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### **LWVNE ACTIVE WITH REDISTRICTING, UPCOMING CAMPAIGNS**

*By MaryLee Moulton & Toni Monette, Co-Presidents*

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska has been incredibly active in the past several months making sure redistricting in Nebraska was understood by the community and was a fair process. Thanks to the many members who contacted senators, put up yard signs, posted on social media, went to rallies, and made sure that the Legislature knew we were watching the process. Special thanks to the Fair Maps Action Team – Director Sheri St. Clair and members Carol Dennison, Rachel Gibson, Sarah Lee, Lynn Perry and Mary Ruth Stegman – who put in countless hours testifying, educating, making videos, doing presentations, and so much more. Their leadership was key to our effort to get fair maps in Nebraska.

But as we close out redistricting, we have new challenges to turn toward.

***Decline to Sign Campaign.*** The LWVNE is part of a coalition opposing a petition drive to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot that would require a photo ID when voting.

- This voter restriction amendment would cost Nebraska taxpayers millions of dollars.
- Elections in Nebraska are already conducted efficiently, securely, and with integrity.
- If passed, the voter restriction amendment will make voting more complicated.
- This petition language is a vague and dangerous voter restriction proposal that would have real consequences.

We have already participated in a press conference and encourage you to use your social media channels to encourage your family and friends to decline to sign the petition. Here are graphics you can download.



**Minimum Wage Campaign.** The LWVNE is part of a coalition to raise the minimum wage in Nebraska. The petition drive for the ballot initiative just started. How can you help?

- October 23, 2021, Raise the Wage Day of Action – The Nebraska Civic Engagement Table is excited to kick off a Day of Action in Pawnee County, NE. They hope to meet their goal of collecting 130 signatures for the county. Come to the Pawnee City Public Library's conference room (735 8<sup>th</sup> St.) at 9 a.m. or sign up to join in at this [link](#).
- Collect signatures in your county. Contact Sandy Griffin at [sandy@nebraskatable.org](mailto:sandy@nebraskatable.org)

**Get Ready to Take Action during the Nebraska Legislature’s Upcoming Session by Joining OutreachCircle.** We have a new tool from LWVUS to help us communicate with you and for you to communicate with friends and family during the upcoming legislative session – OutreachCircle.

- **What is OutreachCircle?** OutreachCircle is a digital organizing platform that easily allows the League to engage its members and larger communities. OutreachCircle will bring you updates on legislation and action to take to support or oppose bills. Through OutreachCircle, you can stay up to date, complete forms and surveys, visit and share links to videos and social media posts, share our League’s content with your friends and family, and much more.
- **Why should the League use OutreachCircle?** Even before COVID-19 impacted our communities, the LWV understood the need to update its digital organizing strategy. Our mission is to empower voters, defend democracy, and serve our communities. To truly realize this mission, it is essential that we bring more voices to the conversation. Moreover – as an organization that envisions a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge, and the confidence to participate – we must make our League increasingly accessible.

We must ask ourselves as League members: How will newcomers and interested community members connect to and engage with our League? How can we volunteer and support LWV’s work despite distance?

Ultimately, we must meet people where they are. In a world that continues to transition into digital spaces – a process accelerated by the pandemic – it is more critical than ever before that we adopt tools like OutreachCircle. In doing so, we can remain informed, engaged, and connected as an LWV community.

- **How can I get started?** You can scan the QR code below on your phone to download.



Or you can download the app on your cell phone (recommended) through your app store or online using your computer. To get started, check out this [OutreachCircle supporter kit](#) and find the League of Women Voters of Nebraska. You can also find other local and state Leagues as well as the LWVUS.

*Finally, the LWVNE has seven Action Teams that cover the Legislature.* To become member of an action team, contact the director:

- *Education Action Team*, Rachel Gibson, [rachel@lwnvnebraska.org](mailto:rachel@lwnvnebraska.org)
- *Government Action Team*, Amy Forss, [amy@lwnvnebraska.org](mailto:amy@lwnvnebraska.org)
- *Health Care Action Team*, Phyllis Salyards, [hpsalyard@lwnvnebraska.org](mailto:hpsalyard@lwnvnebraska.org)
- *Mental & Behavioral Health Action Team*, Aimée Folker & Palistene Gray Moore, [afolker@lwnvnebraska.org](mailto:afolker@lwnvnebraska.org), [pgraymoore@lwnvnebraska.org](mailto:pgraymoore@lwnvnebraska.org)
- *Natural Resources & Energy Action Team*, Megan York Lyons & Janelle Stevenson, [mlyons@lwnvnebraska.org](mailto:mlyons@lwnvnebraska.org), [jstevenson@lwnvnebraska.org](mailto:jstevenson@lwnvnebraska.org)
- *Social Policy Action Team*, Carol Dennison & Jill McDermott, [carol@lwnvnebraska.org](mailto:carol@lwnvnebraska.org), [jill@lwnvnebraska.org](mailto:jill@lwnvnebraska.org)
- *Voter Services Action Team*, Walta Sue Dodd & Claudia Stevenson, [walta@lwnvnebraska.org](mailto:walta@lwnvnebraska.org), [claudia@lwnvnebraska.org](mailto:claudia@lwnvnebraska.org)

