



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEXINGTON

From the Convenor's Desk

I want to thank all who have sent in your dues for the year 2023-2024. We continue to attract new and returning members: Welcome to Billie Drew, Denise Dube, Joyce Grief, Robert Hausslein, Margaret Heitz, Pam Lyons, Joan Macey, Michael Patnode, Jeremy Singh, Lisa Smith, Melanie Thompson, and Jeri Zeder.

Ranked Choice Voting, supported by the League, passed in the 2023 Special Town Meeting with a 70% affirmative vote. Our Convenor spoke in favor of its passage. It now has to go to the state as a home rule petition before it can be implemented.

First Fridays continue with the help of Eileen Zalisk and Wendy Manz. December 1, 2023 featured our legislative delegation: Senator Cindy Friedman and Representatives Michelle Ciccolo and Ken Gordon, who were with us in person at the Community Center to update us on the current legislative program and answer our questions. We missed Senator Mike Barrett, who had a scheduling conflict, but will invite him back again. .

Our panel on January 5, 2024 will look at incidences of book banning in the Commonwealth and elsewhere, and on February 2, 2024 Representative Michelle Ciccolo will lead a discussion on re-use options as part of a more sustainable life style.

The League's second annual event in the Dr. Florence Seldin "Democracy Is Not a Spectator Sport" Speaker Series was held October 14, with approximately 75 people in attendance. The forum on Media, Misinformation, and The Protection of Democracy featured speakers, Dr. Joan Donovan, Assistant Professor of Journalism and Emerging Studies at Boston University and Dan Kennedy, Professor of Journalism at Northeastern University. The forum highlighted a number of resources that can help media users sort out fact from fiction. See page 12 of this Bulletin for a list.

In addition, the event was recorded by Falmouth Community TV and is available on the LWVCCA YouTube Channel, which you can view by following this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7W-l17s3--g&t=1s>

Best wishes for a Happy Holiday season!

Sincerely,

Margaret Coppe

Convenor

mecoppe@gmail.com

OF INTEREST

HARVARD PROFESSOR DANIELLE ALLEN on “DEMOCRACY RENOVATION”

Thursday, December 7, 2023, 7:00 pm at the Community Center



On Thursday, December 7, at 7:00 pm, the Lexington Democratic Town Committee will host scholar and political activist Danielle Allen at the Lexington Community Center, Rooms 230 and 232 (Arts and Crafts Room).

Danielle Allen is the James Bryant Conant University Professor at Harvard University and Director of the [Allen Lab for Democracy Renovation](#) at Harvard Kennedy School's Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation. She is a professor of political philosophy, ethics, and public policy. She is also a seasoned democracy advocate, tech ethicist, author, and mom. In 2022, Allen ran for governor of Massachusetts, making history as the first Black woman ever to run for statewide office in Massachusetts. A long-time member of the League of Women Voters, Professor Allen has frequently participated in League programs, most recently in the 2023 Ma

Her books include [Our Declaration: A Reading of the Declaration of Independence in Defense of Equality](#); [Democracy in the Time of Coronavirus](#); and [Justice by Means of Democracy](#). Recently she has worked with the Massachusetts Democratic Committee to develop a proposal for a MassDems Commission on Healthy Democracy. The proposal for the Commission can be found at: <https://tinyurl.com/Commission4HealthyDemocracy>.

LWV LEXINGTON JANUARY FIRST FRIDAY FORUM BOOK BANNING: CAN IT HAPPEN HERE?

Across the country and in Massachusetts, concern is rising about “book banning” as members of local groups, school boards, and libraries seek to limit access to books in classrooms and libraries. The LWV Lexington January First Friday Forum will explore the impact of this trend on our Town.

The event will be held on **Friday, January 5, 2024, from 9:30 to 11:00 am in the large downstairs meeting room at Cary Memorial Library, 1874 Massachusetts Avenue, NOT the Community Center**, as in recent forums. The program has been developed in response to the national and state controversy, but the issue is not new to Lexington.

