



BULLETIN, January, 2025

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEXINGTON

Greetings from the Convenor's Desk

It looks like there will be contested races in three of the four town-wide elections this year—Select Board, School Committee, and Planning Board. At this writing, Housing Authority is uncontested. There will be two School Committee elections, one race for the three-year term and one race for the two-year term to complete term of the incumbent Deepika Sawhney, who is resigning in March.

This means **Candidates Night on Thursday, February 13, 2025** will have a full agenda, for which we are grateful, but which also will require volunteers for the town-wide races, time keepers, question moderators and precinct moderators. In true League tradition, we plan to once again have an out-of-town moderator for the town-wide races. This ensures both that there is no bias and also that the moderator cannot vote in these races.

LWVMA Reparations Study: The League is renowned for our meticulous studies to reach member consensus on issues. Developing a position or broad policy statement allows League members to advocate on an issue in the future. For example, our reproductive rights position still in use today was developed in 1972. It is time to schedule consensus meetings in Lexington for the LWVMA Reparations Study, and all members are urged to participate. Thank you to the LWVMA Reparations Study Committee for their diligent work in developing study and discussion materials. We will be setting the date for the local League consensus meetings at our January 6 board meeting and will send the information out then. Please consider joining with us as we study the information and give input to the State League. For more information go to [LWVMA Reparations Study for Black Americans - League of Women Voters of Massachusetts](#).

We are sorry to note the passing of two of our valued and long-time members.

Susan Solomon, a longtime League member, died at Lincoln Commons on December 6, 2024 at the age of 92. Over many years she served on the Lexington League board in multiple functions. She was an active volunteer in Lexington schools when her children were young, served as an elected Town Meeting Member, and was active on the Lexington Conservation Commission.



Pat Costello passed away on January 6, 2025 at the age of 88. Although she had moved to assisted living in Peabody last year, she remained in touch with her friends in Lexington and still appeared in town for socializing and events. Over the many years of her membership in the Lexington League, she served in various positions on the Board, including President. She also served on the Board of the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, specializing in senior affairs. A devoted member of the Lexington Historical Society, she was a familiar form in colonial gown and bonnet, acting as a tour guide and docent on the Green and on the Liberty Ride. She was co-chair of the Selectman's Tax Exemption and Deferral Advisory Committee, a group that works on issues regarding local property tax relief for seniors and other qualifying groups. She also volunteered with the AARP's tax preparation program and gave many hours of her time at the Lexington Senior Center helping seniors prepare their tax returns.

We will miss these outstanding women, and will long remember the many contributions that they have made to our town and our state.

Margaret Coppe
Convenor

LEXINGTON LWV JANUARY FIRST FRIDAY FORUM: A GET-ACQUAINTED SESSION WITH OUR NEW TOWN MANAGER

On **January 3, 2025**, the Lexington League welcomed **Steve Bartha**, Lexington's new Town Manager, who began work on November 1, 2024. The conversation was lively, with many questions from attendees, Mr. Bartha demonstrated that he had become familiar with many local issues in a short time, and affirmed his commitment to an increase in the housing supply, more sustainable practices in waste reduction and collection, and working with the many town participants in completing a plan for the new high school and providing for its funding. His easy manner and command of information was well-received, and he professed to be enjoying every moment of his time so far in Lexington, which he noted, was known in other towns as "democracy on steroids." This program is available for viewing on LexMedia.

LEXINGTON LEAGUE FEBRUARY FIRST FRIDAY FORUM: A DISCUSSION OF TURF v. GRASS FOR ATHLETIC FIELDS

On **February 3, 2025**, we look forward to a discussion on the merits (and perils) of installing artificial turf versus natural grass on Lexington's athletic fields. The forum will be held in **Room 237 of the Lexington Community Center, beginning at 9:30 am**, with time for questions and answers. More details will follow.

This program is the fourth in the 2024-2025 LWV First Friday Forum series hosted by the Lexington League of Women Voters to promote awareness and understanding of public policy issues. There will be time for questions and answers. As always, the program is free and open to the public, and Lex Media will record it for later 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

PROGRAM AND ACTION 2025-27 TOWN HALL THURSDAY, JANUARY 9 at 7:00 PM ON ZOOM

LWVMA Convention 2025 planning begins on Thursday, January 9 at 7:00 PM on Zoom with a virtual Town Hall: *Program and Action for the 2025-27 Biennium*.

The Program Planning Guide was emailed to all members on January 7. You can access it at: <https://lwvma.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Program-Planning-Guide-2024-3.pdf> Join us to learn about the program planning process and how your feedback will shape our action priorities for the next two years. We look forward to seeing Members-at-Large and representatives from all local Leagues. Register at: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0vc-yurj4vGNxm2GckSe5KeN_IGhI-pL-Q#/registration.

FUND HONORS RETIRING LWVMA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PATTYE COMFORT

As we say goodbye to 2024 and embark on 2025, it's a good time to make a contribution to the Pattye Comfort Fund, established to honor Pattye upon her retirement at the end of the year. As Executive Director, Pattye's tireless efforts have supported all our local Leagues in their work, inspired individuals, and strengthened communities across the Commonwealth. The fund is a means of helping to continue her work.



