

BULLETIN, November, 2024



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEXINGTON

Greetings from the Convener's Desk

By the time you read this, votes will have been cast and counted. I hope there is a definitive outcome and that we can move on as a nation to the work of governing the country.

This year the League will hold conduct a consensus process on a new position, based on study, of reparations.

At the 2023 League of Women Voters (LWV) of Massachusetts Council, LWV Amherst proposed a study of reparations to determine whether the LWVMA should adopt, by consensus, a position on reparations. Delegates voted by a wide margin to form a study committee. The draft Study Report on Reparations was released in August 2024 and the link to it is here.2024.08.29Reparations-Study-Report-FINAL.pdf

We will be receiving the consensus questions soon and will convene a meeting to discuss reparations and to submit our responses. If you would like to participate, let us know. We will be scheduling as soon as we can. There is more information in another section of this Bulletin.

If you have not yet sent in your membership renewal, please do so. It is important to keeping our League vital to have a supportive membership.

And finally, have a wonderful Thanksgiving!

Margaret Coppe Convener

LEXINGTON LWV DECEMBER FIRST FRIDAY FORUM: UPDATES FROM OUR LEGISLATORS AT THE TERM'S END





Senator Cindy Friedman

Representative Michelle Ciccolo

On Friday, December 6, 2024, the Lexington LWV will hold its First Friday Forum at 9:30 am at the Community Center Dining Room. Senator Cindy Friedman, Fourth Middlesex, and Representative Michelle Ciccolo 15 Middlesex, will be the featured speakers.

This is a chance to hear firsthand what our legislators have been working on on Beacon Hill over the two-year legislative term that ends this December, and to ask questions about the progress of legislation you (and the League) care about. Informal sessions of the Massachusetts Legislature continue through December 31, and according to House Speaker Mariano, conference committees are working to reach consensus on compromise reports despite the end of formal session July 31.

Ms. Friedman was elected to the Massachusetts Senate in 2017, representing six of the nine precincts in Lexington (1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7) along with all or parts of Arlington, Billerica, Burlington, and Woburn. Ms. Ciccolo was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 2018 and represents Lexington (except for Precinct 6) and parts of Woburn and Winchester.

This program is the second in the 2024-2025 LWV First Friday Forum series hosted by the Lexington League of Women Voters to promote awareness and understanding of public policy issues. As always, the program is free and open to the public, and there will be time for questions and answers. LexMedia will record the presentation for future viewing. For more information about the League and this program go to https://my.lwv.org/massachusetts.lexington.

FOR EXCELLENCE

In November the Lexington LWV hosted David Pinsoneault, Director of Public Works, and Maggie Peard, Director of Sustainability, at our First Friday Forum, to update us on the Town's handling of trash and recycling. The presentation was wide ranging and very informative, and it sparked discussion of how Lexington residents could increase participation in existing town programs, like food waste recycling and disposal of specific trash. It is well worth checking out on LexMedia for those who missed it.

As noted at that meeting, the Lexington Public Works Department has been named the 2024 Outstanding Department of the Year by the American Public Works Association (APWA) New England Chapter. The Department was nominated by industry peers and selected by a committee of public works professionals and consultants, highlighting their exceptional service and innovation in municipal operations.

The department earned this distinction through notable achievements, including:

- Completion of the Battle Green streetscape project, enhancing safety and accessibility;
- Implementation of an optimized snow and ice response program that reduced salt usage;
- · Development of a sustainable food scraps collection initiative; and
- Enhancement of the Town's road maintenance program, extending infrastructure lifespan while lowering costs.

Director Pinnsoneault called the recognition "a testament to the dedication and commitment of our staff."



