

The Voter

April 2025



Monthly Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of the Helena Area

April 2025 Calendar

(read on for details)

- Saturday, April 5 - **Hands Off Rally** - Noon to 2 pm - State Capitol
- Tuesday, April 22 - **Annual Membership Meeting** - Please come and vote!
- Thursday, April 24 - **Book Club** continuing with Maria Ressa
- Monday, April 28 - **Our Public Schools: Levies, Laws & Local Impact** - a meeting with local school officials recapping the legislative session and local district issues.

SAVE THESE DATES!

- May 3-4 - **Montana LWV Convention** - Bozeman - Register by April 18!
- May 22 - **Empowering Presenters with News Literacy Knowledge**



Reflections, Gratitude, and Fun!

By Sharon Haugen, Co-President

It has been such a privilege to have served as your co-President for the last two years. Before I joined the League, I had familiarity with the League, because earlier members asked me to address the group on different land use issues. Little did I know the depth and breadth of this group.

My tenure here has taught the importance of ensuring that all

eligible voters have access to this right and the importance of everyone to take part in this process. I have also learned that the League has played a vital role in educating the public on different issues that are affecting the community on the local, state, and national level.

The League is also actively engaged in lobbying the Montana Legislature on issues and positions adopted by the League that affect our rights as citizens, such as preserving our beloved Montana Constitution. The League is making a difference.

But the most valuable lesson I learned is that the greater Helena community is the home to many enthusiastic men and women who care about taking part in the fight for defending democracy. All our members are knowledgeable, talented, and dedicated to the cause. Different people bring different talents and it is amazing to watch how all these people work together to make things happen.

It is fun to hear about events that will educate us and make us better advocates for our community. It is also equally fun to march in events like the Pride and Stampede parades. It is fun to see how excited 18-year-olds get when they register to vote for the first time. Getting to know each other at these and other events is what really makes this experience worth it. The League offers this opportunity to meet with others who share your beliefs and commitment to the future and to learn different points of view on what that means.

So, it is with great sincerity that I thank you for the privilege of serving as your Co-President. Thank you for the friendships and the lessons I learned. We have strong leadership in our new officers and the Board and our committees are strong. As challenging as it all may be at times, remember, we will move forward together.

Takeaways from the Coordinated Land Use Planning Meeting on March 27

Now is the time for citizens to get involved!



L-R: Lewis and Clark County director of community development and planning **Greg McNally**, Helena director of Community Development **Christopher Brink**, and East Helena Public Works director **Kevin Ore**. Watch the recording at [Helena Civic TV](#).

Two important opportunities for citizen input ...

Opportunity #1: Creating and maintaining a greenway across the Helena Valley and connecting the City of Helena with the City of East Helena can happen according to Lewis and Clark County Planner Greg McNally. Attendees at the Thursday, March 27 land use planning meeting at the Library were told by Director McNally that it will take strong and committed citizen involvement in the current land use discussion process to make this happen. Go to the Lewis and Clark County's webpage [Charting our Future: Lewis and Clark County Growth Policy 2025 Draft](#).

Opportunity #2: Helena Forward History. Legacy, 41-page document covering the first five chapters of the consultant's draft document is available for public comment. **The document will be discussed on Thursday, April 3 at 6:00 pm by the City Planning Commission.** The meeting is by Zoom only. [Log on to the meeting at this webpage](#).

Visit the [Helena Forward webpage](#) to preview the draft Land Use Plan (scroll down to Documents and download the document at the top of the list).

Why is it important to attend the planning commission meeting on April 3? Initially, the planning commission will be tasked with the development, adoption, review, and approval of a new Land Use Plan and Future Land Use Map and updating the City Zoning regulations and zoning map and updating the subdivision regulations.

Once fully established and all requirements of the Montana Land Use Planning Act (MLUPA) established during the 2023 Montana Legislative Session are being met, the Planning Commission will not only be tasked with the amendments to these documents, but also with hearing and deciding on appeals from any site-specific land use decisions made by the City Planning Administrator.

