

LWW LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®] OF LEXINGTON

BULLETIN, March, 2024

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEXINGTON

Greetings from the Convener's Desk

Congratulations to Deborah Brown, League member, on her reelection as Town Moderator (16th year), Melinda Walker, League member on her reelection to the Lexington Housing Authority and to Melanie Thompson, League member, on her reelection to the Lexington Planning Board. We look forward to their work !

The following League members were elected, or reelected to Town Meeting on March 5, 2024: Judy Zabin, Barbara Katzenberg, and Taylor Singh. Congratulations! And League members who were elected to the Democratic Town Committee for the next four years are: Margaret Coppe, Margaret Heitz, Taylor Singh, Rita Goldberg, Eileen Zalisk, Robert, Zalisk, Joseph Pato, Michelle Ciccolo, and Jeanne Canale.

On March 21, I was the speaker at the LexSeeHer Speaker Series on zoom from the Cary Library. I presented a history of the Lexington League along with my personal journey with the League, using clippings and archival photos from the League's activities over the years. The League will be hosting the LexSeeHer committee at our May first Friday (May 3) to learn about the women's monument due to be installed in Lexington on May 15.

LexSeeHer SPEAKER SERIES Register at LexSeeHer.com/SpeakerSeries

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH
MARGARET COPPE
March 21, 2024

Civics In Action: Margaret Coppe will share a history of the League of Women Voters of Lexington, giving context for the work of monument honorees Ruth Morey and Marge Battin, and will speak about her civic engagement!

Thursday, MARCH 21st
7:00-8:00 PM
Event on Zoom
tinyurl.com/lexspeakerseries

The poster features a circular photo of Margaret Coppe, a woman with glasses and a blue lanyard, holding a smartphone. Below the text is a small, faded historical photograph of several women sitting at a table.

I have also been busy moderating Candidate Events in Winchester, Dracut, Arlington, and Westwood. It is interesting to hear what issues are current in our neighboring towns.

Margaret Coppe, Convener

mecoppe@gmail.com

LEXINGTON LWV FIRST FRIDAY FORUM, APRIL 5, 2024: STATUS OF GUN CONTROL LEGISLATION IN MASSACHUSETTS

On Friday, April 5, at 9:30 am at the Lexington Community Center, the Lexington LWV will present **Jennifer Muroff, Legislative Action Committee Chair for the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts**, who will update us on the status of gun control legislation in the state, and the advocacy work of the League on this topic.

In 2022, the Massachusetts House voted 120-38 in support of wide-ranging legislation which broadened and strengthened gun control measures in the state. It prohibits bringing a gun into schools or government buildings and polling locations. It expands the state's "red flag" law, imposes new requirements to slow the spread of "ghost guns," updates the state's ban on assault weapons, and streamlines the process of gun registration. Ms. Muroff will explain how much more there still is to do, and what bills are currently supported by the League. The state League Legislative Action Committee includes 20 volunteers who track the progress of bills on Beacon Hill and advocate for League positions as they move through each legislative session. More than 175 League-supported bills have passed this session.

Ms. Muroff joined the LWVMA in 2017 as a legislative specialist on immigrants' rights and gun violence prevention. She received a Commonwealth Heroine Award for this work in 2019. She has served as a board member of the Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence, a coalition of more than 100 organizations working to eradicate gun violence throughout the state, and has also been an active advocate for families and children, as well as immigrant rights and criminal justice reform.

This program is the seventh in the 2023-2024 the First Friday Forum series hosted by the Lexington League of Women Voters to promote awareness and understanding of public policy issues. All League events are open to the public with opportunities for question from the attendees. It will also be recorded by LexMedia for later viewing.

For more information on the League and this program, go to <https://my.lwv.org/massachusetts/lexington>

DOES PROVISION FOR PARKING DETERMINE HOW WE LIVE? A CONVERSATION WITH JOURNALIST HENRY GRABAR ESTABROOK HALL, APRIL 25, 2024

The Lexington League, with generous support from Town Transportation Manager Susan Barrett and League member and transportation activist Pamela Lyons, is sponsoring an evening conversation with **Henry Grabar**, author of the recent book, **Paved Paradise: How Parking Explains the World**. The event will be held at **Estabrook Hall, in the Cary Memorial Building, at 6:30 pm on Thursday, April 25, 2024.**

A staff writer at Slate's online site, where he writes the Metropolis column on issues of housing, transportation and the environment, **Henry Grabar** is currently a Loeb Fellow at the Harvard Graduate School of Design. In 2023 he published **Paved Paradise**, which he describes as, in part, the story of how we destroyed our cities in search of more and more available parking and the people who helped make it so - the mall builders, mobsters, police and the politicians, the garage magnates and community groups. There are new alternatives in the works for dealing with traffic and parking which he also presents in the book.

