



BULLETIN, September, 2024

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEXINGTON

Greetings from the Convener's Desk

Welcome back to a new year with the League. Many of you have been busy over the summer, and will continue to be, with the upcoming Presidential Election in November. The League is a nonpartisan organization, which means we do not endorse a candidate or a party. However, as individuals we are free to work on partisan campaigns and support individual candidates, and of course, to vote. Who we elect to every office, local, state, and national, has consequences. It is important that we not only vote, but that we inform ourselves on who we are voting for. The League continues on all levels to provide neutral and comprehensive information on candidates, both at the local level and through its national Vote411.org web site.

Congratulations to new board member Melanie Thompson, who went as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in August. She was proud to be from Massachusetts and excited to be part of the national democratic process. Which is a reminder that we have scheduled our local **Candidates Night for February 13, 2025**. This is the only candidate event in town which gives all Town Meeting candidates, as well as Town-wide candidates, a forum in which to meet with voters in person. Stay tuned for more information in the coming months

Voter Registration is a core value and practice of the League. This year, League member Jeri Zeder has organized a Voter Registration event on National Voter Registration Day, September 17, 2024, from 2-5 pm at the Lexington Depot. Come by to lend a hand or just to support this effort. Lexington has a very high voter registration rate, but there is always more to be done to welcome new residents, new citizens, and those who are aging into the voter ranks.

And as we look forward to the 250th anniversary of the Battle on the Lexington Green in April, 2025, the Lexington League was delighted to participate in Lexington's Countdown Calendar page turning on Election Day, Tuesday, September 3.



Welcome back!

Margaret Coppe
Convenor

JOIN LEXINGTON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND LWVLEX FOR NATIONAL VOTERS REGISTRATION DAY

November 17, 2024 is National Voter Registration Day, and state and local Leagues are scheduling events across the country to encourage voter registration and participation.

This year, League member Jeri Zeder, working with students from Lexington High School, has organized a **Get Ready to Vote** event on National Voter Registration Day, from 2-5 pm under the awning at the Lexington Depot. LHS students have planned and prepared the event and will be staffing the table after school, from 3:30 – 5 p.m. This is a chance to check your registration status, register to vote and get election reminders. There will be free lemonade and cupcakes!

Come by to lend a hand or just to support this effort. Lexington has a very high voter registration rate, but there is always more to be done to welcome new residents, new citizens, and those who are aging into the voter ranks. And after registration, we welcome the enthusiasm and hard work of local students to tackle **voter turnout** on election day!

LEXINGTON LWV OCTOBER FIRST FRIDAY: AN INTRODUCTION TO NOVEMBER BALLOT QUESTIONS

To kick off the Lexington League's First Friday series this October, we are departing from our usual practice of offering a single morning forum on the first Friday of the month. To introduce attendees to the five ballot questions which will appear on the Massachusetts ballot in November, there will be **two programs**, one presented in the **evening on Thursday, October 10**, and the other in the **morning on Friday, October 11**. While the state League, and therefore the local League, is taking no position on these questions, they are important, and in some cases, complex enough, to warrant explanation and discussion.

On **Thursday, October 10, at 7:00 pm at the Community Center**, we will present contrasting views on:

- Question #1: State Auditor's Authority to Audit the Legislature
- Question # 3: Unionization for Transportation Network Drivers
- Question # 5: Minimum Wage for Tipped Workers.

On **Friday, October 11, at 9:30 am at the Community Center**, we will present contrasting views on:

- Question 2: Elimination of MCAS as High School Graduation Requirement
- Question 4: Limited Legalization and Regulation of Certain Natural Psychedelic Substances .

A brief summary of each Ballot Question appears below on Page 6.

LEXINGTON LWV ANNUAL MEETING HELD IN JUNE WITH FEATURED GUEST JAY KAUFMAN

The Lexington League held its Annual Meeting in June, 2024, at the Lexington Community Center. During the business portion of the meeting, two new board members were nominated and voted onto the Board:

Melanie Thompson was reelected to the Lexington Planning Board in March of this year. She also serves on the Lexington Housing Partnership and is active in both Town affairs and national politics, having been one of Lexington's three delegates to the Democratic National Convention this summer. Pam Lyons is a retired attorney who served as staff counsel for the MA Supreme Judicial Court. She is a longtime local

activist, particularly on public transportation issues. We look forward to the fresh ideas, energy and activism that our new members will bring to the Board!