Pattye believed in teamwork and collaborative partnering with other state-wide organizations whose constituencies are different, but whose goals and values align with ours. This cross-organizational cooperation enables the League to include different voices, maximizing its impact on the issues we care about. The establishment of this fund in Pattye's honor is a testament to the value of her work at LWVMA and a commitment to building on her work.

Thank you for your support in 2024, we look forward to working together in 2025! To donate to the Pattye Comfort Fund, go to: <https://lwmva.org/donate/>.

LWVMA HIRES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

LWVMA is pleased to welcome **Celia Canavan** as its **new Executive Director!** Celia is a community organizer and policy professional who comes to LWVMA with a background in intergovernmental affairs and a commitment to voter engagement and civic education. She previously served as the Director of Government Affairs for the City of Brockton, where she worked to streamline applications for federal funding opportunities, and co-managed the start of the Brockton High School Massachusetts School Building Authority project; the largest physical and financial school building project in the Commonwealth.



Prior to her time at the City of Brockton, Celia worked on multiple ballot campaign initiatives in Maine and in Massachusetts including the 2024 Ballot Question #4 in Massachusetts (Limited Legalization and Regulation of Certain Natural Psychedelic Substances), a Maine ballot initiative to overturn *Citizens United* and support campaign finance reform, and a grassroots effort to implement Universal Healthcare in Maine. An experienced advocate for social justice, she has previously testified in multiple state legislatures for tribal sovereignty, election protections, and ranked choice voting. Her previous work also includes youth voter turnout and engagement, advocating for public education funding, LGBTQIA+ rights, and racial justice.

A Brockton native, Celia attended the University of Maine, where she studied Political Science with a minor in International and Global Studies. A founding member of the LWV Greater Brockton Unit, she is dedicated to supporting the mission of LWVMA, and looks forward to working with the LWVMA Board of Directors, staff, and all the local Leagues.

Celia can be reached at ccanavan@lwmvma.org or 857-452-1712.

OF NOTE: STUDENT CIVICS PROJECTS SHOWCASES 2025

Each spring, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) celebrates the work of 8th–12th grade civics students across the state. Through "**science fair-style**" **showcases**, students have the opportunity to share their civics projects with local community advisors and each other, receive feedback on their work, and be recognized for their civic engagement.

In 2024, DESE hosted three regional Civics Project Showcases in Bridgewater, Worcester, and Amherst. Students from 70 schools participated across the three events, showcasing projects on topics from the environment to educational equity to mental health.

This year, DESE will host four regional Civics Project Showcases in partnership with Generation Citizen. All events will run from 9am–1pm. Dates and locations are listed below:

- **Dartmouth:** UMass Dartmouth, **Tuesday, May 27**
- **Springfield:** MassMutual Center, **Wednesday, May 28**
- **Worcester:** DCU Center, **Monday, June 2**
- **Boston:** Edward M. Kennedy Institute, **Friday, June 6**

At each Showcase, **volunteer community advisors** have short conversations with students about their projects, asking questions and offering feedback based on their own expertise. Given the wide range in project topics, advisors come from many backgrounds: community organizers, legislators, business and non-profit leaders, educators, healthcare workers, and more. **League members are a**

natural fit for this role. To be notified regarding serving as an advisor for next year's showcases, please fill out an interest form at:

<https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/7899552/MA-Civics-Project-Showcases-Community-Advisor-Interest-Form>.

LWV LEXINGTON WILL HOLD A LOCAL CONSENSUS MEETING ON REPARATIONS ON FEBRUARY 11

Recap of LWV Consensus Procedure

The League of Women Voters, as is well known, does not support or oppose individual candidates or parties, remaining strictly non-partisan. However, the League, after appropriate study and discussion, does take positions on issues, and over the years has established a substantial body of policy positions, in the areas of Representative Government, International Relations, Natural Resources and Social Policy. <https://www.lwv.org/impact-issues>

At its annual League gatherings, members may propose amendments to existing policies or direct the national or state boards to conduct studies on new topics. No new position is adopted without a **formal research and study process** and subsequent presentation to the full membership at **local “consensus meetings.”** These meetings are intended for frank and thorough discussion, with a goal of reaching a general consensus position in each meeting. They are not debates where one side wins or loses, but rather an attempt to find whatever common ground there may be among the League membership represented. The results of all local meetings are then reported back to the state or national League (whichever body has conducted the particular study). Sometimes a broad consensus position is reached, and other times a partial consensus on particular aspects of the question presented. If a consensus is reached at the state level, that position is submitted to the national League of Women Voters, which may then decide to broaden the process to include Leagues across the country.

LWVMA Study and Consensus Procedure on Reparations for Black Americans

At its Annual Meeting in June, 2023, the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, at the original instigation of the Amherst League, voted to conduct a **study on the issue of reparations for Black Americans**. That study has been conducted over the past year by a board-appointed committee, which has completed its work and distributed study and discussion materials to all Leagues in Massachusetts.

