



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEBRASKA

## NEBRASKA VOTER

Volume 100, Issue 3

Winter 2023

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### **Our members show their hearts in February Registration open for 2023 Legislative Day**

*By MaryLee Moulton, president*

I've been heartened to hear how many members of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska are interested in being part of the legislative process in 2023. We now have 45 members on our six [action teams](#) – which monitor legislation and act on issues on the state level – and 74 individuals currently on our [action alert list](#) to receive updates on developments in the Nebraska Unicameral Legislature. (You can sign up for an action team and/or the action alert list at the links provided.)

One of the best ways to make sure your voice is heard is to join us at our annual LWWNE Legislative Day on Tuesday, Feb. 14, at the State Capitol in Lincoln. Prior to Legislative Day, the LWWNE will host a training session via Zoom on Saturday, Feb. 11, from 9 to 10:30 a.m.

**Please register for the LWWNE's Legislative Day by Friday, Feb. 10, at this [link](#).** After you register, you will receive a Zoom link for the Feb. 11 training session.



On Tuesday, Feb. 14, we will meet at 9 a.m. in the cafeteria at the State Capitol where we will hand out materials for you to give to the senators and provide directions to their offices.

Over the course of the morning, we will deliver letters to senators' offices and watch debate from the north balcony of the Norris Legislative Chamber where our group will be introduced by a senator on the floor.

Depending on what is happening at the Legislature on Feb. 14, we may have the option to stay for afternoon committee hearings. Participants also can gather together for lunch during the day.

Many contentious issues will be debated in this legislative session, and we hope for an energized crowd at the 2023 Legislative Day. Whether you are a regular participant in our annual Legislative Day or if 2023 is your first time, it is a great experience to go to the Capitol together and make our voices heard.

I hope to see you in Lincoln on Feb. 14 – which is also the 103<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the founding of the League of Women Voters.

## **LWVNE action teams identify legislation to follow in 2023**

*By Rachel Gibson, vice president-action*

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska’s action teams have been busy sorting through the more than 800 pieces of legislation introduced during the early weeks of the 108<sup>th</sup> Nebraska Legislature long session to determine which ones the League will take a position on this spring..

About 30 directors and members of six different action teams met virtually on Saturday, Jan. 21, to identify key areas of legislation to follow as well as several notable bills to support or oppose. The League may also take a position on additional bills through letters and/or testimony during the 2023 legislative session.

### **Education Action Team**

- Focus areas: school funding, parental involvement and access, state level jurisdiction and authority.
- Notable bills: LB99 (M. Cavanaugh), adopt the Hunger-Free Schools Act, support; LB753 (Linehan), Adopt the Opportunity Scholarship Act, oppose; LB374 (Murman), adopt the Parents’ Bill of Rights and Academic Transparency Act, oppose.

### **Government Action Team**

- Focus areas: voter ID, restoration of voting rights, political accountability and disclosure.
- Notable bills: LB20 (Wayne), restoration of voting rights upon completion of a felony sentence, support, (see photo on right); LB228/230 (Erdman), require qualifying ID for voter registration and voting, oppose; LB535 (Slama); require valid photo ID and change provisions relating to voting, oppose; LB675 (Day), change provisions relating to elections and ID documents, support.

### **Health Care Action Team**

- Focus areas: reproductive care including abortion, pharmaceutical access.
- Notable bills: LB626 (Albrecht), adopt the Nebraska Heartbeat Act, oppose; LB333 (Conrad), require coverage for family planning services under Medical Assistance Act, support.

### **Mental and Behavioral Health Action Team**

- Focus areas: expanding access and increasing funding.
- Notable bills: LB381 (M. Cavanaugh), adopt the Mental Health Wellness Act, support; LB601 (Dungan), state intent regarding increases to reimbursement rates, support.



LWVNE president MaryLee Moulton and Joanna Lindberg, government co-director, (second and third from left) were among coalition members attending a news conference supporting LB20 on Jan. 20. League members Jill McDermott, director of social policy, and Maggie Ballard also attended.

## Natural Resources and Energy Action Team

- Focus areas: water quality and public power.
- Notable bills: LB534 (Slama), appropriate federal funds for community water systems, support; LB120 (Bostelman), eliminate obsolete provisions relating to Nebraska Power Review Board study, oppose. (See report from the natural resources and energy co-directors in this issue for additional details about the legislation they are following.)

## Social Policy Action Team

- Focus areas: prison reform, juvenile justice and services, housing inventory and tenant protections, gun deregulation, LGBTQ+ rights and protections, childcare.
- Notable bills: LB169 (Hunt), prohibit discrimination based upon sexual orientation and gender identity, support; LB249 (Briese), change provisions to the Rural Workforce Housing Investment Act, support; LB77 (Brewer), provide for carrying of concealed handguns without a permit, oppose; LB574 (Kauth), adopt the Let Them Grow Act, oppose; and LB60 (J. Cavanaugh), change provisions relating to room confinement of juveniles, support.