Our speaker at the Annual Meeting was Jay Kaufman, retired after 24 years as Lexington's State Representative. Jay was noted for his long campaign for greater tax equity in Massachusetts. Before he retired, he was able to see passage of the "Fair Share" amendment to the state constitution, requiring an additional contribution from taxpayers earning large incomes on the portions of their incomes exceeding one million dollars in a single year.

At the League meeting, Representative Kaufman presented a startlingly unvarnished account of the workings of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, detailing the difficulties of getting traction on any initiatives that weren't approved and furthered by the top leadership in the House. The structure of the body is such that only proposed legislation specifically favored by the Speaker's office is ever likely to reach the floor for a vote, and individual representatives are very aware that their success as legislators, not to mention their status and incomes, depend on maintaining a good relationship with the leadership.

The situation left Representative Kaufman dispirited, and once he retired, he has tried to foster a movement for necessary reforms. The areas where he believes correction is necessary are accountability, transparency, productivity, capacity, a toxic leadership culture, and broad complicity. He is currently working with a group of analysts and activists called The States Project, which seeks to identify state legislatures where improvement is possible.

While the League of Women Voters remains resolutely non-partisan, it is also a strong advocate for the values that Representative Kaufman enumerated. He argues that the only long-term solution is to support and elect candidates for office (of whatever party) who will change the culture of the legislature. He reminded us of the importance of staying informed and selecting our candidates with care.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS

LWVMA EVENTS

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR FALMOUTH ROAD RUNNERS

Falmouth Road Race Co-captains Misty Niemeyer and Chinna Mapp of LWV Falmouth and Susan d. Garvey of LWVMA are pleased to announce that our running team raised funds and trained for the hills of Falmouth to finish the 7-mile race in style on August 18th. Misty hosted a pre-event welcome party at her home for our runners and their

families and friends and LWVMA Executive Director Pattye Comfort presented each runner with a thank-you poster and the official Falmouth 2024 Road Race pin as a keepsake.



LWVMA VOTER SERVICE

FAIR AND SECURE ELECTIONS: HOW YOU CAN HELP

In this crucial election year, the LWVMA is committed to ensuring that our November 5 election runs safely, smoothly and securely, with all voters having access to the ballot. The League is building a team of volunteers to monitor polling places. With its partners in the Election Protection Coalition, LWVMA is recruiting and training non-partisan poll monitors who will be sent out to high-priority polling locations across Massachusetts on Tuesday, November 5. The goal is to recruit at least 50 League volunteers (including spouses and friends) to join the hundreds of volunteers needed.

Poll monitors will help ensure access to the ballot for all eligible voters who wish to participate, assist voters who encounter challenges, and report any complications to our Election Protection Command Center in real time. The job is one three-hour shift on Election Day, at one polling location. You will be able to choose both the shift time and the polling location that works for you. Volunteers do not need any special qualifications, though if you are fluent in a non-English language, you are especially

needed. Volunteers will have to complete a mandatory training session that details what to look for and how to react. Both in-person and virtual training sessions will be scheduled.

You can find more information and sign up to help at Protect the Vote <https://protectthevote.net/?source=LWVMA>. You do not need to make a firm commitment now, but registering will put you on the list for additional information about training programs and, later on, the polling places and shifts to be covered.

Let's prove the League can turn out more than 50 volunteers to make sure the November election is open to all.

LWVMA ADVOCACY

LWVMA TAKES NO POSITION ON NOVEMBER BALLOT QUESTIONS

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts is “taking no position” on Ballot Questions 1-5 for the November 5, 2024 election. League members may participate in Yes or No campaigns for Ballot Questions 1-5 *as individuals* but should not do anything to make the public think that LWVMA or a local League has endorsed a Yes or No campaign. The LWVMA Board votes to support, oppose, or take no position on specific ballot questions based on positions or goals previously researched and adopted by the League, which are described in *Impact on Issues* (LWVUS) or *Where We Stand* (LWVMA). The Ballot Questions in Massachusetts this year are:

Question 1: State Auditor's Authority to Audit the Legislature

It is proposed to give explicit authority to the elected State Auditor (Dianna Dizoglio) to audit the Legislature, “audit” being defined to include “information regarding active and pending legislation, the process for appointing committees, the adoption and suspension of legislative rules and policies and procedures of the Legislature.”