This topic is particularly pertinent now, as Lexington looks to increase its housing stock, and will be dealing with issues of siting and services. The program is free and open to the public, and the League urges Lexington citizens to attend and join in the conversation. For more information, contact League Convenor Margaret Coppe at mecoppe@gmail.com.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS

LWVMA EVENTS

LOCAL LEAGUES ACTIVITY REPORT FOR 2023

The LWVMA has released its Local Leagues Activity Report for 2023, which can be found at : <https://lwvma.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Local-League-Activity-Report-2023-Final.pdf>.

The League of Women Voters was founded in 1920 to empower women, who had earned the right to vote that year, to make informed voting decisions. Although our

mission has expanded to empowering all voters, supporting informed voting continues to be a major part of our work.

The focus of the 2023 Report is on activities that further the League's mission: **Empowering Voters – Defending Democracy**, which is broadly categorized as:

- Encouraging informed and active participation in government; ;
- Working to increase understanding of major public policy issues; and
- Influencing public policy through education and advocacy.

There are 42 active local Leagues in Massachusetts serve 147 cities and towns, providing nonpartisan voter engagement activities to over 2,347,016 registered voters in those municipalities—48% of all registered voters in Massachusetts.

Local Leagues reported 437 individual activities, including events, election resources, and other projects. More than half of the activities reported were categorized as Voter Engagement or Public Policy/Civic Education. Check out the Report for more detail.

LWVMA ADVOCACY

Urge Your Legislators to Ensure Hybrid/Remote Access to Public Meetings

Massachusetts legislators are considering a bill, the Governor's Municipal Empowerment Act - S.2571 – that would allow municipal bodies like city councils, select boards, and school committees to hold meetings in any format they choose—hybrid, remote-only, or in-person-only. This is problematic for people with disabilities, childcare responsibilities, transportation issues, atypical work schedules and others who can't always attend public meetings in person.

Since the start of the pandemic, when cities and towns started holding remote and hybrid meetings, there has been an explosion of participation in local government. This has been a tremendous boon for democracy, and now is the time to maximize access, not limit it. It would be a serious step backward to leave the decision whether to provide any kind of remote meeting access completely up to local officials.

The LWVMA is supporting a better bill: [H.3040/S.2024](#) that would guarantee **hybrid participation** under the Open Meeting Law with remote access as the default if hybrid technology is not yet available. You are urged to ask your Senator and Representative to support [H.3040/S.2024](#) to guarantee hybrid/remote participation in local government under the Open Meeting Law.

LWVMA SUPPORTS NEW STANDARDS FOR SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has finalized new standards for sexual health education. [S.268/H.544](#), *An Act relative to healthy youth*, requires the use of these comprehensive standards for schools that choose to offer sex education. As a member of the [Healthy Youth Act Coalition](#), the LWVMA supports this legislation to require scientifically accurate sex education in public schools.

The Massachusetts Senate has passed [S.268](#) five times, but House Speaker has indicated that he continues to prefer a wait-and-see approach. Please call or email your state representative today and ask them to bring the Healthy Youth Act to the House floor for a vote. For those who would like some guidance on how to approach this topic with your legislators, below is a sample script:

*Subject: Urge leadership to bring H.544, An Act relative to healthy youth, to the floor for a vote
The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) supports teaching medically accurate, age-appropriate, and inclusive sex education in our public schools.*

Although the new MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) guidelines on health and sex education are a positive step, the Commonwealth does not require schools that offer sex education to use them. H.544, An Act relative to healthy youth, would compel schools to use the updated guidelines, which include coverage of consent before engaging in a sexual relationship. Schools can still opt out of teaching sex education, and parents are also allowed to opt their children out of these classes.

Please urge House leadership to bring this bill to the floor for a vote before the end of formal session on July 31.

Thank you for your consideration.

Remember to include your name and complete address, and of course, personalize your communications as you wish.

LWVMA WORKS TO ENSURE FIREARMS ARE PROHIBITED AT MASSACHUSETTS POLLING STATIONS

The Massachusetts House and Senate have passed different versions of firearms bills: [H.4139](#), *An Act modernizing firearm laws* in October and [S.2572](#), *An Act to sensibly address firearm violence through effective reform*, the SAFER Act, in February.

