



The Voter | Fall 2024

Welcome to **THE VOTER** newsletter for the League of Women Voters of Montana!

Letter from League of Women Voters of Montana State President:

Dear League of Women Voters of Montana Member:

Election 2024 is over and the electorate has chosen to go in a different direction from the policies of the past four years. Many League members are concerned about the League's role in the future. Below is the statement on the election issued on November 6 by Celina Stewart, CEO of LWV US:

"The 2024 election underscores the dedication of poll workers, election officials, and volunteers nationwide, who ensured that every eligible vote was counted, and every voice was heard. This year's election was marked by integrity, transparency, and high turnout. The American people have spoken."

"While we celebrate a fair and secure election, the outcome of this election has made the future for women unclear."

"Given the disturbing rhetoric made during this election season, we are deeply concerned about challenges we may face, particularly regarding the issues that disproportionately affect women, from health care and reproductive rights to economic security and equal representation."

"We are thankful to Leagues across the country for their tremendous work supporting the election infrastructure and supporting voters, as well as every election worker and democracy defender who guaranteed our fair and free voting process. We are thankful for the work they have done so far this cycle and the counting, curing, and certifying work that will take place in the weeks ahead."

"The League is dedicated to our mission of defending democracy. As we move forward, we remain steadfast in our commitment to advocate for policies that uplift women and ensure equitable representation in all levels of government."

The League's national President Diana Wynn posted a new blog on the LWV US website as a follow-up to this statement. You can read her blog at the link below - keep scrolling! The blog continues beneath each photo.

<https://www.lwv.org/blog/reflecting-election-we-will-speak-and-speak-out>

The League of Women Voters of Montana is committed to remaining steadfast in our mission to defend and build democracy. Now is the time for League members to take advantage of every opportunity to make sure our leaders know that we, their constituents, support the promise of democracy. Look below for upcoming events to help you prepare to make your voice heard in the Montana 2025 legislative session, and to continue preparing ourselves to rebuild community across the political divisions that continue to tear us apart.

Now and in the days to come, we must be sure to nurture ourselves and our fellow League members and friends, to keep hope and joy in our hearts for the long road ahead.

May your Holiday Season be one of warmth and love of family and friends!

Sincerely,

Nancy Leifer, President,
League of Women Voters of Montana

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GET READY TO MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD IN THE 2025 MONTANA LEGISLATURE!

December 11: 7:00 to 8:00 pm

“2025 Legislature: How to Get Action Alerts and Bill Info on Members-Only Access”

You must register in advance to get the Zoom link:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlpd-mgpj8qGdKc5mMmFofpEqLmDcRDeB](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom-join?from=addon&url=https%3A%2F%2Fus02web.zoom.us%2Fmeeting%2Fregister%2FtZlpd-mgpj8qGdKc5mMmFofpEqLmDcRDeB)

Learn how to receive and respond to Action Alerts; learn how to request access to the “Members-only” part of the LWV Montana website, where you will find more detailed bill reports.

Access “Members-Only” pages on LWV Montana Website: <https://my.lwv.org/montana>

We will be posting more extensive bill information on the LWV Montana website's "Members Only" webpages. The "Members Only" menu doesn't appear until you have requested and set up an account. If you haven't already requested access to "Members Only," here's how:

To create an account, visit <http://my.lwv.org/montana>.

Click on **Register** in the top right corner of the website and follow the prompts.

Your access will be pending until it is activated. This is to ensure only current Montana LWV members are accessing these pages. Once verified, visit the LWV MT website, log in at the top, and the Members-Only pages will appear toward the bottom of the website's menu along the left side of the screen.

If you have any trouble with Members Only access, LWV MT will be offering help with at a training session in December and again on Wednesday evenings throughout the session. See Event on December 11, listed above.

Legislative Information Zoom Meeting Every Wednesday through the Session!

Starting in January, LWV MT will be offering trainings on how to interact with the 2025 Montana Legislature, with sessions on how a bill becomes law, when and how to contact legislators, and new this year, how to write and deliver testimony to legislative committees. Thereafter, LWV MT will offer “This Week at the Legislature” weekly action updates, on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm via Zoom.

January 8: 7:00 to 8:00 pm

“Montana Legislature 2025: How a Bill Becomes Law and How to Contact the Legislature” - the law-making process includes many steps: introduction; committee assignment; committee hearing; executive action; floor vote 2nd reading; floor vote 3rd reading; transmittal to other chamber; conference committee if needed; to Governor for signature. This session will show you how LWV MT will track a bill through the process, and when and how citizens can weigh in. NOTE: you may also need the passcode to get into this meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us05web.zoom.us/j/81203950203?pwd=jj1awuRE8bZbreaxYEGAR6Ey7cAnax.1>

Meeting ID: 812 0395 0203

Passcode: HEwW5p

January 15: 7:00 to 8:00 pm

“Montana Legislature: How to Write and Deliver Testimony”

