



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEBRASKA

## NEBRASKA VOTER

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### LWVNE 9<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MEETING

*Saturday, April 23, 2022*

**10 a.m. -- 1 p.m.**

**In-person in Seward, NE**

**Virtual via Zoom**

### RENEW, REVIVE, REFOCUS ON EMPOWERING VOTERS AND DEFENDING DEMOCRACY

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



The League of Women Voters of Nebraska will hold its 2022 annual meeting from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, April 23, in Seward with a virtual option via Zoom.

This year’s theme is “Renew, Revive, Refocus on Empowering Voters and Defending Democracy,” which reflects the need to recenter ourselves in the mission, vision and values of the League’s work.

Although the LWVNE will offer a virtual option due to the pandemic and ensuring health and safety, we encourage you to join us in-person at the

Seward Civic Center, 616 Bradford St. A light continental breakfast will be offered from 9-10 a.m. before the meeting begins.

Whether participating in Seward or via Zoom, you must register [here](#) by 5 p.m. April 19 for the in-person meeting and by noon April 22 for the virtual meeting. Those attending in person should bring cash or a check, written to the Seward County League of Women Voters, for \$15 to the meeting for breakfast and lunch. There is no charge for joining via Zoom.

The 2020 election brought new and exciting challenges and opportunities for not only our League membership to expand, but also our ability to reach more Nebraskans via digital Get Out the Vote and legislative advocacy work. We reached a record number of voters in Nebraska and we appreciate all of your hard work then and now.

Looking forward to the future of the League and the continuation of our administration, we hope to focus on several key areas that will allow the LWNNE to be more sustainable and drive progress and impact in many areas. As part of the annual meeting, we will have a series of focus group discussions in the areas of capacity building; diversity, equity and inclusion; organizing and outreach, volunteers and more. We hope to have a robust conversation with our membership on what our strategic goals should be in these areas and how we measure our success going forward.

Nebraska is at a pivotal point in terms of fighting for voting rights and an upcoming election, increased economic development in rural and urban areas, changes in our legislative governance, important conversations around criminal and social justice, impacts on the education of students, and a host of other issues. We look forward to discussing these and other topics with our members and being able to fellowship with many in person again. Together we are all more powerful!

## **LWNNE LAUNCHES ONLINE VOTERS' GUIDE PRIOR TO MAY 8 PRIMARY**

*By Dianne Bystrom, Director of Communications*

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska's nonpartisan, online voters' guide – VOTE411.org – has been launched with information on candidates running in contested races at the local, county, district, state and federal levels in the May 10, 2022, primary election in all 93 Nebraska counties.

“Since the March 1 filing date, we have been working nonstop to contact candidates to make sure they have the link to answer questions relevant to their races on issues important to Nebraska voters,” said Walta Sue Dodd, who serves as co-director of Voter Services for the LWNNE with Claudia Stevenson.

As of March 1, 2,156 candidates had filed to run in 1,381 races at the federal, state, district, county and local levels in Nebraska. Current Nebraska election law does not require candidates to list an email address on their filing forms. So League volunteers also send postcards and make phone calls to invite candidates to participate in VOTE411, which provides free publicity for their campaigns and an opportunity to inform their electorate.

The LWNNE has been able to contact 306 candidates running in races across the state to invite them to participate in VOTE411. Of these candidates, 54% have responded. The response rate is higher in Douglas County races – at 69% – as local League volunteers called many candidates without email addresses to ask them to participate. It will not be possible to contact all of the other 1,900 or so candidates in the system statewide without email addresses.

“Asking for an email address on filing forms would provide an easy and equitable opportunity to invite all candidates to participate in VOTE411 to share their platforms with their constituents,” Stevenson said. Candidates are encouraged to contact the LWNNE's Voter Services at [VOTE411@lwnnebraska.org](mailto:VOTE411@lwnnebraska.org) to be included in VOTE411.

VOTE411.org can be accessed from this [link](#). By clicking on the “Find What's on Your Ballot” icon and entering their address, voters receive their ballot and other personalized information. All candidates for each contested primary race are listed, with responses displayed (and photos if submitted) for those who have accepted the LWNNE's invitation to participate.



Responses from candidates to questions can be compared side-by-side for each city, county, district, state and federal race on the voter's primary election ballot. League volunteers created questions for candidates relevant to their race on issues important to Nebraska voters.

In addition to the online VOTE411 platform, a printed voters' guide with Douglas County candidates who responded by March 18 will be available at Omaha public libraries and the county election office the week of April 11. A PDF of the Douglas County Voters' Guide is available on the League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha website at this [link](#).

VOTE411.org also is publicized on the LWVNE's website available [here](#).

Responses will continue to be added to the VOTE411.org online platform up until the November 8 general election for candidates who opt-in to the free voter education service. The LWVNE encourages its members to reach out to candidate they know to encourage them to participate in VOTE411.

### **IN MEMORIAM: CONSER DEDICATED TO EDUCATION, SERVICE**

Annette Conser – who served as editor of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska's newsletter, the *Nebraska Voter*, for 14 years – passed away on March 9, 2022, at the age of 87.

In addition to her work with the LWVNE, Conser was a longtime and active member of the League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha, where she maintained membership data until a few years ago.

"Annette was a longtime, dedicated member we could always count on to keep us on track with the *Voter*. She was a fixture at LWVGO events and never let her health challenges keep her from participating. We will miss her can-do attitude and commitment to the League," said MaryLee Moulton, LWVNE co-president who was among the League members who attended Conser's funeral service on March 14 at St. Paul United Methodist Church in Omaha.



Conser, who lived in Omaha, was born March 3, 1935. According to her obituary, she “passed peacefully after successfully defeating multiple maladies in her later years. A former teacher and dedicated servant leader in her church and civic community, she loved cats, ducks, stupid jokes, saving anything, and especially bridge (the one with cards, not concrete).”

According to LWVGO member and former teacher Lynne Elwood, Conser joined Millard Public Schools in 1978, the year that Millard North High School opened. “She was a business teacher teaching typing classes,” Elwood said. “With the changes in technology, she became a keyboarding teacher. She taught the first computer classes offered at MNHS. She taught at MNHS until she retired from teaching.”

Conser served as editor of the *Nebraska Voter* from Fall 2007 to Winter 2022. “As the LWVNE office administrator, I found that Annette was organized and congenial to work with,” said Sharon Nemeth of the LWV of Lincoln-Lancaster County. “As co-president of the LWVNE in 2019-2021 and director of communications from 2021-present, I also enjoyed working with Annette,” said Dianne Bystrom. “I especially appreciated her dedication to the Oxford comma, her adherence to deadlines and her sense of humor.”

