

VOTER

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October 2023

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy

Overlooked Elections

Why do so few people vote in the primary and local elections when those are the elections that have the most direct impact on our lives?

Primary elections determine the candidates on the final ballot. People who are more partisan have the biggest turnout for primaries which may put more extreme candidates on the ballot. Bigger voter turnout would moderate this. Results of primary elections may cause political parties to rethink strategies and resource allocation for the general elections.

City and county elections determine who will be making policy and setting priorities that impact such things as property tax, regulating land use for building housing and schools, business activity of all kinds, and setting public health and safety standards for residents. They are also responsible for communicating policies and programs to residents and responding to questions.

With the many changes passed by the Iowa legislature and media coverage of contentious school board debates, elections for school boards have become more prominent. They were always important, but often overlooked before. School boards serve as a link between classrooms and communities. They set policy, curriculums, budgets, the school year calendar and determine the amount spent on arts, music and sports. They also hire and fire principals and set guidelines for teachers.

LWVJC is on top of the elections coming up this Fall registering and educating voters. Sign up to register voters. Join us for candidate forums and read about candidates on your ballot at VOTE411.org. Find out why people don't vote in a presentation by Caroline Tolbert.

Read this *Voter* for information and dates on all local League activities. Happy Election Season!

*Paula Vaughan and Miriam Timmer-Hackert
co-presidents*

The *Voter* is issued the last Friday of the month to provide members advance notice of activities.
The November *Voter* deadline is October 23.



Voter Services Committee

As part of our mission to help educate and inform voters, the Voter Services committee is busy planning candidate forums for the city and school elections. We sponsor forums in as many contested races as possible. These forums offer candidates an opportunity to address voters' questions in a public place.

On Tuesday, September 26, a candidate forum was held for the Iowa City City Council District A primary. Two of the three candidates will advance to appear on the November 7 ballot. The participating candidates were Laura Bergus, Tim Borchardt, and Pauline Taylor. We thank the candidates for participating. It was a well-attended and informative forum. The forum was recorded and will be available on the League of Women Voters' website (lwvjc.org). The District A primary will be held October 10.

The following candidate forums are scheduled:

- Lone Tree City Council forum will be held Tuesday, October 10, at 7 p.m. in the Lone Tree Council Chambers.
- Hills City Council forum will be held Thursday, October 12, at 7 p.m. at the Sharon Telephone Company in Hills.
- Iowa City City Council forum will be held on Monday, October 16, at 7 p.m. at the Iowa City Senior Center.
- Iowa City Community School Board forum will be held on Wednesday, October 18 at 7 p.m., at a location to be determined.
- North Liberty City Council forum will be held at 7 p.m. at the North Liberty Council Chambers.
- Tiffin Mayor and City Council forum is in the process of being scheduled.

Watch for more details about all the forums in your League email and on the League Facebook page.

Please contact me at jnn.bancroft@gmail.com if you are interested in serving as a moderator or timekeeper.

*Jeanne Bancroft
Voter Services Chair*



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Sign up for DEI Workshop!

The DEI Committee (Anne Spencer, Bea Hicks, Diana Henry and Paula Vaughan) continues to meet regularly to fine tune our DEI Workshop offered to community members. We have provided this opportunity to several local groups and find it is a thoughtful, informative and inspiring exploration of important ideas and issues. The ultimate goal is that it inspires action that improves our local community. Education about important local, state and national issues has always been a LWV focus, and we have had very positive feedback from participants ranging from the Clear Creek-Amana Schools community, local Rotary members, and LWVJC members.

In October, we are collaborating with the Johnson County Senior Center and TRAIL (Tools and Resources for Active, Independent Living) to offer a two session workshop at the Senior Center. We will meet at 10 a.m. on October 4 and 11 for two hours to explore and discuss issues related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in our community.

Here is the description as posted:

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Workshop
Wednesdays, October 4-11, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Location: Room 302
Register online or call 319-356-5220

*Facilitators: Anne Spencer, Diana Henry,
Bea Hicks, Paula Vaughan*

This workshop will explore social justice issues

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by providing resources and facilitating discussions to better understand varied life experiences as they relate to white privilege and racism. Our sessions include videos, readings, and discussion to raise awareness of the role of white privilege in society. Participants will reflect on why and how one perceives and reacts to others, explore the effects of systemic racism, identify the impediments to social justice in our community, and consider actions to make a difference. This program is offered by the League of Women Voters of Johnson County in partnership with TRAIL of Johnson County.

