



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEBRASKA

NEBRASKA VOTER

Volume 100, Issue 2

Fall 2022

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LWVNE recruiting members to bolster work during legislative session *By MaryLee Moulton, president*

First, a big thanks to all the League of Women Voters members who worked on the printed voter’s guides and online VOTE411.org, especially those who led our efforts – Walta Sue Dodd, Claudia Stevenson and Jeanne Miller. They spent more than 1,200 hours making sure Nebraskans have the information needed to make informed choices in the Nov. 8 general election as well as the May primary. Also, thank you to Rachel Gibson; Sapphire Andersen; the “Go Vote, Omaha!” team; and members of the League of Women Voters of Lincoln-Lancaster County, Hastings and Seward who worked on candidate forums, the 2nd Congressional District debate and educational events on ballot initiatives for the general election. Great job!

Now on to our next big project: We need our LWVNE members to do some recruiting.

As we prepare for a contentious 2023 legislative session at the Nebraska Unicameral, the involvement and action of our membership will be more important than ever. Nebraska state senators have told us that hearing from just five people *in their district* is enough to make them look at their position on an issue. While the League of Women Voters of Nebraska has great representation in our local league areas (Hastings, Greater Omaha, Lincoln-Lancaster and Seward), we need to increase membership in legislative districts outside these areas. The LWVNE needs more members at large.

Join online at lwnvnebraska.org or use this form.

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Email: _____ Phone: _____

League of Women Voters of Nebraska
Member at Large
Annual Individual Member \$40
Annual Household Member \$40
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Additional Contribution \$ _____

If you are using this form, please make your check payable to League of Women Voters of Nebraska and return both to:

LWVNE
P.O. Box 29816
Lincoln, NE 68529

The LWV of Nebraska is a 501(c)3 organization. Membership dues and contributions to the LWV of Nebraska are fully tax deductible.

About the League of Women Voters

Since 1920, members of the League of Women Voters have worked together to encourage informed and active participation in government and increased understanding of major public policy issues. We envision a democracy where every person has the knowledge, the confidence and the desire to exercise their right to vote.

The League of Women Voters does not endorse individual political candidates or political parties. The League does work to influence public policy through education and advocacy.

The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan grassroots political organization that is respected and trusted by those interested in civil discourse, fact-based discussion and inclusive democracy. Membership is inclusive of all interested individuals, demographics and locations.

For further information about the LWVNE visit: www.lwnvnebraska.org



EMPOWERING VOTERS.
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY.



JOIN TODAY!
as a Member at Large

www.lwnvnebraska.org

I ask you to commit to contacting at least three friends and/or relatives who may be interested in joining the LWVNE across the state, especially in the legislative districts (and counties) listed below. New recruiting brochures for members at large can be downloaded from the LWVNE website – in [English](#) and in [Spanish](#) – and sent out electronically or posted on your social media.

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEBRASKA
¿Qué significa hacerse miembro general de LWVNE?
Un miembro general es parte de la Liga a nivel del estado en lugar de uno de nuestros cuatro capítulos locales en Hastings, Lincoln, Omaha o Seward.
En un estado rural como el nuestro, con comunidades pequeñas, un miembro general puede difundir la misión y visión del compromiso no partidista de la Liga de fortalecer la democracia a través del empoderamiento y educando a los votantes mediante actividades de apoyo y abogacía de base en sus comunidades con el apoyo de los recursos de la Liga del estado.
Los miembros general pueden asistir a las reuniones de la junta directiva del estado y participar en todos los programas ofrecidos a través de la misma. Para más información visite: www.lwnvnebraska.org

¡Inscríbete como LWVNE miembro general ahora mismo!



ESCANEE AQUÍ o vaya a LWVNebraska.org

Hacer que la democracia funcione **Making Democracy Work®**

Cómo puede involucrarse en LWVNE

Derecho al voto Trabajar para expandir el derecho al voto a través de votación temprana, registro de votantes en línea y oposición a la supresión de votantes.	Educación Estudiar los asuntos que afectan a nuestro estado y educar a los votantes y funcionarios electos.
Promover el voto (GOTV) Registrar votantes y educar a los jóvenes en toda Nebraska.	Abogacía y apoyo legislativo Antes de cada sesión legislativa, la junta directiva estatal de la LWVNE revisa los proyectos de ley para identificar áreas de interés a los miembros de la Liga y la legislación que afectaría los asuntos del programa de la liga. La LWV no toma una posición sobre un tema sin antes estudiarlo cuidadosamente. La Liga tiene un programa de posiciones en sus prioridades legislativas a nivel local, estatal y nacional.
Financiamiento de campañas/ Dinero en la política Apoyar las propuestas de reforma del financiamiento de campañas.	LWVNE tiene 8 Equipos de Acción que participan con la Legislatura Unicameral de Nebraska sobre los temas de Educación, Gobierno, Salud, Salud Mental y de la Conducta, Recursos Naturales y Energía, Redistribución de Distritos Electorales, Políticas Sociales y Servicio de Votantes.

