



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEBRASKA

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LWVNE prepares to deal with local effects of *Dobbs* decision, readies voters' guide, develops new educational presentations

By MaryLee Moulton, president

Even though it's summer, your League of Women Voters of Nebraska is hard at work. We started off by sending a delegation to the LWV national convention, which you can read more about in this issue of the *Nebraska Voter*.

The LWVNE is preparing to deal with the ramifications in Nebraska of the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, which overturned *Roe v. Wade*. It is still possible that Governor Pete Ricketts could call a special session to consider legislation that would ban abortion in our state. If not, this issue will surely come up in the new legislative session that begins in January 2023.



Cynde Glismann
and MaryLee
Moulton

We are working closely with our partners on our response and now have a [new page](#) on our website that offers ideas for taking action; reviews the current abortion laws in Nebraska; provides links to current media articles, to which we are always adding; and lists reproductive facts and figures. Please email Rachel Gibson, vice president-action, at rachel@lwnnebraska.org if you want to be involved in working on this issue.

Election 2022 is right around the corner, and we are working to update the VOTE411.org online voters' information platform and planning candidate forums for legislative candidates. (Read more on these items elsewhere in this issue.)

Our goal for the late summer and fall is to increase the number of our members at large so we can expand our presence throughout the state with a goal of having members in all 49 state legislative districts. We will need your help to reach out to your friends and family across Nebraska, so you will be hearing more about this project soon.

We have developed two presentations – Government 101 (an overview of government structure, our elected officials, participation in voting and government in Nebraska) and Schools 101 (an overview of students, curriculum, staffing and funding in Nebraska) – that can be presented to community groups over Zoom or in

person. The goal of these presentation is to provide factual information and strengthen democracy in our state. Go to our website [home page](#) for a form to request a presentation.

Remember, whether you are a local League member or a member at large, you are part of the state League. Both leagues offer many opportunities for you to be involved. Please consider joining one of eight LWFNE action teams, which are organized around policy areas. More information on our actions teams can be found [here](#). And follow the LWFNE on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

We look forward to working with you to strengthen democracy in Nebraska. Enjoy the summer.



LWFNE offers Schools 101 presentation focused on four topics

As a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to cultivating an informed electorate, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska has put together some of the basic facts about kindergarten-12th grade education in Nebraska in a program titled Schools 101.

“As residents, we know that public education has been a hot topic of conversation over the past year,” said Rachel M. Gibson, vice president-action for the LWFNE who also recently served as the state director of education policy. “Whether it is health standards, parental involvement, public health protocols or curriculum guidelines, lots of folks have had lots to say about our Nebraska schools,” she said.

“With all the competing voices, a team of five volunteers – including a certified teacher – found themselves as parents, families and community members wondering about how schools work in Nebraska, who attends our schools, who teaches at our schools, who makes decisions about our schools, and who funds our schools and how,” Gibson said.

“We decided to find out, and Schools 101 was born,” she said. The team of volunteers researched and collected resources, read reports, combed through Nebraska-specific data, and pulled out the most important parts to be made into an overview of K-12 education in Nebraska.

The Schools 101 presentation provides detailed information on four topics: who attends Nebraska’s schools (students); who works in the schools (teachers, staff and administrators); what pays for schools (funding); and what guides schools (curriculum). Supporting materials – including videos, links and resources that give an overview of K-12 education in Nebraska – are posted on the LWFNE website to accompany Schools 101.

To request a Schools 101 presentation, fill out this [form](#) and a member of the volunteer team will get back to you.

State and local leagues plan candidate forums before Nov. 8 election

By Dianne Bystrom, director of communications

Events are being planned to help voters learn more about candidates and their positions before the Nov. 8 general election. The League of Women Voters of Nebraska as well as local leagues in Greater Omaha, Lincoln-Lancaster County and Seward County will host forums for candidates running in federal, state, district and local races this fall.

The LWV of Lincoln-Lancaster County will begin its in-person candidate forums on Sept. 24. The Seward County League has scheduled its in-person candidate forum for Sept. 25. Plans for the candidate forums sponsored by the LWV of Greater Omaha and the state League are also underway.

The LWVGO has a locally produced television program – Go Vote Omaha! – to air candidate forums. Go Vote Omaha! is broadcast on Tuesday nights at 7:30 p.m. on Cox channel 22 and 1022HD. The shows are also available on the LWVGO's YouTube channel. In addition to candidates running in contested state legislative races in the Omaha area, the LWVGO plans to invite candidates for school boards and the Omaha Public Power District, said Rachel M. Gibson, vice president-action for the LWVNE and a member of the LWVGO.

According to Gibson, the state League is helping coordinate LWVGO's efforts for the forums with legislative candidates. “The state League wants to be as equitable to legislative candidates as possible – and reach more voters across the state – by Zoom-hosting any legislative races not being covered by Greater Omaha, Lincoln-Lancaster and Seward,” she said. Hastings – the location of Nebraska's fourth local league – does not have a state senator up for election this cycle.

The LWV of Lincoln-Lancaster County has partnered with the Lincoln NAACP to lead a coalition of organizations to sponsor candidate forums this fall. Their first event will be held on Saturday, Sept. 24, at the Swanson Auditorium in the Nebraska Union at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Doors open at 3:30 p.m. for the forum that begins at 4 p.m. Candidates running in Nebraska's First Congressional District are being invited to participate in this forum.



“We hope to have one or two more candidate forums,” said Inonge Kasaji, president of the LWV-LL. “An additional forum will include candidates running for local elected office. We also may sponsor forums for candidates running for the state Legislature, county commissioner, county attorney, county sheriff and district five of the Nebraska State Board of Education.”

In addition to the LWV-LL and Lincoln NAACP, other members of the coalition of sponsoring organizations of the candidate forums planned for Lincoln include UNL Husker Votes, Nebraskans for Peace, Nebraska Civic Engagement Table, Common Cause, Center for People in Need and Nebraska Appleseed.