Conser was preceded in death by her husband, Rodney A. Conser, and survived by children, Lynne (Mike) Larabee, Russell (Nancy) Conser and Suzanne (Rob) Carpenter; grandchildren, Jacob and Alberto Larabee, Alex, Chris (Sai) and Tim Conser, and Tyler (Sarah) and Andrew "A.J." Carpenter; great-grandchildren, Elise and Mae Carpenter, Arjun and Anjali Conser; and a host of other loving family and friends.

The family has designated that memorials in her honor be sent to the League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha at [www.lwvgo.org/donate/](http://www.lwvgo.org/donate/) or to St. Paul United Methodist Church, 5410 Corby St., Omaha, NE 68104.

**REPORT: LEGISLATIVE DAY 2022**  
***By Sherry Miller, Vice President-Action***

On February 5, a Zoom meeting was held to prepare League of Women Voters of Nebraska members for an in-person Legislative Day at the State Capitol on February 15. Although the Zoom meeting was well attended, several indicated they could not be present on February 15.

On February 15, 11 intrepid Leaguers and one University of Nebraska-Lincoln student convened in the Capitol cafeteria to don yellow roses, pick up folders with materials for senators, and divvy up the contacts to be made by teams of two. As many senators' offices have been moved up to floors in the Capitol tower, it was more of a challenge to visit their staff than in previous years. However, all senators and/or staff were contacted with the exception of six, who were sent letters with pertinent information on our priority bills the following day.

***Priority bills we supported:***

LB890 (Walz) – Make permanent revisions to the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Act. A full eight hours of floor debate resulted in eight pending motions, including MO143 by Senator Friesen to bracket until April 1. No vote has been taken on MO143.

LB920 (Lathrop) – Enact strategies to reduce inmate population and lower recidivism. The Judiciary Committee priority bill advanced to General File on March 16 but has faced opposition from Senator Geist, who has filed five amendments.

LB925 (Gragert) – Resilient Soils and Water Quality Act. The bill advanced to final reading on March 10 and should be enacted.

LB976 (Wishart) – Enable implementation of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics. The bill was heard on January 20 and has not advanced.

***We opposed:***

LB1086 (Geist) – Chemical Abortion Safety Protocol Act, which was heard in the Judiciary Committee on February 24 and remains in committee. Senator Hunt's motion to indefinitely postpone is still pending. It is Senator Lowe's priority bill.

LB1181 (Lowe) – Require photo ID returned with early ballots. It was picked up by Senator Lowe after Senator Groene resigned. It remains in the Government Committee.

Many thanks to League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha members Ann Chalson, Linda Duckworth, Carol Dennison, Rachel Gibson, Cynde Glismann, Palistene Gray Moore, Jill McDermott, MaryLee Moulton and Candide V. Santiago; League of Women Voters of Lincoln-Lancaster County member Sheri St. Clair; and UNL student Caitlin Miller for participating in the LWVNE's 2022 Legislative Day. Following a morning of lobbying, we adjourned to The Oven in The Haymarket for a festive Indian cuisine lunch and great conversation with general consensus that our Legislative Day was a success.

**Treasurer's Report**  
*By Terri Rittenburg, Treasurer*

I am happy to report that we are not only solvent, but in good financial shape due to the effective fundraising efforts of co-president MaryLee Moulton; the generosity of our members and supporters for their donations; the grants received (most recently \$10,000 from the Nebraska Civic Engagement Table, applied for by Walta Sue Dodd); and the stewardship of all of you in pursuing our activities and administration of this organization. Thank you all for your hard work. Below are financial highlights of fiscal year 2021-2022.

**LWV of Nebraska Statement of Net Worth**  
**March 31, 2022**

Checking account total		\$51,394.06
Designated General Fund	\$28,307.83	
Designated Education Fund	\$23,086.23	
Old Education Fund Account		\$467.61
Endowment		\$69,501.49
<b>Total Assets</b>		<b>\$121,363.16</b>

Upon recommendation from our auditor to combine our bank accounts, since the entire organization is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, I have undertaken to move Education Fund monies into the General Fund checking account. This process may be completed by the time you are reading this. The Education Fund money is segregated in the budget to keep track of Education Fund vs. General Fund purposes, but the one account will eliminate the need to transfer funds between accounts.

The Education Fund financed several projects this year, including a two-part virtual campaign training school; two virtual webinars on media literacy and the journalism profession; the Fair Maps project; our current Know Your Voting Rights project, including VOTE411; and facilitation of a visit by Creighton University students to the State Capitol. The Sandra K. Powell Fund provided \$100 toward registration for our delegates to the League of Women Voters U.S. National Council last summer. The Education Fund balance as of April 4, 2022, is \$23,547.88, comprising \$6,444.81 remaining designated for Know Your Voting Rights, \$1,200 in the Sandra K. Powell Fund, and an undesignated balance of \$15,903.07. We received \$625 in undesignated Education Fund donations and \$10 to the Sandra K. Powell Fund in the 2021-2022 fiscal year (April 1, 2021-March 31, 2022).

As of April 4, 2022, our General Fund balance is \$27,257.46. In the 2021-2022 fiscal year, we received \$9,600 in donations to our General Fund. We had income of \$3,054 in Per Member Payments from our local Leagues and \$660 in Member-at-Large dues. The LWV of Lincoln-Lancaster County shared in the rent, telephone/internet expenses, and property insurance for our Lincoln office. We also received \$2,000.01 from the LWVUS in a Making Democracy Work Award. With total income of \$23,125.56 (including a \$972 2022-2023 PMP paid in March) and expenses of \$16,186.08, we are in a comfortable position as we embark on the next fiscal year.

As I finish my first year in this treasurer role, I find that I have learned a lot, but still have a lot to learn. I want to thank our auditor, Linda Bors, for her guidance and assistance. I also wish to recognize and thank the members of the Budget and Finance Committee, MaryLee Moulton, Rebecca Gonzales, Inonge Kasaji and Claudia Stevenson; the members of the Education Fund Committee, Toni Monette, Linda Duckworth, Sherry Miller and Katie Wadas Thalken; and the members of the Endowment Committee, Toni Monette, Keith Bystrom, Cindy Hadsell and Sherry Miller. I also thank our former LWVNE treasurer, Lynne Elwood, without whose patience and assistance, I don't know where I would be. Last, but certainly not least, I thank our former and current office administrators, Sharon Nemeth and Candide V. Santiago, who keep our organization on track and humming. Thank you all!