The Lexington League will be conducting a formal consensus meeting, open to all League members, at 7:00 pm on February, 11, 2025, at the Police Headquarters Meeting Room. It is very important that as many members of our

League as possible attend this meeting to review the materials prepared by the Reparations Study Committee and to prepare to make a recommendation to the state League regarding a consensus position for the League. The goal is to identify areas where a consensus is possible, not to have any point of view win out over others. One of the major benefits of this process is to provide an opportunity to broaden our knowledge and understanding of an issue, even if not everyone chooses to participate in formal discussions.

Study and Procedure Materials Available

The Reparations Study Committee has prepared a **Study Guide** (<https://lwmvma.org/lwmvma-reparations-study/>) which sets out the framework of questions presented by this topic and summarizes the material contained in the full **Report**. The complexity of the subject is reflected in this abbreviated list of the questions:

- Why should reparations be provided? Or why not?
Should the LWVMA support educational campaigns to raise awareness of the harms caused by systemic racism in the US?
- Who should receive reparations?
Only descendants of Africans enslaved in the US?
All Black/African Americans living in the US?
- What reparations should be given?
Should payments be made in cash?
Should other benefits such as subsidized college tuition or land grants be used?
- How should reparations be provided?
By the federal or state or local governments?
By business enterprises?
By universities, faith-based groups, or other institutions?
- In light of the complexities of this topic and the strong views pro and con held by Americans across Massachusetts and the US, should the LWVMA take a position on reparations at this time?

A 20-minute **video**, "**Overview of Study on Reparations for Black Americans**" is available on the LWVMA web page at: [LWVMA Reparations Study for Black Americans, https://lwmvma.org/lwmvma-reparations-study/](https://lwmvma.org/lwmvma-reparations-study/).

Purpose of Seeking a Consensus Position

The League is renowned for meticulous studies to reach member consensus on issues. Developing a position or broad policy statement allows League members to operate within the limits of such a policy and to advocate on an issue in the future. For example, the League reproductive rights position still in use today was developed in 1972. With a topic as complex as reparations, our League may choose to support or reject the idea of reparations, support or reject certain suggested forms of reparations, or perhaps, to recommend further education and discussion by the League at this time. We will file a report of the Lexington League's discussion and recommendations with the LWVMA by March 7, 2025.

Please plan to join us for education, discussion, and hopefully, consensus on February 11. We want Lexington's voice heard in this League discussion.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE UNITED STATES

LWVUS EVENTS

LWVUS RESPONDS TO CHANGE OF ADMINISTRATION: CEO CELINA STEWART TOWN HALL, FEBRUARY 5

Members of the League of Women Voters across the country are asking each other, How will the League defend democracy in 2025? What can state and local Leagues do to help?

LWVUS CEO Celina Stewart will brief us during a **virtual Town Hall on Wednesday, February 5 at 7:00 PM**. She will outline the national strategy and take your questions. This one is too important for League Members to miss. Register at:
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/LW_NKxOGRru-JeDFQYF1_w#/registration.



“Given the disturbing rhetoric made during this election season, we are deeply concerned about challenges we may face, particularly regarding the issues that disproportionately affect women, from health care and reproductive rights to economic security and equal representation. *** [W]e remain steadfast in our commitment to advocate for policies that uplift women and ensure equitable representation in all levels of government.”

- Celina Stewart

LWVUS STUDY ON THE FEDERAL JUDICIARY

As noted last month, the LWVUS study for 2025 is an examination of the federal judiciary, addressing concerns about judicial accountability, transparency, independence and ethics. After the research phase is completed, a report will be made to the LWVUS Council in June 2025. For more information go to:
<https://www.lwv.org/league-management/advocacy-litigation/2024-2025-federal-judiciary-study-process-committee-and>.

SAVE THE DATE

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| January 9, 2025 | Small group discussion of reparations
7:00-8:30 pm Zoom |
| January 9, 2025 | LWMA Program & Action Town Hall,
7:00 pm Zoom |
| February 5, 2025 | LWVUS CEO Town Hall, 7:00 pm Zoom |
| February 11, 2025 | Concurrence Discussion on Reparations,
7:00-9:00 pm, Location TBA |
| February 13, 2025 | LWV Candidates Night, 7:00 pm,
Clarke Middle School |
| May 27, 2025 | Student Civics Showcase, U. Mass Dartmouth |
| May 28, 2025
Springfield | Student Civics Showcase, MassMutual Center,
Springfield |
| June 2, 2025 | DCU Center, Worcester |
| June 6, 2025 | Edward M. Kennedy Institute, Boston |

All Civics Showcase events will run from 9:00 am-1:00 pm/

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.

Contact Information for Legislators

U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren

JFK Federal Building
15 New Sudbury Street
Boston, MA 02203
(617) 565-3170

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

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MA Representative Ken Gordon

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We welcome Bulletin articles from members. If you would like to submit an article for the February 2025 Lexington LWV Bulletin, please send it to Wendy Manz at wendy_manz@yahoo.com by January 27, 2025.