In 2005 a Lexington elementary school parent staged a campaign about a related issue. A group, Lexington CARES, (Lexington Community Action for Responsible Education), was formed at the time. More recently the Serious Talk curriculum, introduced in the elementary schools ten years ago to deal with issues of tolerance and inclusion, has come under challenge. Our forum will include speakers led by **Cary Library Director Koren Stembridge and Lexington School Committee member Kathleen M Lenihan**.

This program is the fourth in the 2023-2024 LWV First Friday Forum series hosted by the League of Women Voters to promote awareness and understanding of public policy issues. Like all League events it is free and open to the public, and there will be time for questions and answers from the audience. For more information about the League and this program go to <https://my.lwv.org/massachusetts.lexington>.

LEXINGTON LEGISLATORS URGE SUPPORT OF PROPOSED REAL ESTATE TRANSFER FEE

At their November 27 meeting, members of the Lexington Select Board voted to send a letter to Lexington’s state legislators supporting the concept of a Real Estate Transfer Fee (RETF), understanding that if such legislation passes, it would provide an option, rather than a mandate, for Lexington to tailor an RETF to its own needs and preferences.

H2747/S1771: An Act granting a local option for a real estate transfer fee (RETF) to fund affordable housing is currently pending in the legislature. The bill provides that a city or town having an affordable housing trust (as Lexington does) could impose a fee on the transfer of real property, ranging from 0.5% to 2% of the total sale price, to be paid into the local AHT. Transfers of less than \$1 million and transfers to first-time buyers would be exempted. Individual municipalities could decide whether their RETF would apply to commercial as well as residential properties and whether to adopt further exemptions. They

could also adjust the threshold price and determine whether the buyer, seller or both would pay the fee.

Since the bill was filed, Governor Healey has proposed a slightly different version of an RETF to apply statewide. In that version the transfer fee would only apply to the amount of the sale price in excess of the threshold amount, and the entire fee would be paid by the seller.

The state League has supported the idea of an RETF as a way to provide substantial funds to affordable housing trusts by tapping into some of the extraordinary profits that real estate owners are seeing in Massachusetts. At the December First Friday Forum, **Senator Cindy Friedman and Representatives Michelle Ciccolo and Ken Gordon** expressed strong support for the idea and urged League members to write and call their own legislators, as well as the chairs of the relevant Beacon Hill committees, to show support.

In addition to the contact information for our legislators provided at the end of every Bulletin, we have added those additional names and contacts to encourage members of the Lexington League to make their support known.

[LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS](#)

[LWVMA ADVOCACY](#)

[MORE DISCUSSION ON MASSPORT'S PROPOSED EXPANSION AT HANSCOM FIELD: The Climate Impact of Private Jet Expansion](#)

The Concord-Carlisle League of Women Voters is offering a Community Forum on the proposed expansion of hangars at Hanscom Field, focused on climate impacts. (*See the October Bulletin for details of Lexington's First Friday Forum on the same topic.*) It will be held in person at the Concord Free Public Library, 129 Main Street. Concord on December 6, 2023 at 6:00 pm, with an option to join by Zoom Register on line at <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUodeuqrzlvEtaU3JeF46Q4-D7Ahkra68tw#/registration>.

Speakers are Senator Mike Barrett (3rd Middlesex District), Alex Chatfield, St. Anne's Climate Justice Committee; Neil Rasmussen, Save Our Heritage; Chuck Collins, Institute for Policy Studies; Michael McDonald, Town of Concord Climate Action Committee. This program is sponsored by the League, Save Our Heritage, Town of Concord Climate Action Committee, ConcordCAN, Concord Democratic Town Committee, Restore: The North Woods, The Walden Woods Project, and the Concord Free Public Library.

LWVMA EVENTS

MEET THE SPECIALIST: EDUCATION POLICY

LWVMA's *Meet the Specialist* program offers members the chance to take a deep dive into the bills the League supports in specific topic areas. **Join Education Policy K-12 legislative specialist Robin Chen on Tuesday, January 9, at 12 Noon, via Zoom** to learn about the crisis in funding and salaries for early education and care, and problems of outdated school curriculum. She will offer background on the pending bills below, and spell out what League members can do to take action.