¡Únete a un equipo de acción!

Siga a @LWVNE en:

While the LWFNE is happy to welcome new members into our local Leagues, I am including a list of the legislative districts where we have no or limited membership. Here is a [link](#) to the legislative district map that will help you visualize the districts where we need to recruit. Feel free to reach out to me at marylee@lwfnebraska.org if you have any questions or recruiting ideas. We look forward to an exciting 2023 legislative session. Thanks for your help.

We have no members in the following legislative districts (LDs):

LD1 (Otoe, Johnson, Nemaha, Pawnee and Richardson counties)
LD19 (Madison and southern Pierce counties)
LD22 (Platte County)
LD34 (Lance, Merrick, Hamilton and northeastern Hall counties, except Grand Island)
LD38 (Clay, Red Willow, Furnas, Harlan, Franklin, Webster, Nuckolls and south central Phelps counties)
LD40 (Holt, Knox, Antelope, Knox, Cedar, northern Pierce and northern Dixon counties)
LD44 (Chase, Hayes, Frontier, Gosper, Dawson, Dundy, Hitchcock and southwest Perkins counties)
LD48 (Scotts Bluff, Banner and Kimball counties)
LD49 (Sarpy County, including portions of Papillion and LaVista)

The following districts have only one LWF member (or two if noted):

LD3 (Sarpy County, including Bellevue and a portion of Papillion)
LD15 (Dodge County and western part of Douglas County, including Fremont and Valley)
LD16 (Burt, Cumming, Washington and eastern Stanton counties)
LD 17 (Wayne, Dakota and Thurston counties)
LD47 (Sioux, Box Butte, Morrill, Cheyenne, Garden, Deuel, Grant, Arthur and Keith counties)
LD32 (two members) (Fillmore, Saline, Thayer and Jefferson counties)
LD35 (two members) (City of Grand Island)
LD37 (Cities of Kearney, Gibbon and Shelton and parts of Buffalo County)
LD41 (two members) (Wheeler, Valley, Greeley, Sherman, Howard and Buffalo – except Kearney – and most of Hall County)

LWFNE updates voter's guides for November 8 general election

By Dianne Bystrom, director of communications

VOTE411.org – the League of Women Voters of Nebraska's nonpartisan, online voter's guide – has been updated with information on candidates running for office at the city, county, district, state and federal levels in the Nov. 8 general election in all 93 Nebraska counties.

“With early mail-in voting underway in Nebraska, our volunteers worked hard to make sure that we had information available to voters in a timely manner,” said Walta Dodd of Omaha, who serves as co-director of Voter Services for the LWFNE with Claudia Stevenson of Ogallala.

“In the spirit of empowering voters and defending democracy, the Voter Services team keenly realizes that representation matters, and an informed electorate is paramount when exercising one's right to vote,” Dodd said.

Stevenson said the LWFNE Voter Services team of volunteers has spent more than 1,200 hours since the May primary election updating the online VOTE411.org platform and producing printable voting guides for 10 targeted counties for the general election. Voter's guides for Adams, Buffalo, Cass, Dodge, Hall, Lancaster, Lincoln, Madison, Sarpy and Scotts Bluff counties are available as PDFs from links on the homepage of the LWFNE [website](#).

In addition, the League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha has produced printed voter's guides for Douglas County – in English and Spanish versions – that can be downloaded from the [LWVNE](#) and [LWVGO](#) websites. In Douglas County, 11,500 copies of the printed voter's guide are available in a combined English/Spanish edition at the Douglas County Election Office; main Omaha Public Library; Heartland Workers Center; and the LWVGO office, located in 401J (fourth floor) of the AIM Institute, 1905 Harney St. Another 18,500 copies of the combined English/Spanish printed voter's guide have been distributed throughout Omaha as part of *The Reader/El Perico* monthly magazine.

Approximately 4,129 candidates are running for office in Nebraska in some 2,199 general election races at the local, county, district, state and federal levels. Of those, 625 had email addresses and were invited to participate in VOTE411.org. As of Oct. 15, responses have been received from 202 candidates, a 32.3% response rate, and entered into the VOTE411.org platform. The names of all candidates, including those who did not respond, appear in the VOTE411.org platform.

The Douglas County ballot will offer voters 148 candidates in 64 different races from governor to village trustee, said Jeanne Miller of Omaha, who serves as editor of the LWVGO Voter's Guide. "Thanks to a concerted effort by LWVGO volunteers, every candidate with contact information – 145 of 148 – was reached by mail and followed up repeatedly with an email, phone call, text and/or Facebook message. The overall response rate to date is 54.7%, with most candidates responding in time to be included in the printed voter's guides available throughout the county."

Of the races entered into the VOTE411.org platform for the 2022 general election, at least one candidate has responded to the invitation to participate in 126 of the races. Those races with at least one candidate participating with background information and answers to questions posed by the LWVNE include Congressional Districts 1, 2 and 3; statewide races for governor, secretary of state, attorney general, treasurer and auditor; and 19 of the 25 district races for the Nebraska state Legislature.