Make your voice heard by providing testimony for committee hearings! Nothing is as powerful as individuals presenting testimony as constituents! This year, help make an even greater impact by participating directly in the legislative process, speaking for yourself, not as a League member. This training is for both written and oral testimony. If you don't want to do oral testimony before the committee either in person or on Zoom, you can just write it and submit it. NOTE: You may also need the passcode to get into this meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us05web.zoom.us/j/81203950203?pwd=jj1awuRE8bZbreaxYEGAR6Ey7cAnax.1>

Meeting ID: 812 0395 0203

Passcode: HEwW5p

January 22 - Wednesday - 7:00 – 7:30 pm and ongoing January 29-May 14 (or the end of the session)

“Montana Legislature 2025: This week at the Legislature”

Every Wednesday evening at 7:00-7:30 pm via Zoom, these sessions present a summary of what is happening at the Legislature, and which bills, of those the League is tracking, are up for action that week. MT will provide technical assistance as needed at the end of each session on the Members Only option on the LWV MT website, and how to use the Legislature's website to contact legislators or sign up to give testimony.

The link for all Wednesday meetings through May 14 is the same. You can copy and paste this link where you can find it again. Note: You may need to also use the passcode to get into these meetings.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us05web.zoom.us/j/81203950203?pwd=jJ1awuRE8bZbreaxYEGAR6Ey7cAnax.1>

Meeting ID: 812 0395 0203

Passcode: HEwW5p

ACTIONS:

NATIONAL LEAGUE ACTION ALERT: PUSH FOR CERTIFICATION OF ERA AMENDMENT!

Urge President Biden to complete his legacy by instructing the US Archivist to certify and publish the ERA in the Constitution! Equality cannot wait.

Use the link below. Be sure to fill in the information as you scroll down, and hit "Take Action" to send the message to President Biden.

<https://www.lwv.org/take-action/president-must-immediately-publish-equal-rights-amendment>

Make a tax-deductible year-end gift to the League!

Go to the League's donation page to access links for tax-deductible donations to all four Montana local Leagues and the state League. <https://my.lwv.org/montana/donate>

NEWS:

LWV MT Receives \$25,000 Grant for Video Story-telling Project

Democracy is precious, but how do we convey that message in an age where most people get their news from social media and tend to make decisions based on their emotions?

"Telling the Story of Democracy in Montana" is one way the League can reach people. This project aims to capture on video personal stories from Montanans in all walks of life about how their lives were affected by Montana's democracy. **Volunteers Needed!** The Project will train League members on how to elicit impactful stories, how to capture them on video, how to edit them into compelling 10-15 minute YouTube presentations and podcasts, and how to build a successful following on social media. Project volunteers are needed from January, 2025 through December of 2026 and beyond to November of 2030 when

Montanans will be voting on whether to have a state Constitutional Convention. **No experience needed to volunteer!** Volunteers are needed to run cameras and recording equipment, conduct interviews, edit recordings, and manage social media sites. [Here is a link to the full grant proposal.](#) **To volunteer, send an email with "Video Project" in the subject line to:** nancleifer@gmail.com

LWV MT Hosts Corina Encabo through US State Department YSEALI Program

LWV MT hosted Philippine Career Fellow Corina Encabo for four weeks in September and October, through the auspices of the U.S. State Department and the University of Montana's Mansfield Center. "Cor" as she preferred to be called, spent a week with the Helena League, a week with the Missoula League and two weeks focusing on state League projects. At the end of her visit, Cor gave an inspiring presentation on how the League can engage younger people (see below). Thank you to all the League members who hosted Cor for a few hours or a day to share aspects of League and western Montana culture, and a special thank you to Cherri Jones of the Helena League and Mary LaPorte of the Missoula League who together coordinated Cor's visit and ensured that she was able to experience a wide range of western Montana's natural beauty and culture.

Recording of "Engaging Youth" from LWV Montana Mansfield Fellow Cor Encabo

An inspiring presentation on the theory and practice of engaging young people, with special focus on the League of Women Voters in Montana and what the League can do!

NOTE: You will need to use the access passcode to view this video.

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/NwIFlWVePmv1Wxe7V0BhDACb_aPW7Qj_bPR81hZciwWLCofttvuWObTxgz6-1ii.KxcxAf4sBCirwGV0

Passcode: ggt@\$@h9

Recordings of Two LWV Montana Forums on "Preserving Our Democracy"

LWV Montana hosted two forums featuring former Montana governors, one in Helena on August 7 at Carroll College and another in Butte on October 6 at the Covellite Theater in Butte. These presentations offer hope and actions we can take to preserve our democracy in Montana. **Video Recordings of both are now available!**

"Preserving Our Democracy" LWV MT-hosted Discussion with Former Governor Marc Racicot (Republican) and Mae Nan Ellingson (youngest delegate to Montana's 1972 Constitutional Convention) on August 7, 2024 at Carroll College

LWV Montana sponsored this live event with the help of the Helena League, and Helena's Community Access TV station recorded this historic conversation between two of Montana's foremost supporters of democracy on what citizens can do to support and defend our democracy. A special thank you to Sharon Haugen who served as the League emcee for the meeting! Go to: <https://www.helenacivictv.org/on-demand> and search for "Preserving Our Democracy"