The Seward County League is planning a fall candidates forum that will begin at 2 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 25, at the Seward Civic Center, 616 Bradford Street. “Candidates running in statewide, regional and local races will be invited to participate in a meet-and-greet with the public as well as a question-and-answer forum,” said Emily Hemphill, president of the Seward County League. “We haven't nailed down exactly which races we'll have as there are quite a few in our area this time around, but we always invite candidates for the U.S. Congress, state governor and state Legislature – we have the District 24 race this year – as well as candidates

for city councils in Seward and Milford and the county board of commissioners,” she said. “We are planning in-person only, pending the COVID situation at that time.”

The LWVNE as well as local leagues in Greater Omaha, Lincoln-Lancaster County and Seward County will continue to send out information through their newsletters, websites and social media about the fall candidate forums as more details are available.

LWVNE budget on track for 2022-2023

By Terri Rittenburg, treasurer

I am happy to report that the League of Women Voters of Nebraska is on track with its budget for 2022-2023 and all is proceeding well. The LWVNE is preparing for the move out of the office space in Lincoln, which will save us some money in this year’s budget. Instead of a state office, the LWVNE will utilize a post office box and telephone number for calls, voice messages and texts.

Balances in our accounts are:

LWV of Nebraska Statement of Net Worth

July 23, 2022

Checking account total		\$51,404.61
Designated General Fund	\$28,983.29	
Designated Ed Fund	\$22,418.32	
Endowment		\$60,619.56
Total Assets		\$112,021.17

Our endowment has lost some value in the last couple of months, but I am optimistic that it will rise again.

If you have questions, please email me at treasurer@lwnvnebraska.org.

LWVNE sets goal to expand membership throughout state

By Linda Duckworth, vice president-membership

As our president mentions in her report, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska intends to have at least one member in every legislative district in the state. It’s a challenging goal and yet reachable if we have help from all our members.

Please think about people you know in other parts of our state who carefully follow the news and are passionate about making democracy work. There’s every chance they will thank you for an introduction to the LWVNE. It would be amazing to have met this membership goal by early January when the 2023 legislative session begins.

We’ve been told that when a Nebraska state senator hears from as few as five constituents regarding a legislative bill, their input can have a significant impact. Our senators hear from paid lobbyists all the time but receive input far less often from actual residents in their districts.

We have already begun to focus our recruiting efforts on the northeast corner of Nebraska and will soon create a new unit of at-large members in South Sioux City. LWVNE President MaryLee Moulton gets the credit for

reaching out with the help of the Nebraska Civic Engagement Table to members of Unity in Action. This nonprofit in South Sioux City supports the Latinx community by promoting workers' rights, civic engagement and justice through education, training and advocacy.

If you have friends in that general part of the state, please encourage them to join the League of Women Voters. Being part of an organization that fights for our freedoms can be an incredibly uplifting experience. It's what I wish for every current member and every future member of the League. If you'd like to help in any other way – such as contributing great ideas or sharing contacts in various parts of the state – please contact me at linda@lwvgo.org.

League elects Nebraska members to serve on national board

By Dianne Bystrom, director of communications

Two members of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska will serve on the organization's national board of directors from July 2022 through June 2024.

Dr. Deborah Ann Turner of Omaha, who was elected president of the national LWV board in 2020, was re-elected to serve another two years. Toni Monette, also of Omaha, was elected to serve on the LWV national board as secretary. The election of the 12-member board of directors came during the LWV's national convention, which was held online and in Denver, Colo., from June 23 to 26.

“It is a tremendous honor to serve on the board of directors for this esteemed democracy-driven organization,” said Monette, who has held leadership positions with the LWV of Greater Omaha and LWV of Nebraska, including state co-president and co-director of voter services. “Voting rights are critical to our democracy, and I look forward to working with this new board to ensure that we consider the intersectionality and extreme necessity of including diverse voices in the people-powered fight for voter access and human rights across our country.”



Turner said, “I am honored League members continue to trust me as president of the board of the League of Women Voters of the United States for the next biennium. We have a lot of work to do. Our democracy is under attack, and voters are counting on the League to do everything it takes to protect voting rights. I am confident in this new board to lead the League with vision and strategy through the next two years.”

Monette joined the League in 2014 when coordinating voter registration at the University of Nebraska Omaha. In 2018, she worked on preparation for the 2020 celebration of the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment. Monette subsequently served as co-director of voter services for the LWV of Greater Omaha and LWV of Nebraska. She served as co-president of the Nebraska state League from May 2021 through April 2022. Monette is a training facilitator for a Department of Education contractor and volunteers with her sorority, Zeta Phi Beta Inc., and the National Coalition of 100 Black Women. She is completing a master's degree in public administration with a concentration in public policy at UNO.

Turner joined the Des Moines, Iowa, Metropolitan LWV in 2010 and became its president in 2011. She also served on the LWV of Iowa board as the state vice president from 2011 to 2015, becoming co-president in 2015. Turner was elected to the League's national board of directors in 2016 and has served on the finance and governance committees and chaired the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee. She earned a bachelor's degree from Iowa State University, a Doctor of Medicine from the University of Iowa and a law degree from

Drake University. Turner practiced gynecologic oncology for 35 years and most recently served as associate medical director of Planned Parenthood of North Central States.

More than 1,000 delegates from all 50 states and the District of Columbia attended the League's 55th national convention. The LWV is a nonpartisan, grassroots nonprofit dedicated to empowering people to fully participate in democracy. With active leagues in all 50 states and more than 700 local leagues across the country, the LWV engages in advocacy, education, litigation and organizing to protect every American's freedom to vote.

LWVNE lists action steps to support reproductive rights

By MaryLee Moulton, president

On June 24, 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in its *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision.

The League of Women Voters has a long history of supporting women's reproductive rights. (See page 56 of [Impact on Issues](#).) At our recent national convention in Denver, Colo., we passed a resolution stating: *Be it resolved that the LWVUS, supports the rights of women and those who can become pregnant to self-determination related to, and including, but not limited to bodily autonomy, privacy, reproductive health, and lifestyle choice to bodily autonomy.*

After the court's decision was announced, the entire convention marched to the Colorado State Capitol to join a protest.