Through [VOTE411.org](#), voters can input their address to receive information on the candidates and initiatives that will appear on their ballots for the Nov. 8 general election. "The League of Women Voters aims to provide all voters with easily accessible, unbiased candidate information so they are able to make empowering decisions for themselves and their communities," said Cynde Glismann, co-president of the LWVGO.



Candidates can still provide their background information and answer the questions posed by the LWVNE for the online VOTE411.org voter's guide by emailing VoterServices@lwnnebraska.org. Candidates who have not yet participated can request to do so up until the Nov. 8 general election.

In addition to races for elected office that will appear on general election ballots in all 93 counties, the LWVNE's Voter Services has added judicial offices for retention; candidates running by petition; and local and county ballot measures on sales taxes, use taxes, tax levies, economic development programs and abortion.

Currently in Nebraska, candidates are not asked to list their email address on the form they must file to run for elected office. Without having email addresses for most candidates, LWVNE volunteers must spend hours mailing postcards, making phone calls and doing research online to find email addresses to invite candidates to participate in VOTE411.org. In addition to not providing an email address, some candidates do not provide a phone number and/or have no online presence.

"Every candidate that we cannot reach means that an opportunity is lost for that candidate to present their personal views to voters without the filter of a national party," Miller said. "I have heard over and over from

voters that if they see that a candidate has not responded, they skip over that candidate and vote for a candidate who provided information.”

In the 2022 session, the Nebraska Unicameral passed legislation – supported by the LWFVNE – to include an optional field for an email address on the candidate filing form for elections after 2022. “We hope candidates will provide their email addresses so they may be more readily contacted to provide information on their platforms to voters in election years to come,” Dodd said.

“Despite the challenges posed in contacting candidates running for office in 2022, the LWFVNE remains dedicated to providing nonpartisan information for voters,” Stevenson said. “Through VOTE411.org, voters are more informed before reaching the voting booth or filling out their ballot at home. We appreciate the candidates who took the time to participate in our 2022 nonpartisan voter’s guide.”

LWFVNE members advocate positions on ballot initiatives

By Dianne Bystrom, director of communications

Members of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska are involved in advocacy efforts on two initiatives that will be on Nebraska’s general election ballot on Nov. 8.

Members collected signatures in support of the petition for the minimum wage statute, known as Initiative Measure 433, which would raise the state’s minimum wage from \$9 to \$15 per hour by 2026.

League members testified in opposition to the voter ID amendment, known as Initiative Measure 432, which would require Nebraska residents to present a valid photographic ID to vote in the state.

Hearings on the ballot initiatives were held in each of the state’s three congressional districts – in Lincoln on Oct. 18, Omaha on Oct. 11 and North Platte on Oct. 6. “The purpose of the meetings is to educate citizens and the media on the initiatives prior to the elections,” said Robert Evnen, Nebraska Secretary of State.

MaryLee Moulton, president of the LWFVNE, and Linda Duckworth, co-president of the League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha, testified at the public hearing in Omaha on Oct. 11.

“For 102 years, the League of Women Voters has worked to expand the vote and educate voters. Initiative 432 is a voter restriction amendment,” Moulton said. “We believe that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed.”

In her testimony, Moulton also emphasized that “voter ID is an answer in search of a problem” as 25 million ballots have been cast in Nebraska in the past 50 years with zero prosecutions for voter impersonation fraud.

Moulton gave examples of how passage of Initiative 432 would impact voters in Nebraska. “It would affect highly mobile young people who move often, necessitating changing IDs; low-income residents who have to take time off work to get an ID; differently abled persons who have physical barriers to getting an ID; former members of our armed forces struggling to integrate back into society; and many members of our minority and elderly communities, who do not drive and do not have photo ID.”





Terri Rittenburg of the LWV of Lincoln-Lancaster County and Vic Klafter of Nebraska Appleseed stand with boxes of signed petitions delivered to the Secretary of State's office supporting a ballot initiative to increase the state's minimum wage.

Civic Nebraska is leading the coalition of organizations opposed to the voter ID constitutional amendment. You can read more about how requiring an ID is voter suppression at this [link](#).

The LWVNE supports an increase in the minimum wage. “We believe social policy should promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families and that the most effective social programs are those designed to prevent or reduce poverty,” Moulton said. “Increasing the minimum wage will help workers achieve earnings that are adequate to provide for individual and family needs.”

You can learn more about how raising the minimum wage will help Nebraskans at this [link](#).

Terri Rittenburg, a member of the LWV of Lincoln-Lancaster County and treasurer of the LWVNE, was among those collecting signatures in support of the petition to place increasing the minimum wage on the Nov. 8 ballot.

“Nebraska Appleseed has been the organization coordinating the coalition's efforts,” she said. “I have

been attending the coalition's monthly Zoom meetings. Several members of the LWV of Lincoln-Lancaster County, a coalition member, helped gather signatures for the petition drive.”

Rittenburg said the coalition had contacted minimum wage earners to share their stories at the Oct. 18 hearing in Lincoln.

