

2020 Fall Newsletter from President Julie Rohwein



I have begun this letter many times in the past month. And then, as events rushed forward, each day seemingly a new crisis, I have concluded that I must start again. We are nine months into the Covid-19 pandemic, and our nation crossed the threshold of 200,000 deaths in mid-September. The summer and early fall have seen continuing protests against racial injustice and more incidents of the injustice that spurs them. In August, the western part of our nation exploded with a horrific fire season. Smoke from those fires reached across the nation, irritating lungs and turning our sunsets ruddy, even in Massachusetts. This hurricane season, still in progress, has seen so many tropical storm systems in the Atlantic Ocean that all the names for the year have been used, and we are now two names into the auxiliary list.

Our nation lost central figures in the fight for civil rights-- Joseph Lowry and Phyllis Lyons in the spring and C. T. Vivian and Representative John R. Lewis this summer. And in September, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg died. As November 3rd nears, many of us sense an ever-increasing threat to our democracy. Early voting has already begun in some states, and the work to support and protect voting rights and voting access is unrelenting. We are tired. Some of us are in despair.

Even in these difficult times, our League has been active. Members volunteered to assist Concord Town Clerk, Kaari Mai Tari, with the extra work created by the pandemic and the increased use of mail-in ballots for the state primary in September. There will also be opportunities to help with the work of the General Election. When news came to League members that Concord Town Manager Stephen Crane was going to require the Clerk's office to move to a different physical space after the primary to accommodate renovations in the Town House, the LWVCC board quickly approved sending a letter to the Select Board outlining how this would disrupt the fall election and demanded that the move be delayed until well after the election. The town manager acquiesced to citizen outrage and postponed the move. On National Voter Registration Day, our Voter Service Chair, Cindy Nock, organized a group of League members to stand in Concord Center in suffrage sashes and costumes to encourage registration and voting. New voting awareness signs are on their way.

Our Concord Town Government Committee and Affordable Housing Subcommittee put in many hours to help the Board prepare recommendations for Concord Town Meeting. They also produced a video guide on navigating town meeting with Moderator Carmin Reiss. Carlisle members held an event on August 18 in Carlisle Center to celebrate the 19th

Amendment, 100 years after the final vote to ratify in Tennessee. Our newly formed Racial Justice Committee held an evening conversation for members with Senator Mike Barrett and Representative Tami Gouveia to discuss the police reform legislation currently in conference. And we have just had an evening discussion on Ranked Choice Voting, the subject of Ballot Question 2.

The LWVCC is actively working, sometimes in person and more often on-line, to secure our elections, empower voters through education, advocate for climate change, racial justice, equal education for all and transparency in government. You will find contact information below for our many committees. Committee chairs are always happy to welcome new members and there is much work to do this year.

In closing, I would like to share with you a thought from Rebecca Solnit on the subject of hope and despair. In 2016, she wrote: *"We may be living through times of unprecedented change, but in uncertainty lies the power to influence the future. Now is not the time to despair, but to act."* Hope is a verb; it requires action. Those working to undermine democracy want to generate despair. They promote the belief that the dark path is inevitable so everyone might as well give up and stay home. They desire inaction. That is how they win. The future is not written in stone. As Solnit says, that uncertainty provides the space where we can make our mark. Please come and help. Our League and our nation need us all. *Julie Rohwein*, President League of Women Voters of Concord-Carlisle, President@lwvcc.org.

GENERAL ELECTION INFORMATION

Yes, Virginia, there is an election coming up – Tuesday, November 3rd is the General Election where we will select our national and state leaders. To assist you, here is a brief list of information and links to answer your questions about where and when to vote. The polls will be open 7 a.m. – 8 p.m. in Concord and Carlisle.

Check out the Vote 411 link on the LWVMA website to find out who is running in your district: <https://lwvma.org/>

Registration deadlines – Concord and Carlisle: Saturday, Oct. 24 at 8 p.m.