In the wake of the Dobbs decision, Governor Pete Ricketts and Mike Hilgers, speaker of the Nebraska Legislature, said they will call a special legislative session to try to ban abortion in Nebraska. The League of Women Voters of Nebraska will work with our partners – including Planned Parenthood Advocates of Nebraska, Women's Fund of Omaha, I Be Black Girl, the American Civil Liberties Union and others – to oppose restrictions on reproductive rights in Nebraska.



If you are interested in working on this issue, take action by:

- **Emailing Jill McDermott** (LWVNE social policy director) to join the action team at jill@lwnvnebraska.org.
- **Contacting your state senator.** Call or email your state senator and let them know you oppose restricting the abilities of women, pregnant people and physicians to discuss and make their own health decisions. Visit this [page](#) to confirm your state senator along with their contact information. Visit this [page](#) for guidance from the ACLU on crafting your message.
- **Encouraging friends and family to get involved.** There is strength in numbers. Invite them to join the League at www.lwnvnebraska.org/join. Ask them to help defend democracy.
- **Visiting the new reproductive rights section of our website at this [link](#).** Our website is now updated with resources and information on the fight for reproductive justice in Nebraska. On this page, you can learn about current abortion laws in Nebraska, read local and national media articles, and find reproductive facts and figures.
- **Donating to help in the fight** at www.lwnvnebraska.org/donate.

Based on the Supreme Court's ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson*, all privacy rights in the United States – including the rights to contraception, intimate relationships and same sex marriage – are under threat. We need to act now to protect these privacy rights in Nebraska follow our motto of “empowering voters, defending democracy.”

Petitions on voter ID, minimum wage, medical marijuana submitted for ballot

By Joanna Lindberg and Sheri St. Clair, co-directors of government

Of the 19 petitions submitted to the Nebraska Secretary of State, two initiatives that each raised more \$1 million to support their campaigns will likely be on the Nov. 8 general election ballot. A third petition may or may not have garnered enough required signatures.

July 7 was the deadline for submitting signatures on petitions to place a matter on the ballot. The petition signatures will now be examined by the Nebraska Secretary of State's Office and county election commissioners to determine how many are valid by Sept. 16 for the Nov. 8 general election. Election officials say that between 10 percent and 15 percent of signatures are typically deemed invalid.

The petitions to legalize medical marijuana in Nebraska and to raise the state's minimum wage need 87,000 valid signatures, whereas changing the state constitution to require voter identification requires 124,000 valid signatures, according to a July 7 *Nebraska Examiner* story by Paul Hammel.

Raise the Wage Nebraska leaders submitted 160,000 signatures to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2026. To finance the petition drive, leaders raised approximately \$1.3 million from two Washington, D.C., organizations. The Sixteen Thirty Fund donated \$635,000, and the Fairness Project gave \$252,000. Nebraska Appleseed provided \$200,000 with smaller amounts coming from other Nebraska nonprofits.

Voter ID proposes to change the Nebraska Constitution. Donors to Citizens for Voter ID reported raising \$1.7 million to support the campaign, with 88 percent (\$1.5 million) of that funding contributed by Marlene Ricketts, the mother of Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts, according to the story by Hammel. State Senator Julie Slama was a vocal and visible leader of the effort. The LWVNE will encourage citizens to vote **no** on voter identification and will lobby Nebraska state senators who will make the decision on what constitutes an ID if the measure is approved by voters in November.

Medical Marijuana is up for grabs, with 93,000 signatures for one petition and 91,000 for the other petition delivered to the Secretary of State. This year, due to relatively minimal funding, it was mostly volunteers who solicited signatures. State Senator Anna Wishart chaired the effort with help from Senator Wendy DeBoer.

Opponents of legalizing medical marijuana – including Governor Ricketts – have maintained that medical use of marijuana has not been cleared by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, could lead to permitting recreational use of cannabis and could endanger youth. In 2020, the Nebraskans for Medical Marijuana effort was well funded, and the group gathered more than enough signatures to qualify for the ballot. But their initiative was stopped by a Nebraska Supreme Court ruling saying the petition violated the state's "single subject" rule, according to the story by Hammel.

Voter Services volunteers work to expand VOTE411.org statewide

By Claudia Stevenson and Walta Sue Dodd, co-directors of voter services

Members of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska's Voter Services Action Team are working to get all races and candidates in Nebraska's 93 counties entered into the VOTE411.org database by Sept. 30 – before vote-by-mail ballots are mailed beginning on Oct. 3.

VOTE411.org is the League of Women Voters' user-friendly, interactive database that provides each voter the ability to make more informed decisions on Election Day. The online [VOTE411.org](https://www.vote411.org) portal allows voters to simply type in their address to see the candidates who will be listed on their specific ballot as well as participating candidates' bios and answers to questions relevant to their races.



LWVNE volunteers are working to enter all races with candidates for each village, city, county, state and federal elected office into the VOTE411.org system prior to the Nov. 8 general election.

Recently, three LWVNE members have volunteered to join the VOTE411.org action team. **One more volunteer is needed to enter information into the VOTE411.org system to help cover candidates running in races throughout Nebraska.** We will train each new volunteer on how to enter the information.

We have set a Sept. 30 deadline for data entry so that it will be available before voting by mail starts in Nebraska. Our team will need to produce a final update after Sept. 26 when the final notice of election will be published in each county.

Jeanne Miller of the League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha will help us format the VOTE411.org version of the voter guides into PDFs. Our goal is to produce a PDF online version of the VOTE411.org guide for these 10 counties – Adams, Buffalo, Cass, Dodge, Hall, Lancaster, Lincoln, Madison, Sarpy and Scotts Bluff.