~ Mary "Mickey" Harlow, Chair, Local Government Committee



***Thank you, Mickey, from all of us
at LWVHA!***

Many of us worked hard to present this meeting. But hands down, **Mary "Mickey" Harlow** was the key to it all. Her organizational skills, her follow-up, her scripts and timelines and questions, her contacting the speakers, organizing the PR, being interviewed on KCAP's Cup of Joe about this program, and a lovely presentation to the speakers of our new LWV mugs filled with candy.

High Five, Mickey! You are the organizer extraordinaire when it comes to bringing busy public servants and busy LWVHA members together for a public program.

A round of applause to Mary "Mickey" Harlow for bringing the important topic of land use planning before the citizens of the Helena area.

~ Becky Piske, former Co-President of LWVHA



Come for the pizza and cookies!

Stay for the good of the League!



ANNUAL BUSINESS MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Tuesday, April 22, 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.

In person at Lewis & Clark Library & on Zoom

Each year we call our members to an annual business meeting to celebrate our accomplishments over the past year and to plan our activities for the coming year. Since our fiscal year begins April 1, we also take care of business, which usually means voting on changes to our bylaws, positions, studies, and electing officers to serve on the Helena Area LWV board.

In mid-February we sent a 30-day advance notice of changes to our budget, bylaws and positions. If you didn't have a chance to download this information yet, you can [download the meeting packet now](#). Prepare for the business part of the meeting! We'll have fun, too!

Preliminary Agenda

- Welcome, Announcements
- Nominations and Votes
- Approval of 2025 Budget
- Review of Proposed Bylaws Change
- Annual Review of LWVHA Principles – DEI, Non-Partisanship
- Review of Positions
- Committee Accomplishments (PowerPoint) 2024
- Honoring Members

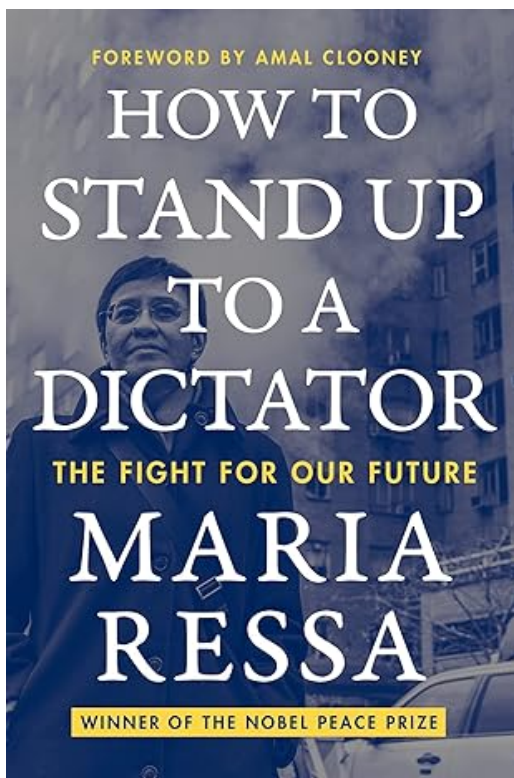


Celeste Jazwinski Nominee for Board Vice President

Celeste is a retired Registered Nurse who has lived in Helena since 1998. She joined our local League in 2024. She jumped right in and got involved with the Health Care and Local Government committees. She says, "I am honored to be nominated for the position of Vice President on the LWVHA board of directors."

PLANNING TO ATTEND THIS MEETING VIA ZOOM?

If attending via Zoom, please [preregister for the Zoom link](#) so we can plan accordingly. After you register, the Zoom link will be emailed to you. Thanks!



Helena-Area LWV Book Club

Thursday, April 24 on Zoom
6:00 to 7:00 pm

We've been reading Nobel Peace Prize winner and journalist Maria Ressa's book and listening to interviews with her. LWV Montana is also encouraging all Montana members to read this book and/or watch the linked broadcasts below prior to the May 3-4 State Convention in Bozeman.

We will pick up our discussion about Maria Ressa's work in late April. We'll have more time to read her book and watch the videos linked below:

For more information, visit the [Harper Collins website](#). This book is available at Lewis & Clark Library, on Hoopla Digital, and on Audible.