Local, state Leagues sponsor candidate forums, conversations

By Dianne Bystrom, director of communications

This fall, all four local Leagues of Women Voters in Nebraska as well as the state League sponsored forums, debates and conversations featuring candidates running for local, state and federal office in the Nov. 8 general election.

The format – and description – of the events differed according to the level of candidate participation. A forum or debate format was used when more than one candidate for a particular office participated in a moderated question-and-answer session. A conversation format featured candidates for one level of office – for example, the state Legislature – who may or may not be running in the same district against each other. Candidate conversations were facilitated by a League member.

The League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha co-sponsored a debate on Oct. 13 between 2nd Congressional District candidates U.S. Rep. Don Bacon, the incumbent, and Nebraska state Sen. Tony Vargas. The debate, held at the Omaha Press Club, was co-sponsored by television station WOWT of Omaha. The debate was covered by several print and broadcast media outlets, including this [story](#) by Nebraska Public Media.

The LWVGO also sponsored two conversations featuring candidates running for the Nebraska Unicameral in legislative districts located in the Greater Omaha area. All candidates running for the state Legislature in Greater Omaha area districts were invited to participate.

“Candidates were provided two date options and were contacted several times,” said Rachel M. Gibson, LWVNE action vice president who facilitated the Greater Omaha area candidate conversations. “We engaged all candidates equally. Some did not respond, some could not attend due to their schedules and some declined.”

Candidates participating in the Greater Omaha legislative district conversation on Aug. 18 were R. Brad von Gillern, LD4; Megan Hunt, LD8; Robin Richards, LD12; Michael Young, LD18; and Stu Dornan, LD20. Candidates participating on Sept. 1 were Cindy Maxwell-Ostdiek, LD4; Machaela Cavanaugh, LD6; Merv Riepe, LD12; and John A. Fredrickson LD20.

The two candidate conversations were broadcast on LWVGO’s locally produced television program – “Go Vote, Omaha!” – which airs on Tuesday nights at 7:30 p.m. on Cox channel 22 and 1022HD. The shows were recorded and are available on the LWVGO’s You Tube channel at these links for the [Aug. 18](#) and [Sept. 1](#) candidate conversations.

The LWVNE sponsored two virtual conversations featuring candidates running in contested races in state legislative districts outside of Omaha and Lincoln. Again, all candidates in such races were contacted and given two date options. Gibson hosted the conversations on Zoom with Dianne Bystrom, director of communications for the LWVNE, serving as facilitator.

Candidates for the state Legislature who participated in the virtual conversations – which can be viewed from the LWVNE’s YouTube channel – on [Sept. 14](#) were Sarah Slattery, LD2; Barry DeKay, LD40; and Brian Hardin, LD48. Participants on [Sept. 15](#) were Loren Lipincott, LD 34; and Don Lease, LD 48.



On Sept. 25, the Seward County LWV held its second Candidates Night of 2022. Sixteen candidates and two candidate representatives participated in the forum:

- Gubernatorial candidates Carol Blood and Scott Zimmerman;
- State Board of Education candidates Helen Raikes and Kirk Penner;
- Legislative District 24 candidates Jana Hughes and Patrick Hotovy;
- Seward mayoral candidates Josh Eickmeier and Sid Kamprath;
- Seward Public Schools Board of Education candidates Matthew Hastings and Jill Hochstein;
- Seward City Council candidates Kristi Ideus, Dana Nottingham, Tatum Tonniges and Ann Underwood and representatives for Rich Wergin and Megan Kahler;
- Ronda Rich for the Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District; and
- Raegan Hain for the Seward County Commission District 3.

“Candidates had the opportunity to introduce themselves and meet with the public about issues ranging from state taxes and medical marijuana to local streets and school bus routes,” said Emily Hemphill, president of the LWV of Seward County and the reporter who covered the event for the Seward County Independent.

“Question-and-answer forums were held for candidates running for Legislative District 24, Seward mayor, Seward City Council and the Seward Public Schools Board of Education,” she said.

The LWV of Lincoln-Lancaster County was among the nonprofit organizations co-sponsoring a debate on Oct. 6 between Lancaster County attorney candidates Pat Condon, the incumbent, and state Sen. Adam Morfeld. Coverage of the debate is available [here](#).

The Hastings LWV organized a series of forums with candidates for the Hastings City Council on Sept. 22; Adams County Register of Deeds and State Board of Education District 6 on Sept. 23; and the Hastings Board of Education on Oct. 3. The Hastings LWV also organized forums on the constitutional amendment to require a voter ID on Oct. 7 and Nebraska Initiative 433, which calls for raising the state’s minimum wage, on Oct. 14.

Hastings forum co-chair Judy Reimer said the League of Women Voters has been helping educate people for more than 100 years in its belief that a democratic government depends on informed and active participation of citizens. Our foremothers worked hard and long to get the right to vote, she said, “and I don’t want anybody to think it’s something we can just take for granted.”