The four new VOTE411.org volunteers also will help with formatting the PDF versions for the 10 targeted counties. The goal is to finish the PDF versions – which will be available online only – by Oct. 7, just one week after the Sept. 30 deadline for data entry.

If you would like to be part of the VOTE411.org team, please email us at walta@lwnnebraska.org, claudia@lwnnebraska.org or jeanne@lwnngo.org.

Seward County LWV plans candidates forum, begins monthly newspaper column *By Emily Hemphill, president*

The Seward County League of Women's Voters is planning a fall candidates forum prior to the Nov. 8 general election. The event will be held at 2 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 25, at the Seward Civic Center, 616 Bradford Street.

Candidates running in statewide, regional and local races will be invited to participate in a meet-and-greet with the public as well as a question-and-answer forum. The Seward County League held a similar event in April, prior to the May primary election. That event was spread over two evenings because so many candidates wanted to participate. The League has invited the Greater Federation of Women's Clubs-Seward Woman's Club and the Seward County Chamber and Development Partnership to be partners for the September event, forming additional connections in the community.

The Seward County League has begun a monthly guest newspaper column in the *Seward County Independent* and *Milford Times*, sharing information about voting and election-related topics. The first column in June focused on the special election for Nebraska's First Congressional District, which includes Seward County. The July column focuses on who is eligible to vote and what information is public about voter registrations. The Seward County League is also exploring a partnership with the county election commissioner to help spread accurate information about elections.

In August, the League will donate books related to voting to the Seward Memorial Library. The books will be given in memory of members we have lost in the past couple of years – Priscilla Lawin, Chris Mackie and Louis Reith. The League has made such donations in previous years as well. The coming donation is being made in August to coincide with the League's 102nd anniversary.

Natural Resources provides information on Environmental Voter Project, AltEn, legislative resolution, sustainable energy action plan

By Megan York Lyons and Janelle Stevenson, co-directors of natural resources and energy

Members of the League of Women Voters in Nebraska may be interested in learning more about the Environmental Voter Project, which works to support a healthy environment by turning non-voting environmentalists into consistent voters. It does not endorse candidates or lobby.

If you want to get involved and take action, the EVP [website](#) features volunteer opportunities such as phone banking, sending postcards and canvassing in states where research predicts the biggest impact. According to its website, the EVP – a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization – estimates that more than 8 million environmentalists did not vote in the 2020 presidential election and more than 12 million skipped the 2018 midterms.

On its website, the EVP notes that it is “focused on a simple, high-leverage solution to this problem.” With a six-year track record of success, the EVP is “accurately identifying these non-voting environmentalists and efficiently converting them into a critical mass of consistent voters that will soon be too big for politicians to ignore.”

Check out the EVP website if you are interested in helping change voting behaviors rather than changing minds.

As for state legislation, LR 355 may be a resolution on our radar if the Legislature goes into special session. The resolution calls for a study of existing statutes governing electrical transmission but involving very little public engagement within Nebraska’s public power districts. This [link](#) provides a quick read of the full text of the resolution.

One key point to keep in mind as we monitor LR 355 is that renewable energy resources deliver rural economic opportunity.

Also, please stay tuned for updates on the AltEn environmental crisis in Mead. We have been committed to providing public input, submitting testimony, writing letters, and publishing letters to the editor and op-eds on this issue. There is more work to do, according to updates available [here](#).

The Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy has reissued AltEn’s National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit, which was filed June 29, 2022. This permit provides a method to remove treated wastewater from the AltEn site by allowing the continued land application of treated wastewater. The permit does not allow the discharge of non-processed and processed wastewater from AltEn to waters of the state.

The renewed permit features more stringent requirements for land application and requires monitoring groundwater for 13 pesticides in all monitoring wells. The previous permit monitored for only five pesticides. Outfall 001, a direct discharge of cooling tower wastewater to a tributary of Clear Creek, was removed from the reissued permit.

The LWVUS encourages people to join one of its 750 plus state and local leagues to “support climate efforts” in their community. You can learn more about the League’s statements on the environment [here](#). Virginia Kase-Solomon, CEO of the League of Women Voters, recently said this to members of the U.S. Senate: “On behalf of our 500,000 members and supporters, as well as the millions of Americans who believe climate action is necessary for a secure future, the League of Women Voters strongly urges Congress to take action to address climate change.”

We can act on climate issues most directly affecting our communities, but to enact systemic change, we need to keep up active communication with our elected representatives at all levels.

Locally, we can attend public power district events such as public meetings and workshops. The Sustainable Energy Program's Integrated Resource Plan Report by the Lincoln Electric System will be discussed at its third workshop on Aug. 25 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. This meeting will be available virtually or in-person at the LES Operations Center, 9445 Rokeby Road, Lincoln. The results of LES' resource analysis and a full draft of the IRP report, including LES' proposed action plan for the next five years, as well as information on joining the Aug. 25 workshop virtually is available on this [page](#) of the LES website.

Mental and Behavioral Health Action Team shares information on Lifeline
By Aimée Folker and Palistene Gray-Moore, co-directors of mental and behavioral health

The Mental and Behavioral Health Action Team is excited that the 988 Behavioral Health Lifeline went live on July 16. We would like to share some facts from NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Health) Nebraska concerning the 988 Lifeline:

- In 2020, Congress designated the new 988 dialing code to operate through the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Beginning on July 16, 2022, the 1-800-273-TALK lifeline will transition to 988. Moving to a three-digit dialing code is an opportunity to strengthen the existing National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.
- The Lifeline, 988, is more than just an easy-to-remember number. It is a direct connection to trained, compassionate, accessible care and support for anyone experiencing mental health-related distress or thoughts of suicide.
- Moving to 988 does not mean the 1-800-273-8255 number goes away. After July 16, using either number will get people to the same services. In Nebraska, we will still maintain our 24/7 crisis lines after the transition. If Nebraskans know their local providers and crisis line, it is important to ensure access.
- It's important to understand that when you call 911, you will talk with a person who answers the phone. The caller experience will be different with 988. When dialing 988, the caller will hear some automated prompts before hearing the counselor's voice. The crisis line's trained counselors will seek to de-escalate the caller; assess their safety to determine if Emergency Medical Service, fire and/or police are needed; and connect callers to services.
- The 988 call center will do a follow-up with callers as will the mobile crisis response teams. NAMI wants to ensure that Nebraskans were connected and to problem solve any challenges or answer questions.
- By providing 24/7, free and confidential support to people in suicidal crisis or mental health-related distress, the Lifeline helps thousands of people overcome crisis situations every day. Lifeline crisis counselors are an essential element of the crisis care system to save lives.