## HELP RECRUIT NEW MEMBERS TO THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

*By Linda Duckworth, Vice President-Membership*

We are calling on all members to make sure others know about the benefits of membership in the League of Women Voters. So many folks know about us through our voter information, our forums and the well-considered testimony we give before the Legislature, but they don't quite realize that they can be part of this amazing group and become part of the action. Please make a plan now to think of at least one person you know in Nebraska who would be a good fit in the League of Women Voters and then invite that person to join. Here's the [link](#) to our membership page.

## ANNUAL REPORT: LWVNE CO-PRESIDENTS

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

The first year of our term has seen the impact of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska across the state. The major accomplishment of 2021 was the implementation of redistricting in the state of Nebraska. Even though the timeline for redistricting was shortened because of late receipt of the census data due to COVID, that did not stop the intrepid Fair Maps Action Team led by Sheri St. Clair – with members Carol Dennison, Rachel Gibson, Sarah Lee, Lynn Perry and Mary Ruth Stegman – from having a major impact in the process. Their efforts, and the efforts of the Communications Action Team, to educate Nebraskans on redistricting, lobby the senators and the Redistricting Committee, and publicizing the limited public participation opportunities by encouraging Nebraskans to show up at the hearings really made a difference. We hope the Fair Maps effort can be a template for how the LWVNE tackles legislation in the future.

The COVID period presented challenges to the LWVNE and we rose to those challenges. As the world returns to a new normal, and the national League makes changes, we need to examine the LWVNE priorities for the future and how we will get there. So, we will devote a large portion of the annual meeting to brainstorming about capacity building, DEI, organizing and outreach, and volunteering. We look forward to hearing your ideas at the annual meeting.

The May 10 primary election is right around the corner, and we would like to thank Walta Sue Dodd, Claudia Stevenson, Jeanne Miller and all those who helped out on the primary election VOTE411 site and the printed Douglas County Voters' Guide. You can go to [VOTE411.org](https://www.vote411.org) to get personalized voting information thanks to their efforts. This is just the first step. We still need help to input the uncontested primary races into VOTE411 for the general election across the state as well as the initiatives that qualify for the ballot. Also, if the Voter ID constitutional amendment qualifies for the ballot, we will be joining with our partners to try to defeat the amendment. Election 2022 will be an all-hands-on-deck effort to register and educate voters.

We encourage you to regularly check out our [website](#), which contains valuable updates and in-depth information on a variety of subjects. We also hope you are following us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

It is important that we hear from members across the state. If you are not able to join us at the annual meeting, feel free to email us at [marylee@lwnnebraska.org](mailto:marylee@lwnnebraska.org) or [tmonette@lwnnebraska.org](mailto:tmonette@lwnnebraska.org). We are happy to arrange a time to talk with you.



## ANNUAL REPORT: COMMUNICATIONS ACTION TEAM

*By Dianne Bystrom, Director of Communications*

Members of the Communications Action Team for 2021-2022 and their years of service are: Dianne Bystrom, chair (2019-2022); Katie Wadas Thalken, vice chair (2019-2022); Aimée Folker (2019-2022); MaryLee Moulton (2019-2022); Toni Monette (2020-2022); Rebecca Gonzales (2020-2022); Charlyne Berens (2021-2022); and Maureen Ose (2021).

With the support of the Communications Action Team, the following outreach was completed from April 2021 through March 2022:

**Website:** The League of Women Voters of Nebraska continues to maintain and update a comprehensive and informative [website](#) with timely news posts on its homepage and drop-down menus for About the LWVNE, including mission and vision, DEI, leadership and staff, history and recently added stories about members who inspire us; Legislative Advocacy 2022, with information on the 107<sup>th</sup> Legislature second session, including 31 letters sent to committee chairs in 2022; Voting (in English and Spanish), including updated Know Your Voting Rights in Nebraska and VOTE411; Get Involved and Local Leagues. Moulton, with assistance from Bystrom, maintain and update the LWVNE website.

**Social Media:** The LWVNE continued its active presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Rachel Gibson, director of Education Policy, helped Moulton and Bystrom with the LWVNE's Twitter account – especially during redistricting and the legislative session. The LWVNE's followers on Facebook have increased from 708 in March 2021 to 793 in March 2022, from 328 to 1,270 on Twitter, and from 230 to 291 on Instagram.

The Communications Action Team's 2021-2022 budget included funding for paid ads on Facebook. Paid ads were run to oppose LR107 to "maintain and defend" the U.S. and state constitutions against a federal "abuse of power" (May 2021); promote participation in the LWVNE's two virtual webinars on media literacy and the journalism profession (October-November 2021); promote Monette's op-ed on the COP26 climate change conference (November 2021); oppose LR14 calling for a constitutional convention of the states (January 2022); and promote participation in the LWVNE's two virtual campaign training schools (February 2022).

**Emails via MailChimp:** From April 2021 through March 2022, 24 emails were sent via MailChimp to 435 LWVNE subscribers. Open rates ranged from 32% to 62% with 14 of 24 emails (58%) opened by more than 50% of subscribers. Topics included AltEn; redistricting/fair maps; and the promotion of LWVNE programs on media literacy, the journalism profession, COP 26/climate change, Schools 101 and campaign training schools. In addition, the website links to the Summer, Fall, Winter and Spring issues of the LWVNE's quarterly newsletter, the *Nebraska Voter*, are distributed via MailChimp with a summary of the content for each issue.

**News Releases:** From April 2021 through March 2021, news releases were sent to media outlets – newspapers, television and radio – on such topics as the election of Monette and Moulton as the 2021-2023 co-presidents of the LWVNE (published in the *Lincoln Journal Star* and *Omaha World-Herald* in May 2021); Redistricting Day of Action rallies in Omaha and Lincoln (covered by WOWT/NBC/Channel 6 and KPTM/Fox 42 of Omaha and KLKN/ABC/Channel 8 of Lincoln in September 2021); and a September 2021 candlelight vigil on voting rights in Omaha (not published).

**Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor:** Four op-eds by LWVNE officers and directors were published by newspapers in 2021-2022 on redistricting (Midlands Voices in the *Omaha World-Herald* on September 14 by Moulton and Monette); climate change (Midlands Voices in *Omaha World-Herald* on November 27 by Monette); AltEn fiasco (Midlands Voices in *Omaha World-Herald* on February 13 by Janelle Stevenson and Megan York Lyons); and VOTE411 (*Nebraska Examiner* on March 28 by Walta Sue Dodd and Claudia Stevenson).

Letters to the editor also were sent as a follow-up to the candlelight vigil on voting rights in Omaha by Cynde Glismann and Joanna Lindberg (published in the *Omaha World-Herald* on September 23); “decline to sign” petition for voter ID law by Walta Sue Dodd and Claudia Stevenson (not published); and VOTE411 by Walta Sue Dodd and Claudia Stevenson (published in the *North Platte Telegraph*, *Norfolk Daily News*, *Kearney Daily Hub*, *Lincoln Journal Star* and *Grand Island Independent* between March 22 and March 31, 2022).