If you are interested, here is the link to the Senior Center Program Guide. You can sign up for our workshop on page 4. It is NOT too late!! <https://www.icgov.org/home/showpublisheddocument/1535/638289246671100000>

Anne Spencer
DEI Committee

Making Connections: Economic Justice in the Criminal Justice System

Karen Person and Lettie Prell from the Des Moines LWV will discuss the LWV of Iowa's study on Economic Justice in the Criminal Justice System on Sunday, October 22, at 2 p.m. Donna Hirst will host the event at her home at 810 N. Linn St., Iowa City. Please join us to learn more about this important study.

Kathleen Kamerick



Membership

Membership of the League of Women Voters Johnson County is currently at 167 active members. Thank you to everyone who has renewed. Your timely renewal is greatly appreciated. June 30 is the renewal date for all members each year. If you don't remember receiving the message, the email reminder

comes from lwvjcmembership@gmail.com so please check your spam to see if it is going there.

We welcome the following new members: Jane Shuttleworth, Siri Felker, Rosemary Timmer-Hackert, Natalee Bell, Barbara Kelley, Barbara Henke, Derek Willard, Ann Satterly and Susan Eberly. Hope to meet you at the monthly Casual Coffee which is the second Wednesday of every month at the Poindexter Coffee House in the Graduate Hotel in downtown Iowa City. We gather at 10 a.m.

Jeanne Bancroft
Membership Chair



Advocacy Update

Despite the legislature being out of session, a number of issues kept the advocacy committee busy this month. Unfortunately, none of them are for the good. The most pressing issues this month were changes to Iowa's public boards and the Summit carbon pipeline.

The Iowa Utility Board has been having hearings about the carbon pipeline, and the advocacy committee asked LWVJC volunteers to provide feedback to that board. This was a new experience for all of us, so we documented the process for submitting comments to that group and issued talking points to the advocacy alert volunteers. Particular thanks are due to member Gaylen Wobeter for exploring the process and drafting the initial talking points. As of this writing, the Utility Board has concluded its public hearings but continues to hold other hearings about this issue.

The committee also swiftly responded to a state notification about Iowa's temporary Boards and Commissions Review Committee. This

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committee provided recommendations on whether to keep, eliminate, restructure, or merge 250 Iowa boards and commissions. Its process has been extremely opaque with features that appear to be deliberately designed to avoid public participation, for example having “subcommittees” with so few participants that open meetings rules do not apply to them. The entire process is objectionable from a good governance point of view, and the League has particular concern about the review committee’s recommendations to eliminate Iowa’s requirement that boards and commissions make a good faith attempt at gender balance and that the Commission on the Status of Women be eliminated. The advocacy also sent talking points to the advocacy volunteer group on those concerns, but the committee was generally unresponsive to even the minimal public input that it allowed. The next step to combat these changes will be in the legislature.

The Advocacy Committee is still looking at the Farm Bill but hopes to coordinate our talking points with LWVUS and the Upper Mississippi Inter-League Organization.

Last and most pleasantly, we are also working to schedule our annual legislative update. Last year's format of combining that with the December member meeting met with good feedback, so we expect to do that again. The date is set for Saturday, December 2. Additional details will be forthcoming.

*Shannon Patrick
Advocacy Chair*



Voter Registration

Voter Education Outreach October Happenings. Coralville celebrates its 150th anniversary on Sunday, October 1st at the Xtreme Arena! The League will be present to register voters (sign-up link for volunteers is below). Arrangements for

senior centers, food pantries, and other sites are underway for October. If you have any particular sites you’d like to see the League at, let me know. While not all sites yield the same success in new registrants, they provide a great opportunity to showcase the League in various community settings.



[Happy 150th Birthday Coralville!](#)

Indoors. Xtreme Arena. Big Crowd. Table + Chairs provided by arena. Sign up at the link.

*Silvia Quezada
Voter Registration Coordinator*

***Kiss the Ground* addresses climate crisis**

Project GREEN recently partnered with area nonprofit organizations concerned about the environment and natural resources to host the documentary film *Kiss the Ground*. These organizations were 100 Grannies, Backyard Abundance, Bur Oak Land Trust, Iowa City Public Library, Johnson County Master Gardeners, and the League of Women Voters. The film was made available free of charge through a generous grant from Roco Films.

The film, narrated by and featuring Woody Harrelson, explored a viable, low-cost way to reverse climate change through soil regeneration. Modern, industrialized, mono-crop agriculture is killing microbial life in the soil that sequesters carbon. When soil loses its ability to sequester carbon, it becomes dirt. What

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was once productive, healthy soil slowly becomes dry and infertile, a process called desertification.

The film showed in detail how healthy soil is the answer to address the climate crisis. Soil regeneration has the potential to sequester 100% of the carbon dioxide humans emit into the atmosphere. The film revealed how *regenerative agriculture* increases and improves soil life, helps store water and sequesters CO₂.