LWVMA supports affordable early education and childcare by advocating for passage of **H489/S301, *An Act Providing Affordable and Accessible High Quality Early Education and Care to Promote Child Development and Well-Being and Support the Economy in the Commonwealth (Common Start)***, and seeks to ensure that K-12 education in Massachusetts includes accurate histories and contributions of racial and ethnic groups by advocating for passage of **H542/S288, *An Act to promote racially inclusive curriculum in schools***. Register at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEvdOmtrzopE9aBvMhm3n6WAEyi1m1dZ52S#/registration>.

“WHAT’S UP WITH OFFSHORE WIND” SERIES CONTINUES

LWVMA is partnering with New England for Offshore Wind (NE4OSW) on a three-part Zoom webinar series featuring distinguished speakers who will bring us up to speed on Offshore Wind. The third in the series: ***Conflicts and Solutions: Overcoming Offshore Wind Opposition***, will be available on Zoom on January 18, 2024, from 4:00 -5:00 pm. Watch the archived first and second webinars, and register for the third one at lwwma.org/whats-up-with-offshore-wind/.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE UNITED STATES

LWVUS EVENTS

2024 LWVUS COMMUNITY FIELD CALL

The LWVUS continues to strengthen links between the national organization and state and local Leagues. Anticipating an activity-filled election year in 2024, the LWVUS is

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working to align and coordinate League field activities and events around issues important to the League as a whole. It does not plan to communicate “requirements” but to participate in discussions across all the levels of the League through periodic field calls open to all League members and staff.

The first of these will take place on **Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2024, at 5:00 – 6:00 pm ET.**

Register at: <https://web.cvent.com/event/6cc5d131-ddc9-4fc6-bef9-63d798518a29/regProcessStep1?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=5eefd94c-d52e-4290-9aab-b75a3f6af0d6>

LWVUS VOTER SERVICE

SURVEY OF 2023 STATE LEGISLATIVE TRENDS

The national League has issued a Survey of **Trends from 2023 Legislative Sessions** which tracks enacted legislation across the country bearing on voters’ rights.

The report highlights laws passed in more than 20 states that restrict access to voting, such as requiring voter IDs, limiting the use of mail-in ballots and absentee ballots, reducing eligibility to vote and purging voter rolls, penalizing those who assist voters to register or to cast their ballots, and cutting funding for the administration of voting.

It lists eight states in which voter rights have been expanded, by allowing pre-registration of 16 and 17 year-olds, automatic voter registration in connection with motor vehicle registration, restoring voting rights to citizens who have completed sentences arising from felonies, and instituting penalties for the harassment of poll workers and other voting officials. The report does not cover legislation that has been proposed but not enacted, and notes that efforts of Leagues across the country have had some effect, not only in getting laws enacted, but in preventing others from passing.

Massachusetts is not featured, since its recent progressive voting legislation did not occur in 2023. Over all the trend is not positive, and it indicates that for organizations like the League, which work to protect and expand voting rights, there is a lot of work to do.

WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM FAT BEAR WEEK

Light-Hearted Selections from a Blog by Lilly McGee

Every October, more than a million people vote in one of the most anticipated elections of the year: **Fat Bear Week (FBW)**.

According to the National Parks Service, Fat Bear Week is “a celebration of success and survival.” More specifically, it’s the week when the bears of Katmai National Park in Alaska are pitted against one another, bracket-style, in a battle to be crowned Fat Bear Champion. For a week in October, culminating in “Fat Tuesday,” internet users select their bears based on before and after hibernation pictures and bear biographies written by Katmai’s park rangers.

FBW is a brilliant campaign for engaging and educating people worldwide about the majestic brown bear. But in addition to teaching us about bears, it teaches us a lot about how we vote.

We Love Candidates with Good Narratives

Many factors go into voters’ decisions in the FBW bracket. As with government elections, everything from the bear’s perceived intelligence (creativity in hunting), power (status in the bear community), and, well, appearance (self-explanatory) is weighed. But one thing we can’t ignore is the importance of each bear’s narrative when appealing to voters.