LWV is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to the organization’s current and future success in engaging all individuals, households, communities, and policy makers in creating a more perfect democracy.

There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, gender identity, ethnicity, race, native or indigenous origin, age, generation, sexual orientation, culture, religion, belief system, marital status, parental status, socioeconomic status, language, accent, ability status, mental health, educational level or background, geography, nationality, work style, work experience, job role function, thinking style, personality type, physical appearance, political perspective or affiliation and/or any other characteristic that can be identified as recognizing or illustrating diversity.



*The LWVNE’s Fair Maps Action Team sponsored Redistricting Day of Action rallies in Omaha and Lincoln on September 18, including at this location in a parking lot at the University of Nebraska-Omaha on Dodge Street. Carol Dennison (third from left), a member of the action team, was interviewed by Omaha television stations about the LWVNE’s efforts to ensure fair maps in the redistricting process.*

**ACTION TEAM EDUCATES, ADOVATES FOR FAIR REDISTRICTING MAPS**  
*By Sheri St. Clair, Fair Maps Director*

The goal of the Fair Maps Action Team was to assure the creation of fair and accurate maps by the Nebraska Legislature following receipt of the 2020 census data. New maps are required by law for the state Supreme Court, Natural Resource Districts, Board of Regents, state Board of Education, the Nebraska Legislature, and Nebraska’s three congressional districts. Efforts were focused on the latter two. We strove to educate citizens and generate action in order to bring about fair redistricting in Nebraska.

We became an active member of a coalition of Nebraska non-profits formed to coordinate activity on redistricting efforts. Partner organizations included Common Cause Nebraska, Nebraska Appleseed, Farmers Union, RepresentUS Omaha, the Nebraska Civic Engagement Table, Nebraskans for Peace, and ACLU Nebraska. The coalition met regularly and submitted news releases and letters to the Legislature’s Redistricting Committee urging a fair and transparent process be adopted.

Team members participated in a mapping training exercise conducted by Common Cause Nebraska to learn how to create maps using districtr software. This software was useful for identifying neighborhoods and communities of interest. The team subsequently created statewide maps for both congressional and state legislative districts using software from Dave’s Redistricting. These maps were shared with the vice chair of the Redistricting Committee.

An extensive variety of materials were prepared and made available for use. The focus was on presenting to neighborhood organizations, libraries, civic groups, and religious organizations.

The prepared presentation was adapted to the needs of the audience. Materials were both informational (print materials and updates to the redistricting hub on the LWNNE website) and for presentation (“Meant to Represent: Redistricting in Nebraska” in several formats).

The Fair Maps Action Team completed more than 20 presentations between July and September. We also coordinated Redistricting Day of Action rallies in Omaha and Lincoln on September 18 to raise awareness of the long-term consequences of redistricting while the Legislature was in special session to determine the newly created maps based on the 2020 Census data. These rallies were covered by two Omaha and one Lincoln television stations.

The Fair Maps Action Team also sponsored booths or tables at several events such as neighborhood association meetings or farmer’s markets. Several hundred individuals were reached through these efforts. In addition, the presentation materials were sent to Omaha Public Schools educators who requested them for use in government classes.

The League’s position regarding fair redistricting was shared with the Legislature whenever possible. A position letter was submitted, and oral testimony given, in support of LB 107. Following the failure of LB 107 to advance, LR 134 (“Adopt the proposed guidelines to be used by the Legislature during the 2021 redistricting process”) was proposed. Testimony in support of LR 134 was given at the Executive Committee hearing, and the legislative resolution was subsequently adopted. Following the nomination of the nine senators to the Redistricting Committee, the League sent “welcome to the committee” letters to each committee member.

After receipt of census data in August, the Redistricting Committee posted several bills with proposed district maps on the Legislature’s website. LBs 1 and 3, introduced by Senator Lou Ann Linehan, chair of the Redistricting Committee, dealt with proposed congressional and state legislative districts, respectively. LBs 2 and 4, introduced by Senator Justin Wayne, vice chair of the committee, also dealt with congressional and legislative districts.