**Nebraska Voter:** From March 2021 through February 2022, the LWVNE’s quarterly newsletter was published in March 2021 (Spring 2021), June 2021 (Summer 2021), October 2021 (Fall 2021) and Winter 2022 (February 2022). The newsletter is published as a PDF on the LWVNE website – at first as a post on the homepage and then under the Get Involved drop-down link – with an email sent to all LWVNE members via MailChimp with a link to the PDF on the website as well as a summary of content.

The Communications Action Team wishes to recognize the service of longtime *Nebraska Voter* editor Annette Conser, who passed away at the age of 87 on March 9, 2022. Bystrom worked closely with Conser on the *Nebraska Voter* as co-president of the LWVNE from 2019-2021 and as director of communications from 2021-present. Bystrom will serve as editor of the *Nebraska Voter* beginning with the Spring 2022 issue to be published in April 2022.

## **ANNUAL REPORT: EDUCATION POLICY ACTION TEAM** *By Rachel M. Gibson, Director of Education Policy*

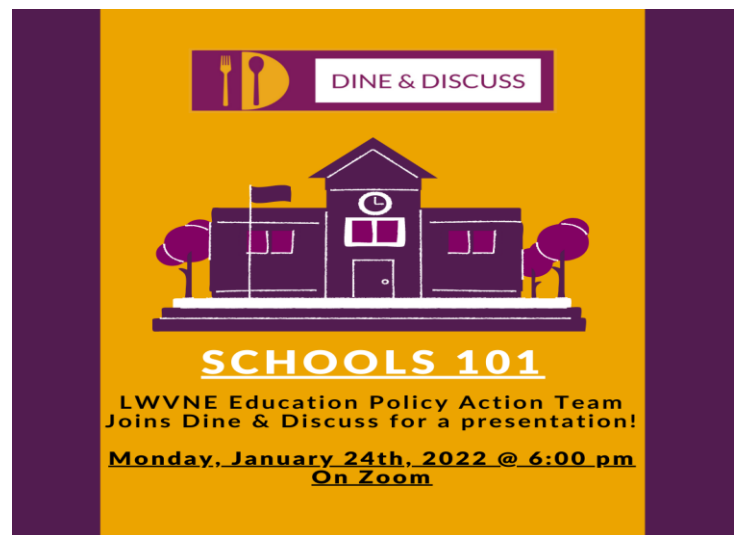
The Education Policy Action Team is grateful to share with you its 2021-22 annual report. First and foremost, a huge thank you to our newly developed team: Lolly Koneky, Sarah Smolen, Jane Skinner and Taylor Sterba. As a team, we identified three areas of focus for the year:

1. Information gathering and connecting to the Nebraska education advocacy community,
2. Legislative advocacy during the 107<sup>th</sup> short session, and
3. Development of Schools 101, a program to help the public learn and understand how K-12 education in Nebraska works.

Below you will find specifics about these three areas with both a look back at what we have accomplished and a preview of what we plan to work on in the coming year. Our primary focus over the next six months is to provide information about education to voters so they can make an informed choice when they vote in November.

If you or someone you know would be interested in joining our team or have suggestions of organizations to partner with in our efforts, I would be thankful for suggestions (email me at [rachel@lwnvnebraska.org](mailto:rachel@lwnvnebraska.org)).

A special thank you to Lynn Elwood, former LWVNE director of Education Policy who has kindly shared her knowledge, insight and connections. Her contributions and mentorship have helped make this a successful session for our team.





Thanks for taking the time to see what we've done the past year. I am incredibly proud of and thankful for our team's hard work. This is what democracy looks like!

## Connecting to the Nebraska Education Community

### Information Meetings

- Senator Wendy DeBoer – July 1, 2021
- Edison McDonald (executive director, The Arc of Nebraska) – July 6, 2021
- Sara Davenport (3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher, Rockbrook Elementary) – June 29, 2021
- Jack Moles (executive director, Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association) – July 14, 2021
- Jeremy Ekeler (associate director of education policy, Nebraska Catholic Conference)– July 22, 2021
- Lynne Elwood (former LWVNE director of education policy) – July 20, 2021
- Connie Knoche (education policy director, OpenSky Policy Institute) – October 13, 2021
- Laura Fisher (art teacher, Russell Middle School and Red for Ed) – November 14, 2021
- Mike Lucas (superintendent, Westside Community Schools) – December 9, 2021
- Laura Garcia (Nebraska state director, School Choice Now) – January 21, 2022

### Community Presentations and Involvement

- LWVGO Dine & Discuss – January 24, 2022
- Creighton University political science presentations – February 3, 2022
- Creighton University visit to the state Capitol – February 11, 2022
- Creighton University political science brown bag – February 18, 2022

## Legislative Activities

Bill	Bill Title	League Stance	League Action	Current Status
<b>LB758</b> (Brandt)	Change provisions to include early childhood education programs in the Nebraska Farm-to-School Program	Support	Read letter; in-person testimony	Passed – Approved by Governor
<b>LB890</b> (Walz)	Change the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act (TEEOSA)	Support	Read letter; in-person testimony	On hold – done for session
<b>LB986</b> (Briese)	Adopt the School District Property Tax Limitation Act	Oppose	Read letter; in-person testimony	Cloture failed – done for session
<b>LB1050</b> (Flood)	Prohibit public postsecondary institutions from discriminating against student organizations based on viewpoints, beliefs and mission	Neutral	Letter submitted online	Remained in committee
<b>LB1077</b> (Hansen, B.)	Prohibit public schools, public postsecondary institutions, and governmental entities from training or teaching certain concepts relating to race and sex and provide for withholding of state funds	Oppose	Read letter; in-person testimony	Remained in committee
<b>LB1128</b> (DeBoer)	Adopt the Student Loan Repayment Assistance for Teachers Act	Support	Read letter; in-person testimony	Remained in committee

<b>LB1237</b> (Brewer)	Adopt the Opportunity Scholarship Act and the Nebraska Child Care Contribution Tax Credit Act	Oppose	Letter submitted online	Remained in committee*
<b>LB278 CA</b> (Linehan)	Constitutional amendment to eliminate the State Board of Education and provide for the Governor to appoint the Commissioner of Education	Oppose	Letter submitted online	Remained in committee

\*LB1237 (Brewer) was nearly the exact same bill as LB364 (Linehan), which was debated on the floor at the very beginning of session and failed a cloture vote.