To help assist everyone in publicizing 988, a toolkit has been created that can be downloaded [here](#).

If you are interested in joining or have joined the League of Women Voters of Nebraska's Mental and Behavioral Health Action Team, please reach out to Aimée Folker at afolker@lwnnebraska.org or 402-320-1991.

Legislative session results in significant positive initiatives, disappointments

By Rachel M. Gibson, vice president-action

During the 2022 Nebraska legislative session, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska actively followed 55 bills and resolutions. Six action team leaders and members researched, wrote and submitted for the official record 30 position statements and testified in person at 11 hearings.

During our Legislative Day on Feb. 15, members engaged state senators and their staff in person regarding six League priority bills, in support of four and in opposition to two.

Overall, the 107th short legislative session resulted in several significant initiatives and programs, especially from a fiscal perspective. We were heartened to see federal dollars from the American Rescue Plan Act directed to both rural and urban areas of the state, with particular focus on North Omaha.



Members of the LWWNE observe legislative debate from the north balcony.

From a tax and holistic budget perspective, we were less pleased. In particular, we are concerned about the significant income tax cuts passed that will benefit out-of-state corporations and a few wealthy Nebraskans while providing minimal to no relief for middle- and working-class residents.

We were also disappointed to see the Legislature fail to move forward on school funding reform. For the first time in many years, a coalition of school and business interest groups were open to reforming the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act (TEEOSA) formula that funds our schools, but the Legislature took no action. This was a missed opportunity.

On social issues, we were disappointed to see the senators' inability to pass meaningful justice system and prison reform, especially in light of the recent bipartisan, executive branch-supported study and report. While final approval to build a new prison was not forthcoming, money was set aside for the project in the future.

On a positive note, several major bills were stopped, including bills for an abortion ban if *Roe v. Wade* was struck down by the Supreme Court, which it was on June 24; private school scholarships with public money; permitless handgun carry; and statutory restrictions on K-12 curriculum.



Among the most significant bills we supported one improved the election process, and the other enhanced environmental policy. Both passed and were signed by the governor. With the passage of the first, some small improvements were made to the election process and safeguards were added to prevent significant voter suppression tactics. The environmental bill set guidelines for soil and water quality and addressed the environmental disaster at Mead, helping Nebraskans continue to move forward as stewards of land and water.

Read the complete LWWNE review of the 2022 legislative session at this [link](#).

LWVGO educates voters through GOTV efforts, television program

By Linda Duckworth, co-president

It's summer, but our work has not ceased or even taken a small break, thanks to the dedication of so many members and leaders of the League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha.

We participated in Omaha's Earth Day event, marched in the Omaha Juneteenth parade, registered voters at rallies for reproductive rights and engaged in conversations while registering voters at the Heartland Pride Festival.

Upcoming events include the Maha Music Festival on June 29 and 30, during which we will challenge concert-goers with civic trivia questions while also offering voter registration forms and early voting applications. We thank Cat Henning and Tiffany Truong, our co-directors of Get Out the Vote, for organizing the activities for those and other recent events.

We are fortunate to have Jackie Prados working on behalf of LWVGO through the generosity of the Nebraska Civic Engagement Table. As our community organizer, Prados contacts members to request their help with phone banking and canvassing, which will begin in the fall. She has also been tremendously helpful with our GOTV (Get Out the Vote) efforts by serving as a registrar (and all-around cheerleader) and has begun to take the lead in some of our registration efforts.

The LWVGO was represented at the national League convention – held June 23-26 in Denver, Colo. – by the co-presidents (me and Cynde Glismann) and board member Jan McKenzie. Other LWVGO members who attended the national convention were Sapphire Andersen, who represented the Seward County LWV; LWWNE delegate MaryLee Moulton; and observer David Connolly. Rachel M. Gibson, also a delegate for the LWWNE, attended virtually.

We are proud to note that Toni Monette, LWVGO member and immediate past co-president of the LWWNE, was elected secretary of the LWWUS board and that Dr. Deborah Ann Turner, also an LWVGO member, was elected to a second term as LWWUS president. Congratulations to Deborah and Toni!

Our members who attended the national League convention have already begun to use the knowledge gained in such areas as diversity, equity and inclusion; voter engagement; and effective advocacy. And we continue to stay in touch with other League members around the country who have similar concerns and challenges. Please reach out to any of the LWVGO convention delegates to learn more about their experiences.

Our June program for Dine and Discuss provided the fascinating history of local LGBTQIA+ activism with a panel discussion by members of Heartland Pride and the University of Nebraska Omaha Libraries Queer Archives. The archives contain a remarkable collection of decades old newsletters, flyers, posters and more, all of which can be viewed by appointment.

We decided to take a break from our monthly Dine and Discuss program in July. Our August program is not yet set, but we are excited to announce an in-person program on Sept. 19 when we will tour First Star Fiber Recycling.

The Go Vote Omaha! television (and YouTube) show continues to offer important information. Recent topics included a primary turnout update, youth in civic engagement, and money in politics. You can access Go Vote Omaha! programs at this [link](#). Please watch for more Go Vote Omaha! programs in the coming months as our general election candidate forums gear up. We need more volunteers to serve as greeters and timers, so if you are a member of the LWVGO, please consider offering your help with Go Vote Omaha!

