



BULLETIN, November, 2023

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEXINGTON

From the Convenor's Desk

This past month was a busy one for me as I attended Day on the Hill and then that same week traveled to Hyannis to attend the League of Women Voters of the Cape Cod Area's program on Media, Misinformation, and the Protection of Democracy.



I met with other League members from Middlesex 3 with Senator Michael Barrett. We discussed the LWVMA Priority Legislation for 2023-2024. The four legislative actions that the League is prioritizing are elections and voting, maternal health, firearms, and PFAS regulation.

The **forum on Media, Misinformation, and the Protection of Democracy** featured two speakers, Dr. Joan Donovan of Boston University and Dan Kennedy of Northeastern University. The talks pointed out the dangers of intentional spreading of disinformation as well as the unintentional spread of misinformation arising from the former. They discussed the role local newspapers can play in making sure accurate news reporting reaches readers. I will be working with the First Friday committee on a future program on these topics.

The **LWV Lexington November First Friday** will feature Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan as set out below. Our **December First Friday** will present our legislative delegation, Senator Michael Barrett, Senator Cindy Friedman, Representative Michelle Ciccolo, and Representative Ken Gordon as guest speakers with an update on pending matters on Beacon Hill, and an opportunity for constituents to engage with them in person on matters of concern.

Lexington's Special Town Meeting convenes Tuesday, November 7. While the Warrant this fall is not long, Article 9 is of particular interest. It proposes that Lexington adopt Ranked Choice Voting for its Town-wide elections. (Town Meeting elections are not proposed to be included at this time.) Based on positions taken by both the State and National Leagues, the Lexington League board voted unanimously to support this warrant article and to speak to it at Town Meeting.

Membership renewals and new memberships have been arriving in the mailbox. Please remember to send yours in if you have not already done so.

my.lwv.org/Massachusetts/Lexington . We anticipate an active year with the energy and support of additional members!

Best wishes for a Happy Thanksgiving.

Sincerely,

Margaret Coppe

Convenor

mecoppe@gmail.com

LWV LEXINGTON NOVEMBER FIRST FRIDAY FORUM: MIDDLESEX COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY MARIAN RYAN

The November First Friday Forum of the Lexington League will take place on Friday, November 3, 2023, at 9:30 AM, at the Lexington Community Center, 39 Marrett Road, Lexington, MA 02421. The program will introduce **Middlesex DA Marian Ryan** and highlight her work in the largest county in New England, covering 54 cities and towns.

District Attorney Ryan's Office has sought to redress racial injustice, reduce unfair judicial practices, address the opioid crisis, support legal means of immigration and find ways to extend restorative justice. During her tenure, the DA's Office has created crime prevention programs as well as a Cold Case Unit that has delivered answers and sometimes justice in

decades-old crimes. Recently DA Ryan has been focusing on the rise of disinformation and misinformation in public media and the difficulty in differentiating truth from falsehood.

This program is the second in the 2023-2024 LWV Lexington First Friday Forum series. All Lexington League forums are free and open to the public, and as always, there will be time for Q&A after the program. For more information about the League and this program go to <https://my.lwv.org/massachusetts.lexington>.

OF INTEREST

LEXHAB ROUNDTABLE ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING **NOVEMBER 2, 5:00 -7:00 PM NYE GALLERY AT 130 WALTHAM STREET**

- What is affordable housing?
- Why does Lexington need it?
- What is the outlook for affordable housing in our Town?

Residents are invited to Join a conversation with community organizations, affordable housing developers, planners and advocates. including: LexHAB, Affordable Housing Trust, Planning Board, Regional Housing Services Organization, Housing Partnership Board, Lexington Human Services, LexRAP and more'

Original works of art by area artists responding to the concept of 'HOME' will be exhibited from October 28- November 19 at LexArt's Nye Gallery, 130 Waltham Street. All work is for sale. A portion of the proceeds of each sale will support LexHAB.

For more information contact Sarah Morrison, LexHAB Director, at director@lexhab.org.

“LEXINGTON CENTER WORKSHOP – THE JOURNEY FORWARD” **November 17 and 18, 2023**

The Town of Lexington has announced a two-day community workshop, to be held on November 17 and 18, 2023, with the goal of continuing to rejuvenate the downtown area and increase its vitality. This event will bring together residents, business owners, and other community stakeholders to discuss Town priorities and to identify specific actions the Town can take toward these goals. Building on recent successes in revitalizing Lexington's downtown area, it is hoped that this workshop will be a pivotal moment in Lexington's sustained development efforts.

Informed by insights from past studies—including the Comprehensive Plan and those focused on parking, retail strategy, and tourism—the Town has begun a variety of community-driven initiatives. These efforts range from lively programming, such as concerts and beer gardens, and achieving a Cultural District designation, to physical improvements

such as completing the Center Streetscape project and redesigning problematic intersections.