Early voting dates/times – Concord (Oct. 17-30): Sat. and Sun. (Oct. 17, 18, 24 & 25): 12-4 p.m.; Mon.-Fri. (Oct. 19-23): 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. All early voting is at the Concord Town House hearing room, 2nd floor

Carlisle (Oct. 17-30): Sat. and Sun. (Oct. 17, 18, 24 & 25): 2-4 p.m.; Mon.–Thurs (Oct. 19-22): 10 a.m.–12 p.m., Fri. Oct 23: 10 a.m.–1 p.m.; and Fri. Oct. 30: 10 a.m.–3 p.m. All early voting is at the Carlisle Town Hall.

Concord Town Clerk's election website: <https://concordma.gov/375/Elections-Voting>

Carlisle Town Clerk's election website: <https://www.carlislema.gov/318/Voter-Registration-and-Election-Information>

LWVCC in Action -- Opportunities to Get Involved

The work of the LWVCC continues—safeguarding elections, educating voters by providing forums for discussions and smaller groups to research and study local, state and national issues.

The Voter Service Committee, under chair **Cindy Nock**, is publicizing election information in coordination with the national and state LWV. A Rally for Voting was held on Tuesday, September 22nd, National Voter Registration Day, on Monument Square in Concord. It featured League members in Suffragist costumes, holding signs, and celebrating the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote and the 100th Anniversary of the League of Women Voters. Contact Cindy at voterservice@lwvcc.org if you are interested in participating on this committee.



Barbara Lewis, Cindy Nock, Dana and Kathy Booth

The **Racial Justice Committee**, guided by **Nancy Brown**, has brought League members together to explore what role the LWVCC can play in combating racial inequality. The committee sponsored a Zoom meeting with state Senator Mike Barrett and Representative Tami Gouveia to discuss the policing bill pending in the state legislature. The legislators explained the complexity of the issues and the politics and lobbying that is happening as the conference committee seeks ways to compromise. A subsequent Zoom meeting with Concord's Chief of Police, Joseph F. O'Connor, highlighted the Chief's commitment to community policing and efforts to provide diversity training for the Concord police force. The Racial Justice Committee welcomes new members. Contact Nancy at secondvicepres@lwvcc.org if you are interested in participating.

At a September 21st Zoom meeting, **Stephan Bader**, chair of the **Events Committee**, gave a brief overview of Ranked Choice Voting (RCV), which is Ballot Question #2 on the November 3rd General Election ballot. RCV is a proposed voting system in which voters rank one or more candidates by order of preference. The ballot initiative is supported by our State League. Featured speaker was Kobe Yanks-Jacobs of the RCV movement. Kobe described the work that put RCV on the ballot and the plans to educate voters as to its merits. Watch the recorded program on the League's website, www.lwvcc.org. Contact Stephan at events@lwvcc.org if you are interested in participating on the Events Committee.

The **Concord Town Government Committee**, chaired by **Diane Proctor**, focuses on Concord town government issues. A series of First Friday programs is being planned, including the October presentation by School Superintendent, Laurie Hunter, on planning for and implementing strategies to keep Concord and Carlisle students safe in the time of COVID. Contact Diane at towngovernmentconcord@lwvcc.org if you are interested in participating.

The **Observer Corps**, chaired by First Vice President **Karlen Reed**, follows the work of town committees and gathers information that is used by the League in much of our work. Corps observers watch committee and board meetings via Zoom on the Town's YouTube channel or broadcast by the Town's Minuteman Media Network TV, then report their findings. The next

Zoom meeting of the Observer Corps is Monday, October 19. Contact Karlen at firstvicepres@lwwcc.org if you are interested in participating.

A stock of affordable housing appropriate to the needs of varied ages and stages of life is important to the long-term health of a community. The **Affordable Housing group** is working to understand Concord's housing issues and how to provide housing diversity to meet the needs of our community. The committee is actively looking for new members. Contact the chair, **Dorrie Kehoe**, at affordablehousing@lwwcc.org if you are interested in participating.

The **Education Committee**, under chair **Susan Frey**, coordinates Concord's efforts with the four-town Civics Bee and also follows the work of the School Committees as well as monitoring the progress of the Concord Middle School Building Committee. Contact Susan at education@lwwcc.org if you are interested in participating.