LWVNE members report on national convention

Editor's note: This convention wrap-up was provided by Cynde Glismann with input from Sapphire Andersen, Linda Duckworth, Inonge Kasaji, Jan McKenzie, MaryLee Moulton, Terri Rittenburg and Sheri St. Clair.

Fifteen members of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska participated in the national convention of the LWV of the United States, which was held online and in-person in Denver, Colo., from June 23-26.

Attending the convention in-person were Sapphire Andersen, David Connolly, Linda Duckworth, Cynde Glismann, Inonge Kasaji, Jan McKenzie, Toni Monette, MaryLee Moulton, Terri Rittenburg and Sheri St. Clair. Rachel M. Gibson, Linda Rea, Jill McDermott, Caroline Sedlacek and Deb Sharrick were online attendees.

According to McKenzie, director-at-large on the board of the LWV of Greater Omaha, “going through the plenary sessions helped me to better understand the makeup of the League on a national level plus more on the administrative side. It was great to be able to spend time with the members of our Nebraska delegation. I appreciated the time we were able to talk, discuss and connect.”

Glismann – who serves as co-president of the LWV of Greater Omaha – added that “it was good to be with other League members on June 24 when the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision was announced. Dr. Deborah Turner of Omaha – the president of the LWV of the United States – spoke powerfully about the ruling, saying, ‘If you come for one of us, you come for all of us’ and encouraged us to use our anger as fuel for action.”

Items passed at the convention can be found at this [link](#).



LWVNE convention participants (from left), Duckworth, Connolly, Moulton, Rittenburg, St. Clair, Kasaji, McKenzie, Glismann and Andersen.

Convention session summaries by LWVNE delegates:

1. Maximizing Election Outreach Through Partnerships

- The LWV needs to continue to build strong partnerships with issue-driven organizations with which we align.
- This aligns with election outreach as other entities may take the lead to support their demographics to encourage voter registration and participation but we provide the authority to do voter registrations and resources like VOTE411.org etc.
- When those other organizations take the lead, we provide support and endorsement to the issue/cause.

2. How to Build Lasting Relationships with Election Officials to Ensure Voting Rights: Supporting the Process; Asking for Access. (Adam Ambrogi)

- Stats: 75 percent of election officials are more than 50 years old; 80 percent are women; 90 percent are non-Hispanic white.

- Voter Outreach: A significant number of election officials view it as part of their job, but have few resources to do it.
- Given the recent election, election officials are facing the same issues we are. We must work together, especially because they have restrictions that we don't, such as restrictions on talking to the media, inability to ask for things outside their control, resources for education.
- They can send mailers to all voters.
- The session reinforced that the League is a highly respected and credible organization.
- It seems that the League does have good relationships with election officials in Douglas and Lancaster counties.
- The session suggested that it is important to publicly praise election officials when processes go well (e.g., letters to the editor).

3. Immigration Reform and League Advocacy

- The purpose of the resolution adopted at the 2022 national convention to actively advocate and support immigration reform at all levels of the LWVUS is to bring advocacy on this issue to the priority list.
- Problems: No path to citizenship for DACA recipients; lack of comprehensive immigration reform; increased hardships for immigrants because illegal border crossing is now criminal.
- Priorities: Expand pathways to legal status; increase permanent resident and VISA quotas; expand DACA; increase budget and improve backlog processing; address humanitarian needs while providing order at the border.
- The LWV is a trusted voice.
- Immigrants are advantageous to this country.

4. The Power and Strength of Intergenerational Organizing (with panelists from Maine, Ohio and Arizona)

- Here are the stair steps they illustrated with youth engagement, starting with what must not be done and ending with best practices: manipulation of youth; use for decoration; mere tokenism; assigned but informed (getting there); consulted and informed; adult initiated; shared discussion with youth; youth initiated.
- Suggested question to be used in future interactions with young people who want to participate: "What do you want to do and how can I help?" The presentation included many examples of successful youth-led projects, but also said youth like getting to know and learn from longtime activists who can help them find perspective on issues that seem to never go away. One young person said, "We need hope; fear and desperation will only go so far when it comes to the work we're doing, and learning from you gives us hope."
- Ideas: Student clubs/associations at universities. Focus on hot button issues that young people are passionate about like criminal justice, immigration, LGBTQI and abortion.
- Maine: Mail out voter information to students, provide trainings and workshops. Example: A Youth Council, self-governed within the League, runs events and does fundraising and registration.
- Ohio: Youth in Action creates spaces for open conversations about democracy (Kids Voting Ohio).
- A good focus is on technical knowledge: Kids know how to get information out and connect if given the space, time and resources. What they lack is the technical knowledge of the processes, and the League can provide that.
- Advice from panel: Ask young people to walk with us, see our perspective. Be aware of a cost barrier. Don't ask "how come they don't care" – assume they do and ask what is stopping them, e.g., meeting times, event times, place, money. Kids are already doing this work; find them and amplify their voices/work; sponsor/believe in our youth; meet them where they are.
- League resources: Where are we spending our money?

- Civic education: 45-minute curriculum to learn about government/civics, connect with teachers, especially within Title 1 schools.
- How do we get kids to do drives at their schools? They don't want to talk to retirees.
- Possible contact: Kathy Thurber (Utah).

5. News Access and Literacy for Civic Participation

- “News deserts” exist in about every state, especially in rural areas. A news desert is defined by the *Columbia Journalism Review* as “an uncovered geographical area that has few or no news outlets and receives little coverage.”
- Loss of local news.
- Drop in citizen participation; loss of government watchdog; increased exposure to misinformation and disinformation; increase in hyper-partisan discourse, marginalization; loss of a common set of facts; loss of a public good (information); plants the seeds for authoritarianism to take root.
- Ensuring news access and literacy protects democracy.
- Local news, trustworthy and timely information, are critical to democracy and LWV's work. (Due to internet issues, slides were not shown but should be available.) Talked about but couldn't show media bias chart, which shows veracity and political bias in national media.
- Important to build back trust, increase diversity in newsrooms.

