



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEBRASKA

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SAVE THE DATES

Saturday, Feb. 20, 10 a.m. to noon, training for Legislative Day. See page 3.
Wednesday, Feb. 24, noon to 1:15 p.m. Legislative Day. See page 3.
Saturday, April 24, 10 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Annual Meeting. See page 6.

LWVNE VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTE TIME TO MAKE DEMOCRACY WORK

By Dianne Bystrom, LWVNE Co-President



Volunteerism is the foundation of the work of the League of Women Voters, especially at the local and state levels. In Nebraska, we have some 500 members across the state affiliated with local Leagues in Hastings, Lincoln-Lancaster County, Seward and Greater Omaha as well as members-at-large. The work of the LWV in Nebraska is carried out by state and local officers, board members, committee members and other volunteers who contribute their time and talents to the organization to achieve LWV's mission to empower voters and defend democracy.

Our volunteers work year-round to register new voters, host community forums and debates (most recently virtually via Zoom), and provide voters with election information. For example, in 2020, the LWVNE distributed thousands of copies, both in print and electronic format, of the Know Your Voting Rights in Nebraska brochure as well as nonpartisan voter guides with information submitted by candidates for local, district, state, and federal office.

Each year, members of the LWVNE also engage at the local and state levels on our legislative priorities. In the past month, LWVNE directors have written and submitted more than 20 letters to Nebraska state senators and legislative committees about bills that we support, oppose, or have a neutral position. You can read the letters submitted to the Nebraska Legislature in 2021 [here](#).

Recently, state and local Leagues across the United States were asked to respond to the national LWV's semi-annual survey about their volunteer activities in 2020. To answer the survey's more than 80 questions, Linda Duckworth and I (as co-presidents) contacted members of the LWVNE state board as well as leadership in Nebraska's four local Leagues. We were more than impressed with what we learned, and would like to share with LWVNE membership some of the highlights from our survey responses about our combined volunteer efforts and hours at the local and state levels in 2020:

- 235 election-related activities, including voter registrations, candidate forums, presentations, and educational programs;
- 400 volunteers took an active role in planning and/or executing these events;
- 5,813 hours that volunteers dedicated to planning and/or executing these activities and events;
- 1,849 voters registered, including 376 new and previously ineligible voters; and
- 500 voters contacted by telephone, text messages, social media, and in-person.

The LWVUS also asked for examples of how state and local Leagues carried out their volunteer work in 2020. Through its state and local Leagues, the LWVNE:

- Produced and distributed brochures, e.g., Know Your Voting Rights in Nebraska and nonpartisan voters' guides; flyers; postcards; videos; magnets, and other educational materials;
- Distributed educational materials via door drops and at libraries, county election offices, museums, community organizations, barbershops, and hair salons and digitally via social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) and the LWVNE website;
- Made presentations to local and state community organizations; businesses; and high schools, colleges, and universities;
- Targeted voter engagement activities to high school, community college, and university students; communities of color; low-income communities; new citizens; seniors; and tribal nations; and
- Engaged in such activities as poll observation, get-out-the-vote activities, phone banking, texting, and election monitoring on Election Day.

If you would like to become more active in the work of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska, at either the local or state levels, we encourage you to contact us at president@lwnnebraska.org and we can direct you to one of our state directors or local League presidents based on your interests. Or you can read more [here](#) about our volunteer opportunities in this recent email sent via MailChimp to LWVNE members and contact the directors listed.

We thank our hundreds of active volunteers and welcome more members to become involved in our efforts to empower voters and defend democracy.

LWVNE HOSTS VIRTUAL LEGISLATIVE DAY IN THIS VIRTUAL ERA!

By Sherry Miller, Vice President for Action



All members of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska (and guests) are invited to participate in our first virtual Legislative Day. Participants will join a Zoom meeting on Saturday, Feb. 20, from 10 a.m. to noon for two hours of training for action on seven priority bills, selected by the LWVNE board on Jan. 30. Legislative action will take place on Wednesday, Feb. 24, between noon and 1:15 p.m. with participants contacting senators virtually via emails and phone calls.

The seven bills set as priorities to support or oppose based on our positions are as follows:

PORTFOLIO	BILL	SENATOR	DESCRIPTION	POSITION
EDUCATION	LB 364	Linehan	The Opportunity Scholarship Act	OPPOSE
GOVERNMENT	LB 8	Blood	Change independent expenditure reporting requirements and require electioneering reporting	SUPPORT
HEALTH	LB 20	Blood	Provide for insurance coverage of and Medicaid access to prescribed contraceptives	SUPPORT
MENTAL & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH/ SOCIAL POLICY	LB 383	Hilgers	Appropriate funds to plan, design, and construct two new correctional centers for up to 384 beds	OPPOSE
NATURAL RESOURCES	LB 266	McCollister	Adopt Renewable Energy Standards Act	SUPPORT
SOCIAL POLICY	LR22CA	Linehan	Constitutional amendment to limit the total amount of property tax revenue that may be raised by political subdivisions (e.g., public school districts)	OPPOSE
VOTER SERVICES	LB 11	Blood	Allow registered voters to request permanent receipt of an early ballot to vote	SUPPORT

I encourage you to research these bills on the Legislature's [website](#) in advance of Feb. 20. Find the bills by clicking on Bills and Laws on the menu on the upper left of the website, enter the bill or resolution number, and press the spy glass icon.