#### Interim Studies Following After Session

- **LR354** (McDonnell) – Interim study to examine the educational experiences and outcomes of youth in foster care.
- **LR359** (Walz) – Interim study to examine whether sections 79-458, which authorize certain property holders to attach their property to a different school district through a freeholder petition, should be updated or eliminated.
- **LR373** (Walz) – Interim study to create a select interim committee of the Legislature known as the State and Local School Aid Committee.
- **LR414** (McDonnell) – Interim study to examine programming, opportunities and interventions for students attending alternative school, class or educational program in Nebraska.
- **LR420** (Hansen, B.) – Interim study to examine the education process and procedures for serving students with special needs.

#### Schools 101 Initiative

**What:** An initiative to raise public awareness about how K-12 education works in Nebraska. The subject matter is broken into five areas. Depending on the need of the audience, the areas can be presented as a whole or as individual stand-alone topics.

1. K-12 Education in Nebraska Overview
2. Who Learns in Our Schools (enrollment and student demographics)
3. Who Works in Our Schools (employment types and roles)
4. Who Pays for Our Schools (school finance and taxes)
5. Who Guides Our Schools (curriculum and governmental oversight)

**Who:** The Education Policy Action Team in collaboration with local stakeholders to reach the public.

#### How:

- Presentations to local groups of stakeholders including parents, board members, community organizations, etc.,
- Print materials that overview education in Nebraska, and
- Social media campaign to continue to share accurate information about K-12 education during campaign season.

## ANNUAL REPORT: GOVERNMENT ACTION TEAM

*By Joanna Lindberg, Director of Government*

The following summarizes the work of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska's Government Action Team during the 107<sup>th</sup> Legislature second session.

### **Bills supported:**

LB1263 (Clements) – Provide uniform rules for secure ballot boxes statewide. Live testimony was provided to the Government Committee.

**Status:** Added to Senator Brewer's LB843 and will likely pass.

LB861 (McCollister) – Provide an email address when filling as a candidate for office. Live testimony was provided to the Government Committee.

**Status:** Added to Senator Brewer's LB843 and will likely pass. The wording states the email address is "optional." According to Brewer's legal counsel, the state cannot require any candidate to have an email address as it would deprive them of the opportunity to run for office if they did not have one.

LB844 (McCollister) – Provide requirements for filling a vacancy in the Legislature. Sheri St. Clair testified for LWVNE.

**Status:** Transferred to the Executive Board of the Legislature.

LB158 (McKinney) – Allows felons to vote once they have completed their sentence.

**Status:** This was a 2021 bill and is currently on General File.

LB733 (J. Cavanaugh) – Provide requirement for contributions or expenditures for foreign nationals under the Nebraska Political Accountability and Disclosure Act. Sherry Miller wrote testimony, which was sent via the Legislature's online portal.

**Status:** General File.

LB734 (J. Cavanaugh) – Provide a contribution limit for candidate committees under the Nebraska Political Accountability and Disclosure Act. Sherry Miller wrote testimony, which was sent via the online portal.

**Status:** In Government Committee.

### **Bills opposed:**

LB282CA (Slama) – Constitutional amendment to eliminate the requirement to nominate and elect members of the Legislature in a non-partisan manner. Linda Duckworth testified along with a large contingent of organizations and individuals opposing.

**Status:** Transferred to the Executive Board of the Legislature.

LB1181 (Lowe took on the bill after Groene resigned) – To change provisions to require an ID to vote by mail and change early voting procedures.

**Status:** Still in the Government Committee.



**ANNUAL REPORT: MENTAL AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ACTION TEAM**  
*By Aimée Folker & Palistene Gray-Moore, Co-Directors of Mental and Behavioral Health*

The Mental and Behavioral Health Action Team, or MABHAT as we refer to ourselves, had an amazing and busy year. We began the year by fulfilling a major goal by forming a robust and active committee that meets regularly, including weekly during the legislative session.

Our awesome committee includes voices from diverse backgrounds including those with mental health lived experience; medical professionals and behavioral health practitioners with backgrounds in social work, disability rights, psychology and advocacy. All of us on MABHAT come together to continue to better the lives of those with mental and behavioral health challenges and their community at large.

Our members and co-directors serve not only as voices on issues to the League of Women Voters of Nebraska, but continue to serve as leaders in organizations dedicated to the eradication of stigma, the empowerment of peer and consumer voices, and the education of policymakers and their communities at large. Those are too many to name here, but on behalf of the LWVNE, we attended legislative policy meetings with partner organizations and wrote letters on specific bills, including LB1066 and LB905.

We especially recognize MABHAT member Patsy Burnett, who wrote her first legislative letter with an impassioned plea to the Appropriations Committee. If our duty as LWV members is to empower people to vote and vote with an informed voice, then we must certainly celebrate the bravery and commitment of individuals who step up and use their wisdom to support our program. MABHAT celebrates all those first-time advocates and legislative voices. Even the most seasoned and proficient of our testifiers began with one first letter.

In the Legislative process, it is sometimes hard to know which bills will end up advancing out of committee, which ones will grow in support or wain, and which ones will be rolled over into other bills as amendments or into Christmas tree bills. So as MABHAT identified LB976 as its priority bill for the LWVNE's 2022 Legislative Day, we were disappointed to see it not advance this session. We still believe the adoption of the Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics Act is an important and viable way to address the chronic issues and funding difficulties that face 52.9 million Americans and more than 250,000 Nebraskans. We will continue to fight for the desperately needed "wrap around services" a bill like LB976 would ensure.

We encourage all our members to continue to raise awareness and fight to eradicate stigma and ignorance when it comes to disabilities and ableism by personal examination and community action. Disabilities are only so because we live in a neurotypical, ableist society. If the supports to thrive existed there would be no disability, only humans who need varied supports.

**REPORT: NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY ACTION TEAM**  
*By Megan Lyons & Janelle Stevenson, Co-Directors of Natural Resources and Energy*

This legislative session, our Natural Resources and Energy Action Team – which includes Jeanne Miller and Claudia Stevenson – selected LB925 as one of the League's priority bills, to adopt the Resilient Soils and Water Quality Act and state intent regarding appropriations.

With more than 90% of Nebraska's land used for cropland and agriculture, how the land is used affects the well-being of the Great Plains and those that depend on it. The purpose of the bill is to: (1) initiate first steps to accelerate the use and scope of best practices for healthy soil management; (2) protect and improve soil and water quality throughout the state; (3) protect the public's health and enhance agricultural production and profitability; (4) address soil health economics, resource stewardship, and managerial and environmental issues; (5) increase awareness, education, and promotion of healthy soil best practices through producer-to-producer,

peer-to-peer and mentoring relationships, networking and sharing of technical information; and (6) provide observational proof of healthy soil benefits through access to demonstration and research farms and data.