The Redistricting Committee advanced LB 1 and LB 3 to general file for full debate. We submitted letters in opposition of LB 1 and LB 3 and testified at the public hearings held in Lincoln and Omaha. As the Legislature appeared to be reaching a stalemate on the issue of redistricting, League representatives called the office of each of the 49 state senators to urge completion of the redistricting process during the special session.

The maps proposed in LB 1 and LB 3 underwent significant revision with amendments AM 36 (to LB 1) and AM 37 (to LB 3). These bills then advanced for further debate. They have since been approved by the Legislature and signed by the governor. Adopted maps for the state Board of Education, Nebraska’s three Congressional districts, state Supreme Court, Legislature, state Board of Regents, and Public Service Commission can be viewed from this [link](#).

A few comments regarding the approved maps follow:

- Although the final congressional map does not split Douglas County as initially proposed, portions of the Sarpy County metro area are now in District 1, replaced by rural Saunders County to achieve population balance in District 2.

- The final legislative map diluted urban and suburban voters in Lancaster County with 5 of the 10 districts significantly shifted. For example, a portion of District 25 that included part of northeast Lincoln moved to District 2, which includes Cass County.
- The redrawing of the Grand Island district corrected some of the wrongs from the previous redistricting process by rejoining the large Latino population that was previously in two districts back into one. The final map also took care to not break tribal lands in the northeast into two different districts. Although what is generally considered “North Omaha” was not manipulated, the areas where there recently has been a population increase in individuals of color were very worked over, potentially diluting the vote in years to come.
- Overall, there was more public engagement with the redistricting process than in previous decades. We agree with the redistricting coalition that this was likely due to greater public awareness of the issue rather than action by the Legislature to encourage engagement.
- There were several aspects of the process that could be improved. Specifically, the Redistricting Committee could have made better use of technology to accommodate all Nebraskans, especially for citizens in western areas of the state who live hours away from the nearest public hearing.
- Partisanship was clearly part of the map drawing process and that shows in the district maps. Legislators openly discussed the election impacts of district lines during floor debate, and there’s no doubt partisan concerns were a part of backroom deliberations.
- Process transparency and public engagement could have been better. The committee was slow to announce hearing dates and did not give the public adequate time to review draft maps beforehand.
- More hearings, with greater accessibility, would have improved the process. Hearings could have been held before map drawing began. The committee also scheduled the Omaha hearings on Yom Kippur, an especially troubling error given Omaha’s prominent Jewish community.

## **LWVNE URGES NEBRASKANS TO “DECLINE TO SIGN” VOTER ID PETITION**

*By Sherry Miller, Vice President for Action*

*Walta Sue Dodd & Claudia Stevenson, Co-Directors of Voter Services*

A petition effort is underway for a constitutional amendment to require Nebraska voters to present a photo ID when voting. It was launched in April 2021 after legislative efforts failed to gain traction with our state senators over the past several sessions.

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska – a nonpartisan organization dedicated to the protection of the right to vote – urges Nebraska citizens to decline to sign the petition. As stated

in Article I-22 of our state constitution since 1875, “All elections shall be free; and there shall be no hindrance or impediment to the right of a qualified voter to exercise the elective franchise.”

There are strong reasons to avoid any hindrance or impediment to the right to vote:

- **It’s a solution in search of a problem.** Voter impersonation fraud in Nebraska is virtually non-existent. Former Secretary of State John Gale has testified that one such attempt occurred during his tenure from 2000 through 2018, and current Secretary of State Bob Evnen stated that the 2020 election was fraud free. Furthermore, voter impersonation fraud is a felony. How could anyone think an intentional concerted effort would go unnoticed?
- **A photo ID is required to register to vote**, which is why so many Nebraskans register at the same time as acquiring a driver’s license. The safeguard already takes place.
- **The petition language is extremely vague.** If passed by the voters, it will be up to the Legislature to codify the new law. Voter photo ID bills have been introduced since 2016; all have failed to advance from the Government Committee for very good reasons. We ask, what would qualify as a photo ID – a student ID, a driver’s license, a military ID, a passport? Would there have to be an address on the ID that exactly matches an address on the registration rolls? A driver’s license fulfills this requirement if the driver has not moved, but the other types of IDs cited do not have addresses. Would a person voting by mail have to include a copy of the new voter ID?
- **It’s estimated that providing state-issued IDs would cost our state government (i.e., Nebraskans) \$3 million the first year and \$1 million every year thereafter.** Past legislation included the cost of providing state-issued IDs with addresses to Nebraskans who do not have drivers licenses, (e.g., senior citizens or others who do not drive). We would all be on the hook for this unnecessary bureaucratic burden through our personal income and sales taxes.