Transparency of government activities has long been a key tenet of the League, which has advocated for the public's right to know and to participate in decision making at all levels of government.

However, LWVMA takes no position on Ballot Question 1 because existing law does not authorize it, and it may be unconstitutional. State Attorney General Andrea Campbell has concluded that the State Auditor does not currently have the authority under the Massachusetts Constitution and Massachusetts General Laws to audit the legislature without its consent, and to do so may violate the separation of powers doctrine. The AG's opinion letter states: “An unqualified auditing power sufficient to audit the Legislature over its objection would be difficult to reconcile with the powers vested

exclusively in the Legislature by various parts of ... the Massachusetts Constitution, and protected from encroachment by ... the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights.”.

Question 2: Elimination of MCAS as High School Graduation Requirement

It is proposed to eliminate the requirement that a student pass the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests in order to receive a high school diploma.

The League believes the state Board of Education should set minimum educational standards for local public-school systems with reasonable criteria for implementation and it should also provide services to assist local schools and to motivate them to improve the quality of education. However, LWV members would need to reach consensus on an alternative to MCAS before deciding to support or oppose this ballot measure and therefore the LWVMA takes no position on this question.

Question 3: Unionization for Transportation Network Drivers

It is proposed that transportation network drivers should have the legal right to form unions. The League has no positions on this topic, so LWVMA takes no position on this question.

Question 4: Limited Legalization and Regulation of Certain Natural Psychedelic Substances

It is proposed to allow people aged 21 and older to possess and use certain natural psychedelic substances within specific parameters. The League has no positions on this topic, so LWVMA takes no position on this question.

Question 5: Minimum Wage for Tipped Workers

It is proposed to gradually increase the minimum hourly wage an employer must pay a tipped worker in Massachusetts to 100% of the state minimum wage over five years.

While the LWVUS Meeting Basic Human Needs position includes support for a living wage, it also states, “Specific issues in relation to a living wage and income levels should be decided by Leagues working in their communities.” LWVMA believes members would need to study and reach consensus on this issue and therefore takes no position on this Ballot Question.

LWVMA LEGISLATIVE SUCCESSES IN THE LAST SESSION

Despite a slow and painstaking 2023-24 legislative session, LWVMA scored major this year as shown below:

LWVMA 2023-24 SUPPORTED LEGISLATION ENACTED INTO LAW

Affordable Housing

- Eviction sealing
- Access to Counsel Pilot Program

Children and Families

- Coercive control added to the definition of domestic violence
- Addition of eight family court judges
- Universal school meals
- Lift the Cap on Kids: 10% increase in cash assistance programs

Education

- Civics Project Trust Fund \$2.5M line item in annual state budgets

Environment: Natural Resources

- An Act relative to the reduction of certain toxic chemicals in firefighter personal protective equipment

Gun Violence Prevention

- An Act Modernizing Firearms

Immigration

- In-state tuition rates for undocumented students

Women's Issues

- Frances Perkins Workplace Equity Act
- An Act promoting access to midwifery care and out-of-hospital birth options



wins.:

FUNDING IN STATE BUDGETS TOWARDS LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

- Fare-free Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs)
- Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3 grants) \$475 million
 - Common Start

EXECUTIVE ACTION TAKEN THIS SESSION THAT INCLUDES LWVMA- SUPPORTED POLICIES/BILLS

- [MassSpeaks: language access provided by all government agencies](#)
- [Climate Bank](#)

await action:

- **Economic Development bill**
 - Raise the Age
 - Statewide Action for Public Health Excellence, SAPHE 2.0
 - Campaign Funds for Childcare
- **Climate and Energy omnibus**
 - Permitting and siting
 - Bottle bill expansion