Candidates participating in the [City Council](#) forum in Hastings include Ginny Skutnik and Steven Wayne Huntley in Ward 1, Trent Meyer in Ward 2, Marc Rowan and Chuck Rosenberg in Ward 3, and Roger Harper and Matt Fong in Ward 4. Candidates participating in the [Adams County Register of Deeds](#) forum were Rachel Ormsby and Byron Morrow.

The forum for the [State Board of Education District 6](#) candidates included Danielle Helzer and Sherry Jones. Seven of the eight candidates vying for four seats on the [Hastings Board of Education](#) participated in the forum: Jodi Graves, Becky Sullivan, Stacie Widhelm, Shay Burk, Brady Rhodes, Andrew McCarty and Mark Montague. David Hughes sent a representative, who gave opening and closing remarks.

The Hastings candidate forums are available for viewing on the city’s public access YouTube channel at the highlighted links.

Note November 8 general election deadlines

- 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 p.m. deadline to return early voting ballots to election commission offices or drop box locations.
- Nov. 8: Statewide Election Day from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (Central Time) – in person voting.

November virtual information sessions to focus on legislative advocacy for 2023

By Rachel M. Gibson, vice president-action

It’s the season of yard signs, political ads, mailers and door knocking. Voting on or before the Nov. 8 general election is a top priority. But once the ballots are counted and the winners are announced, a different kind of work begins.

The 108th session of the Nebraska Legislature will begin in January, and it already looks to be a busy one. Based on campaign topics, comments from current state senators and recently released party legislative plans,

major topics this session will include abortion and reproductive justice, gun regulation, school choice, voter ID, and wholesale change of the Nebraska Unicameral to a more partisan and less representative body.

Want to take action but don't know where to start? Attend one of our two virtual information sessions on Sunday, Nov. 13, at 2 p.m. or Tuesday, Nov. 15, at 7 p.m. to learn more about how you can get involved. Register [here](#).

What exactly will this work look like? Continuing the advocacy that the League of Women Voters of Nebraska has engaged in for decades, directors, volunteers and League members at large will actively engage with legislators this spring through researching and writing position letters on one of six different action teams, contacting senators throughout the session in response to action alerts, and attending the LWFNE Legislative Day at the State Capitol. Those interested can participate in all or just one of these efforts. No matter your interest or schedule, there's a way for you to take an active role in the legislative process.

On a final note of gratitude, deepest thanks for the long and productive leadership of Sherry Miller as LWFNE action vice president from April 2019 through April 2022. She will take a much-deserved rest and guide me in this role for the upcoming legislative session. Thank you, Sherry, for all you've done for the League and the state of Nebraska.

While the exact legislative players won't be known until after the Nov. 8 general election, the significance of the work to be done is clear. No matter your interest, availability or background, there is a place for you in advocating for Nebraskans. If you are interested in getting involved, sign up for one of the upcoming information sessions or email rachel@lwfnebraska.org.

Member spotlight: Judy Reimer works to make a positive difference

By Dianne Bystrom, director of communications

Judy Reimer decided to join the League of Women Voters 32 years ago. She still thinks it was a good idea.

A retired registered nurse with a master's degree in education, Reimer said she became involved in the LWV when members of the Nebraska Nurses Association's Social and Legislative Committee were encouraged to "branch out to other bodies, board and community organizations to broaden our political knowledge and influence. I chose the local LWV – with never a regret," she said.

Reimer has served as president, vice president and board member of the Hastings LWV. She is currently the local League's membership chair and co-chair of the Voter Forum Committee.



In Hastings, Reimer has been active in voter registration efforts and has served as co-chair of the Bylaws Committee and Nominations Committee. Her LWV portfolio has included social issues and government. Reimer assisted in getting mental health added to the League of Women Voters of Nebraska's state program. At the state League level, she has served as liaison to the LWFNE board as the Hastings LWV president and was the LWFNE's membership vice president from 2001 until 2004.

Reimer is married, the mother of three sons and three daughters by marriage. She has 12 grandchildren. Her career as a registered nurse has included hospital nursing, continuing education and administrative responsibilities. "After retirement, I began a parish nurse program at a local church and provided care for our parishioners for 13 years," she said.

The president of the Nebraska Nurses Association from 1990-1994, Reimer has held various offices at the local and state level. She served on the Governor's Blue Ribbon Coalition for Health Care Reform, which led to an appointment as a charter board member for the newly formed South Heartland Public Health Department in 2001. Reimer served on that board for 17 years. She served on the statewide Mammography Screening Committee from 1991 to 1994 and as a board member and president for the Bridge Therapeutic Community for Chemically Impaired Women from 1986 to 1992.

Reimer is active in Church Women United – holding local, state and national offices – and is a longtime member of the YWCA. She is an active member of the United Methodist Church.

“My life has been and continues to be enriched in so many ways by the opportunities to work with women and men within various organizations to make and influence decisions and take action to make a positive difference in the lives of individuals and in our communities,” Reimer said.

“Joining the League in 1990 and participating in League activities since that time was a very wise decision.”