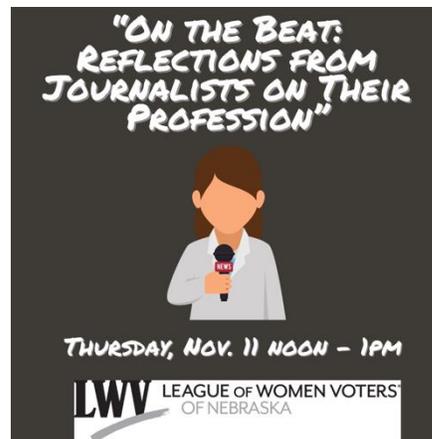
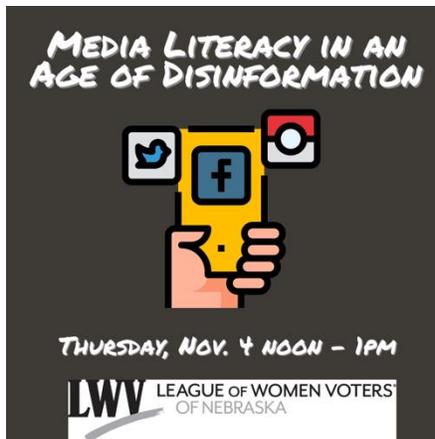
For these reasons, we urge Nebraskans to DECLINE TO SIGN this voter restriction petition!

**LWVNE TO PRESENT VIRTUAL WEBINARS ON MEDIA LITERACY,  
JOURNALISM PROFESSION IN NOVEMBER**

*By Dianne Bystrom*

*Defending Journalism and the First Amendment Action Team*

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska will present two virtual webinars related to media literacy, the journalism profession, and the importance of the First Amendment in November via Zoom.



The first webinar, “Media Literacy in an Age of Disinformation,” will be presented from noon to 1 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 4. The webinar will focus on how to determine if news is credible, how to improve the relationship between the media and the public, and the

importance of the First Amendment. The second webinar, “On the Beat: Reflections from Journalists on Their Profession,” will be presented from noon to 1 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 11. It will feature journalists with ties to Nebraska working at national and state media outlets. They will talk about their careers and important issues in the profession.

Both webinars are free and open to the public, with efforts underway to reach high school and college students interested in learning more about these topics. Registration for the webinars is available at this [link](#).

The media literacy webinar on Nov. 4 will feature Tobin Beck, an assistant professor of journalism and political science at Concordia University with more than 30 years of experience in journalism, including United Press International; Peggy Rupprecht, an associate professor of journalism and public relations in the Department of Computer Science, Design and Journalism at Creighton University, where she teaches classes on media and digital literacy; Ryan Teten, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Nebraska-Kearney, who studies the impact of social media on information consumption; and Mason Walker, a research analyst focusing on journalism and media at the Pew Research Center.

The professional journalist webinar on Nov. 11 will feature Sharon Chen, an anchor for WOWT in Omaha with television broadcast experience in Scottsbluff and Lincoln, Colorado, Hawaii, and San Diego, CA; Dee Ann Divis, who reports for Al Jazeera on commercial space, NASA, robotics, and emerging technology sectors; Matthew Hansen, editor of the *Flatwater Free Press*, Nebraska’s first independent nonprofit newsroom focused on investigative journalism and feature stories; and Tony Herrman, local government reporter at the *Hastings Tribune*, where he covers the Hastings City Council, Utility Board, and Planning Commission and the Adams County Board of Commissioners and Planning and Zoning Commission.

The webinars are being planned by the LWVNE’s Defending Journalism and the First Amendment Action Team, which was created to respond to concerns about attacks on the media as well as misinformation/disinformation campaigns. Members of the action team are Sherry Miller, chair, of Lincoln; Ellen Beck, Seward; Dianne Bystrom, Plattsburgh; Aimée Folker, Omaha; Tony Herrman, Hastings; and Mary Ann Sturek, Omaha.

**MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: INONGE KASAJI LEADS LINCOLN-LANCASTER LWV**  
**By Dianne Bystrom, Director of Communications**



Inonge Kasaji, an international student pursuing a master's degree at Doane University, joined the League of Women Voters of Lincoln-Lancaster County in March 2021. She now serves as its president.