OF INTEREST



The Lexington Lyceum and the Lexington Observer are sponsoring a showing of the film "Join or Die" on Tuesday, November 12, 2024 at 7:00 pm at the Lexington Venue. The feature is based on well-known social scientist Robert Putnam's work on the decades-long decline of community connections in the United States. Professor Putnam, a former resident of Lexington, is the author of Bowling Alone. He discusses: "What makes democracy work?" "Why is American democracy in crisis?" and "What can each of us do about it?". The film will be followed by a short discussion. Tickets are \$15 in advance, and \$20 at the door.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS LWVMA EVENTS

LEAGUE LEADER LUNCH DISCUSSES BUILDING THE LEAGUE MEMBERSHIP PIPELINE

On October 26, 2024, the Massachusetts League of Women Voters held its annual League Leaders Lunch, hosting representatives of Leagues across the state to share experience and encouragement, and to receive a presentation on the LWV's current work on expanding membership and furthering DEI goals.

Two representatives of YW Boston (successor to the YWCA) presented a full program on "Building the Leadership Pipeline" which included a chart representing an "Expanded Community Engagement Continuum." The chart laid out a range of levels, from "Outreach," to "Consultation," to "Involvement," to "Collaboration," and finally "Shared Leadership." The goal was to provide a sort of road map for local Leagues who are seeking to increase community involvement, by collaboration with other members of the community, and particularly by making the League a more welcoming and supportive environment for people of diverse backgrounds and experience.

Attendees were reminded that "Diversity" means representation of identities; "Equity" means access to resources and opportunities, and "Inclusion" means full participation, all voices heard.

The presenters advocated for use of a "SOAR" framework for discussion and planning: i.e., Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results, and recommended starting with a "Problem Statement," stating a desired "Outcome," and moving to "Action Steps." It remains for local Leagues to determine how many of these frameworks are applicable to their specific circumstances and how they can use them to move toward membership and diversity goals.

LWVMA REPARATIONS STUDY COMMITTEE PREPARES FOR LOCAL CONSENSUS MEETINGS

Group Discussions on Zoom

The LWVMA Reparations Study Committee is offering a series of group discussions on Zoom throughout the fall of 2024, facilitated by Debra Dagwan and Jeffrey Gold, centered on Ta-Nehisi Coates' foundational essay, "The Case for Reparations." The group discussions offer the opportunity for League members to familiarize themselves with the concept of reparations as a path to restorative justice, and explore an American history not typically addressed in public forums. Participation involves registration, as each group discussion will be limited to 15 participants. Every group discussion is a "one and done" experience, meant to engage the participant in respectful and reflective listening. Remaining discussions are scheduled for November 21, and December 12, with the possibility of an additional session after the first of the year, to respond to demand. Register through LWVMA's calendar of events at https://lwvma.org/events/.

Study and Procedure Materials Available

Meanwhile the Reparations Study Committee continues with its work, and will shortly be distributing materials to local Leagues who wish to participate in the consensus process. The **Study Guide** will provide instructions for conducting local discussions and working toward consensus in individual Leagues. The **Study Report** will contain all of the research assembled by the Reparations Study Committee, divided into sections for easy reference, and will deal with such topics as "Why reparations?" "What form of reparations?" "Who should receive reparations?" The topic is extremely complex, and it will require considerable time and commitment from members at the local level once the state level work is done.

Overview Session November 14 on Zoom

On **Thursday, November 14, from 7:00-8:00 pm on Zoom**, the LWVMA will show the 20-minute **video "Overview of Study on Reparations for Black Americans"** followed by a questions and answer session with members of the Reparations Study Committee. Register for this meeting at:

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlpduqhqj0oGtV5VONoL4knoqV7hl3nqBgs#/registration.

You can view the presentation at any time on the study webpage: <u>LWVMA</u>
<u>Reparations Study for Black Americans</u>, <u>https://lwvma.org/lwvma-reparations-study</u>, or contact <u>reparations@lwvma.org</u> with questions.

All Massachusetts Leagues are urged to participate in the League consensus process to try to reach a position for LWVMA to adopt. Our participation can have national repercussions. If we adopt a reparations position, it is possible other state Leagues or the LWVUS could adopt it by concurrence. However, that is less likely to happen if the position is based on input from only a few of our 45 Leagues.