A global movement of activists, scientists, farmers, and government agencies are partnering to demonstrate and explain how *regenerative agriculture* can balance the climate, replenish water supplies, feed the world, and maintain profitability. The film tells their story and the powerful solution to one of our greatest challenges.

Two facts in the film are particularly noteworthy:

- 2/3 of the earth's soil has been damaged; we have approximately 60 years to repair the damage to the soil and avoid a total loss of all of the soil's productivity.
- Millions of people migrate every year to avoid starving. Out-migration is partially due to soil productivity loss. The Russian-Ukrainian war has added to the global crisis creating food insecurity in the region and beyond.

More than 60 people representing our partner organizations and the public attended the screening to learn how regenerating the soil can restore our climate and our environment. Hopefully, the viewers of the screening will become active volunteers who will carry the message and spread the word about the importance of *regenerative agriculture and farming*.

Finally, all of our partner organizations have volunteering opportunities. According to the US Census, nearly 25% of Americans 16 years and older spent time volunteering during the pandemic (September 2020 and 2021). More than half helped their neighbors during the same

period. Volunteering is beneficial since acts of kindness can protect your brain and help with cognitive functioning. We hope you can help these organizations with your time, your talents, and your resources. Remember, always be kind to each other to make everyone's day better.

LWVJC offers numerous volunteer activities to encourage informed and active participation in government, increase understanding of public policy issues and influence through education and advocacy. Join any one of our committees and volunteers to make a difference in our world.

Linda Schreiber



Upper Mississippi River Region InterLeague Organization (UMRRILO)

You can all be so proud of your membership in the LWVJC. We are doing so many things to educate, create awareness and actively get involved to make a change.

Did you know Shannon Patrick not only chairs the Advocacy Committee for LWVJC, but he also serves on the Executive Board of the LWVIA as its treasurer? What an active group our Advocacy committee is – consider joining this group! Did you read Diane Duncan-Goldsmith's letter to the editor about Governor Reynolds' committee review? Our governor just cut 111 state committees with little to no input. Did you know some of our LWVJC members are presenting a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion workshop at the Senior Center October 4 and 11? Sign up for that informative and impressive class.

Did you miss the collaboration Linda Schreiber achieved working with other groups such as 100 Grannies to present the movie, "Kiss the Ground" at the Iowa City Public Library? You can still watch the movie on Netflix, and if you belong to an organization interested in viewing, it can be shown as an educational presentation. Linda is a gem of a worker, organizer and thinker.

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Personally, my role with the LWV Upper Mississippi River Network InterLeague Organization, has brought me unending joy and education. I was appointed to represent all of you on the Mississippi River Network which works for 31 states surrounding the Mississippi River. I'll be going to our Annual Meeting in Memphis in mid-October. I'd love to have company and someone who is interested in interacting with the vibrant, young group of dedicated water preservation and environmentalists. Just contact me if you are interested. It is through that organization that our twenty plus people were able to enjoy the Celebration of the Mississippi River in Dubuque in June. The presentation at the Galena Public Library from Dale Glick taught me a great deal, especially about the "Lead City" designation for Galena. Native American women and children worked those mines and were exposed to lead which created many maladies.

My experience with the UMRR InterLeague Organization even brought LWVUS President Deb Turner to our Annual Retreat, which was finally held in person. Deb had no idea there was such an active ILO and that we were doing such good advocacy. She has given us the support to be action movers on issues that are already part of our LWVUS Issue publication, such as protect and preserve the environment.

Missouri is being represented at our Action meetings because several local units want to be a part. Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois and Iowa are the current ILO and take action state wide and Upper Mississippi area wide.

Our groups LWVUS, MRN, LWV UMRR ILO and our LWVJC Advocacy are all focusing on the Farm Bill. It will be a tough reauthorization. It is due this year, but probably won't be addressed until next year. This bill is so convoluted that notes for Congress people are in a 1000 page publication. Most don't understand any of it except items about their own turf. LWV UMRR decided long ago, our focus in this bill was conservation and sustainability of the soil. Those issues are in our LWVUS Issues publication. Crop insurance costs are a large

share of the Farm Bill. Even Senator Grassley has asked for a monetary cap on crop insurance several times during renewal of the Farm Bill (every five years) in his tenure. The crop insurance goes to big corporations, as well as local farmers. Crop insurance was necessary in the 1930's, but is it now? Big Ag corporate organizations can be identified by fields planted with crops (corn and soybeans in Iowa) right up to the road without grass waterways. These fields could feed the world and our nation with foods that are better for our bodies and existence. Using diversified crops and varied usage (cover crops, natural growth, grass for cattle and no till) has been shown to be profitable and better for the soil, and allows the farmers to sell what consumers really need and want.