“For some time now, I’ve been very interested in civic engagement and education and that’s what drew me to the League,” she said. “Our mission to create a more informed and active participation is something that I am passionate about. I believe that our future relies on a civically engaged community that is knowledgeable about the issues that affect us all and especially marginalized communities.”

Kasaji immigrated to the United States (southern California) with her parents and younger sister in 2003 when she was 10-years-old. After graduating from high school in California, she attended Union College in Lincoln and decided to make Nebraska’s state capital her home.

“During my time over the last decade in Lincoln, I have tried to be an active volunteer in my community,” she said. “After volunteering with organizations like The Friendship Home, The People City Mission, and Nebraska Appleseed, my interest in advocacy increased, which led to grassroots activism and work as a campaign staffer first on Patsy Koch Johns’ campaign for the state Board of Education, then four other races afterward.”

Kasaji has been a member of the Lincoln YWCA and is an alum of Leadership Lincoln’s Project A.L.L. Class of 2015. She has served on boards and committees for various organizations including Bridges to Hope, Lincoln Community Foundation, and the YWCA.

Her top priority as president of the LWV-LL is to “create a civically engaged Lincoln and Lancaster County, especially among younger voters including high school and college-age students. I think we’re in a time where we have the opportunity to build engagement around issues within that population,” Kasaji said. “I would also like to expand on the diversity and equity work that the League has been embracing and put a renewed focus on advocacy and education in minority communities.”

Kasaji has a wide range of interests that include, but are not limited to, the criminal justice system, poverty/economic/justice issues, immigration, voting rights, and reliable access to education for all students. “I hope that my current degree in management and leadership will help me develop skills which will allow me to continue to be an advocate in my communities and other communities in need.”

Outside of work, Kasaji enjoys “reading just about any book I can get my hands on as well as listening to far too many podcasts. Feel free to ask for a recommendation.”

**LWVGO, LWNEN SPONSOR CANDLELIGHT VIGIL FOR VOTING RIGHTS**  
*By Cynde Glismann, LWVGO Co-President, & Joanna Lindberg, LWVGO/GOTV*



*Krystal Fox, immediate past co-president of the League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha, was among the speakers at the candlelight vigil held outside U.S. Senator Ben Sasse's Omaha office on September 17 in support of the Freedom to Vote Act.*

More than 40 people participated in a “Democracy Doesn’t Sleep” Candlelight Vigil in support of the compromise voting rights bill – the Freedom to Vote Act – on September 17 in front of U.S. Senator Ben Sasse's Omaha office to show community support for voting rights.

The League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha and Nebraska were among the co-sponsors of the event. Other co-sponsors – which are all engaged in non-partisan voter registration and GOTV, “Get Out the Vote,” programs – were Black Votes Matter, Civic Nebraska, Latino Center of the Midlands, Omaha Women’s March, and You Go Girl.

A compromise bill before the U.S. Senate, the Freedom to Vote Act, “would protect our freedom to vote, get big money out of politics, ensure fair districts, and help create a democracy that works for all of us,” said Krystal Fox, immediate past co-president of the LWVGO and one of the speakers at the event.

Other speakers at the vigil were MaryLee Moulton, co-president of the LWNEN; Juanita Johnson of the Omaha City Council; Preston Love Jr. of Black Votes Matter; Brad Christian-Sallis of Civic Nebraska; community advocate Alisha Shelton; and Brandi Bothe of the Omaha Women’s March.

The Freedom to Vote Act is a compromise developed and promoted by moderate conservative Democratic U.S. Senator Joe Manchin of West Virginia. To pass the U.S. Senate, the act will require 10 Republican Senators to support it. Vigil speakers and participants urged Senator Sasse to vote yes for the bill to ensure that all eligible citizens can vote without barriers and regardless of their zip code.

A letter describing the tenets of the Freedom to Vote Act was signed by the candlelight vigil participants and delivered to Senator Sasse on September 20. We encourage you to contact Senator Deb Fischer at (202) 224-6551 and Senator Ben Sasse at (202) 224-4224 to urge them to support the Freedom to Vote Act.

**LWVGO CO-SPONSORS RALLY FOR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS**  
*By Dianne Bystrom, LWVNE Director of Communications*



*Among members of the League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha and Nebraska who participated in the Rally for Reproductive Rights at the Omaha City Hall on October 2 were (from left) Candide Villard, Joanna Lindberg, MaryLee Moulton, Cynde Glismann, Deborah Turner, Krystal Fox, and Terri Crawford.*

More than 600 rallies were held across the United States on October 2 to advocate for reproductive rights. Two of those rallies took place in Nebraska with hundreds participating in events in downtown Omaha and at the State Capitol in Lincoln.