Concerned about the climate? Worried about sustainability? This is the place for you. The **Environment Committee** focuses on helping Concord and Carlisle residents take action in the fight to improve our environment. **Janet Rothrock** and **Alice Kaufman** are the co-chairs. Contact Janet at environment@lwwcc.org if you are interested in participating on this committee.

The **Immigration Committee** under **Nancy Cronin's** leadership continues lobbying for immigration legislation in Massachusetts – specifically working with MIRA, the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy coalition. They and other immigrant relief groups have been attempting to pass two important bills, the Safe Communities bill and the Work and Family Mobility bill. The Safe Communities bill would prevent state and county law enforcement officers from assisting federal immigration officers in the arrest of immigrants. The Work and Family Mobility bill would allow the undocumented immigrants in Massachusetts to receive drivers' licenses after training.

The Immigration Committee has also lobbied to stop the 'Public Charge' regulation which would prohibit the granting of visas and green cards to immigrants and members of their families who had received public benefits like Medicaid and food stamps from taking effect. This regulation went into effect in October 2019, but was suspended during the pandemic by the courts in August 2020. Members of the Committee have donated to Dignity in Asylum, an organization run by two Concord women which helps immigrants and refugees find and pay for housing until they become employed. If you are interested in joining, contact **Nancy Cronin** at immigration@lwwcc.org.

Communications Committee, chaired by **Ingrid Detweiler**, oversees communicating information about League events, publishes the Bulletin and other print and electronic mailings, and maintains the LWVCC website and postings on social media. Contact Ingrid at communications@lwwcc.org if you are interested in participating on this committee.

State and National Program and Action, led by Second Vice President **Nancy Brown**, coordinates the LWVCC advocacy with the work of the state and national League of Women Voters organizations. Focusing on this year's elections, they are working to protect the 2020

election by advocating for adequate funding to support a safe and fair election. The LWVMA is working for passage of Ballot Question 2, Ranked Choice Voting, in November. The LWVMA also supports a strong climate protection bill and police reform legislation. The LWVUS is working to ensure that every eligible citizen can vote without having to choose between their health and exercising the right to vote. LWVUS is also seeking to address partisan redistricting and racial gerrymandering, environmental protections and statehood for D.C. Contact Nancy Brown at secondvicepres@lwgcc.org if you are interested in participating in these groups.

The **Book Group**, led by **Mary Sterling**, selects a monthly reading and meets to discuss via Zoom. To date they have read *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation in your Own Yard*, *The Education of an Idealist* by Douglas Tallamy, A Memoir by Samantha Powers, and *The Common Good* by Robert Reich. The November 18 selection is *How to Be an Anti-Racist* by Ibram X. Kendi. The Zoom links for the Book Group will be announced in Monday Member News. Contact Mary Sterling at bookgroup@lwgcc.org if you are interested in participating on this committee.

Membership Committee, chaired by Linda Ziffrin, is busy gathering dues and welcoming new members. The LWVCC is one of the largest Leagues in New England. The committee publishes the Annual Membership Directory, recruits new members, and sponsors member events. Contact Linda at membership@lwgcc.org if you are interested in this committee.

It's time to renew your LWVCC membership! While we may not be meeting in person, a pandemic won't stop us from working together to try to create a more perfect Democracy! As a League member, we will keep you informed and updated on current issues and events with our Monday Member News and Bulletin, along with opportunities to learn and to participate in a variety of League activities.

Take a moment to renew your membership using the enclosed form or go to our website and renew online (<https://my.lwv.org/massachusetts/concord-carlisle/join-league>). Please send the form with your check (\$60 for single membership, \$90 for household) to League of Women Voters of Concord-Carlisle, PO Box 34, Concord, MA 01742, or use PayPal on our League website. We welcome your involvement and appreciate your support. **Linda Ziffrin**, Membership Chair, membership@lwgcc.org.

Carlisle Suffrage Event

The Carlisle Community came together on August 18th on the town green to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment. Many wore period dress and carried signs.

