



BULLETIN, January, 2026

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEXINGTON

Greetings from the Convenor's Desk

Happy New Year!

We are past the successful debt exclusion vote of December 8 and look forward to the start of a new high school for Lexington. Thank you to those who worked to pass the vote, and thank you to all who exercised their right to vote.

Speaking of elections, the annual town elections are coming soon. Now is the time to take out papers to run for office, either town wide or precinct. Our annual [Candidates' Night](#) is scheduled for **February 12, 2026, 7:00 pm at Clark Middle School**. We will need volunteers to run the nine precinct meetings as well as others to help with the town wide candidate forum.

The annual [Martin Luther King celebration](#) has been expanded this year to include a week of programs. The League will be participating in two of the programs. On Wednesday, **January 14, 2026, 6:30 PM at Diamond Middle School, Nancy Brumback** of the Sudbury League and **a director of the LWMVA**, will be one of the panelists discussing voter rights. On **Monday, January 19, 2026, 9:00 am -3:00 pm at Grace Chapel, we will have a table at the Day of Reflection**. If you would like to help at the table sometime during the day, please let us know.

Burlington ICE Action

Wednesdays from 11AM-1PM

Burlington ICE Operations Office, 1000 District Ave, Burlington (near the Burlington Mall)

Are you close to Burlington, MA? **Bearing Witness** stands in solidarity outside the ICE Operations Office in Burlington, MA, every Wednesday from 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM. **Justice 4 All** standouts also happen at Burlington ICE every Thursday 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM, same location and instructions as Wednesday. The League is not an official sponsor of these events but encourages attendance.

Update on Ballot Questions for 2026

The Elections Division of the Secretary of the Commonwealth's office has announced that an additional four potential ballot questions have completed processing and have been determined to contain enough certified signatures to advance toward the 2026 State Election ballot. These four petitions join five others certified by the Division earlier this month.

According to the Elections Division, the following additional ballot questions contain more than the 74,574 certified signatures required to proceed to the next step in the process of qualifying for the ballot:

- "Initiative Petition for a Law to Improve Access to Public Records" – **89,013**
- "Initiative Petition for an Act to Reform and Regulate Legislative Stipends" – **96,797**
- "Initiative Petition for a Law Relative to Labor Relations Policies for Committee for Public Counsel Services Employees" – **86,153**
- "Initiative Petition for a Law Relative to Limiting State Tax Collection Growth and Returning Surpluses to Taxpayers" – **85,588**

With this certification, the **total number of potential questions certified this month has reached nine**, with an additional two petitions of significant size still to be processed by the January 7, 2026 deadline for the Secretary to transmit qualifying petitions to the Massachusetts Legislature.

After qualifying petitions are transmitted on January 7, 2026, the **Legislature will have until May 5, 2026 to consider and act on the proposals. If the Legislature chooses not to pass a proposed law, the petitioners will be permitted to gather the additional 12,429 signatures needed to place the question on the ballot in November.**

Getting ready to file taxes? From the Secretary of State of MA:

Secretary of the Commonwealth William F. Galvin is reminding Massachusetts residents preparing to file their 2025 tax returns to pay close attention to **recent changes in federal tax laws** before submitting a return.

Under the tax reform package signed into law in July of this year, Calvin warns, certain taxpayers will now be able to deduct up to \$40,000 in state and local tax payments – but only if they itemize their deductions.

In previous years, the state and local tax deduction was capped at \$10,000. The recent increase in the deduction is most likely to benefit Massachusetts homeowners with significant property tax bills or residents with high income tax payments.

Best wishes for 2026!

Margaret Coppe

Convenor

LWV LEXINGTON JANUARY FIRST FRIDAY FORUM: RICKI PAPPO ON REAL WORLD CLIMATE ACTION



On Friday, January 2, the Lexington League First Friday Forum welcomed **Ricki Pappo, Chair of the Lexington Climate Action Network (LexCan)**, who shared her experiences attending **COP30 (Conference of the Parties), the United Nations Climate Change Conference, in Belem, Brazil**, as a League of Women Voters Observer. Ricki spent a week immersed in the massive global summit attended by some 56,000 registered delegates, officials and observers, where nations negotiate the planet's future. This is where the Paris Accord was born, where breakthrough deals are struck, and where the fate of climate action hangs in the balance. Notably, the United States sent no official representatives to the conference, although there were observers from many climate action groups, and California sent 100 official attendees in conjunction with a delegation of U.S. governors.

While we have made strides in Lexington and in Massachusetts, Select Board member Mark Sandeen noted that most progress in alternative sources of energy and other strategies date back to the Deval Patrick administration. The climate crisis demands continuing worldwide cooperation, innovative solutions, and unprecedented financing. While committees and other groups meet all year to wrestle with these issues, the annual COP is intended to reach a rough consensus on broad policy issues. This year a movement to reduce the group's original fossil fuel reduction goals as impossible was voted down, although it is recognized that efforts to move away from fossil fuels have so far not been sufficient.