2023’s winner, Grazer, is described as “a particularly defensive mother bear who has successfully raised two litters of cubs. She often preemptively confronts and attacks much larger bears—even large and dominant adult males—in order to ensure her cubs are safe.” Surely, her fierceness and courage propelled her ahead of the crowd this year, allowing her to beat out the “enigmatic” Chunk, whose scarred muzzle gave him an air of mystery.

Meanwhile, frequent-winner Otis exemplifies the power of the underdog. One of the oldest bears in the competition, Otis, suffers from medical problems - he’s missing two canine teeth, and the rest of his teeth are “greatly worn.” Yet he hasn’t let these hurdles hold him back, and his perseverance is undoubtedly one of the reasons for his frequent success.

Election Workers Keep Everything Moving

Okay, maybe the people running FBW aren’t exactly “election workers,” but much like the volunteers in our government elections, they’re the ones who

keep the system running. Candidate profile compilers pull together the photos, videos, and bios for FBW to give us the information we need to make our selections. Then we have all the folks setting up the technology that allows us to vote, counting our ballots, and otherwise allowing our democratic government elections/FBW brackets to take place.

We Love to Vote When the Process is Accessible

It's incredibly easy to participate in FBW, getting the info you need and casting your votes. FBW doesn't make you jump through hoops to cast your ballot with suppressive measures like limited voting hours and locations or oppressive ID requirements. As with elections that provide mail-in ballots or expanded hours, FBW allows people to cast their votes at the times and in the places that work for them

The FBW website makes it easy to find all your candidate information in one place. This is a concept the League has worked to emulate with VOTE411.org, our one-stop shop for election information

We Love to Vote When It Brings Us Joy

Perhaps the most important takeaway from FBW is how eager people are to cast their votes when doing so brings them joy.

Sure, voting for a human representative may never bring the delight as voting for a favorite brown bear. But it's worth asking how we can turn our government elections into celebrations – of our democracy, our community, and the power of our voices. A few ideas include:

- Going to the polls with friends and celebrating together afterward;
- Hosting election week parties to celebrate participating in your democracy;
- Having an inspiring, pre-voting session where you binge-watch movies that get you in the “change-making” spirit. Try “Milk” or “Lincoln” for a look at electoral politics, or “Norma Rae” for social justice;
- Posting your picture on social media covered with “I Voted” stickers. If voting doesn't merit a shameless selfie, what does?



**REMEMBERING TWO WOMEN WHO HAVE INSPIRED US
AS WOMEN AND AS CITIZENS**



[First Lady Rosalynn Carter](#)

The LWVUS issued statement on the passing of former **First Lady Rosalynn Carter** on November 19, 2023, which said, in part:

Rosalynn Carter was the consummate public servant who dedicated much of her life to enhancing the well-being of people all around the world. As the First Lady from 1977 to 1981, she [sought] to create “more caring society.”

An advocate for human rights, democracy, and mental health, Rosalynn Carter was, [from the beginning,] a defender of women’s rights and the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA)’ [She] engaged with the League of Women Voters on several occasions, and in 1988, while celebrating the bicentennial of the US Constitution, [she] convened a “Women and the Constitution” conference, [pointing out] the document’s omission of women.

The League of Women Voters offers our deepest condolences to the Carter family, and we are forever grateful for Rosalynn Carter’s dedication to public service. Let us pay tribute to her memory, and may each of us aspire to leave [such] a lasting legacy.



Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor

The LWVUS issued a statement on the passing of **US Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor** on December 1, 2023, which said, in part: :

*Sandra Day O'Connor was an exceptional leader and trailblazer who inspired many generations of female lawyers as the [first woman] to sit on the Supreme Court. * * * **

A defender of women's rights, [she] served as the first female majority leader in the Arizona state Senate, where she advocated for changing various state laws that discriminated against women. As a strong supporter of civics education, Justice O'Connor famously said, "The practice of democracy is not passed down through the gene pool. It must be taught and learned anew by each generation of citizens." When she retired, Justice O'Connor engaged with the League of Women Voters on civic education programs and spoke at the League of Women Voters National Leaders Council in 2003.