The program included remarks by, LWVCC member Barbara Lewis, Freddie Kay, founder and president of Suffrage100MA, John Troast, college sophomore and member of the board of the Carlisle Historical Society, Gina Fox, founder of Carlisle Race Amity Day, and Emmy McCormack, a high school junior. The First Religious Society church bell rang 20 times to represent 1920 at the beginning of the event, then 20 times again at the end of the program to mark 2020.



Carlisle Suffragist Parade (photo courtesy Carlisle Mosquito/Beth Clarke)

Report on LWVMA Council - June 13, 2020

LWVCC members Julie Rohwein, Nancy Brown, Karlen Reed, Nancy Beeuwkes, Diane Proctor, Stephan Bader and Linda Ziffrin attended the June 13, 2020 LWVMA Council held virtually. New board members and officers were elected, including Elizabeth Foster-Nolan who was elected Co-President. LWVCC member Judy Zaunbrecher continues as Co-President for the second year of her term.

Ricardo Ramírez, from the Voting Rights and Election Center of the Brennan Center for Justice was the keynote speaker. His presentation, "Voting during a pandemic: What we need to do over the next 5 months and beyond," outlined five components for expanding voter access. Interested members can find a link to the video of his presentation in the 2020 LWVMA Council Recap email of June 24.

Report on LWVUS Convention - Pre-Convention Caucuses June 22-24, 2020; Convention June 25-27, 2020

The virtual LWVUS Convention for 2020 began on the evening of June 25th with a panel discussion: "Expanding the Vote." Moderated by LWVUS CEO, Virginia Case, the panel featured Muriel Bowser, Mayor of Washington D.C., Alejandra Castillo, CEO of YWCA USA, Allison Riggs, Southern Coalition for Social Justice and Valerie Jarrett, former Senior Advisor to President Obama, and Co-Chair United State of Women and When We All Vote. The panel explored strategies and for protecting and expanding voting and increasing voter engagement.

The plenary was conducted over two days. There were 1241 delegates at the start of the Plenary including six voting members of LWVCC: Julie Rohwein, Launa Zimmaro, Nancy Cronin, Nancy Beeuwkes, Diane Proctor and Stephan Bader, plus several LWVCC observers. Business included adoption of the budget, the election of new board members and officers, and the adoption of the LWVUS Program for the next biennium. The program adopted was the proposed "Making Democracy Work," consisting of Voting Rights, Improving Elections, Campaign Finance/Money in Politics, and Redistricting with one addition: Abolition of the Electoral College.

Two positions were adopted by concurrence: the proposed position on Electoral Systems, and the LWV New Mexico position on the Transfer of Federal Lands. Three resolutions were also adopted: A resolution reaffirming LWV's commitment to immigration reform, offered by the LWV of Oregon, a resolution calling for an immediate, wide-scale, mobilization by the United States that restores, protects, and funds an ecologically sustainable environment and climate, offered by the LWV of Arapahoe and Douglas Counties, and an emergency resolution against systemic racism in the justice system and, at a minimum, for preventing excessive force and brutality by law enforcement, offered by LWV of Missouri in conjunction with 20 state and 27 local leagues.

LWV CEO Virginia Case spoke about democracy under attack and how the LWV can stand on its positions to defend the Constitution and fight for justice. The newly elected President, Dr. Deborah Turner, spoke of our duty to eliminate voter suppression and reinvigorate voter engagement at all levels. She also addressed the need to be good allies in the ongoing struggle for civil rights. CBS News Anchor, Norah O'Donnell delivered the convention keynote address on the 100th anniversary of the founding of the League and the critical issues that must be addressed today to expand and protect voting rights.

The Convention was preceded by three days of caucuses on a variety of topics. Members can find recordings of the convention speakers, the panel on expanding the vote, and many of the caucuses by visiting lww.org. Navigate to "League Management" and then "Conventions and Councils" to find "Convention 2020." *Julie Rohwein, Nancy Cronin, and Nancy Beeuwkes.*

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CONCORD SUFFRAGIST VIGNETTE with Barbara Lewis, Kathy and Dana Booth, and Cindy Nock