LWVUS is working on a policy statement for the Farm Bill as requested by the UMRR-ILO. Climate issues are becoming front and center to the public, which is demanding something better happen quickly. Carbon sequestration is also a big farm issue. The Farm Bill could promote, with financial rewards, programs that support our climate needs and lead to a healthier future.

Anyone AS AN INDIVIDUAL can call their Congressperson's office, leave a message and state desired outcomes. Simple messages are best. Too much information is overload. Ask for the Farm Bill to increase financing for farming methods that enhance the environment and support good conservation methods. SNAP is also part of the Farm Bill. Many areas of the Farm Bill will NOT expire in September, but the renewal has to take place before those good programs will be hindered.

Stay tuned. I have lots of information to share. The Farm Bill is an area that can draw many people together for the good of all.

*Nancy Porter
LWV Upper Mississippi River InterLeague
Organization, Mississippi River Network, Advocacy
Committee, LWV representative*

Photo Gallery

National Voter Registration Day!



Above: League members Elinor Levin, Denise Chevalier (top left) and Polly Horton (top right) registering voters at National Voter Registration Day at the Iowa City Public Library on September 19.

Below: League members Syndy Conger and Patty McCarthy were registering voters at the Kirkwood Regional Center on NVRD.





Top Left: League members Vicki Aden, Diana Henry, Syndy Conger, and Cathy Eisenhofer registering voters at National Voter Registration Day at the Kirkwood Regional Center on September 19. **Top Right:** League members Kathy Ryerson and Barbara Beaumont were registering voters at the North Liberty Recreation Center on NVRD.



The LWVJC Education Committee held a workshop, *It's Your Right to Know: Preparing Freedom of Information Act Requests*, on September 24 at the Iowa City Public Library. Pictured left, Education Committee member Patty McCarthy introduces Randy Evans, Executive Director of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council, and Vanessa Miller, reporter for *The Gazette*. Above: Randy Evans and Vanessa Miller during the workshop.

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK®

Calendar of Events

Date	Time	Location	Program
Sunday, October 1	1:30-5:30 pm	Xtreme Arena, Coralville	Voter Registration 150th Anniversary Coralville
Wednesday, October 4	10 am - 12 pm	Senior Center, Iowa City	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Workshop, part 1
Sunday, October 8	1:30-2:30 pm	C20 Pomerantz Center at the University of Iowa	One Community One Book 2023; Keynote Lecture by Joanne Ramos, author of <i>The Farm</i>
Monday, October 9	6:30-8 pm	virtual	Board meeting
Tuesday, October 10	7 - 8 pm	Lone Tree Council Chambers	Candidate Forum, Lone Tree City Council candidates
Wednesday, October 11	10 am	Poindexter Coffee, Graduate Hotel, Iowa City	Casual Coffee
Wednesday, October 11	10 am - 12 pm	Senior Center, Iowa City	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Workshop, part 2
Thursday, October 12		Oaknoil and Legacy Senior Living	Voter Registration
Thursday, October 12	7 - 8 pm	Sharon Telephone Company, Hills	Candidate Forum, Hills City Council candidates
Monday, October 16	7 pm	Senior Center Assembly Room, Iowa City	Candidate Forum, Iowa City City Council At-Large and District A candidates
Wednesday, October 18	7 pm	Location to be determined	Candidate Forum (co-sponsored by DPO), Iowa City Community School District candidates
Thursday, October 19	7 pm	virtual	<i>What to Expect in 2024 Legislative Session</i> with LWVIA lobbyists
Sunday, October 22	2-3:30 pm	Donna Hirst home, 810 N Linn St, Iowa City	Making Connections: <i>Economic Justice in the Criminal Justice System</i> led by Karen Person and Lettie Prell
Tuesday, October 24	6:30-8 pm	Iowa City Public Library	<i>Why People Don't Vote</i> presented by Dr. Caroline Tolbert
Wednesday, October 25	7 - 8 pm	North Liberty City Council Chambers	Candidate Forum, North Liberty City Council candidates
Date TBD	7 pm	Tiffin Council Chambers	Candidate Forum, Tiffin Mayor and City Council
Tuesday, November 7	7 am - 8 pm		Election Day: city councils, school districts
Wednesday, November 8	10 am	Poindexter Coffee, Graduate Hotel, Iowa City	Casual Coffee
Monday, November 13	6:30-8 pm	virtual	Board meeting
Thursday, November 16	7 pm	virtual	<i>How to Talk to Legislators</i> , Connie Ryan of Interfaith Alliance
Saturday, December 2	11-1:30 pm	Radisson Hotel, 1220 1st Ave, Coralville	Annual Membership Meeting and Legislative Lunch
January 25, 2024		Iowa City Public Library	<i>House File 68: Challenges & Changes for Public Schools</i> with Matt Degner