“Preserving Our Democracy” from the evening of October 6, 2024, in the Covellite Theater in Butte, Montana, **featuring former Republican Montana Governor Marc Racicot (1993-2001) and former Democratic Montana Governor Steve Bullock (2013-2021)** and moderated by Evan Barrett, Vice Chair of Friends of the Montana Constitution. The forum Preserving Our Democracy was sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Montana and the Forward Montana Foundation. This is a Maney Telefilm, its Executive Producers were Kim Longcake and Evan Barrett, cinematography by Dick Maney. Here is the link: [Preserving Our Democracy](#)

LWV MT Voter Services Completes Special Voter Outreach Projects

LWV Montana’s Voter Services Committee has successfully completed several special outreach efforts for targeted voter registration and voting for the 2024 election. The New Citizens project attended every naturalization ceremony in the state, reaching 250 new citizens and registering 127. The Formerly Incarcerated Project reached out through the justice system to reach 440 formerly incarcerated citizens and registered 355. In addition, League members went to several border towns to reach Native Americans living in or near reservations. Thank you to all the League volunteers who helped make these special projects successful, and a special thanks to state League Voter Services Committee Chair Rebecca Johnson who wrote the grant applications for two of these projects.

LWV MT statewide Guest Editorials on Election (August, September, October, watch for November) LWV Montana together with local League Presidents had three Guest Editorials in major newspapers across the state in the lead up to the election. You can read each one using the links below:

[August: Autocracy v Imperfect Democracy](#)

[September: Speak Up – Vote in 2024](#)

[October: Voting in Montana is Safe and Secure](#)

LWV Education Issues Briefing Book Coming Soon!

After the Montana legislative session in 2023, League members voted to have a state League Working Group study and potentially make recommendations to update the LWV Montana’s position on education.

“A quality public education is essential for a strong viable, and sustainable democratic society and is a civil right.” (Impact on Issues, 2020-22, p. 124)

The Working Group has prepared a Briefing Book on pre-school through 12th grade Education Issues in Montana. Most of the materials focus on financing education, the challenges facing school districts from inadequate funding, and the potential impact of diverting public funds to private providers.

Each local League will have a League membership meeting in January to discuss the articles contained in this briefing book. It will be up to individual League members to determine whether to take action and contact legislators during the session as you get action alerts about legislation that supports or counters the existing League position. League members will also discuss the issues and determine in each local League if there is a consensus about adopting the proposed changes in the LWV Montana position. If there is support for the proposed changes, they will be introduced as part of the LWV Montana 2025 Convention process, for consideration for adoption.

Watch for the Education Briefing Book to come as an email from your local League, sometime around Thanksgiving!

LWV US Prepares National Study on the Judiciary

At the national convention in June of 2024, the delegates voted to have the National League prepare a Study of the federal Judiciary so that the League would have a position in place as soon as possible. News hot off the presses is that the materials for the Study will be ready by February 7, 2025 and local Leagues will have until April 14 of 2025 to read through the materials and have a meeting to discuss and come to consensus. Watch for more information coming early next year, and in the meantime, you can find out more at:

<https://www.lwv.org/league-management/advocacy-litigation/2024-2025-federal-judiciary-study-process-committee-and>

LWV MT VOTE411 Combats Misinformation on Voting and Candidates

This year, LWV MT partnered with the Montana Free Press to tackle recruiting candidates to respond to the VOTE411 candidate Voter Guide, and promoting and administering VOTE411 for Montana statewide, legislative, public service and judicial races. VOTE411 is an online voter guide that features both information about the process of voting, and responses from candidates to issue questions straight from the candidates' themselves.

Thank you to all the League volunteers who helped make VOTE411 possible at the state level, with special thanks to Bozeman League member Carol and Helena League member Patrice Anderson who took on the massive task of mastering candidate outreach, GIS map uploading and data downloading! We had a 49% response rate from candidates, which is about 8% better than the response rate from 2022. And, we had over 43,000 Montanans go to the VOTE411 website, a 400% increase from 2022! All of the information specific to the 2024 election has been removed from the site, but generic voting information is still there. If you aren't familiar with VOTE411, you can find it here:

<https://www.vote411.org/>

LWV US Dues Transformation Coming Soon – February 1

Did you know that about 3,000 people a month go to the LWV US website looking to join the League? Most of them never do, because currently you can't join the League at the national website, you can only join a state or local League. Also, young people today typically don't have check books, so the only way they could join a League is online. For these and many other reasons, becoming a League member and paying your dues will look a bit different starting February 1 of 2025.

Learn more about what the changes mean for members from the LWV US [member-oriented FAQs](#).

For more information on how this might affect Leagues in Montana, here is a summary: [Transition to new League dues system](#)

Thanks for reading the League of Women Voters of Montana Fall Edition of THE VOTER! We will see you in the Winter.