Ricki Pappo will make a formal report to the Massachusetts League of Women Voters, and as her local League, we are fortunate to have heard from her directly. She is already planning to attend next year's COP in Turkey.

This program was the fifth in the 2025-2026 LWV First Friday Forum series hosted by the Lexington League of Women Voters to promote awareness and understanding of public policy issues. More information is available on the Lexington Climate Action Network web site: <https://causes.benevity.org/causes/840-884030374>.

LWV LEXINGTON FEBRUARY FIRST FRIDAY FORUM: **STATE SENATOR CINDY FRIEDMAN ON HEALTH CARE INITIATIVES** **IN THE LEGISLATURE**

On **February 6, 2026, at 9:30 am at the Lexington Community Center**, the Lexington League will host **Lexington State Senator Cindy Friedman** to update us on her work on Beacon Hill. Since 2017) Senator Friedman has represented the 4th Middlesex District which includes Arlington, Billerica, Burlington, Lexington (Precinct1-2 and 4-7) ,and Woburn. Prior to becoming a state senator, Friedman worked as a public school teacher and a senior manager in high tech before becoming Chief of Staff for the late State Senator Ken Donnelly.

As a major focus of hers is health care and the health care system in Massachusetts, Senator Friedman will talk with us about current challenges brought about by federal changes to abortion regulations, reduction in research funding, vaccination requirements etc.

This program will be the sixth in the 2025-2026 LWV First Friday Forum series hosted by the Lexington League of Women Voters to promote awareness and understanding of public policy issues. As always, the program is free and open to the public, and there will be time for questions from the audience. The program will also be recorded by LexMedia for on-demand viewing. For more information about the League and this program go to: <https://my.lwv.org/massachusetts/lexington>.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS **OF MASSACHUSETTS**

LWVMA EVENTS

LWVMA NEW MEMBER MINGLE, FEBRUARY 24

All members are cordially invited to a New Member Mingle on **Tuesday, February 24, at 7:00 pm on Zoom**. There will be a brief overview of LWVMA; including our staff, the state Board, state committees, and local Leagues, followed by small group conversations and a quick look at upcoming events. Whether you are a new member or a long-standing one, this

is a chance to connect and get updated on League activities. Register at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/yT73QrD6RwWXLs7KDeNMjA#/registration>, and bring a friend interested in learning more about the League.



New "What Democracy Means in Everyday Life" Episode: Indirect Taxation Without Representation

The newest episode of the "Democracy In Everyday Life Series" is now [live on YouTube](#)!

Panelists Dr. Kent Jones, Professor Emeritus of Economics at Babson College, and Jim Klocke, Chief Executive Officer of the Massachusetts Nonprofit Network, share their thoughts on the impact of tariffs on democracy at the local, state, and national levels. They discuss the role of the U.S. Constitution, Congress and US legal system in the usage and implementation of tariffs. This panel, moderated by LWVMA Board Director Erica Rachel Andrews, is an opportunity to see how tariffs are impacting our business and nonprofit sectors. Check out the [Democracy in Everyday Life](https://lwmma.org/what-democracy-means-in-everyday-life-series-2/) webpage at: <https://lwmma.org/what-democracy-means-in-everyday-life-series-2/> and watch the new episode on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpjyueQqQw>.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF UNITED STATES LWVUS ADVOCACY

LWV MAINE INTERVENES AS A DEFENDANT IN FEDERAL SUIT TO PROTECT VOTER PRIVACY

The United States District Court for the District of Maine has granted a motion allowing the League of Women Voters of Maine to intervene as a defendant in **United States v. Bellows**. The U.S. Department of Justice is suing the State of Maine and its secretary of state, Shenna Bellows, for access to Maine's statewide voter file, which includes voters' personal data, such as driver's license numbers and the last four digits of voters' Social Security numbers.

By intervening in the case, the League seeks to protect the privacy of Maine voters and defend the longstanding state and federal safeguards governing voter data. It is represented by Campaign Legal Center, the Brennan Center for Justice, and Johnson & Webbert, LLP, a leading civil rights firm in Maine that specializes in cases standing up against abuses of power by the government.

In July, the Justice Department sent a request for Maine's statewide voter registration list, with questions regarding the state's compliance with federal voter list maintenance laws. Secretary of State Bellows responded to the questions but declined to provide the complete voter file, citing state and federal privacy protections. The Justice Department filed suit on September 16.

United States v. Bellows is one of 18 lawsuits the Justice Department has filed since September against states demanding their complete voter files.

"These ongoing attempts by the federal government to retrieve sensitive voter data without justification are an attack on Americans' privacy and freedoms," said Sejal Jhaveri, senior legal counsel for litigation at Campaign Legal Center. "Our elections have numerous safeguards in place to make sure only US citizens participate, a responsibility that election officials across the country and here in Maine take seriously. The immediate impact of these DOJ lawsuits will be to deter people from registering to vote. Our democracy works best when every voter has a chance to participate in the electoral process, and we look forward to continuing the fight to protect Americans from the administration's attempts to limit the freedom to vote."