“Given the community's strong enthusiasm and track record of achievements, the workshop offers an exciting forum to collaboratively identify the next actionable priorities for enhancing Lexington Center,” says Douglas Lucente, member of the Lexington Select Board.

Scheduled Events

Day 1: Friday, November 17, 2023

- **Time:** 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
- **Location:** Cary Memorial Building, Battin Hall
- **Format:** Round-table discussions led by urban planners Dr. John Mullin and Dr. Zenia Kotval
- ***Pizza and refreshments will be served.***

Day 2, Part 1: Saturday, November 18, 2023

- **Time:** 9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
- **Location:** Starts at the Depot Building, 13 Depot Square, Lexington, MA
- **Format:** A walking tour of the downtown area, followed by a group discussion from 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
- ***Light refreshments will be served.***

Day 2, Part 2: Saturday, November 18, 2023

- **Time:** 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
- **Location:** Depot Building, 13 Depot Square, Lexington, MA
- **Format:** Open House, drop-in sessions where you can share your thoughts and ideas
- ***Light refreshments will be served.***

Who Should Attend

- Shoppers, restaurant goers, and patrons of Lexington Center
- Young people
- Families
- Business owners
- Property owners
- Town Meeting members
- Committee members
- League members

How to RSVP

Please visit <https://www.lexingtonma.gov/RSVP-Journey-Forward> to confirm your attendance. Registration is requested but not required to attend. Participants are welcome to attend some or all of the events.

This is an opportunity for League members to join with other residents to help shape the future of Lexington Center.

FOLLOW UP ON ISSUE OF HANSCOM EXPANSION

On October 3, 2023, the Lexington League's First Friday Forum offered a presentation from Neil Rasmussen, Concord resident and President of Save Our Heritage, a non-profit engaged in protecting historical and cultural resources in and around Concord. His organization is among those leading the opposition to an expansion of Hanscom Civil Air Field's hangar facilities for luxury private aircraft. The League also opposes the proposed expansion for reasons including concern about fossil fuel consumption and climate equity issues.

The Towns adjacent to Hanscom have since sent a joint letter to Governor Healey expressing their "pressing environmental concern" regarding greenhouse gas emissions generated by jet plane traffic, and pointing out that the proposed Hanscom expansion would undermine the state's efforts to meet greenhouse gas emission reduction targets by 2030. They ask the Governor to exert her authority to limit the expansion of private jet capacity at Hanscom and across the state with an eye to noise levels, air quality, species protection and the environmental justice implications of luxury jet travel.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS

LWVMA ADVOCACY

FIREARMS BILL ADVANCES IN THE MA HOUSE

On October 18, the Massachusetts House of Representatives voted to pass **HD 4139, An Act Modernizing Firearm Laws**, which now moves on to the Senate. Despite organized and vocal opposition, the bill passed handily, with 120 yeas (including those of our Representatives) and nays 38.

The law regulates ghost guns, updates the assault weapons ban, streamlines the licensing process, and prohibits firearms in schools, polling places and government buildings, among other measures.

The LWVMA will continue to advocate for this law as it passes through the legislative process, and members are urged to contact their senators to express their support.

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE UNITED STATES

LWVUS ADVOCACY

CHILDREN'S FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND CLIMATE RECOVERY RESOLUTION

The national League of Women Voters is urging members to contact their representatives and senators to express support for the **Children's Fundamental Rights and Climate Recovery Resolution**, currently pending in Congress as **S.Con.Res.13** and **H.Con.Res.56**.

The resolution was first introduced in 2020 and re-introduced on July 13, 2023 by Senator Merkley of Oregon and Representatives Jayapal of Washington and Schakowsky of Illinois. It supports the principles underpinning the constitutional climate lawsuit **Juliana v. United States** which was filed in 2015 by 21 young plaintiffs, including 11 Black, Brown and Indigenous young people, asserting that our looming climate crisis affects the health, economic opportunity and fundamental rights of children, and demanding that the United States develop a comprehensive, science-based, and just climate recovery plan to meet necessary emissions reduction targets. The essential premise is that children and future generations from all communities are entitled to a safe, healthy and livable planet, and that a comprehensive climate recovery policy is necessary to support environmental and climate justice across indigenous and low-income communities and communities of color, which have long suffered disproportionately from climate change and environmental degradation.

In 2018, Chief Justice Roberts of the U.S. Supreme Court halted the case prior to trial, and in 2020, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals dismissed the suit, ruling that the judiciary does not have the power to enact climate policy. However, the principles remain valid, and the LWVUS has endorsed the Congressional resolution and encourages all to contact Congress in support .



