... It is an idea that hasn’t been disproved yet, a song the words of which have not gone bad.”

Inspiring words for us to reflect upon!

—*Mary Fran Buckley*



E. B. White and his dog Winnie

Make your voice heard today!

Contact Information for Your Legislators

(Be sure to include your name, address, and phone number when writing.)

Senator Dylan Fernandes
617-722-1330
dylan.fernandes@masenate.gov

Representative David Vieira
617-722-2230 and press 5
David.Vieira@mahouse.gov

Representative Thomas Moakley
(617) 722-2800 x7302
Thomas.Moakley@mahouse.gov

Senator Elizabeth Warren
(202) 224-4543
<https://www.warren.senate.gov/contact/shareyouropinion>

Senator Edward Markey
(202) 224-2742
<https://www.markey.senate.gov/contact/share-your-opinion>

Congressman Bill Keating
508-771-6868
Info.keating@mail.house.gov

Letters to the Editor

The Falmouth Enterprise

Letters can be mailed to 50 Depot Avenue, Falmouth, MA 02540 or e-mailed directly to the editor at paradise@capenews.net.
General email: newsroom@capenews.net.

The Cape Cod Times

Email to letters@capecodonline.com or mail to Letters, Cape Cod Times, 319 Main St., Hyannis, MA 02601.

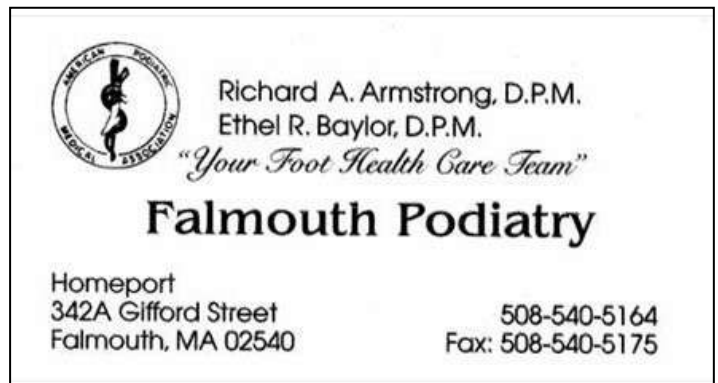
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Send an e-mail to letter@globe.com or mail to Letters to the Editor, The Boston Globe, PO Box 55819, Boston, MA 02205.



Stephanie Miele
Certified Piano Technician

Tuning
C: 508-685-9866
H: 508-548-1759
steplen@comcast.net

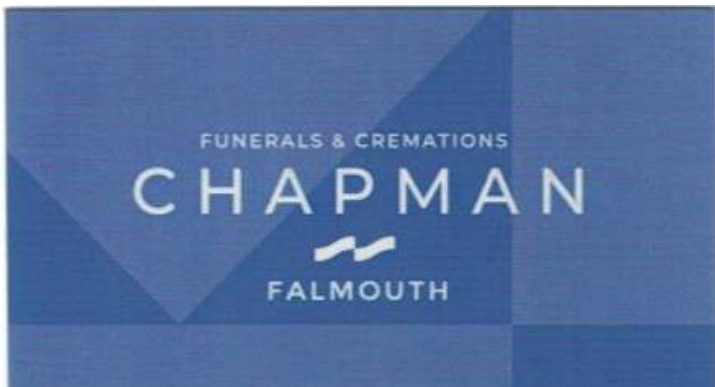


 Richard A. Armstrong, D.P.M.
Ethel R. Baylor, D.P.M.
"Your Foot Health Care Team"

Falmouth Podiatry

Homeport
342A Gifford Street
Falmouth, MA 02540

508-540-5164
Fax: 508-540-5175



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Nominating Committee

Chair Stephanie Miele

*Member of Steering Committee

**Shared Chairmanship by Richard Johnson*, Kathy Mortenson, Denise Morreale, John Carroll, Sally Palmer. Richard Johnson is Board Representative.

Meeting and Event Calendar

March 10, 7 p.m., Hermann Room, Falmouth Library	Legislative Committee public meeting with Legislators
March 11, 7:30-10:30 a.m., Emerald Resort, 35 Scudder Avenue, Hyanis	International Women's Day Breakfast
March 25, 7 p.m.	Board meeting (Zoom)
April 7, 7 p.m., Lawrence School Auditorium	Annual Falmouth Town Meeting
April 19, 2 p.m., Hermann Room, Falmouth Public Library	Film Viewing and Discussion: <i>Harlem Rising</i>
April 22, 7 p.m.	Board meeting (Zoom)
April 30, 7 p.m., Hermann Room, Falmouth Library	Voter Service Committee Candidates Night

Contact us:

Address: League of Women Voters of Falmouth
P.O. Box 450
Falmouth, MA 02541

Email: FalmouthLWV@gmail.com

Website: <https://my.lwv.org/massachusetts/falmouth>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LWVofFalmouthMA/>

Submissions for the April issue of the LWVF Bulletin are due by April 5, 2025. Please send copy, photos, and other material to both of these addresses:

maryfran55@earthlink.net
eileenmattingly@yahoo.com