The Lexington League will be planning our participation in this study at its Board Meeting November 11 on Zoom. Because of the importance of this undertaking, we plan to reach out well beyond the Lexington LWV Board to involve as many of our members, and perhaps other members of the community, in our discussions. While only League members can register a vote toward a consensus position, all participants will be welcome.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION: LAND OWNERSHIP ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"A Land Acknowledgment is a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories."

This statement is from the Brookline LWV, which has established an Indigenous People's Celebrations Committee, and published its acknowledgement a propos the October holiday traditionally known as Columbus Day in the United States. Such an acknowledgment does not necessarily lead to any specific reparative action, but is a first step toward a better awareness of our Nation's history, and perhaps a level of reconciliation on painful issues. Lexington has officially renamed the holiday "Indigenous People's Day."

LWVMA ADVOCACY

LEGISLATIVE SPECIALISTS CLARE GORDON AND ZIMMARO RETIRE

<u>LAUNA</u>



Clare Gordon (left) and Launa Zimmaro (right)

We all owe a huge thank you to Clare Gordon for eighteen years of service. Clare's area of specialty has been *Meeting Basic Human Needs*, including affordable housing. A member of the League for sixty-one years, Clare has been a member of the local Leagues of Lexington, Arlington and Concord-Carlisle. From 1972 when she chaired the local study committee for the state reproductive rights position, to 2022 when she

advocated for the Economic Development Bill, which included the MBTA Communities Act, she has worked tirelessly to improve necessary services for Massachusetts residents. Her anti-poverty successes include improving grants for people with dependent children who receive assistance and improvements to the Earned Income Credit. Clare's wisdom and wonderful written testimonies will be missed.

Many thanks also to Launa Zimmaro for fifteen years of service to the Legislative Action Committee. Launa has made her mark on the League through her persistent and staunch advocacy to educate members, legislators, and voters on the existential threat that is the climate emergency. Her legislative accomplishments include *An Act creating a next-generation Roadmap for Massachusetts climate policy* in 2021, and *An Act driving clean energy and offshore wind* in 2022. Before she tackled the climate crisis, she fought to improve campaign finance rules. Launa, a member of the Concord-Carlisle League, she served as a director on the LWVMA Board in 2013 and as a member of the LWVUS Money in Politics_Committee in 2014. Her energetic advocacy has made a difference.

STATE LEGISLATIVE ACTION COMMITTEE IS RECRUITING SPECIALISTS

The Legislative Action Committee (LAC), a dedicated group of advocates, works on behalf of the LWVMA to pass legislation here in the Commonwealth. The team is recruiting new volunteer specialists for the following topic areas: Climate Emergency, Natural Resources including PFAS, and Meeting Basic Human Needs.

This volunteer position includes:

- Identifying and advocating for/against legislation in the identified subject area;
- Actively participating as a member of the LWVMA Legislative Action Committee;
- Pursuing non-legislative efforts in the identified subject area. For a more detailed job description go to https://lwvma.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Legis.specialist.job_.description.Oct_.2018-1.pdf, or contact: specialists@lwvma.org.

HOMELESS ID BILL ACTION ALERT

S2251, An Act to provide identification to youth and adults experiencing homelessness, passed in the Senate in each of the last four legislative sessions. Now we need the House to act.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts supports this bill, which requires the Registry of Motor Vehicles to establish a process to provide identification cards to

persons who are homeless or unaccompanied homeless youth. Proof of residency could be provided by satisfactory documentation from entities that provide housing or youth services in the Commonwealth or other services from a department of the Office of Health and Human Services. Identification cards (IDs) are often essential for a range of life activities such as applying for a job, enrolling in education programs, opening financial accounts, picking up packages at the post office, entering certain government buildings, interacting with law enforcement, and accessing many services. IDs are also necessary for initial voter registration. The life circumstances of homeless individuals, such as rapid loss of residence due to fire, disaster, violence, or relationship failure often makes it difficult to access and/or maintain those documents ordinarily used to prove residence. This is particularly true for homeless youth who may have been ejected from their parental home. Although IDs are now available from the Registry of Motor Vehicles that don't relate to driving skills, such IDs do require an in-person visit and cost \$5 per year or \$25 for five years. This bill would make IDs for homeless adults and youth free.