A conference committee of three representatives and three senators has been appointed to iron out the differences between the two bills: Senator Cindy Creem, Representative Michael Day, Senator Joan Lovely, Senator Bruce Tarr, Representative Carlos Gonzalez and Representative Joseph McKenna. LWVMA has sent a letter to the Conference Committee (<https://lwwma.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/LWVMA-letter-to-firearms-conference-committee.pdf>) and now asks League members to address these issues:

1. The House bill explicitly prohibits firearms at polling locations. The Senate bill does not because firearms are currently prohibited in schools and municipal buildings. However, 438 of the 2,387 polling stations in Massachusetts, or 18.3%, are *not* located in schools or municipal buildings. They are located within houses of worship, elderly housing, social clubs, even grocery stores.
2. The Senate bill offers municipalities the option to allow licensed gun owners the right to carry firearms in municipal government buildings.

Please call or email your state senator and state representative and urge them to contact the members of the conference committee to ensure firearms are prohibited from polling locations.

LWVMA VOTER SERVICE

WORKING ON VOTER ENGAGEMENT IN 2024

Please consider joining LWVMA's Voter Engagement Committee! We have two new, dynamic women leading this committee – Jessica Vocaturo and Samantha Giffen – and there is a LOT to do for the 2024 election--drafting candidate questionnaires for the state-wide races; partnering with our allies to do voter registration in under-resourced communities; assessing polling places for disability access; voter turn-out efforts and more. Jess and Sam are focusing the committee's work on four areas: (1) voter registration; (2) voter education (including VOTE411 and candidate forums); (3) voter turnout and (4) partnership building.

Please email Jess or Sam to get involved at voterengagement@lwwma.org.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE UNITED STATES

LWVUS EVENTS

VICE PRESIDENT SANIA CHOUDHURY IRWIN ASSUMES PRESIDENCY OF THE LWVUS

INTERIM CEO POSITION WILL BE COVERED BY CHIEF OF PROGRAMS ALMA COUVERTHIE AND CHIEF OF STAFF KELLY MCFARLAND

Over the past month, the national organization of the League of Women Voters lost both its President, with the untimely death of Dr. Deborah Ann Turner, and its CEO, Virginia Kase Solomon, who is moving on to Common Cause. In accordance with the national League Bylaws, Vice President Sania Choudhury Irwin has stepped into the President's role. While the national board undertakes a search for a new CEO, those responsibilities will be handled on an interim basis by former Chief of Programs Alma Courverthie and former Chief of Staff Kelly McFarland.

The LWVUS continues to pay tribute to Dr. Turner as a devoted advocate for women's rights and voting rights, and refers members to the Memorial Page found on the League website: www.lwv.org. The League also acknowledges the critical role that Virginia Kase Solomon has played in guiding our 103-year-old organization through a period of rapid growth and transformation, and expresses gratitude for her leadership.

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN FOR THE 2024 NATIONAL CONVENTION: *TURN UP AND TURN OUT*

Registration is now open (until June 10) for the 2024 National Convention to be held at the Washington, D.C. Hilton from June 27 to 30. The Convention will be a fully hybrid experience, with combined and unique experiences for in-person and virtual attendees. League members are invited to attend the National Convention as voting delegates or as observers. For more information and to register, go to: <https://web.cvent.com/event/07627034-5f27-44a8-8363-5805fab4b0ef/summary?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=d30d8e9e-6763-49d8-b6a4-ac1d5f1ccac0>.

NATIONAL LEAGUE UPDATES DEI POLICY

In January, 2024, the LWVMA reviewed and updated its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy. Below is the updated text:

Discrimination or harassment of any kind will not be accepted within the League, including but not limited to race, socio-economic status, age, ability status, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, gender identity, or marital status. The League is committed to fostering, cultivating, and preserving a culture of diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and belonging for all people. The League is an organization that respects and values the richness of our community and our members. The collective sum of our individual differences and life experiences represents not only our culture, but our reputation and the organization's mission and achievements as well.

*

LWVUS ADVOCACY

LWVUS ASKS ALL LEAGUE MEMBERS TO URGE THEIR SENATORS TO SUPPORT THE JLVRAA

In February, the U.S. Senate re-introduced S4, the **John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (JLVRAA)** which was drafted to fully restore and modernize the **Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA)**.

The VRA was landmark legislation which sought to eliminate discriminatory barriers preventing Black voters from exercising their right to vote. In the decades since its original passage, it has been consistently reauthorized with bipartisan support in the Congress and signed by Presidents of both political parties. However, in 2013, in **Shelby County v. Holder**, the U.S. Supreme Court considered a challenge to sections of the VRA which required certain states and local governments with an established history of discrimination to obtain federal preclearance before implementing any changes in their voting laws or practices. The Court held that these requirements were unconstitutional and thus invalid, because they were based on 40-year-old data. Since that decision, numerous discriminatory voting laws have passed across the country, chipping away at the essential guarantees of the VRA.