Schools 101 presentation educates Nebraskans about K-12 education

By Rachel M. Gibson, vice president-action

As the midterm elections draw closer, candidates, parties, political action committees and social media accounts have an awful lot to say about kindergarten through 12th grade education in Nebraska. But how much of it is accurate? And why is it important?

A little over a year ago, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska's Education Policy Action Team had the same questions about how Nebraska public schools are financed, organized and governed. So they came up with a public awareness campaign – Schools 101 – to address the questions.

Over the past year, what started as a small idea has turned into a full initiative. After rigorous research and conversations with educators and advocates, the Education Policy Action Team developed a portfolio of resources including web, print and video materials. With this foundation set, the team shifted its focus to community outreach.

The team's first priority was to connect directly with Nebraskans through informational sessions for community groups. The team has presented to such organizations as the Latino Center of the Midlands, a local chapter of the American Association of University Women and the Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative, among others.

The second focus was to engage with local media. In addition to contributing to a handful of local articles about K-12 education in Nebraska, team members Sarah Smolen and Rachel Gibson were featured on an episode of the Omaha public radio series, [Riverside Chats](#).

Looking ahead, the team hopes to continue to expand its reach throughout the state via both in-person and virtual presentations as well as online resources. Even after the Nov. 8 general election, a well-informed public is imperative to ensuring educational opportunities and access for all Nebraska children. Throughout the next year the LWVNE Education Policy Action Team will keep working to educate parents, grandparents, family members and community members across the state about the realities and importance of K-12 education.

If you are interested in learning more about the program or would like to [request a presentation](#), visit <https://lwnnebraska.org/schools-101/> or email Rachel Gibson at rachel@lwnnebraska.org

Urban Soil Health Expo set for Dec. 3 in Omaha

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

You are invited to attend the Omaha Urban Soil Health Expo on Saturday, Dec. 3, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Swanson Conference Center, 5370 N 30th St., in the Institute for the Culinary Arts at Metropolitan Community College. The conference center is located on the second floor.

The event is free and open to the public.

Soil health is now a League of Women Voters of Nebraska program subsection under natural resources and energy.

This event will connect urban growers with resources supporting the adoption of management practices that sustain and regenerate soil health; raise awareness of the four principles of soil health and create a space for urban growers to share knowledge; and engage past, present and future growers of all ages in soil conservation and science.

LWVNE advocacy, education activities include events, projects, outreach

By Rachel M. Gibson, vice president-action

Since August, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska has been involved in the following advocacy events, projects, outreach, meetings, conferences and trainings.

Events and collaborations:

- Med/Peds Trainees Advocacy, Oct. 17, 2022.
- Two candidate conversations with the League of Women Voters of Omaha in person, recorded and aired by KPAO:

Go Vote, Omaha – Aug. 18		Go Vote, Omaha – Sept. 1	
R. Brad von Gillern	District 04	Cindy Maxwell-Ostdiek	District 04
Megan Hunt	District 08	Machaela Cavanaugh	District 06
Robin Richards	District 12	Merv Riepe	District 12
Michael Young	District 18	John A. Fredrickson	District 20
Stu Dornan	District 20		

- Two virtual events with non-metro area candidates via Zoom:

Out-state Virtual – Sept. 14		Out-state Virtual – Sept. 15	
Sarah Slattery	District 02	Loren Lippincott	District 34
Barry DeKay	District 40	Don Lease	District 48
Brian Hardin	District 48		

- Represent Us, Aug. 6, 2022; Sociology 309 class, Creighton University, April 27, 2022.

Projects:

- Legislative session prep – One-on-one meetings with directors and co-directors; researching legislative priorities of senators, parties and groups; exploring collaboration with Common Cause to lead a pro-democracy legislative planning group; and new action team member outreach.
- Medical association outreach – After the *Dobbs v Jackson Women’s Health Organization* ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court, I individually reached out to the leadership of the local and state medical associations to communicate the LWVNE’s support of the patient-doctor relationship, providing a recap of what happened last legislative session regarding abortion legislation and asking them to encourage their members to reach out to legislators.

Associations contacted were: American Academy of Pediatrics, NE chapter; American College of Cardiology, NE chapter; American College of Physicians, NE chapter; American College of Surgeons; Health Care Association of Nebraska; Metro Omaha Medical Society; National Association of Health Services Executives Heartland; National Association of Hispanic Nurses; National Association of Social Workers, NE chapter; National Hispanic Medical Association, NE chapter; Nebraska Academy of Family Physicians; Nebraska Academy of Physician Assistants; Nebraska Association of Nurse Anesthetists; Nebraska Chapter National Hemophilia Foundation; Nebraska Chiropractic Physicians Association; Nebraska Emergency Medical Services Association; Nebraska Hospital Association; Nebraska League for Nursing; Nebraska Medical Association; Nebraska Neurological Society; Nebraska Nurses Association; Nebraska Organization of Nurse Leaders; Nebraska Pharmacists Association; Nebraska Psychological Association; Nebraska Radiological Society; Nebraska Rural Health Association; Nebraska Society of Medical Assistants; Nebraska State Student Nurse Association; Nebraska Urban Indian Health Coalition; and Public Health Association of Nebraska.