LB925 is timely for Nebraska to step up in conservation. We need to keep in mind that this legislation is for agricultural production. However, you can seek residential advice from entities where you live such as Natural Resources Districts and university extension offices.

One year ago, our Natural Resources and Energy Action Team began a study on soil health, finding out why it is important to create and maintain healthy soils, especially in an agriculturally driven state like Nebraska. When the land is continually covered in diverse polyculture vegetation – with minimal soil disturbance – humans, wildlife and the environment thrive. When soils are healthy (5% or more organic matter) fewer chemical inputs are needed, decreasing costs to the farmer. Not to mention the widespread problem of excess nitrates found in groundwater in areas of Nebraska.

Our colleagues in the Nebraska Energy State Table have been diligently following legislation on public power district bills. There has been an attack on public power in the Legislature this year. Much of it is due to the fact that all of our major public power districts have adopted decarbonization goals and made significant investments in renewable energy.

There were four main bills attacking public power: LB1045, LB1046, LB1047 and LB1058. At the public hearings, there was no support and unanimous opposition to LB1046, LB1047 and LB1058. There was a mix of support and opposition to LB1045, which would allow a general manager from one power district to serve on the board of another power district – a bad public policy idea that would create a conflict of interest.

As of April 8, 2022, LB1045 was not scheduled to be heard. With the last day of the legislative session on April 20, the Nebraska Energy State Table leaders believe it is safe to assume the bill is dead.

For the month of April, we should stay diligent but also celebrate and learn during Earth Day events throughout the month. Although the official international Earth Day is observed on April 22, most community events will take place on Saturday, April 23. Take these opportunities to connect with community and the local environment. Lincoln and Omaha events will be held in person once again.

Let's celebrate and then be prepared for action alerts about AltEn ethanol leading up to the last week of April.

**The Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy has scheduled a public hearing on AltEn at 6 p.m., Wednesday, April 27, at the Mead (NE) High School.**

Looking ahead to the 2022 elections, we ask you to vote with the climate in mind. Electing candidates who hold a realistic view of climate change is one of the most effective environmental efforts we can make as individuals. Systemic changes are what it takes to meet measurable goals for less atmospheric CO2 and livable global temperatures.

Situation in Mead, Nebraska, where AltEn has been processing seed coated with fungicides and insecticides, is a warning sign, experts say



▲ A pesticide pile Mead, Nebraska. Photograph: Judy Wu-Smart



## REPORT: SOCIAL POLICY ACTION TEAM

*By Carol Dennison & Jill McDermott, Co-Directors of Social Policy*

Social Policy co-directors and action team members Sara Lee, Carolyn Thiele and Carmen Bunde have advocated for legislation in 2022 in the areas of criminal justice; violence prevention; juvenile justice and child welfare; and basic needs (nutrition, housing and workforce protections). Also, Carol Dennison and Rachel Gibson encouraged additional action in a legislative preview filmed February 20, 2022, for *GoVoteOmaha!*

### **Criminal Justice**

**SUPPORT: LB920**, one of the League's priority bills, is comprehensive legislation to enact smart justice reforms intended to reduce Nebraska's overcrowded prison system. The bill seeks to reduce overcrowding and ensure those released are supervised and supported as they return to their community. Areas of debate include non-consensus items that address penalties for varying amounts of drug possession, establishing a system of geriatric parole for inmates, establishing criteria for judges to determine when sentences for multiple crimes should be served consecutively, and setting a limit on minimum sentences to encourage offenders to spend more of their sentences under parole supervision.

Governor Ricketts opposed the bill as written. Senator Lathrop and Senator Geist worked on a list of compromises. *However, on April 6, LB920 was defeated 26-18 due to the opposition of Senator Geist, who opposed many reforms that would spur prison reductions.* Her proposals would have addressed too few to make a difference in the overcrowding crisis. Issues of sentencing, classification of drug crimes and geriatric parole remain stumbling blocks. Law enforcement, county prosecutors and the courts need to find compromise on the data-driven recommendations of the Criminal Justice Reinvestment Workforce Group. Senator Geist and members of the Governor's Office have promised to work on reforms over the summer.

**OPPOSE: Appropriations for New Prison (Agency 46).** The co-directors attended the hearing on appropriating funds for a new 1,500-bed prison and Dennison testified in opposition to the prison allocation. The majority of testifiers were in opposition to the prison. *The budget – which sets aside \$175 million to be released to the Nebraska Capital Construction Fund for a potential new state penitentiary, but does not appropriate those funds until certain conditions are met – was passed on March 30.*

### **Juvenile Justice**

While these bills, except for LB 308, were not on this session's final list identified for League advocacy, they were critical to improved juvenile justice in the state, so were monitored by McDermott. She submitted a personal letter of support for LB1000 relative to the definition of child neglect and reasonable independent activities.

**Support** LB308 – Provide grants for juvenile indigent legal defense. Carryover bill. *Did not advance.*

**Support** LB445 – Requires law enforcement to notify parent/guardians of youth in custody. *General File.*

**Support** LB792 – Request of funds for new construction, renovation and equipment replacement at the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center-Kearney. *\$12 million allotted to YRTC-Kearney and \$15 million to the University of Nebraska for the University of Nebraska Medical Center Rural Complex in Kearney.*

**Support** LB952 – Connects those leaving prison or jail to Medicaid coverage. *Now LB921 is part of a combined package that was debated the week of April 4.*

**Support** LB732 – Prohibits use of deception by peace officers in the questioning of juveniles. *To be reintroduced by Senator John Cavanaugh next session.*

**Support** LB1000 – Updates and clarifies Nebraska's definition of child neglect and excludes certain reasonable independence. McDermott sent personal letter of support. *Did not advance to the floor.*

**Monitor** LB1254 – Use America Rescue Plan Act funds to assist eligible programs that prepare youth who have aged out of the foster care system to enter the workforce in Nebraska. *Did not advance to the floor.*

## **Violence Prevention/Gun Policy**

**OPPOSE: LB773**, a concealed carry bill that does not require a permit, was pulled from the Judiciary Committee on March 14 without a majority vote to advance the bill. Most testimony was in support, but was opposed by both the Omaha and Lincoln police departments. Senator Brewer added an amendment to answer the objections of the Omaha Police Department, which would leave in place Omaha's handgun registration ordinance, but there would be fewer reasons to reject a permit.

The amendment would also allow prosecutions for the crime of "carrying a concealed handgun" if a concealed gun was used in a long list of "covered offenses," from robbery and kidnapping to cockfighting and some drug offenses. Senator Wayne supported the original bill, but not the amendment that would create more than 20 new crimes that could unfairly target people of color in his community. Senator McKinney also opposed the bill. Senator Morfeld brought an amendment to cover the cost of permit issuance and renewal by the state to answer proponent claims that the fees were prohibitive to some who could not afford them. That amendment failed.