The portfolio directors will share League rationale to support or oppose on each bill/resolution. Also, we are inviting Senators Blood and McCollister to join by video recording to speak on the bills we support.

Please register for Legislative Day at these links: [Feb. 20](#) and [Feb. 24](#). I look forward to "seeing" everyone on Feb. 20 and again on Feb. 24. It's disappointing not to be able to roam the halls of the Capitol, observe debate from the north balcony or have lunch at the Governor's Mansion. But we will plan to do that next year! BE SAFE, BE WELL!

THANK YOU TO ALL 2020 FUNDRAISER CONTRIBUTORS

Thanks to the generosity of its members, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska will have almost \$5,000 to support its efforts to register voters, provide nonpartisan voter education programs and increase its communication outreach in 2021.

A total of \$4,815 has been raised to date in response to the Dec. 1, 2020, letter from co-presidents Dianne Bystrom and Linda Duckworth: \$3,695 to the General Fund and \$1,120 to the Education Fund. All contributions, no matter their specific designation, are tax-deductible.

The following LWVNE members contributed to the 2020 donation drive (with additional contributors requesting anonymity):

Those contributing to the General Fund were Mary Anna and Clyde Anderson, Suzanne Brady, Dianne and Keith Bystrom, Melina Cohen, Nancy Comer, Sancha Corrigan, Janet Davis, Linda and Charlie Duckworth, Lynne Elwood, Polly Goecke, Joyce Grothen, John and Dianne Herzog, Kathleen Kelley, Karren Kerr, Mele Mason, MaryLee Moulton, June Pederson, Kathleen Piper, Susan Prazan, Dr. Debra Romberger, Caroline Sedlacek, Marcia Shavlik, Mary Ann Sturek, Barbara Tripp, and Deborah Wigton.

Education Fund contributors were Marilyn Abariotes, Cheryl Moninger-Bettin and Joel Bettin, Janet Chung, Nancy Comer, Carol Connor, Judi Cook, Sancha Corrigan, Janet Davis, Roger Glawatz, Eunice Goldgrabe, Caryl Guisinger, LeEllen Haynes, Kathleen Kelley, Judy Paine, June Pederson, Kathleen Piper, Terri Rittenberg, Lynn Roper, Kathryn Stofer, Vicki Treat, and Barbara Tripp.

Additionally, during 2020, but prior to the 2020 fundraiser, a total of \$1,652 had been donated by League members: \$752 to the General Fund; \$700 to the Education Fund; \$50 to the Endowment Fund; and \$150 to the Sandra K. Powell Memorial Fund. Those contributors were Terri Alberhasky, Melina Cohen, Linda Duckworth, Caryl Guisinger, Cynthia Hadsell, Kate High, Amy McGaha, Toni Monette, MaryLee Moulton, Carol Ramsey, Judy Reimer, Judy Sandeen, Caroline Sedlacek, Marcia Shavlik, Sheri St. Clair, Mary Ann Sturek, and an anonymous donor.

The LWVNE is still accepting donations for its 2020 fundraising drive. You can contribute by sending a check to the state office at League of Women Voters of Nebraska, 4600 Valley Road, Suite 306, Lincoln, NE, 68510, or through this link on the LWVNE website via [PayPal](#).

We thank you for your support!

HELP LIBRARY OF CONGRESS WITH TERRELL TRANSCRIBE-A-THON



The Library of Congress will honor African American suffragist and civil rights leader Mary Church Terrell with a transcribe-a-thon of her papers from Feb. 12 to 14 as part of this year's Douglass Day service project.

The Library of Congress will release the project on Friday, Feb. 12, to coincide with the kickoff of the celebration. Beginning on Feb. 12, you can join the transcribe-a-thon from this [link](#).

Terrell founded Douglass Day in 1895 to honor her late friend Frederick Douglass in the Washington, DC, public schools as a celebration of his chosen birthday of Feb. 14. The commemoration was then adopted by schools across the country and later turned into a full month of celebrating Black history in

the 1960s.

February 14 is also the date that the League of Women Voters was founded in 1920 at the national convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association.