One-on-one meetings: Sen. Jen Day, July 31, 2022; Sen. Megan Hunt’s legislative aide, July 6, 2022; Sen. Adam Morfeld, June 13, 2022.

Coalition work: Nebraska Civic Engagement /Community Supports Network/Nonprofit Association of the Midlands, Sept. 20, 2022; Reproductive Justice Coalition, July 15, 2022; CSN Legislative Wrap-up, April 26, 2022.

Conferences/trainings: Open Sky Fall Symposium, Sept. 22, 2022; Platte Institute’s Doing Great Things Legislative Summit, Sept. 8, 2022; Center for Public Affairs Research, University of Nebraska Omaha, Data and Research Series, Aug. 24 and Sept. 28, 2022; Voter Access Network Database Training, Aug. 31, 2022; Women’s Fund of Omaha’s Policy Intensive, July 22, 2022.

LWVNE communicates through social media, MailChimp, news releases

By Dianne Bystrom, director of communications

LWVNE website – Recent additions to the website’s homepage include links to the printable voter’s guides for 11 targeted counties with information on candidates running for city, county, district, state and federal office in the Nov. 8 general election; links to YouTube videos on conversations with candidates running for the state Legislature; stories on ballot initiatives (voter ID and minimum wage); and a radio podcast interview on the LWVNE’s Schools 101 presentation.

Social media – As of Oct. 16, 2022, the LWVNE has 855 followers on Facebook, 1,888 followers on Twitter and 364 followers on Instagram. Recent posts have focused on promoting VOTE411.org; links to videos of candidate conversations, forums and debates; political news; and events such as Books After Dark and a Lunch and Learn featuring former Secretary of State John Gale.

MailChimp – The MailChimp audience for LWVNE correspondence was recently updated with names of new members of the League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha provided by Candide Santiago. As of Oct. 16, 2022, 505 people subscribe to the LWVNE’s MailChimp emails. Since the communications report for the Aug.



20, 2022, LWVNE board meeting, MailChimps were sent on Aug. 31, “Book Series Discussion on Native and Indigenous Peoples Begins Sept. 6,” (55.1% open rate); Sept. 26, “Books After Dark Schedule Revised,” (54.1%); Sept. 29, “LWV-LL Lunch and Learn Focuses on Voting Rights,” (54.9%); and Oct. 5, “VOTE411.org Updated for 2022 General Election,” (58.9%). From Jan. 1 through Oct. 5, 2022, 22 MailChimps have been sent.

Media interviews and news releases: LWVNE Education Policy Action Team members Rachel Gibson and Sarah Smolen were interviewed about the Schools 101 program for the Riverside Chats podcast by KIOS Omaha on Sept. 23. The podcast is available at this [link](#). A news release was sent on Oct. 10 to 20 reporters and editors at newspapers, TV stations and radio stations across the state highlighting the updating of the online VOTE411.org platform; printable voter’s guides for 10 targeted counties; and distribution in October of 30,000 copies of an English/Spanish voter’s guide for Douglas County. The news release has been published to date in the Omaha Star, North Platte Telegraph and Hastings Tribune. Two Omaha television stations – [WOWT/Channel 6](#) and [KETV/Channel 7](#) – recently aired stories about the work of the League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha to educate and inform voters.

Education Policy Action Team outlines activities, projects

By Rachel M. Gibson, vice president-action

Members of the Education Policy Action Team: Lolly Koneky, Marilyn Pike, Sarah Smolen and Taylor Sterba.

Meetings and trainings completed to date: State Sen. Jen Day, July 31, 2022; Daniel Russel (Stand for Schools), June 9, 2022; Annette Dubas (executive director, Nebraska Association of Behavioral Health Organizations), May 27, 2022; and Educational Status of Latinos in Nebraska Summit, April 30, 2022.

Projects:

- Legislation planning – Identify topic areas and assign to committee member.
- Schools 101 – Website and information handout created; recorded full presentation and cut into smaller topic-based videos.
- Presentations planned and completed – LWV of Lincoln and Lancaster County Lunch and Learn, Nov. 3, 2022; American Association of University Women, Oct. 8, 2022; Blue Dots, Sept. 2, 2022; Latino Center of the Midlands, July 6, 2022; and Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative, June 27, 2022.
- Media – Riverside Chats on KIOS (Gibson and Smolen), aired Sept. 26, 2022.

Keeping an eye on: Midterm elections, legislative priorities of groups and parties and increased activity of the Nebraska Federation for Children (school choice political action committee).

Report: LWVNE account balances, expenses and audit recommendations

By Terri Rittenburg, treasurer

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska's current checking account balance is \$52,118.22, with \$29,817.81 designated general fund and \$22,300.41 designated education fund money. As of Sept. 30, 2022, the LWVNE's endowment fund balance was \$53,297.79.

In addition to VOTE411.org and election-related activities, other recent expenses have been associated with the move out of the LWVNE's Lincoln office. We are waiting on just one refund on our landline account to wrap up the final moving-related income and expenses.