The Police Officers Association had testified against LB773 earlier this year, saying that as originally drafted, it limited prosecution and penalties against criminals who should not have guns. The Omaha Police Officers Association stated that as originally drafted, it would harm police efforts to combat street gangs. The Lincoln police and a state police chiefs' association remain opposed to the bill.

We believe this bill jeopardizes public safety because it will reduce gun safety training and background check requirements that accompany the permitting process. We also oppose it because of additional crimes that will be created affecting people of color and for causing unintended consequences for those carrying concealed handguns without full knowledge of offenses they may be committing. We sent letters in opposition for written testimony to the Judiciary Committee hearing on January 20, an action alert on March 14, and a follow-up letter to swing senators on March 31. *On April 11, the bill stalled on select file after a cloture motion failed on a vote of 31-9. It is unlikely the bill will be debated again this session.*

## **Basic Needs: Fair Housing/Housing Supply/Nutrition**

### **Nutrition**

**SUPPORT LB710.** We sent a letter in support of this SNAP bill that would drop asset tests to streamline application and administration for nutrition support, saving costs and reducing time in processing applications. Statistically, only 48% of SNAP households have any assets and those that do own a median value of \$450. Most do not even have \$150 in the bank. *Did not advance to the floor.*

**SUPPORT LB121.** This bill was an effort to support a particular group, felons convicted of certain drug offenses who have served their sentences, yet who were singled out for a lifetime ban of SNAP benefits some years ago. With the idea of supporting those who are transitioning to the community from prison, to avoid recidivism and to recognize the adverse effects on this group of affected families, Social Policy sent an email to the Health and Human Services Committee and action alerts were initiated by Sherry Miller. *The bill was advanced to Enrollment and Review on March 22.*

### **Housing**

**Support LB1073** – Emergency Rental Assistance. *Governor Ricketts vetoed the bill.* Miller sent an action alert on March 30 urging an override vote. *The motion to override the governor's veto failed by one vote, 29-16, on April 5.*

### **Tenant Protections** (rolled over from last session)

**Support LB205** – Limits on late fees, rules regarding notice of termination.

**Support LB453** – Seeks to incentivize landlords to comply with city ordinances that would ensure safe housing.

*Neither bill has come out of committee despite support from Senators John Cavanaugh and Terrell McKinney.*

**LB1024 Affordable Housing** – Designates \$20 million to North Omaha and \$30 million for Lincoln in affordable housing construction as well as broadened economic assistance to all three congressional districts. Senator Wayne crafted this compromise bill, which has *one more round of debate on the floor*.

### **Non-Discrimination**

**Support LB 814** – Require the Office of Legislative Research to prepare racial impact statements for legislative bills. Toni Monette wrote a letter to the committee, but the bill *did not advance*.

**Next Year:** Watch for bills related to the following topics:

- **Increasing jurisdictional age** to 21 (Wayne). LB330 addressed the topic but *did not advance*.
- **Increase childcare assistance** by 200% (Linehan). LB677 addressed, but the bill *did not advance*.
- **Minimum wage** for tipped employees (Pansing Brooks). LB1028 addressed, but *did not advance*.
- **Minimum wage ballot initiative** – The objective of this petition is to amend Nebraska's minimum wage law to increase the state minimum wage from \$9 per hour to \$10.50 per hour on January 1, 2023; to \$12 per hour on January 1, 2024; to \$13.50 per hour on January 1, 2025; and to \$15 per hour on January 1, 2026, to be adjusted annually thereafter to account for increases in the cost of living.

**Signatures:** 85,628    **Deadline:** The deadline to submit signatures is July 7, 2022.

The initiative was filed by Raise the Wage Nebraska on August 20, 2021.

- **Pretrial risk assessment and services** pilot program (J. Cavanaugh). LB1155 *did not advance*.

## **ANNUAL REPORT: VOTER SERVICES**

*By Walta Sue Dodd & Claudia Stevenson, Co-Directors*

Here is a summary of our work from April 2021 through March 2022:

### **Know Your Voting Rights**

Dodd edited the 2020 version of the Know Your Voting Rights brochure to create the 2022 version. Stevenson communicated with the vast partner list and received orders for 5,000 copies of the English version. These have been printed, folded, and mailed or delivered to the partners. The League of Women Voters of Lincoln-Lancaster County has the remaining 500 copies. The Spanish version is being printed and will be available soon; 1,500 copies have been ordered.

### **Nebraska Civic Engagement Table Grant**

Dodd wrote, requested and received a grant from the NCET for \$10,000. \$5,000 went directly to the LWVNE Education Fund in repayment of the printing and mailing costs for the Know Your Voting Rights brochure.

### **VOTE411.ORG – Voters' Guide**

We have been working on the VOTE411 revised system since February 16, 2022, with only six weeks to enter all competitive races by April 4, 2022. We were assisted by members of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska, especially Jeanne Miller of the LWV of Greater Omaha. Miller not only serves as editor of the LWVGO's Douglas County Voters' Guide, but she also acquired all of the necessary data for the Natural Resources Districts for VOTE411. Miller reached out to all 23 NRDs to acquire their "shapefiles" to make the system more specific to each race. Of the 23 NRDs, 15 replied with shapefiles to work in the system.

To make VOTE411.org work efficiently, the boundary maps for various districts and sub-districts need to be available on the system. Voters will be able to enter their home address and see who is running for an office on their ballot. For example, Stevenson lives in Keith County, but not the City of Ogallala. When she enters her

address, she will see candidates in the races she can vote on for the primary. These will not include the City of Ogallala.

Although this is a partisan primary election, the voter will see candidates from all political parties listed in VOTE411.org. This will allow registered nonpartisan voters (nearly 22% of all Nebraska voters) to be informed about all candidates for whom the voter can cast a vote. The nonpartisan voter can ask to vote one partisan ballot for the races allowed by each of the state's political parties.

This was the year everything seemed to happen: new co-directors, revised VOTE411 system, redistricting, and the corresponding boundary data (GIS shapefiles) needed for the various political entities in the state. We have 93 counties, and every county is different. We have county clerks who have never heard of the League of Women Voters and wanted to know if we were a viable organization. Many checked with the Secretary of State before sharing any information. The information we received, in many cases, was incomplete – no addresses, no phone numbers, and no email addresses.

Stevenson contacted the SOS election office for their assistance to get the notice of the primary election from the 93 counties, which were available on March 28, 2022. Most counties do not post this on their own websites. We needed to know which races would be on the primary ballot in each county. Stevenson suggested that the SOS office request each county to post its notice of election on the county website. The SOS will recommend that change.