6. How Do We Move from “Us vs. Them” to “Me and You”?

- Presentation from perspective of Terry Wu, Ph.D., neuroscientist from Vanderbilt University (Terry@WhyTheBrainFollows.com)
- Humans have innate desires for safety and identity, thus are attracted to others “like them;” but “like” is based very much on life experiences and how one is treated by others.
- Stereotypes are the brain's shortcuts to make fast decisions; mental shortcuts help humans save energy by reducing complex thinking. Difficulty comes in making snap decisions based on one group membership when we belong to many groups.
- When confronted by someone quite different (Extreme Them), the frontal cortex goes dark and amygdala activates, which causes us to dehumanize Them and perhaps have aggression toward Them.
- Belonging is key to diversity efforts because people will tend to conform to the group, even when the group's belief is wrong. Stress exacerbates this vicious cycle. Wu talked about how good leaders reduce stress, which ought to help slow down thinking to reduce snap judgments. He also gave examples of how perceptions of groups change over time (i.e., Alan Turing, John Newton).
- Overcome “US vs. THEM” by creating “ME + YOU.”

7. Task Force Recommendations for League Structure, Prioritizing Flexibility, Achieving Goals

- Six strategic goals: Voter engagement, building campaign capacity, strengthening “Making Democracy Work,” expanding relationships with partners, funding to support activities, and growing advocacy and activism.
- Budget relies on increasing donor revenue about \$7 million/year, largely via major donors.
- Giving through direct marketing and corporate foundations has increased substantially.
- Fundraising hit an all-time high in 2020-21, as with many democracy-oriented organizations, due to what is termed the “Trump Bump.”
- Key takeaways regarding budget: LWV financial health is strong and growing; strategic goals are driving budget; we have reserves to cover deficits (and they are one-time investments); investment focuses on field impact; we have a solid, focused, board-approved proposal.

8. Introduction to the New League Management Site

- Site managed by Allegiance Group. It is the main resource hub for League leaders.
- For access to resources at www.LWV.org, go to footer League Management (no longer login protected and, thus, inconspicuous to nonmember visitors).
- LWVUS conducted research using focus groups among members to determine what to keep and what to change, then used a card-sort exercise among 60 LWV members. They tested navigation and categorization, focusing on findability and searchability.
- In addition to the topics listed on site, there is a content library where members can search to find resources. Also new is “date last updated” on pages so users know how recent information is.
- Future improvements: Refreshing important content, new “League Basics,” additional topic tags and tweaking search functions.
- Helpful hint for printing: Use browser functions to identify best way to print.
- The roster management system is separate from this site: See rostersupport@lwv.org for help.

9. Building Civic Capacity in a Time of Disinformation and Disruption

- When engaging different communities, we can educate while still having fun. Think of more casual or non-formal educational opportunities.
- Gibson asked whether an informal table opportunity at Hardy Coffee (Highlander) would be worth a try. Maybe a happy hour?
- Thin engagement (wide-spread audience, like social media posts) v. thick engagement (one-on-one or small group discussions).

10. Can Our Democracy Survive the Digital Age?

- The presentation featured a 20-minute video discussing the need for a study and the study’s parameters.

11. Fundraising Perspective (Adam Ambrogi)

- Advice: Don’t be shy about asking for money; ask for more than you need; utilize local businesses/organizations; engage funder landscapes; Roland Kennedy Jr. (Carnegie Fund); look to foundations – family, private, community, etc.; request for proposals – innovative funding; storytelling – videos – funders love to hear stories about impact, especially if its quantitative.
- Why do we need fundraising? To look/be professional; generate respect/excitement.
- Planning: Blue sky thinking: What is the gap in resources/pain points for our organization? What do you want to do with the money: trainings, office assistant, resource materials?
- Research: Do your homework. Find out who gives in your community, state, city, county, nationally. Look at other civic organizations and who is funding them.
- Resources: Vote ER, Dr. Turner; Federal Election Commission; Follow the Money (.org); Candid Community Foundation Search; ProPublica; GuideStar.
- Network: Find out about your donors – who are they, what they do, where do they like to go out, where do they shop and/or eat, etc. Use your connections: mutual friends, Linked-In, Facebook, Twitter. Invite foundation staff to speak at events. Ask for introductions.
- Pitching: Best to ask for donations to general operations and unrestricted funds. Keep it simple. Connect on issues, values, etc. Show them why funds are crucial and how the money will be used.
- Report/maintain relationships: Nonprofit Association of the Midwest.
- Tell the story of impact, not just numbers but the qualitative stories from testimonials. How can we build this into our existing events and processes? Offer voter registration at locations of donors; engage funder landscape, family, community, foundations and individuals. We have been around for 102 years; we are not going away. Have a simple budget in your mind for what you are asking for and why those funds would be a game-changer.

12. Youth Engagement (Session 2)

- Financially support youth engagement. One example: hire and pay interns. Ask businesses to "sponsor a fellow."
- Give youth members opportunities to have autonomy and take ownership over projects or initiatives. Don't just have youth show up; engage them in the planning process.

13. Litigation

- The public is really tuned in to U.S. Supreme Court decisions right now. (Think *Dobbs* and the religious freedoms case). Can we organize an event to dive into some of these recent decisions? A Supreme Court recap of sorts?

14. People-Powered Fair Maps & Redistricting Beyond this Cycle

- Not much new information but nice to know Nebraska isn't alone. As with other states, the most likely outcome was to default to the least changed maps. And, everywhere, there was a reluctance to accept public input. It was emphasized that independent commissions are the way to go and the next fair maps push will begin in 2025, well before the next census.

15. Advocating for Ranked Choice Voting

- Some states have RCV for all primaries; some are just starting to implement. It's generally better to start with local elections. This movement has lots of support groups, including in Nebraska.
- Great opportunity for local/municipality races.
- This option keeps a person's ballot in the mix since they are ranking the candidates.
- Need to review data, but it would seem that this could increase voter participation especially in mid-term elections.

