

The Voter

President's Message

I hope everybody is enjoying the summer so far. Most local leagues do not meet in the summer, but some activities like voter registration will be ongoing. We can also expect opportunities to participate in demonstrations and rallies to protest government actions that violate our Constitution and threaten our democracy. The LWVUS will give us guidance on when we can participate as League members or when we should participate as individuals.

The LWVUS has declared that our country is in a constitutional crisis and has initiated the [Unite and Rise 8.5 campaign](#). They are asking League members to sign the [Unite & Rise Commitment Form](#) to support the initiative. By signing, individuals commit to supporting the movement and will receive focused updates every 90 days. The LWVUS is also encouraging members [to take action opposing the cuts to Medicaid](#) and to [oppose the SAVE Act](#). I encourage you to support the LWVUS work and respond to these action alerts.

The LWVMT has several statewide projects that members from any of the local leagues can participate in, if interested. Nancy Leifer is chair of the committee launching a grant-funded video storytelling project with the working title "Stories of Democracy." This project is focused on educating people about our Montana Constitution leading into the 2030 election when we vote on whether or not to have a constitutional convention to revise it.

Rebecca Johnson is chair of our Voter Services Committee and our Civics Education Committee. She will ensure all of our local leagues are

complying with the new voter registration laws passed by the 2025 Legislature.

While the Montana Legislature only meets for 90 days every other year, a great deal of work happens between sessions. The state league can follow some of this work with a state Observer Corps if members are interested. Members of the Observer Corps could follow legislative interim committee meetings, PSC meetings and regulatory rule making meetings. If you want to join the LWVMT Observer Corps, please send an email to me at montanalwvpres@gmail.com.

The rest of this newsletter is a report by Nancy Leifer on the Montana LWV State Convention that was held in Bozeman on May 3 and 4. Many thanks to the Bozeman League for doing a fabulous job organizing everything.

A significant change that occurred at the convention was Nancy Leifer stepping down as the President of the LWVMT after serving for eight years. My comments from the convention thanking Nancy for the incredible job she has done can be [downloaded here](#).

[Here are my comments](#) from the convention introducing myself as your new President. I look forward to working with League members from across the state to empower voters and defend democracy. We live in challenging times and all of us who support our democracy need to step up in whatever capacity we can.

~ Rosanne Nash, President, LWV Montana

Report on the League of Women Voters of Montana Convention 2025

Making the Case for Democracy

The Bozeman League welcomes more than 50 Montana League members to the State Convention



By Nancy Leifer

The Convention was held on May 3-4, 2025, at the Beall Park Community Center, a beautiful historic building surrounded by a park near downtown Bozeman. The initial welcome was offered by incoming Bozeman League President Jane Arntzen Schumacher and Gallatin County Commissioner and Bozeman League Member Jennifer Boyer.

A Special **Thank You** to the Bozeman League for hosting a wonderful convention! And thanks to Bozeman member, Red Audiss, who took the photos published here on Sunday, May 4.

Delegates elect new LWV Montana State Officers



Becky Piske, Rebecca Johnson, Cherri Jones, Gerrie Beck, Nancy Leifer, Bonnie Lorenzen, Patti Borneman, and Rosanne Nash.

At the Sunday morning business meeting, there were 26 delegates representing all four local Leagues thereby constituting a quorum so the business of the League could proceed. Delegates unanimously elected new officers for the state League:

Rosanne Nash, President - Rosanne is a past President of the Bozeman League and is the outgoing Vice-President of the Montana League.

Bonnie Lorenzen, Vice-President - Bonnie is a past President of the Billings League and was the Billings League representative on the state board.

Cherri Jones, Secretary - Cherri is also President of the Helena League and was the Helena representative on the state board.

Patricia Borneman, Treasurer - Patti is continuing as state Treasurer, and is also the communications and VOTER editor for the Montana State and the Helena Area League.

The new state League board met immediately following the Convention. Here are the additional appointed board members:

- Rebecca Johnson, (Helena League) state Voter Services Chair
- Becky Piske, (Helena League) state Membership Chair
- Nancy Leifer, (Missoula League) Montana Constitution 2030 Projects Chair
- Pam Dimich, Billings League representative
- Jane Arntzen Schumacher, Bozeman League representative
- Celeste Jazwinski, Helena League representative
- Frankie Feinstein and Mary LaPorte, President, Missoula League representatives

Welcome, new LWV Montana Board Members!

Other Items Approved by the Voting Delegates at the Convention

- **The Program for 2025-2026.** [Click here](#) to download.
- **The Budget for the 2025-2027 biennium.** [Click here](#) to download.
- **Changes to the LWV Montana Bylaws** to accommodate the new dues structure. [Click here](#) to download.