*"Justice O'Connor's strength, boldness, and dedication to women's rights is a shining example of the League's belief in the power of women to create a more perfect democracy. The League of Women Voters is forever grateful for Justice O'Connor's leadership as we commemorate her lasting legacy * * * **

Media Accuracy Resources

- **FactCheck.org** is a project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania, a nonpartisan, nonprofit consumer advocate for voters that aims to reduce the level of deception and confusion in U.S. Politics. “We monitor the factual accuracy of what is said by major U.S. political players in the form of TV ads, debates, speeches, interview and news releases.”
- **Snopes.com** “The definitive Internet reference source for urban legends, folklore, myths, rumors, and misinformation.”
- **PolitiFact** at <https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/> This Pulitzer Prize winning website rates the accuracy of claims by elected officials. Run by editors and reporters from the independent newspaper Tampa Bay Times, it features the Truth-O-Meter that rates the accuracy of statements.
- **MediaBias/FactCheck** at mediabiasfactcheck.com A bias rating resource with multiple fake news checking apps. It is a source to check the bias of one’s favorite news websites.
- **The News Literacy Project** at [newslit.org](https://www.news literacyproject.org) The Library of Congress awarded NLP their highest literacy award, the David M. Rubenstein Award, in recognition of the project’s “outstanding efforts to help people of all ages identify misinformation and stop its spread
- **The Media Manipulation Casebook** at <https://mediamanipulation.org> is a digital research

platform linking together theory, methods, and practice for mapping media manipulation and disinformation campaigns. This resource is intended for researchers, journalists, technologists, policymakers, educators, and civil society organizers who want to learn about detecting, documenting, describing, and debunking misinformation, disinformation, and media manipulation. (NOTE: The Media Manipulation Casebook was a project of the Technology and Social Change Project, which was active from 2019-2023. The Casebook will remain at this URL as a publicly accessible resource, but is no longer being updated as of September 1, 2023.)

Contact Information for Legislators

U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren	309 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510 202 244-4543
U.S. Senator Edward Markey	255 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, D.C. 20510 202 224-2742
U.S. Representative Katherine Clark	2448 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, D.C. 20515 202 225-2836

***Mailing addresses for MA legislators are all at
24 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02133 with a room number.***

MA Senator Michael Barrett	Mike.Barrett@masenate.gov Room 617 722-1572
MA Senator Cindy Friedman	Cindy.Friedman@masenate.gov Room 617 722-1432
MA Representative Michelle Ciccolo	Michelle.Ciccolo@mahouse.gov Room 617 722-2210
MA Representative Ken Gordon	Ken.Gordon@mahouse.gov Room 156 617 722-2240

Joint Committee on Revenue:

Senate Chair: Lydia Edwards	Lydia.Edwards@masenate.gov Room 413 C 617 722-1634
House Chair: James Arciero	James.Arciero@mahouse.gov Room 146 617 722-2575

Joint Committee on Housing:

Senate Chair: Susan L. Morah	Room 312D 617 722-1330
House Chair: Mark L. Cusack	Room 34 617 722-2320

SAVE THE DATE

December 6, 2023	Proposed Hanscom Expansion	6:00 pm	Zoom/ Concord Free Public Library
December 7, 2023	Professor Danielle Allen	7:00 pm	Community Center
December 13, 2023	VOTE411 Training	6:00 pm	Zoom
January 5, 2024	First Friday Forum: Book Banning	9:30 am	Cary Library
January 24, 2024	LWVUS Field Call	5:00-6:00 pm	On line
February 15, 2024	Candidates' Night		Clarke Middle School
June 27-30, 2024	LWVUS Biennial Convention		Washington, D.C.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF 2023-2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan organization dedicated to the principles of self-government established in the Constitution of the United States. The League works to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government. For more information, contact Lexington League Convener, Margaret Coppe at mecoppe@gmail.com. All League forums are free and open to the public.

We welcome Bulletin articles from members. If you'd like to submit an article for the January 2024 LWV LEXINGTON Bulletin, please send it to Wendy Manz at wendy_manz@yahoo.com prior to December 15, 2023.