The Colored Conventions Project began celebrating Douglass Day in 2016 as a digital day of service for Black history. This year, Douglass Day volunteers will aim to transcribe the final section of Terrell's papers.

Intrepid virtual volunteers have already completed more than 20,000 pages of the Terrell papers. On Feb. 12, the Library of Congress will release the final section of the collection for a weekend-long transcribe-a-thon. These 4,600 pages of mostly printed materials document all phases of Terrell's public activities and provide glimpses of her private life. Together we can make Terrell's legacy more accessible in honor of Douglass.

According to the Douglass Day website, the online transcribe-a-thon and other events invite "people to participate in the making of Black history. . . . Our collective efforts – what we create on 2/14 – helps to remind us that African American history *is* American history." Douglass Day also will feature readings, discussions and a birthday cake bake-off. You can read more about Douglass Day [here](#).

CALL TO LWVNE 8TH ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, April 24, 2021

10 a.m.–1:30 p.m.

All League of Women Voters of Nebraska members are called to participate on Saturday, April 24, from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the LWVNE's 8th Annual Meeting. The agenda will include election of officers and board directors. Please add it to your calendar now; details will be available closer to the meeting date.

LWVNE PARTNERS WITH UCC TO PUBLICIZE CLIMATE CHANGE TOOLKIT *By Janelle Stevenson and Megan Lyons, Co-Directors of Natural Resources*

The LWVNE Natural Resources Committee has a special collaboration to share with you and to ask you to participate in this outreach. Jessica Palys – former community organizer and current pastor at First Congregational United Church of Christ in Hastings – approached the League of Women Voters about working together to spread the word that we *can* arrest the impacts of climate change.

The UCC has created an in-depth toolkit or manual with small to large ways in which a church can incorporate climate change awareness and create care components into their worship. This toolkit offers suggestions for action, ways in which a group of people can be more engaged in understanding global warming. This toolkit also provides hands-on examples of advocacy such as considering your diet, buying power, and alternative energy sources, which actively work to reduce the human effect of climate change on the planet. You can view and download the toolkit from this [link](#).

How can we do this? The UCC and the LWVNE are asking congregations across Nebraska to observe a Creation Care Sabbath or a Climate Change Sabbath, using any activity from the toolkit, around the time of this year's Earth Day on April 22, 2021. Leaders or committees of the congregation can choose from hymns, scripture, short or long films, movies, speakers, letter writing activities, or youth and adult lessons. Any one of these valuable offerings helps in the step toward consciously preserving our planet. We will ask for feedback on what churches across our state did on Climate Change Sabbath to better understand the impact of this project, either through an online survey or phone call.

To quote directly from the toolkit: “Climate change refers to significant, long-term changes in the global climate – our interconnected system of sun, earth and oceans, wind, rain and snow, forests, and deserts, and everything people do. While climate doesn't cause weather, it can increase the probability of particular weather events that affect regions differently” (page 6). “Our hope is you will take this as an opportunity to initiate dialogue, education and advocacy regarding the approaching climate crisis” (page 3).

The UCC hopes to partner with the Arbor Day Foundation for Nebraska's UCC churches (and perhaps yours) to create a statewide tree-planting initiative, one method of abating excess carbon

in the air. We are excited about this opportunity to show our home state advantage and be Nebraska Strong on Climate Change. To be part of this effort, contact Pastor Palys directly at pastor@fcucchastings.org.

This year, the LWFNE's legislative priorities include LB 266 that would adopt the Renewable Energy Standards Act. We will happily provide educational materials and/or postcards for you to utilize with your congregation on this bill.

As a nonpartisan organization, the LWFNE offers this toolkit as a nonpartisan resource for you to use as is most appropriate. Faith communities are influential and uniquely equipped to alter the partisan gridlock around climate change, as you can see on page 4 of the toolkit. We encourage LWFNE members involved in a faith community to share this toolkit with their congregation leaders, or use the toolkit in other organizations, or individually. To make change, we must continue to educate ourselves and bring others along with us in this massive effort to reduce carbon emissions. Thank you for helping us spread the word.

REPORT: COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

By Dianne Bystrom, Chair

During the past year, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska's Communications Committee – established by the LWFNE board in July 2019 – has been busy on all fronts. Most notably, the volunteers on our committee worked to develop, launch, and maintain a new information-rich website, which can be accessed [here](#).

We also have increased our presence on social media via our Facebook page and new Twitter and Instagram accounts. As of Feb. 5, the LWFNE has 700 followers on Facebook, 299 on Twitter, and 221 on Instagram. If you have not followed the LWFNE on social media, we invite you to do so on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#). In the past 28 days, we've engaged with 1,575 people through our posts on Facebook alone, thanks mostly to the work of Communications Committee member MaryLee Moulton.