Other Highlights of the Convention

Keynote address from **John Adams**, Executive Director and founder of Montana Free Press (MTFP), presented the case for investigative journalism and the crucial role it plays in a democracy. John cited research that confirms citizen engagement and democracy are stronger when there is a trustworthy local news source. MTFP is Montana's first on-line news service, and has been winning awards since 2020. MTFP's mission is to get high quality journalism to Montanans. It offers free access to all of its articles for everyone, including citizen readers and other news organizations that can re-print or carry MTFP articles free of charge. Go to: <https://montanafreepress.org/>

Vanessa Zamora Moreno, Executive Director of *Bienvenidos a Gallatin Valley*, reflected on the challenges facing Spanish-speaking immigrants in becoming U.S. citizens, especially now. As Vanessa noted, the process to become a citizen is not easy or quick, and can take 10 years or more. While people are in this process, they are not illegal aliens, nor are they undocumented. Every step of the process has specific qualifications and legal status. People legally in the process are now threatened with deportation simply for not having completed it. Go to: <https://bienvenidosgv.org/>

Anne Harris, Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and founder of the Western Montana Community Center, offered a workshop on LGBTQ basic concepts and myths about transgender individuals. Anne herself is a transgender person. She offered examples of more accurate wording to use, such as "gay" rather than homosexual; "all genders" rather than male or female; "assigned male or female at birth" rather than born male or female. Anne also offered medical science-based responses to the myths being presented by the anti-trans movement. The handout from her presentation can be [downloaded here](#).

Report on Two Years of State League Actions

Nancy Leifer, outgoing state League president, presented a report on the actions and accomplishments of the state League over the past two years. Highlights include:

- The League was a plaintiff in two lawsuits on legislation from the 2023 session in state court. HB 892 that threatened voter registration was declared unconstitutional in federal court, based in part on testimony presented by the League's legal team at the state's initial hearing. The suit on HB 562 challenges "community choice" charter schools being funded with public tax dollars with no public oversight and is still in progress.
- Democracy Champions, a 6-part introduction to the League for members and potential leaders, was offered November 2023 to May 2024. This series will be offered again November 2025 to May 2026. Watch for more information.
- Braver Angels training offered two sessions in October and November 2024 to help League members have conversations across political lines.
- Bill McKibben event on the Climate Crisis, partnered with the Bozeman League in September of 2024, had about 400 attendees.
- Two events featuring former Montana governors Marc Racicot and Steve Bullock, and ConCon delegate Mae Nan Ellingson, on "Preserving Our Democracy" in late summer of 2024, one of which was in partnership with the Helena League.
- Co-sponsored the 2025 Policy Leadership Institute organized by Catalyst MT (newly formed organization from the merger of Montana Women Vote and Montana Human Rights Network). Two League members from Bozeman attended.
- Partnered with Catalyst MT to send letter to all candidates for the Montana legislature in October of 2024 with fact sheet on the role of Montana's Supreme Court.
- Hosted Judicial Study Panel discussion for the LWV US Justice Study, featuring League members Carolyn Ostby (retired federal judge), and Susan Dana and Ann Gilkey, attorneys.
- Promoted League member participation in the Carter Center's Montana 2024 Election Observation Initiative, a first for the Carter Center within the United States.
- Hosted Southeast Asian Mansfield Fellow Cor Encabo, a mid-career fellow from the Philippines and a leader in youth engagement.
- Established statewide Voter Services working group to collaborate statewide on voter services projects including obtaining grants for outreach to former felons and to newly naturalized citizens.
- Established statewide Education working group that researched and created materials and suggested changes to the state's Education position, lead the process of updating the position.
- Established statewide working groups on Affordable Housing and Climate Change.
- Secured \$25,000 grant for special video project "Stories of Democracy."
- Secured \$5,000 donation and partnership with the Montana Free Press to offer VOTE411 statewide for the 2024 election for all candidates for legislature, district courts, and statewide offices.

- Published seven Guest Opinion pieces in state major newspapers. All of these Guest Editorials are posted on the LWV Montana website: <https://my.lwv.org/montana/articles>
 1. CI-126 and CI-127
 2. Local Government Review
 3. Importance of Voting in the Primary
 4. Including Inactive Voters in petition signature count
 5. Democracy vs. Autocracy
 6. Speak up and Vote
 7. Voting is Safe and Secure
- For the first time in recent memory, had a full delegation of Montana League members participate in the LWV US National Convention in 2024 – 12 voting delegates plus one observer!

If you would like to become involved in any of the ongoing activities and working groups, send an email to: montanalwv@gmail.com

Report on the League's 2025 Montana Legislative Session

The League's Legislative Action Committee faced a double whammy challenge for the 2025 session: the Legislature had a whole new website complete with glitches that League members had to learn from scratch; and the League's Outreach Circle software that we relied on for the past two sessions no longer worked, requiring the Action Committee to design new ways to get Action Alerts and bill information to League members.

Despite these challenges, the Action Committee tracked 97 bills during the session, submitted official LWV Montana testimony on 50 of these bills, sent out 38 multi-bill Action Alerts (about two per week) to the 217 League members who signed up, and hosted 16 Wednesday Night Zoom meetings "This Week at the Legislature."

For a more complete report on the League's actions, what passed, and what didn't, [download the report here](#).

NEW CONTACT EMAIL ADDRESSES FOR THE STATE LEAGUE!

Going forward, look for emails from the state League as coming from one of these two email addresses:

- montanalwv@gmail.com - generic email address for the state League
- montanalwvpres@gmail.com - emails from the LWV Montana state president

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