The League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha was among the co-sponsors of the Rally for Reproductive Rights at the Omaha City Hall. “In its Impact on Issues, the League of Women Voters of the U.S. states its commitment to ‘protect the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices,’” said MaryLee Moulton, director of communications for LWVGO and co-president of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska.

“The League believes that every resident of the U.S. should have access to affordable, quality healthcare, including abortion,” said Cynde Glismann, co-president of the LWVGO. “Lawmakers should consider the fact that the majority of Americans firmly agrees that reproductive freedom is the right of all women.”

Other co-sponsors of the reproductive rights rally in Omaha were the Omaha Women’s Day March, Planned Parenthood of North Central States, ACLU of Nebraska, I Be Black Girl, United State of Women, and the Women’s Fund of Omaha.

According to event organizer Brandi Bothe, co-chair of the Omaha Women's Day March, the rallies were held in “response to attacks on reproductive rights in Texas and across the country. We are sending the U.S. Supreme Court and lawmakers a clear, unified message – we will fight any and all attacks on reproductive rights.”

At the rally in Omaha, speakers included a young advocate, a healthcare provider, an educator, a policymaker, and others.

“The new Texas vigilante law goes against everything our nation stands for,” said Dr. Deborah Turner, a former gynecology oncologist who spoke at the rally as the associate medical director of Planned Parenthood of North Central States. “I am caring for and helping women make decisions about their life that are not always easy, but are always right for them,” she said. Turner is also a member of the LWVGO and LWVNE and president of the League of Women Voters of the United States

## **PROPOSED INTERIM STUDIES FROM 2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

*By Sherry Miller, Vice President for Action*

During the course of a legislative session in the Unicameral, senators often propose studies of issues to be taken up during the interim, the period between sine die and the beginning of the next session.

I have been tracking the following resolutions and sharing their hearing schedules with the appropriate LWVNE board directors. I encourage any League member to also watch hearings via live streaming or Channel 17 of Nebraska Public Media. You may also be able to find written records of hearings already held on the Nebraska Legislature’s [website](#), using the bill search function. Be sure to choose LR from the drop-down box at the top right of the page and then type in the number of the legislative resolution. I’d be happy to assist anyone with navigating bills/resolutions if you contact me at (402) 488-2568.

Here’s an update, alphabetically by committee:

LR 210 introduced by McKinney to examine poverty and incarceration and appropriations to reduce both. HEARD October 6 by the APPROPRIATIONS Committee.

LR 213 introduced by Day to examine mental and behavioral health needs of students and the role of school psychologists. HEARD October 5 by the EDUCATION Committee.

LR 141, introduced by DeBoer to create a select interim committee of Legislature Services known as the School Finance Study Committee. To be heard by the EXECUTIVE BOARD.

LR 171 introduced by McKinney to examine the rights, roles, and responsibilities of election officials and relevant court and corrections personnel in carrying out the state law regarding voting rights for former felons. To be heard by the GOVERNMENT Committee.

LR 143 introduced by Stinner to examine mental and behavioral health needs of Nebraskans, assess shortage of providers, and determine what is needed to ensure adequate services. HEARD September 15 by the HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES Committee.

LR 203 introduced by Flood to examine Medicaid expansion and behavioral health. To be heard by the HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES Committee.

LR 129 introduced by Wishart to review staffing at the Department of Corrections. HEARD October 13 by the JUDICIARY Committee.

LR 156 introduced by Pansing Brooks to examine mental health and addiction issues within the Nebraska criminal justice system. To be heard by the JUDICIARY Committee.

LR 194 introduced by DeBoer to examine methods of ending domestic and sexual violence in Nebraska. To be heard by the JUDICIARY Committee.

LR 23 introduced by Erdman to examine the progress of the Natural Resource Districts in fulfilling their originally intended purpose. To be heard by the NATURAL RESOURCES Committee.

LR 152 introduced by Bostelman to evaluate the need for laws to allow the Department of Energy and Environment to respond to emergency situations regarding pesticide-treated seed or grain. To be heard by the NATURAL RESOURCES Committee.

LR 188 introduced by John Cavanaugh to examine issues regarding adopting reward-based conservation programs. To be heard by the NATURAL RESOURCES Committee.

LR 193 introduced by DeBoer to examine broadband mapping and speed testing. To be heard by the TRANSPORTATION Committee.

LR 69 introduced by Wayne seeking reports and public input regarding housing density and missing middle housing. HEARD August 13 by the URBAN AFFAIRS Committee.