Please join us whether you've read the book or not!

- 2021 PBS Frontline documentary, "[A Thousand Cuts](#)."
- [PBS Interview](#) on the state of US democracy.
- [Maine Public Television Interview](#) from February 11, 2025.

**Click here to log into
Zoom**



Our Public Schools: Levies, Laws, and Local Impact

Monday, April 28, 2025 - 6:00 pm

In-person at Lewis & Clark Library

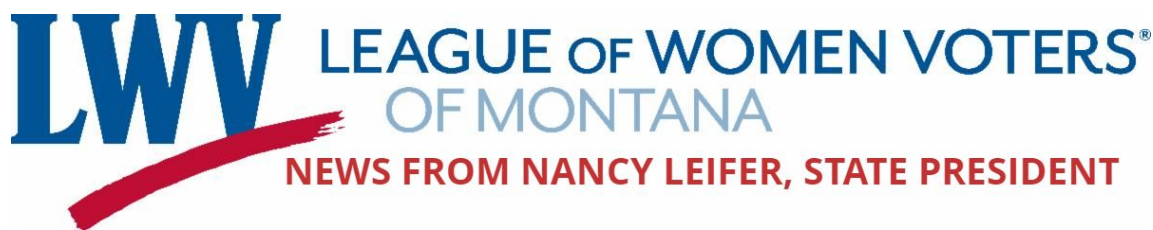
Join your Helena neighbors to learn about upcoming school levies on the ballot, legislative updates and local impacts of some recent state and federal actions.

Helena Public Schools Superintendent **Rex Weltz** will open the meeting with a brief overview of how Helena funds its schools, what the general fund levy is, and why it's needed. He'll also address upcoming tech levies on the ballot for the elementary and high schools. And he'll explain the local impacts of recent federal actions to shut down the U.S. Department of Education.

Rob Watson, executive director of the School Administrators of Montana, has been asked to speak about major education bills coming out of the Montana legislature, including the school funding interim commission (10 year review).

The meeting will close with a question-and-answer session.

This public event is sponsored by the League of Women Voters of the Helena Area and Lewis & Clark Library.



A CALL TO NATIONAL ACTION!

Now is the time to show up and protest the destruction of our democracy!

WHAT: Rally "HANDS OFF"

WHEN: 12:00 pm Noon, Saturday, April 5

WHERE: County courthouses in Missoula, Bozeman and Billings and the Capitol Flag Plaza in Helena

More info: <https://handsoff2025.com/>

LWVUS is one of the partner organizations behind the "Hands Off" rallies being planned all across the country on Saturday, April 5.

And if you didn't have enough reason to protest before, President Trump is now going after our election system!

On Wednesday night, March 26, President Trump issued an executive order on elections, which includes the following actions:

1. Requires the Election Assistance Commission to add documentary proof of citizenship to federal voter registration form.
2. Requires states to access databases to verify eligibility.
3. Instructs the attorney general and DOGE to review voter registration databases.
4. Requires that all ballots be counted on Election Day.

This Executive Order claims control over elections and threatens states to comply with these conditions or lose federal funding.

[Read the statement](#) LWV US issued in response.

ENOUGH! It is time for massive protests, and April 5 promises to be historic. HANDS OFF is committed to being nonviolent. Visit [this LWVUS webpage](#) to learn how to stay safe when protesting.

I encourage all League members who are able, to rally on April 5 at noon. Make and bring a sign with the theme "HANDS OFF ____" and insert what concerns you most. And stay safe.

MONTANA LEAGUE NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS:

STATE CONVENTION MAY 3-4, BOZEMAN! REGISTER BY APRIL 18!

The **Final Call to Convention** will be emailed to Helena-Area members on **Wednesday, April 2**, with all the information you need to register, find lodging, and a packet of draft documents that will be voted on. **Please watch for and read this important email.**

You can preview the details and download the convention flyer, and also register for the convention at: <https://my.lwv.org/montana/2025-lwv-mt-convention>. **Deadline to register is April 18.** Hope to see you in Bozeman May 3 and 4th!