When we first started, we began entering all the races and candidates in 91 counties (Miller handled Douglas and Lancaster counties) as we received the information. We have entered 2,156 candidates running in 1,381 races. We have 1,714 candidates without email addresses and 1,214 without mailing addresses. Only 396 had email addresses and out of the 396, only 117 responded.

To gather the emails for the federal and state races – such as U.S. House of Representatives, state legislature, NRDs and community colleges – a group of volunteers contacted more than 100 people and got email addresses so that we could then invite them to participate in VOTE411. The Seward County League of Women Voters helped get about 75% of their candidates contacted to obtain emails addresses. We have a long list of Lancaster County candidates that still need to be contacted. If you would like to help get emails from these candidates, we can still add their responses to the VOTE411 system. Contact one of us for a copy of the names and phone numbers.

As editor of the printed Douglas County Voters' Guide for the primary election, Miller coordinated county-only and statewide races that will appear on the Douglas County ballot and in the printed guide. Thus, there is a large degree of overlap between Douglas County's efforts and statewide efforts. A small group of volunteers was able to contact every one of the 123 candidates appearing in the printed guide by postcard and further attempts were made by email and phone to invite candidates to participate in VOTE411 and appear in the guide. Of those, 98 have now responded. This response rate is only due to the efforts of those volunteers, which is not easily replicated on a statewide level.

VOTE411.org is live and available to voters. All of the candidates in a competitive race will be listed in VOTE411.org. There are currently 353 published races for the primary. Only those with an email address and a response will have their response listed. We are disappointed that only 134 candidates' opinions will be shared. Overall, we have a 41% response rate in races outside of Douglas County.

We hope that LB861 – which includes an option for candidates to list an email address on the filing form for an elected office – is enacted. It is important for more candidates to provide their email addresses so that the LWVNE, LWVGO and other Leagues as well as media outlets can reach out to every candidate to invite them to participate in nonpartisan voters' guides.

The LWVNE Communication Action Team led by Dianne Bystrom and MaryLee Moulton helped publicize our frustrations on getting information on candidates by writing and submitting, with our signatures, op-eds and letters to the editor to newspapers across the state. Our op-ed was published by the *Nebraska Examiner* and daily newspapers in Norfolk, Lincoln, Kearney, Grand Island and North Platte published our letter to the editor.

## **REPORT: LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER OMAHA**

*By Cynde Glismann, Co-President*

Spring continues to be a busy time for the Greater Omaha League of Women Voters. Thank you to the members and leaders who make it possible for LWVGO programs to thrive.

The Douglas County Voters' Guide will have been distributed to the Omaha public libraries, the Douglas County Election Commission, and more than 40 locations throughout the greater Omaha area by the time of this publication (25,000 copies distributed). Voters are also encouraged to visit [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org) for personalized ballot information. Many thanks to LWVGO's new Voters' Guide editor, Jeanne Miller.

The *GoVoteOmaha!* television (and YouTube) show continues to prepare citizens to become informed voters. This spring, the show featured Chris Carithers, Deputy Douglas County Election Commissioner, who spoke about voting by mail and election safety; and state Senator Terrell McKinney, who discussed the North Omaha Recovery Plan. Planned for April are voter forums featuring candidates for state Legislature District 6, Douglas County sheriff and Register of Deeds. Thanks to *GoVoteOmaha!* director Karina Hernandez and producer Kathy Bass.

Get Out The Vote is focusing on developing new partnerships and increasing connections within and across communities as it continues voter registration events. The team is looking forward to educating the community at Earth Day and the Maha Festival about the primary election and the discriminatory effects of the petition for a constitutional amendment requiring a voter ID. LWVGO, along with WOWT, sponsored a 2<sup>nd</sup> District Congressional debate at the Omaha Press Club.

Dine & Discuss presentations remain virtual on the fourth Monday of each month. Topics this spring included "Erasing Neighborhoods," a discussion on the disappearance of Sheelytown in South Omaha; and about SPARK, a nonprofit working to engage stakeholders to focus on holistic community development. Next on the schedule is "Climate Change," presented by Martha Shulski from the Nebraska State Climate Office. May's topic will be "East/West Omaha Courageous Conversations: Race & Education – The Real Talk" sponsored by LWVGO, the NAACP, Civic Nebraska and the American Muslim Institute.

Be sure to check [LWVGO.org](http://LWVGO.org) for the next Books After Dark discussion (on the first Tuesday of the month) and for many more activities.

Again, thanks to LWVGO members and the Board of Directors who support the mission and values of this organization in so many ways.

### **LWV-LINCOLN/LANCASTER COUNTY TO HOLD ANNUAL MEETING ON MAY 7**

The League of Women Voters of Lincoln/Lancaster County will hold its Annual General Meeting on Saturday, May 7. A packet and more information on the annual meeting will be distributed soon to LWV-LL members.



## ANNUAL REPORT: SEWARD COUNTY LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

*By Emily Hemphill, President*

The Seward County League of Women Voters held 11 meetings this year, with nine of those via Zoom and two in person. We hosted five public events. Activities of note include the following:

April – The Seward League’s annual meeting included a thank you to Ellen and Tobin Beck, who served as longtime president and secretary. The League presented them with gifts of appreciation. Current officers include president Emily Hemphill, vice president Louis Reith, secretary Marilyn Bechtel and treasurer Laurie Baack.



July – We celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the Seward and Nebraska Leagues a year late, since Seward’s big Independence Day celebration was canceled in 2020 because of COVID-19. Our celebration included a special stamp cancellation by the U.S. Postal Service to commemorate the events. We hosted LWVNE 2019-2021 co-president Linda Duckworth as a guest lecturer for the public on July 4 and created a display about the history of the Seward League and suffrage in Nebraska with help from students at Concordia University as a class project. The lecture and display were well received.

August – Carol Dennison and Sheri St. Clair of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska joined us in Seward for a public “Meant to Represent” presentation on redistricting on August 22. They outlined the process of drawing new maps, why redistricting matters and what threats go against fair maps. They also showed how people could experiment with their districts using online mapping programs. Senator Mark Kolterman (District 24) joined us for this presentation as well, and an article about the event was sent to both local newspapers. Nine members of the public attended.

September – In conjunction with Seward Memorial Library, we hosted guest speakers from the Seward County Chamber and Development Partnership on September 14. President and CEO Jonathan Jank 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 the City of Seward has received. 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, with 14 business owners and residents participating in a Q and A.

On 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 LWVNE.

November – Tobin Beck of the Seward League served as a panelist in the LWVNE’s media literacy/journalism and the First Amendment webinar series. Ellen Beck helped to coordinate the event with other state members.