LR 124 and LR 126 introduced by Wayne to examine issues regarding designation of blighted areas and extremely blighted areas under Community Development Law. HEARD August 13 by the URBAN AFFAIRS Committee.

LR 131 introduced by Matt Hansen to examine the lack of affordable housing. HEARD August 13 by the URBAN AFFAIRS Committee.

**NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY REPORT**  
*By Janelle Stevenson & Megan Lyons, Co-Directors*

On October 15, the Nebraska Power Review Board – appointed by the governor – met to consider exercising more authority over Nebraska public power districts, creating a firestorm of confusion and concern among utility companies and environmental groups. However, at the meeting, the board backed off its controversial proposal to seek veto power over agreements between utilities and private projects – mostly wind and solar farms – that provide electricity. We thank all those who sent in letters, including the Omaha Public Power District, Lincoln Electric System, Nebraska Public Power District, the Sierra Club, and others.

The LWVNE Natural Resources and Energy Committee plans to send a draft of the Soil Health Study to local Leagues for input. We were eager to take this step soon, but we are digging deeper and have a wealth of revisions at the moment on regenerative agriculture, carbon sequestration, and carbon credits.

In September, a panel discussion on “Cannabis in Nebraska: Medicine, Agriculture, and the Law” was hosted by Nebraska Public Media, NOVA, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. One week prior to the documentary, Sarah Holt, Yasmin Hurd, Andrea Holmes, and Kelly Dineen discussed neurobiological, industrial production, healthcare, and drug policy in “The Cannabis Question.”

Holmes is a professor at Doane University studying yeast and mold colonies in cannabis plants. She is a leader in the professional cannabis certification program available through Doane and in high international demand. A major conclusion was how the endocannabinoid system is a powerful regulatory system in the body and brain, and that cannabis can affect how it works. An excerpt from the film describes how every 58 seconds there is a cannabis-related arrest.

While there are both known and unknown factors about cannabinoid receptors, there is much to learn about how cannabis could cure us or hurt us. The rise of the cannabis industry is being felt in Nebraska currently with hemp crops. And following the 2020 ballot initiative challenged by procedure, there will be another ballot initiative in 2022. Nebraska is among the last three states with no laws allowing access to recreational or medicinal marijuana.

It is still urgent for us to keep an eye on the environmental crisis in Mead, NE. Nebraska Public Media covered the situation in an article and documentary, “The Smell of Money: Mead Nebraska’s Fight for Its Future.” The story is available to listen to and the transcript can be read on the NPM [website](#). Records related to the AltEn plant can be viewed through the Nebraska.gov [website](#) by searching for Facility ID 84069.

In regard to the anti-30x30 Resolution, LWFNE signed on to a letter to the Natural Resources District Board members in August. Along with GC Resolve, Nebraska Communities United, and Nebraska Interfaith Power and Light, we stepped up for federal support coming to the local level for soil health initiatives, conservation, and water quality. We asked the board to thoroughly understand the resolution before taking any action.

Through Nebraska Interfaith Power and Light, the Green Team Summit 2021 was available to attend online in September. The Faith in Place organization of Chicago hosted sessions on ecowomanism, ecospirituality, racial healing resources, and healing with food. One outstanding quote was: “Before the policy work, we have to do the people work.” The summit concluded with options for healing practices in breakout rooms – a children’s story, a journal healing practice, and yoga. Please look out for and let us know about any online resources you may come across for online training or conferences accessible during the pandemic.

## **COMMUNICATIONS ACTION TEAM REPORT**

*By Dianne Bystrom, Director of Communications*

The Communications Action Team met via Zoom on October 1, 2021. Attending the meeting were Dianne Bystrom, chair; Katie Wadas-Thalken, vice chair; Rebecca Gonzales and MaryLee Moulton. We discussed the following LWFNE communications efforts and filed a report for the October 9 board meeting of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska.