The League of Women Voters of the US has established positions in support of Basic Human Needs and Citizen Rights applicable here: "In order to prevent or reduce poverty, LWVUS supports policies and programs designed to increase job opportunities; increase access to health insurance; provide support services such as child care and transportation; provide opportunities and/or incentives for basic or remedial education and job training..."

Please contact your state representative and ask them to urge House leadership to bring the homeless ID bill to the floor for a vote. Remember to give your full name and street address.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE UNITED STATES LWVUS EVENTS

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST/ LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS POLL OF US VOTERS: HOW CAN THE VOTING PROCESS BE IMPROVED?

Eliminate the Electoral College

As we approach Election Day 2024, and with two-thirds of Americans expressing enthusiasm about this year's vote, a new national <u>University of Massachusetts</u> <u>Amherst/League of Women Voters Poll</u> has found that women overwhelmingly want the US to move away from the Electoral College and toward a national popular vote for

presidential elections. The poll, which was conducted Oct. 11 - 16 and included an oversample of women in an effort to better understand the specific views of women, found that the economy remains the No. 1 issue on the minds of all voters and women alike, followed by the health of our nation's democracy.

With the 2024 presidential election likely to be one of the closest in the nation's history and the candidates spending much of their time in swing states important to garner 270 electoral votes, a majority of the voters (57%) and more than 6 in 10 women (62%) support a new system in which the candidate who wins the most votes nationwide wins the presidential election.

"For much of the nation's history, the Electoral College was an afterthought," says <u>Tatishe Nteta</u>, provost professor of political science at UMass Amherst and director of the poll. "In recent years, with increasingly close presidential elections, we have seen the Electoral College take center stage in selecting the nation's next president as winners of the popular vote in 2000 and 2016 failed to secure enough Electoral College votes to become president."

"The Electoral College is an outdated racist relic with harmful implications for all voters," says <u>Celina Stewart</u>, CEO of the League of Women Voters of the United States. "Voters, not politically motivated electors, must choose the president. Since 1970, the League has called for abolishing the Electoral College, and this poll proves just how important our work is now to end the Electoral College and center voters once and for all."

"Women acknowledge the crossroads we stand at as a nation, with the growing concern that our democracy is at risk," says <u>Dianna Wynn</u>, president of the <u>League of Women Voters of the United States</u>. "They understand that the stability and fairness of our democratic institutions are crucial to ensuring a better future. At the League, we remain committed to ensuring everyone is fully represented in our electoral system."

"Sixty-one percent of the poll's respondents say their vote matters in the upcoming election but 39% say it does not, largely because they are in states that are not competitive for the Electoral College," says <u>Raymond La Raja</u>, professor of political science at UMass Amherst and co-director of the poll.

"The [presidential] race is too close to call and will likely come down to just thousands of votes in a couple of states," says <u>Alexander Theodoridis</u>, associate professor of political science at UMass Amherst and co-director of the poll. "There is a real chance that the winner of the popular vote will not win in the Electoral College – if so, it would be the third time in just 25 years that the Electoral College tally did not match the national vote totals. Even the Electoral College's 'nightmare scenario,' in which neither candidate receives 270 Electoral College votes, is possible, though not likely, this year. Should that occur, though, Congress would then choose the president and fewer than a quarter of Americans support this process. office. Presidential elections are the highwater mark in our electoral cycle and should be an opportunity to engage all Americans in our democracy."