LEGISLATIVE ACTION COMMITTEE BY THE NUMBERS



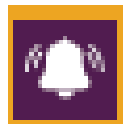
20

Legislative
specialists



170

Bills Followed



24

Action Alerts
Issued



89

Testimonies
Submitted



21

Lobby Days
Attended



18

Coalitions



12

Education
Events

[OF INTEREST](#)

A free seven-week course “Dismantling Racism in our Town,” led by a team of all-volunteer facilitators, will start on September 18 and will run through October 30. It is offered by and for those who live, work, study and/or worship in Lexington or nearby towns and is designed to strengthen personal and collective awareness of anti-Black racism and its consequences; and to commit to undo and repair the legacies of racism and white supremacy in ourselves and our communities This is a valuable opportunity to learn with members of the community in an interactive seven-week experience. The fall session will be meeting via Zoom on Wednesday mornings from 9:00am to 11:00am, running from September 18 through October 30. Registration is required. Contact LexDismantlingRacism@gmail.com with questions or to register.

This program is supported by the Lexington Human Rights Committee and the Lexington Lyceum Advocates.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF THE UNITED STATES
LWVUS ADVOCACY

LWVUS PRESIDENT ISSUES STATEMENT ON COMING ELECTION

As the national presidential campaign heats up, League President Dianna Wynn has issued a reminder to local and state Leagues that we do not take positions regarding candidates or parties, but only on issues and policy proposals that may be formally introduced. In a statement on July 19, 2024, President Wynn stated:

For more than a century, the League of Women Voters has stood as a trusted, nonpartisan source of election information for voters across this nation. Since our founding, [we have] been dedicated to preparing voters to exercise their right to participate in democracy.

We stand firmly against policies and actions that threaten the integrity and inclusiveness of the democratic process. White nationalism and efforts to move our government toward authoritarianism threaten the very foundation of our democracy. The League will use our power and resources to combat any attempt to undercut the values of free and fair elections, and our democracy of, by, and for the people. ...[W]e will challenge any policies, laws, and regulations that propose restrictive measures that undermine our nation's progress toward ensuring every citizen's right to vote.

Our country is at an existential crossroads, and voters must make a critical decision about the direction of our nation. The League remains committed to providing nonpartisan election information for voters at VOTE411.org and empowering voters to

send a clear message about the future we want. We urge American voters to turn up and turn out in November to ensure our democracy reflects the will of the people.



NEW LWVUS POSITION ON THE DECLINE OF LOCAL NEWS

At its 2024 Annual Convention, the LWVUS adopted a formal position on “The Decline of Local News and Its Impact on Democracy.” The statement below is now a part of the Representative Government Section of the League’s policies, and may be cited by state and local Leagues in their advocacy efforts.

d States believes it is the responsibility of the government to provide support for conditions under which credible local journalism can survive and thrive. The League defines local news as accurate, in-depth coverage of government entities, including but not limited to, city councils, county councils, county boards of commissioners, health departments, schools, and school boards. The League supports credible and ethical local journalism, in whatever format it is published, as essential to our democracy. The League supports efforts to ensure everyone has access to information necessary for casting an informed ballot and that credible local news sources are integral to this pursuit. The League believes that support for the viability of local news may take a variety of forms. Control of the content must remain exclusively with the news organizations. The League also believes media literacy and news education, including support for journalism students, are essential. These opportunities should be expanded in schools and throughout communities. The League believes that everyone should have access to comprehensive, credible local news and that barriers to access should be removed. These barriers include, but are not limited to, geography, economic status, and education.

SAVE THE DATE

September 17, 2024 National Voter Registration Day

September 18-30, 2024 Dismantling Racism, 9:00 am Zoom

October 10, 2024 Forum on Ballot Questions 1, 3, and 5 7:00 pm.

Community Center

October 11, 2024 Forum on Ballot Questions 2 and 4, 9:30 am

Community Center

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

Community Center

November 5, 2024 Election Day

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

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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

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MA Senator Michael Barrett

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Room 617 722-1572

MA Senator Cindy Friedman

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MA Representative Michelle Ciccolo

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Room 617 722-2210

MA Representative Ken Gordon

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF 2024-2025

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We welcome Bulletin articles from members. If you would like to submit an article for the October 2024 Lexington LWV Bulletin, please send it to Wendy Manz at wendy_manz@yahoo.com by September, 27,2024.