- **LWFNE Website** – MaryLee will train Dianne and Candide Villard, LWFNE administrator, to help with posting content. Dianne will continue to proof content. The Communications Action Team recommended spending \$300 to expand the website hosting capacity, provided by Siteground, from 20 GB to 40 GB as we were at 80% capacity. As the expense was within our approved budget for 2021-22, the website upgrade was reported at the October 9 LWFNE board meeting and made on October 12.
- **Social Media** – As of October 15, 2021, the LWFNE has 766 followers on Facebook, 947 followers on Twitter, and 280 followers on Instagram. The action team thanks Rachel Gibson and MaryLee for live tweeting during Redistricting Committee meetings, public hearings, and the special legislative session – which resulted in many likes, comments, retweets, and new followers on Twitter.
- **MailChimp** – Nine emails were sent via MailChimp to 434 subscribers from April 28 through September 13, 2021, on “People-Powered Day of Action,” (43.1% opens); “Action Alert on AltEn – Call for Investigation,” (44.9% opens); “LWFNE Publishes Summer 2021 Nebraska Voter,” (41.2% opens); “Juneteenth Program is June 19!” (45.1% opens); “June 28 Zoom Meeting Focuses on Voting Rights,” (55.4% opens); “Decline to Sign Voter Restriction Petition,” (54.1% opens); “Help the LWFNE Advocate for Equality Act on Sept. 8,” (52.6% opens); “Help LWFNE Advocate for Fair Maps in Redistricting Process,” (51% opens); and “Week of September 13, 2021,” (46.1% opens). LWFNE officers, directors, and members are encouraged to suggest topics to [communications@lwfnebraska.org](mailto:communications@lwfnebraska.org).

- **Media Outreach** – News releases were sent on the Redistricting Day of Action to Omaha and Lincoln print and broadcast media and on the Candlelight Vigil on Voting Rights to Omaha print and broadcast media. The Redistricting Day of Action on September 18 was covered by WOWT (NBC/Channel 6) and KPTM (Fox 42) of Omaha, featuring interviews with Carol Dennison of the Fair Maps Action Team, and KLKN (ABC/Channel 8) of Lincoln, including interviews with MaryLee Moulton and Rachel Gibson.

Letters to the editor were sent on redistricting (published by the *Omaha World Herald* as a Midlands Voices column by MaryLee Moulton and Toni Monette on September 14); candlelight vigil (published by the *Omaha World Herald* as a Public Pulse letter by Cynde Glissman and Joanna Lindberg on September 23); voter ID petition drive by Sherry Miller on September 20 to college newspapers (not yet published); and voter ID petition drive by Walta Sue Dodd and Claudia Stevenson to daily and weekly newspapers on October 14 (not yet published).

WOWT (NBC/Channel 6) in Omaha ran a story on “League of Women Voters Works to Keep Voters Informed” featuring MaryLee Moulton and Linda Duckworth. You can watch from this [link](#).

- **Fall 2021 Nebraska Voter** – An email soliciting articles was sent on October 8 with an October 15 deadline. The Nebraska Voter is published on the LWVNE website with a link and summary of content sent via MailChimp to all members.
- **Interested in joining the Communications Action Team?** We are seeking a few new members, particularly representing local Leagues in Hastings, Lincoln-Lancaster County, and Seward County. If you are interested, email [communications@lwnnebraska.org](mailto:communications@lwnnebraska.org).

## **SEWARD COUNTY LWV REPORT**

*By Emily Hemphill, President*

The Seward League has been busy!

September 22 – We hosted a booth at our local farmers market leading up to National Voter Registration Day. We passed out information about voting rights, voting rights for ex-felons, how to register, why voting is important, what to expect at the polls on Election Day, and how to get involved in the League. We also included information on redistricting provided by the state League.

September 14 – In conjunction with Seward Memorial Library, we hosted guest speakers from the Seward County Chamber and Development Partnership. Jonathan Jank, president and CEO, and Zane Francescato, development and government affairs director, presented on downtown revitalization efforts across the county. They spoke about the state of housing and what has been done with several rounds of Community Development Block Grant funds received by the City of Seward. They highlighted the dozens of new businesses and improvements across the county

since 2017 and shared plans for future projects. The program was well attended by the public and well received, with business owners and residents participating in a question-and-answer session.

August 22 – Carol Dennison and Sheri St. Clair of the LWVNE’s Fair Maps Action Team joined us in Seward for a public “Meant to Represent” presentation on redistricting. They outlined the process of drawing new maps, why redistricting matters, and what threats go against fair maps. They also showed how folks could experiment with their districts using online mapping programs. Senator Mark Kolterman (District 24) joined us for this presentation, and an article about the event was sent to both local newspapers.

We are looking forward to hosting everyone this coming April for the state annual meeting!

### **UPCOMING LWVNE MEETINGS**

- November 13, 2021 - Board Meeting in Lincoln, 10 a.m., (preparation for legislative session, end-of-year planning)
- January 8, 2022 - Board Meeting, 10 a.m., Zoom
- January 22, 2022 - Special Board Meeting to Review Legislative Bills, 10 a.m., Zoom
- February 2022 - Legislative Day Training, Date TBD, Zoom
- February 2022 - Legislative Day in Lincoln, Date TBD
- March 12, 2022 - Board Meeting in Lincoln, 10 a.m.
- April 23, 2022 - Annual Meeting in Seward