The LWVNE received its audit report on the April 2021-March 2022 fiscal year, with some suggestions to tighten up procedures. Going forward, I will ask each of you to submit a voucher along with receipts for every reimbursement request. Please contact me if you need an updated form.

If you have questions at any time – about reimbursement or other aspects of our finances – please contact me at 307-343-2540 or treasurer@lwnnebraska.org. Thank you for your cooperation. It's a pleasure working with all of you.

Mental health Lifeline shows increase in calls, texts and chats

By Aimée Folker and Palistene Gray Moore, co-directors of mental and behavioral health

Members of the Mental and Behavioral Health Action Team – MABHAT – are gearing up for the legislative session by following several interim studies and their hearings, some of which have already occurred, including: LR366, LR368, LR384, LR387, LR393, LR397, LR399, LR409, LR414 and LR420. The topics of these legislative resolutions/interim studies is available [here](#).

In our last report, we discussed the Mental Health Lifeline's 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline's new three-digit phone number coming online. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Lifeline saw a 45% increase in overall volume of calls, texts and chats in August 2022 – the first full month that 988 was operational — compared to August 2021.

The number of calls answered increased from 141,400 to 216,000 – more than 50% – according to HHS officials. And texts answered went up by a whopping 1,000% – from 3,400 in August 2021 to 39,900 in August 2022. The number of chats on the Lifeline's website that were answered saw a 195% increase.

According to an NPR [article](#), “While the 988 Lifeline is accessible nationally, with a national network of call centers, it essentially functions as a state-run system. And states vary vastly in how much they have invested in the former 10-digit Lifeline and associated services. According to a recent [analysis by the National Institute of Mental Illness](#), few states have passed legislation to supplement the recent federal funds into 988.” That analysis indicates Nebraska is one of the states that has not considered any such legislation, with none is pending.

MABHAT urges all members to reach out to their senators and make sure 988 is fully funded, that crisis response teams are active, and that a 988 advisory council which guarantees inclusion of people with lived experience/peers is created.

Members of MABHAT continue to serve on state and local behavioral health and disability committees; advocate as peers and allies; and do vital work to improve the lives of those with brain disorder, neurodiversity and struggles with mental health concerns. If you'd like to join MABHAT, contact Aimée Folker at afolker@lwnnebraska.org or 402-320-1991.

LWVGO members work to educate, engage voters

By Linda Duckworth and Cynde Glismann, co-presidents

We are excited to announce an upcoming forum for the candidates running for governor of Nebraska. Two of the three candidates the League invited – Democrat Carol Blood and Libertarian Scott Zimmerman – will join us in our studio on Oct. 20. The forum will be aired on KPAO Cox channel 22 at 7:30 p.m. on Oct. 25. It will also be available on our YouTube channel.

Our member-volunteers of the League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha have inspired and made us proud throughout recent months. They have worked to spread the voting message at area events and participated in numerous voter registration efforts at colleges, churches, farmers' markets, partner events and more.

As League members, we also increase our own political and policy understanding by attending events organized by our community partners or the LWVGO itself. Often our own leaders are the speakers. For example, co-president Cynde Glismann has contributed as a panelist for Courageous Conversations, a series of forums co-sponsored by LWVGO, NAACP, Civic Nebraska and the University of Nebraska Omaha that has received well-deserved praise.

In addition, LWVGO members Jenny Synowiecki (left) and Cat Henning attended the NAACP Freedom Fund Banquet on Oct. 15. Keynote speaker Quinton Lucas, the mayor of Kansas City, Missouri, discussed the importance of policies that benefit everyone, Synowiecki said. “And, given disproportionate [demographic] statistics, he focuses on policies that specifically center on Black communities,” she said, such as making neighborhoods safer, creating more affordable and accessible housing and public transportation, and improving basic services. Lucas is nationally known for his Zero Fare Transit initiative, making all public transportation in Kansas City free.



Our volunteers have worked tirelessly to bring vital information to voters through in-person forums and our locally produced television show, “Go Vote, Omaha!” Thanks to our archived [YouTube channel](#), viewers are able to learn a lot about the candidates they'll find on their ballots.

The debate between 2nd Congressional District candidates Don Bacon and Tony Vargas – co-sponsored by the LWVGO and WOWT – received considerable media attention, including coverage by the [Omaha World-Herald](#) and [Nebraska Examiner](#).

Two Omaha television stations – [WOWT/Channel 6](#) and [KETV/Channel 7](#) – recently aired stories about the work of the LWVGO to educate and inform citizens through its voter’s guide and get out the vote efforts.

Upcoming 2022-2023 LWFNE Meetings

Dec. 3 – 9 a.m. Zoom board meeting

Jan. 7 – Zoom board meeting

Jan. 21 – Legislative priority bill meeting on Zoom

Legislative Day Training – (date TBD) on Zoom

Legislative Day – (date TBD) in person

March 11 – board meeting (location TBD)

Annual Meeting – (date TBD) Lincoln