"Given the partisan rancor seen in the US Congress and state legislatures, it is unlikely that a constitutional amendment that addresses this system will be passed anytime soon," Nteta says, "but given the widespread support for this change, particularly

among young people (59%), it may be a matter of time until the Electoral College becomes a thing of the past."

In the meantime, the poll also found voters in favor of a number of changes to the way elections are currently conducted that would make casting a vote easier for Americans, from expanding the option to vote-by-mail (58%), to same-day registration (58%) to automatic registration (54%) to online voting (52%) and to re-extending the franchise to those who have served prison sentences (52%.

Nteta notes a divide on the issue of same-day registration. "Over 20 states now allow their voters to register and vote on the same day, and in these states, turnout on average is higher than in states without same-day registration," he says. "Majorities of Americans across traditional divides express support for this change to elections, but the exceptions are Republicans (38%), conservatives (36%) and Trump voters (31%). Given the partisan and ideological nature of this opposition and the current partisan rift in the US Congress and in many state legislatures, it is unlikely that same-day registration will become the law of the land anytime soon. However, with many states having the option of passing laws through ballot measures, we may see voters taking the initiative and passing these policies themselves." While Americans want to make voting easier, Rhodes also notes that nearly three-quarters of the poll's respondents (73%) also want voters to show identification before casting a ballot.

Enthusiasm, but Concern

"Sixty-eight percent of voters say they are enthusiastic about voting and just 18% say they are not, but we do see gender differences," La Raja says. "Seventy-two percent of men say they are enthusiastic compared to 64% of women, although Democratic women seem somewhat more enthusiastic than Republican women. And with respect to age, 78% of people over 55 are enthusiastic compared to 58% of people under 30."

"The biggest concern among voters is the influence of fake news, disinformation and deepfakes," La Raja says, "Close behind, however, are concerns about protests, riots, or violence by supporters of the losing candidate (61%). A significant number of voters — although not a majority — cite fraud and abuse associated with the counting of ballots (48%), attempted voter suppression by the opposing party (46%), and the losing presidential candidate refusing to accept the final election result (44%).

"We are facing a crisis of confidence in American democracy," Theodoridis says. "Just 39% of respondents tell us they are 'very confident' their vote will be counted accurately and only two-thirds express any level of confidence. This is deeply troubling, especially given that our elections are the safest and most secure they have ever been and levels of fraud and error are miniscule. We see that 61% of Democrats are 'very confident' their vote will be counted accurately, compared to just 26% among Republicans — a remarkably high 72% of Republicans tell us they are concerned about fraud and abuse associated with the counting of ballots."

Methodology

This <u>University of Massachusetts Amherst Poll</u> was conducted by YouGov Oct. 11 - 16. YouGov interviewed 1,816 respondents who were then matched down to a sample of 1,500 to produce the final dataset, consisting of two samples: A Main sample of 1,224 individuals from the U.S. general population matched down to 1,000, and an

Oversample of 592 women from the U.S. general population matched down to 500. The margin of error of this poll is 3.1% for all respondents and 3.8% for female respondents.

LWVUS ACTION ALERTS

Climate change and its effects threaten the physical, psychological, and economic well-being of our nation. It disproportionately impacts vulnerable communities, including youth, that have contributed the least to climate change-causing emissions.

The League of Women Voters (LWV) believes that climate change is a serious threat facing our nation and planet. LWV supports climate goals and policies consistent with the best available climate science to ensure a stable climate system for future generations.

In July of this year, Congress reintroduced vital legislation known as the *Children's Fundamental Rights and Climate Recovery Resolution*. This resolution recognizes the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis on the health, economic opportunities, and fundamental rights of children in the US. It also acknowledges the need for a national, just, comprehensive, and science-based climate recovery plan to meet necessary emissions reduction targets and stabilize the climate system. The League has endorsed this resolution, and Congress needs to hear that this crisis requires bold action now.