"This state-by-state campaign by the Justice Department to collect voters' personal information is part of the Trump administration's broader effort to undermine American elections," said Eileen O'Connor, a former attorney in the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department and a Brennan Center senior counsel. "Amassing data like driver's license numbers and partial Social Security numbers from every registered

voter in the country creates serious risks. It could be turned into a national database and exploited to fabricate false claims of voter fraud or to remove eligible voters from the rolls improperly. States have long protected voter privacy, and the Justice Department's demands represent a dangerous federal overreach that threatens election security and public trust."

In addition to Maine, the League of Women Voters, Campaign Legal Center, and the Brennan Center are working together against the Justice Department's similar lawsuits seeking voter files from New York and Oregon. The League is also active in additional suits where the DOJ has sued California, Minnesota, Michigan, and Pennsylvania.

JUST IN: The Department of Justice has now sued Massachusetts because of its noncompliance with their request that states provide voters' personal information and data to the federal administration. **Secretary of State William Galvin has issued a statement that he will not release the data.** LWVMA is in contact with the national League to monitor the lawsuit and determine what action it may take. As a reminder, the level of League action follows the level of an event, and in the case of a federal lawsuit, as noted above, the LWVMA will look to the LWVUS for opportunities to stand up for the protection of private voter information. Inquiries may be sent to LWVMA Executive Director Celia Canavan at ccanavan@lwmvma.org.

LWVUS OPPOSES US HOUSE BILL SILENCING NON-PROFITS

LWVUS joined 257 partner organizations in opposition to government efforts to silence nonprofit organizations that disagree with the party in power, arguing that the bill sets a dangerous precedent and threatens the essential services provided by nonprofit organizations.

Below are excerpts from a letter sent to the Chair and Ranking Member of the House Subcommittee on the Constitution and Limited Government:

December 15, 2025

Dear Chairman Roy and Ranking Member Scanlon:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the undersigned 257 civil rights, faith, and nonprofit organizations, we write to express our profound concern about [this bill] and the dangerous pattern it represents. We stand united in condemning this effort to discredit an institution that has worked tirelessly to serve our communities, protect our rights, and advance opportunity for all.

This is not about any single organization—it is about a broader effort to use government power to silence people. The government is targeting groups that check abuses of power and that ensure that democracy belongs to all of us. This includes

civil rights, community-based, humanitarian, and faith-based organizations that speak from deeply held convictions and provide essential services across the country.

This precedent should concern every Member of Congress regardless of party. The same tools used to target one set of organizations today can tomorrow be turned against anyone that a future Congress or administration views as hostile to its political agenda.

Across nearly every sector of public life, the government is rolling back civil rights protections while unlawfully targeting the organizations that defend and strengthen those rights. Civil rights safeguards are being dismantled in voting, education, housing, employment, healthcare, and more. At the same time, nonprofit organizations, advocates, and watchdogs that challenge discrimination and government overreach are being targeted in an effort to push them out of the public square—eroding both legal protections and democratic oversight.

We have witnessed:

- Threats to designate civil rights and community groups as “domestic terrorists” and revoke their nonprofit status;
- Grants terminated without justification or due process;
- Targeted government investigations aimed at discouraging lawful speech and chilling public participation;
- Public intimidation campaigns designed to isolate and discredit community organizations;
- Pressure on law firms, media, corporations, faith leaders, and nonprofits to sever long-standing relationships with vulnerable communities for fear of government retaliation; and
- Civil rights laws weaponized against the very communities they were designed to protect.

The tactic is familiar: intimidate independent voices, deflect from the real issues facing the country, and mete out retribution on anyone who dares to challenge those in power. Our nation has seen, across different eras and under administrations of both parties, how governmental power can be misused to suppress dissent—from McCarthy-era investigations to federal surveillance and harassment of civil rights, religious, labor, and anti-war leaders through efforts like the FBI’s COINTELPRO program.

If we don’t speak out against these attacks, it will clear the path for the dismantling of freedom of speech and civil rights and the repression of dissent.

We urge members of this Committee to reject the abuse of congressional oversight to target organizations for their lawful work.

Respectfully submitted,
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights



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SAVE THE DATE

January 14, 2026 MLK Celebration: Voters Rights, 6:30 pm, Diamond Middle School

January 19, 2026 MLK Celebration: Day of Reflection, 9:00 am – 3:00 pm, Grace Chapel

February 12, 2026 LWV Candidates Night, 7:00 pm, in person, Clark Middle School

February 24, 2026 New Member Mingle, 7:00 pm Zoom

March 3, 2026 Town Elections

March 19 2026 Performance of “Suffs, the Musical” 7:00 pm, Emerson Colonial Theater, Boston

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 Convenor Margaret Coppe at mecoppe@gmail.com. All League forums are free and open to the public.

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We welcome Bulletin articles from members. If you would like to submit an article for the February 2026 Lexington LWV Bulletin, please send it to Wendy Manz at wendy_manz@yahoo.com by January 28, 2026.