SAVE THE DATE! Thursday, May 22, 2025

Empowering Presenters with News Literacy Knowledge

6:00 - 7:00 pm (in person at Lewis & Clark Library or by Zoom)

You are invited to attend a presentation by Alee Quick, Director of Community Engagement with The News Literacy Project, at 6:00pm on Thursday May 22. Alee will present the fundamentals of news literacy to any interested League member who wants to advance their knowledge on this subject and/or is interested in becoming part of the League's civic education presenter teams. This presentation will focus on identifying different types of information and understanding the standards of quality journalism. Alee will also introduce us to the resources available to us as educators to help us develop a news literacy civics education presentation in our efforts to combat mis- and disinformation.

Join Empowering Presenters with News Literacy Zoom:
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82642044122>

Brought to you by the LWVMT Civics Education Working Group

HELP NEEDED: STORIES TO SAVE DEMOCRACY

Stories Needed: How do you win hearts and minds? With personal stories that convey human connection. Here is your chance to help capture the human impact of Montana's unique democracy, forged in the 1972 Constitutional Convention and affecting Montanans' lives ever since. Do you have suggestions for people to interview who have poignant stories that illustrate why democracy in Montana is special? Let us know! Send an email with suggested interviewees and their contact info, and include "Story" in the subject line to: nancleifer@gmail.com.

Volunteers Needed: LWV Montana received a grant of \$25,000 to purchase video recording equipment, learn how to use it, and produce a series of interviews with individuals telling stories of how Montana's democracy has affected their lives. The project will begin in June and run for a minimum of three years. No experience needed to volunteer! Volunteers will be trained to run cameras and recording equipment, conduct interviews, edit recordings, and manage social media sites.

To volunteer, send an email with "Video Project" in the subject line to: nancleifer@gmail.com.

~ Nancy Leifer, President, LWV Montana



This Week at the Legislature!

On Zoom - Wednesdays through the middle of May at 7:00 pm

Montana LWV members are meeting via Zoom every Wednesday night through the end of the legislative session. We discuss which bills are up for action each week and how to use the Legislature's website to contact legislators or sign up to give testimony.

Starting at 7:30 pm, League members will offer technical assistance for anyone needing help with access to the Members-Only section of the LWVMT website, help navigating the Montana Legislature website, or any other issues related to taking action.

To register for access to the Members-Only pages on the Montana LWV website, [download these step-by-step instructions](#).

To join the Legislative Action list, please send an email to montanalwv@gmail.com.

**Log into Zoom on Wednesdays at 7:00
pm**

Seeking Civics Education and Voter Registration Volunteers!

Are you interested in **teaching civics education** to high school students? Become a trained presenter by sending an email to rebeccainmt@gmail.com. Training is set for early May.

How about an interest in **planning voter services work** for Helena? If so, contact Rebecca at rebeccainmt@gmail.com and help get voter services offered to the public.



New Members Joining in March! Welcome!

Erin Kimball
Nann Parrett
Muriel Condon

2024-25 Board Members

Co-president: Sharon Haugen

Co-president: Cherri Jones

Treasurer: Connie Griffith

Secretary: Denise Pengeroth

At-Large Board Members:

Ann Gilkey

Mary "Mickey" Harlow

Lynn Hinch

Julie Huntington

Mary I. Johnson

Committee Chairs

Book Club: Kathy McNeill

Civics Education: Rebecca Johnson

Communications: Patti Borneman & Becky Piske

Health Care: Sue Hoell & Celeste Jazwinski

Local Government: Mary "Mickey" Harlow

Membership: Wendy Wheeler

Nominating: Sue Hoell

Coming up in the May 2025 issue of the LWWHA Voter

- Member Business Meeting Recap
- Celebrating our Work
- LWW Montana News
- Committee Updates
- Book Club
- Volunteer Training
- On Zoom: Empowering Presenters with News Literacy Knowledge

Program: Mary I. Johnson

Publicity: Marga Lincoln

Student Essay Contest: Ann Gilkey & Sherry Meador

VOTE411: Patrice Anderson & Tracy Donaldson

Voter Services: Seeking chair!

The Voter Editor: Patti Borneman



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