The John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, is named for the legendary Congressman John R. Lewis, who represented Georgia in the House of Representatives from 1987 to his death in 2020. It is vital to restoring the original VRA and stopping the tide of discriminatory laws that followed Shelby County v. Holder. It will ensure renewed federal oversight, accountability, and greater justice to all voters of whatever color or status.

The LWVUS urges all League members to contact their Senators to express support for this legislation and speed its passage.

DO NOT FORGET THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

Despite significant advances made in recent decades, women and others continue to face discrimination based on sex. This is clear in our ongoing fights against unequal pay, workplace harassment, pregnancy discrimination, domestic violence, limited access to comprehensive health care, and more.

The Equal Rights Amendment will protect the equality of rights under the law regardless of sex in the United States. It will provide a vital tool to the judicial branch to combat discrimination, prevent the rollback of equal rights, and pave the way for additional legislative progress.

The ERA has already met the very high bar for amending the Constitution. In 1972, Congress passed it with more than a 2/3 vote, and, in 2020, Virginia became the 38th and final state needed to ratify it. However, more than four years later, the ERA is still awaiting publication. We do not want to let another year go by without equality as the law of the land.

The good news is that there is a bipartisan, congressional resolution affirming the validity of the ERA as part of the Constitution. The League is working tirelessly to demand federal action, but constituent voices MATTER. Take one minute now to urge your members of Congress to act and ensure that this is the last International Women's Day without the ERA!

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH QUIZ

Women's History Month is drawing to a close, but the LWVUS reminds us that there is still time for you to test your historical knowledge by answering the questions below about the women who have shaped our democracy. Answers are at the bottom of the quiz.

Which voting rights advocate battled racial segregation and voter suppression while founding the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party?

- a. Claudette Colvin
- b. Sarah Remond
- c. Ella Baker
- d. Fannie Lou Hamer

Which of these first ladies was a delegate to the United Nations?

- a. Laura Bush
- b. Lou Hoover
- c. Eleanor Roosevelt
- d. Lady Bird Johnson

The matrilineal Haudenosaunee government is also believed to be...

- a. The inspiration for the US system of government
- b. The oldest living participatory democracy
- c. A model for suffragists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott
- d. All of the above

Barbara Jordan, the first Black woman elected to state Senate, served in the state of...

- a. California
- b. Texas
- c. New York
- d. Idaho

Suffragist and anti-xenophobia advocate Mabel Ping-Hua Lee once famously led a suffrage parade while...

- a. Wearing an American flag fashioned as a dress
- b. Tossing donuts to the crowd
- c. Riding horseback through the streets
- d. Disguised as a famous local politician

Who is believed to be the first woman elected to public office
(Superintendent of her community's schools) in the US?

- a. Julia C. Addington
- b. Cora Belle Reynolds Anderson
- c. Hattie Wyatt Caraway
- d. Ella T. Grasso

Patsy Mink ran for President of the US in 1972 on what stance?

- a. Pro-education
- b. Anti-war
- c. Anti-racism
- d. Pro-tax reform

In addition to being the first Latina in Congress, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen was
also the first Republican to support...

- a. The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act
- b. The Marriage Equality Act
- c. The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act
- d. The Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act

This anonymous group advocates for women and people of color through
their bold works of art (all while wearing masks)

- a. The Nasty Girls
- b. The Good Girls
- c. The Riot Girls
- d. The Guerilla Girls

The first suffrage group for Black women, formed by Ida B. Wells-
Barnett, was called...

- a. The Alpha Suffrage Club
- b. The Beta Club for the Vote
- c. The Beta Phi Suffrage Club
- d. The Alpha Club for the Vote

Who wrote the Equal Rights Amendment?

- a. Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton
 - b. Lucy Stone and Elizabeth Blackwell
 - c. Lucretia Mott and Lucy Burns
 - d. Alice Paul and Crystal Eastman
-

Answers: d, c, d, b, c, a, b, b, d,

LWVMA INTRODUCES A NEW LOGO FOR 2024

After a poll of the membership, where several alternative voting logos were offered, the LWVMA has chosen a new logo for 2024.



It speaks to us!

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

SAVE THE DATE

April 5, 2024	LWV First Friday Forum: Gun Control 9:30 am Community Center
April 25, 2024	Henry Grabar: Conversation on Parking 6:30 pm Estabrook Hall, Cary Memorial Building
June 27-30, 2024	LWVUS Biennial Convention Washington, D.C.

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 April 2024 Lexington LWV Bulletin, please send it to Wendy Manz at wendy_manz@yahoo.com by March 30, 2024.