Do not let future generations inherit the climate crisis. Urge your Members of Congress to cosponsor the *Children's Fundamental Rights and Recovery Resolution* to address climate change and protect our youth's rights and future!

Urge your Members of Congress to cosponsor the *Children's Fundamental Rights* and *Recovery Resolution* to address climate change and protect our youth's rights and future!

LWVUS NAMES TWO KEY OFFICERS

Chief Counsel. The League of Women Voters of the United States is proud to announce Marcia Johnson, Esq. as the next Chief Counsel of the national League. Ms. Johnson will lead the organization's advocacy and litigation teams, overseeing the strategic direction of their program, government affairs, and litigation efforts.

Ms. Johnson is a nationally recognized leader in the area of voting rights. She has testified before Congress and is regularly tapped as an expert and spokesperson on democracy issues. Before joining the League, she worked as the co-director of the Lawyers' Committee's Voting Rights Project, where she led the organization's work

convening the nationally recognized Election Protection, a nonpartisan voter protection coalition. The coalition's goals include ensuring that voters have any support needed when casting a ballot. Ms. Johnson has also done extensive research on the history of discrimination in voting, advocating for legislation reform to improve access to voting, and advocating for the full restoration of the full protections of the *Voting Rights Act*. She played a pivotal role organizing two national commissions that researched the record of discrimination in voting within the United States. Commission findings were a significant part of the record that Congress pointed to when it reauthorized the *Voting Rights Act* in 2006.

Ms. Johnson has served as an adjunct professor at Georgetown University Law Center. She received her J.D. from Villanova University School of Law and a Bachelor of Science in Linguistics from Georgetown University.

"I am thrilled to join the League of Women Voters to work with and grow the vast grassroots network to advance the organization's mission of expanding voter access and promoting pro-voter reforms. This work is essential for our democracy to flourish," Ms. Johnson states.

National Development Director. The League of Women Voters of the United has named Heather Koslov as the organization's next National Development Director. Ms. Koslov will lead the League's development team, overseeing strategic planning, organization, and the direction of all League's fundraising activities.

Before joining the League, Heather worked as the development director at The Sentencing Project, a nonprofit organization advocating for effective and humane responses to crime that minimize imprisonment and criminalization of youth and adults by promoting racial, ethnic, economic, and gender justice. During her tenure, she led the implementation of numerous fundraising campaigns, significantly increased total charitable contributions, and sat on the organization's DEIB committee.

Ms. Koslov is a Certified Fundraising Executive, which is the highest standard in ethics and professionalism in fundraising. Outside of her work with the League, Heather sits on the Board of the Free Minds Book Club & Writing Workshop, which is a nonprofit that uses books, creative writing and peer support to help incarcerated and formerly incarcerated youths.

"The League's mission of empowering voters and defending democracy is critical to the vitality and future of our nation," said Ms. Koslov. "I'm incredibly eager to support the critical work of the League and share its mission with philanthropy partners invested in the League's vision for democracy."

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SAVE THE DATE

November 1, 2024 First Friday, Update on Recycling 9:30 am Community Center

November 5, 2024 Election Day

November 12, 2024 "Join or Die" film, 7:00 pm, Lexington Venue

November 14, 2024 "Overview of Study on Reparations for Black

Americans," 7"00 pm on Zoom

November 21, 2024 Reparations discussion on Zoom

December 21, 2024 Reparations discussion on Zoom

December 6, 2024 First Friday Forum, Lexington Legislators

9:30 am, Community Center

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.

Contact Information for Legislators

U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren JFK Federal Building

15 New Sudbury Street Boston. MA 02203

(617) 565-3170

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 <u>Ken.Gordon@mahouse.gov</u>

Room 156 617 722-2240

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We welcome Bulletin articles from members. If you would like to submit an article for the December 2024 Lexington LWV Bulletin, please send it to Wendy Manz at wendy_manz@yahoo.com by November, 29,2024.