LWVUS VOTER SERVICE

WORKING TO RENOVATE DEMOCRACY

The article excerpted below, by Washington Post Contributing Columnist and Harvard Professor Danielle Allen, appeared in the Post on October 19, 2023.

One of my recent columns offered a list of FAQs about democracy renovation — and a poll. I was eager to learn how you allocate time and energies in advancing the cause of democracy. Several hundred of you responded. And I'm glad to share the results of this very unscientific survey.

Slightly under half of respondents are doing partisan work. That aligns with the national numbers: Only about half of Americans are enrolled in a political party these days.

Some respondents have been able to make their democracy concerns a full-time occupation — social studies teachers and advocates in particular. More commonly, respondents fit their civic work in around other professional activities, putting in one to three hours of civic work a week; some making it up to three to 10.

One of you shared: “When I worked with the League of Women Voters and other organizations to end gerrymandering in [Michigan], I was involved 3-10 hours a week. Now I probably have less time, but contribute more money to organizations who are helping with democracy renovation.”

Often, people get connected to civic life through membership in specific associations. Many traditional associational opportunities fell away throughout the late 20th century, but I can tell you that one organization shines through in these results: Seven respondents named the League of Women Voters as the forum for their civic participation. No other organization showed up more than once.

The democracy issues that preoccupy my respondents are largely focused on five core themes: voting rights and access; campaign finance reform; concern about polarization and hopes for bridge-building; electoral systems reform to improve representation; and civic education and information integrity, the pillars needed to get to a healthy democracy. The aspirations are clear: “Free, fair, and accurate voting, without fear of reprisal or discrimination.” “Voting is the foundation. Whether you are rich or poor, all of our votes have the same value.” A hunger for leadership we can respect is palpable. “When norms fail at the top, they necessarily will fail at the bottom.”

When it came to the skills people thought they had to offer, I was amazed by how many people said writing. While there was good representation of organizing experience and skill at coalition-building — and trumpet-playing, photography and persistence were also on offer — it was really a way with words that stood out.

So here's a suggestion. Is it time for a letter-writing campaign? Think [Committees of Correspondence](#) during the American Revolution. Perhaps it's time for all those who are already passionate about democracy renovation, and have writing skills to offer, to start letter-writing campaigns to friends and family to introduce people to some core democracy renovation ideas. For example, states that have really successful same-day voter registration could do a favor to those of us in Massachusetts with a letter-writing campaign explaining why your system works.

Democracy renovation is underway all over the country. And a lot of people are passionate about it. It's time to spread the word. All those writers in my survey might just have a special role to play.

Editor's Note: *The themes in this article will be entirely familiar to League members, and it is inspiring to read that the League is making a difference out there. We are ideally positioned to heed Professor Allen's call: What topics would you be prepared to write about?*

**Planning is underway for the LWVUS Biennial Convention
June 27-30, 2024 at the Washington Hilton, Washington, D.C.**

Delegates from all Leagues will vote on the LWVUS:

- 2024 - 2026 program,
- 2024 - 2026 budget,
- Submitted bylaw amendments, and
- 2024 - 2026 LWVUS Board of Directors and Nominating Committee.

There will also be opportunities to network with fellow League members, participate in workshops and trainings, and hear from dynamic speakers.

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
MA Senator Michael Barrett	Mike.Barrett@masenate.gov 617 722-1572
MA Senator Cindy Friedman	Cindy.Friedman@masenate.gov 617 722-1432
MA Representative Michelle Ciccolo	Michelle.Ciccolo@mahouse.gov

SAVE THE DATE

- November 3, 2023 LWV First Friday Forum: Marian Ryan,
Middlesex District Atty Community Center, 9:30 am
- November 7, 2023 Town Meeting 7:30 pm Cary Memorial Building
- November 15, 2023 VOTE411 Training 6:00 pm Zoom
- November 17, 2023 Lexington Center Workshop 6:00-9:00 pm
Cary Memorial Building
- November 18, 2023 Lexington Center Workshop I 9:00-11:30 am
Depot Building > Walking Tour
- November 18, 2023 Lexington Center Workshop II 4:00-6:00 pm
Depot Building
- December 1, 2023 LWV First Friday Forum: Lexington's Legislators
Community Center, 9:30 am
- December 13, 2023 VOTE411 Training 6:00 pm Zoom
- February 15, 2024 Candidates' Night Clarke Middle School
- June 27-30, 2024 LWVUS Biennial Convention Washington, D.C.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF 2023-2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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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.

We welcome Bulletin articles from members. If you'd like to submit an article for the December 2023 LWV LEXINGTON Bulletin, please send it to Wendy Manz at wendy_manz@yahoo.com prior to November 15, 2023.