16. Achieving Digital Equity

- Definitely a struggle throughout the country both in rural and urban areas.
- COVID certainly brought to light that this is not just a geographic issue but also an income issue.
- While this is an important issue and concern for now and our future, it's not necessarily something for which the LWV must be the driving force. The League can support partner organizations leading this endeavor.

17. Abolishment of the Electoral College by Constitutional Amendment

- The presentation highlighted some "myths" that are used to downplay the change: that California and New York are the most populous states, when it's actually California, Florida and Texas; that it favors Democrats when, in fact, during 2004 election, George W. Bush won the Electoral College but with just over 50 percent of the popular vote. That could have easily turned the other way.

18. Best practices for Digital Media

- Website: Post multiple times weekly if possible. It looks better to search engines.
- Instagram: Use more carousel posts (multiple images into one post) to tell a story.
- Social media: Know audience in platform.

19. Pack Your Welcome Mat hosted by LWVFL (cecile@lwfvl.org)

- Provide "edutainment" (learn while having fun).
- Investigate potential vendors; for example, the Omaha Star will print brochures.
- Plan celebrations/recognitions to open doors.

20. Federal LWVUS Lobby Corp

- Congress used to follow regular order: hearings, passage, reconciliation. Filibuster is now routine.
- It's important to educate young staffers, some of whom don't know the history of the Voting Rights Act or the League.
- Get more speakers on a call with the Nebraska senators/representatives to share personal stories.

21. League Action to Data (Surveys – Wisconsin League)

- Data to action cycle → Data collection → Actionable insights → Decision making.
- Get WI survey: LWVWI has spent a lot of time creating a survey. Nebraska can try to get theirs to send out through the local leagues.
- Create state fact sheet about League activities.
- What do local leagues need to advance DEI?
- Take a survey to collect demographic data; get a snapshot in time of the League.
- Build leagues that reflect the communities they serve.
- Use Google forms and census definitions.

22. Organizing a Movement to Make Democracy Work

- Federal action hamstrung. Work will have to be done in states and local communities.
- Activist training program: Base building oriented around a common identity, shared understanding of common problems, shared understanding of root causes and ways to build toward constructive solutions. Once organized, you can build power.
- The presentation talked about providing courses – Intro to Legislative Process, Meeting with Legislators, Providing Testimony, Understanding the State Budget, Grassroots Organizing, Relational Organizing.

23. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion – Underestimated

- Experience discomfort: 360 degree empathy. Who pays price when you can't get over your uncomfortableness?
- Remember context: People live situational lives.
- Ask who benefits: Does one group benefit at the expense of another?
- Critical Race Theory: College-level critical analysis that questions assertion that racist incidents are aberrations. Instead, it asserts they are manifestations of structural and systemic racism.

24. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Healthcare

- The concurrence adopted at the 2022 national convention was necessary because the last update was in 1993.
- The update to the existing LWV position on healthcare added expanded delivery options (e.g. telemedicine) while providing “standard of care” treatments; separating healthcare from employment status; “safe staffing” for staff and patient safety; patient, family and licensed medical providers.
- Goals: Protect the vulnerable, help marginalized Americans.
- Single payer system is viable.
- Universal healthcare is necessary.
- Respect everyone's healthcare decisions; patients should make their own decisions.
- Separate healthcare from employment.
- LWVUS => same goals as World Health Organization.
- Number one predictor of mortality is one's zip code.

25. VOTE411 Outreach (Luana Chaires/organizing@lwv.org)

- Outreach Circle: Get voter lists from registration, and get the voters to the polls.
- Follow-up is important: Calls, emails, texts.
- Actions: Verify voter registration status; utilize the voter guide; send invitations to candidate forums (and other events); create a polling location finder; send election reminders; publicize the Election Protection Hotline; use a relational organizing program; create a VOTE411 influencers/ambassadors group of about 15 people with board members overseeing; recruit election observers.

Hastings LWV presents programs on variety of topics in 2021-2022

By Linda Rea, president

The League of Women Voters of Hasting presented a variety of programs for its members in 2021-2022. During that timeframe, the Hastings LWV conducted all meetings via Zoom to make it easier for members and speakers to attend.

Topics covered in 2021-2022 were a report on AltEn, the ethanol plant in Mead; the Nebraska State Board of Education and its function, which was presented by a member of that board; the results of redistricting on polling places in the county; and book banning and censorship. We also received periodic reports about the status of COVID-19 in our region.

In February 2021, one of our members presented an in-depth report on the Convention of States proposal as a way to amend the U.S. Constitution. Our state senator, Steve Halloran, had frequently advocated for this proposal. In the 2022 legislative session, he introduced LB 195 in favor of the Convention of States. So it was timely to bring this information before the public because without a clear construct, a constitutional convention would throw the country into turmoil, creating legal and political battles of great consequence to the nation's future. This is a power grab that would put control of our country's future into the hands of politicians and special interests.

All of our speakers are well covered by our local paper, the *Hastings Tribune*. One of our current problems is how to get the information out to those people who do not read the local paper.

In July 2022, members of the Hastings LWV toured Bristol Station, a 65-bed residential re-entry center in Hastings whose goal is to reintegrate state probationers and parolees back into society while simultaneously reducing recidivism. Not many members of our League were familiar with this facility. Again, a reporter from the *Hastings Tribune* attended the tour and wrote an excellent article that was published in the newspaper.

Note these deadlines for Nov. 8 general election

- July 11: First day to accept early voting ballot requests for the general election.
- Oct. 3: First day early voting ballots to be mailed.
- Oct. 21: Last day for voter registration by online and mail.
- Oct. 22: Last day for voter registration by walk-in.
- Oct. 28: Deadline for early voting ballots to be requested to be mailed.
- Nov. 7: Last day for early voting at the county clerk or election offices.
- Nov. 8: 8 pm. deadline to return early voting ballots to election commission offices or drop box locations.
- Nov. 8: Statewide Election Day from 8 a.m.-8 p.m. (Central Time) – in person voting.