Other members of the LWFNE Communications Committee are Katie Wadas Thalken, vice chair; Aimee Folker, Toni Monette, and Rebecca Gonzales. Caryl Guisinger, former committee member, also contributed greatly to our work in 2019-2020, particularly to the development and launch of the new LWFNE website. We will soon add Maureen Ose to our committee. This is an active committee, with all members contributing to our efforts.

The Communications Committee also recommended and received approval from the LWFNE board to communicate more frequently with members through the MailChimp platform. Over the past 10 months, we have sent 23 messages to LWFNE members through MailChimp. Our MailChimp emails have an open rate of 45% to 51%. Since fall 2020, the LWFNE has sent out the link to the Nebraska Voter, which can be found on the LWFNE website, via MailChimp.

The Communications Committee is always adding to the LWFNE website and posting on social media. Please feel free to send suggestions for the website and social media

to marylee@lwvgo.org or dbystrom@lwnnebraska.org. We are particularly looking for any ideas for the Inspire section of the LWNNE website. During the first half of 2021, we are focusing website content on the legislative session, bills and redistricting.

REPORT: NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY

By Janelle Stevenson and Megan Lyons, Co-Directors

Have you heard of Mead, Nebraska? About two years ago, residents of Mead noticed health concerns in themselves and their animals. Many Saunders County residents believed the AltEn Ethanol processing plant was the culprit. The plant, established in 2015, processes unwanted pesticide-coated agricultural seeds, such as corn, into ethanol. Some of the byproduct is then distributed to farm fields as “soil conditioner” or left exposed at the plant where experts and researchers report dangerously high levels of neonicotinoids, a type of insecticide.

Today, we can be certain that their irresponsible business practices have contaminated soil, water, and air. Two letters were submitted by the LWNNE to the Nebraska Legislature’s Natural Resources Committee on Feb. 1 and 2; one to request action, the second to support LB 507.

On Feb. 4, the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy ordered the plant to shut down. AltEn is tasked with making a plan to dispose of the wastewater within the three dilapidated lagoons and remove the piles of leftover grain. In the meantime, the Nebraska Legislature is [considering a bill](#) to ban the use of treated seed corn in the production of ethanol. Unfortunately, the contamination of groundwater is possible.

We now hear about climate change on a daily basis, and Nebraskans are at the forefront of advocating for climate solutions. We were approached by Jessica Palys, pastor of the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Hastings, to collaborate in sharing their Climate Change Toolkit with LWN members. This toolkit is a manual filled with proactive ways in which a group of people can take action on climate change. We hope that LWNNE members will share it with their congregation/faith community leaders or civic organizations to choose an activity from the toolkit to execute on a Sunday close to Earth Day, “Climate Change Sabbath,” on April 22. Please share the toolkit with your congregation, faith-community, or organization.

The LWNNE state board has selected seven priority bills to recommend a particular position on, including LB 266—adopt the Renewable Energy Standards Act. Nebraska is one of the few states that does not have a renewable energy standard plan. The LWNNE believes that energy conservation must be a part of any national or state energy policy.

Carbon pollution from power plants is the largest source of industrial carbon in the United States. Clean energy offers a significant opportunity to diversify the rural economy while generating cheap, renewable power for rural homes and businesses. Let’s not forget, renewable energy helps us reach the ultimate goal of net-zero carbon emissions. Thank you for your advocacy, and please contact us with any questions or interests. We welcome members and non-members on our Natural Resources Committee.

REPORT: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE

By Linda Duckworth, Co-President

The LWVNE now boasts a committee dedicated to our full commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in principle and in practice. With the recognition that diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to LWV's current and future success in engaging all individuals, households, communities, and policy makers in creating a more perfect democracy, we are eager to include all of our members in our ongoing DEI process.

In December, the LWVNE board and other interested members participated in a two-part anti-bias training presented through a partnership with Creighton University's communication studies department and the Anti-Defamation League. Our members found it helpful and expressed a readiness to continue our collective DEI work, so we formed a committee consisting of League members Carol Dennison, Linda Duckworth, Aimee Folker, Rebecca Gonzales, Palistene Gray-Moore, Joanna Lindberg, Megan Lyons, Toni Monette, and Katie Wadas Thalken.

One of our goals is to make DEI work accessible to all of our members, so we have decided to sponsor book discussions of *How to be an Anti-Racist* by Ibram X. Kendi. We hope you'll choose to join the reading and discussion, which we plan to begin via Zoom at 5 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 22. We will meet eight times, every other week, more or less. Please get in touch with me at lindabduckworth@gmail.com if you are interested in participating or in just learning more. You do not need to commit to joining in for every meeting.

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF NEBRASKA

Celebrates

*"The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them." -
Ida B. Wells-Barnett*

FEBRUARY
BLACK HISTORY
MONTH