## Feb. 2 program focuses on fighting misinformation

*By Tari Hendrickson, chair, Lunch and Learn Committee, LWV of Lincoln/Lancaster County*

Why do people reject science and believe online conspiracy theories? How are people radicalized online and go on to commit acts of violence? Why is our society so politically polarized?

These questions will be addressed by author Andy Norman and former State Sen. Adam Morfeld on Thursday, Feb. 2, as part of the Lunch and Learn series sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Lincoln/Lancaster County. The noon to 1 p.m. event is free and open to the public throughout Nebraska via Zoom. Membership in the League is not required.



Norman is the award-winning author of “Mental Immunity: Infectious Ideas, Mind-Parasites” and “The Search for a Better Way to Think.” His work has appeared in scholarly journals, and he has been a guest on NPR and BBC talk shows. Norman directs the Humanism Initiative at Carnegie Mellon University and is the founder of CIRCE, the Cognitive Immunology Research Collaborative.



Morfeld, founder and executive director of Civic Nebraska, served in the Nebraska Legislature from 2014 to 2022. In the November 2022 election, he narrowly lost a contentious race for Lancaster County attorney. Since then, he has launched the Nebraska Legal Action Fund in an effort to fight political extremism and misinformation.

To receive the Zoom link to attend the program, register [here](#). If you need assistance joining the Zoom meeting, email [secretary@lincolnleague.org](mailto:secretary@lincolnleague.org).

For more than 100 years, the League of Women Voters – a nonpartisan political organization – has encouraged informed and active participation in government, worked to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influenced public policy through education and advocacy. Membership is open to all.

More information about the LWV-LL is available [here](#).

Andy Norman (top) and Adam Morfeld will speak at the Feb. 2 Lunch and Learn.

## **LWVNE board adopts land acknowledgement policy**

*By Dianne Bystrom, director of communications*

At its Jan. 21 meeting, the board of directors of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska adopted a land acknowledgement policy to recognize that its statewide locations cover the homelands of Indigenous peoples.

The policy was proposed by the LWVNE's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee, which is chaired by board member Aimée Folker. She conducted research about the practices of organizations, including Leagues in other states, in drafting the proposed policy.

"In my research, I found that a well-written land acknowledgement includes three parts: the acknowledgement (paragraph one), the call forward (paragraphs two and three) and finally the honor to the past (paragraph four)," Folker said. "By adopting this language, the board can choose to use it as we see reasonable – for instance, by posting it on the LWVNE website and reading it at our annual meeting."

The policy adopted by the LWVNE board reads:

"The League of Women Voters of Nebraska acknowledges that its statewide locations currently cover the homelands of Indigenous peoples. 27 tribes have a connection to the land in what is currently known as Nebraska. We respect and are grateful for the stewardship and conservation of the land that these tribes have managed since time immemorial and which continues today.

"We recognize that it is our responsibility as an organization to establish and maintain relationships with citizens of these tribes and members of other tribes currently residing in Nebraska.

"We recognize the responsibility we have to continue to listen to, engage with and support tribal governments, Indigenous peoples and their inherent sovereignty.

"Please take a moment to consider the legacies of more than 400 years of displacement, violence, settlement and survival that bring us here today. This acknowledgement and the centering of Indigenous peoples is a start as we move forward together."

The following federally recognized tribal nations have connections to the land of the state of Nebraska as the original inhabitants of this land and/or through the practice of forced removal:

Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Flandreau Santee Sioux, Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma, Kickapoo Tribe in Kansas, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Mandan Hidatsa and Arikara Nation, Northern Arapaho Tribe, Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Oglala Sioux Tribe, Omaha Tribe of Nebraska and Iowa, Otoe Missouria Tribe of Indians, Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma, Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma, Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska, Sac and Fox Nation of Oklahoma, Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa, Santee Sioux Nation, Spirit Lake Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska and Yankton Sioux Tribe.



## **Generosity of members powers League of Women Voters of Nebraska**

*By Terri Rittenburg, Treasurer*

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska grew its fundraising results in 2022, mostly through member donations. The total raised was \$11,689.50, with \$3,450 designated for education fund purposes, \$300 for the endowment, \$10 to the Sandra K. Powell Memorial Fund and \$7,929.50 unrestricted for general fund use.

Giving this year represents a 36% increase over last year. This amazing result provides resources for the many activities our state League conducts, including pay for our talented office administrator, Candide Villard; engagement of intern Taylor Sterba, who worked with Rachel Gibson, vice president-action, over the summer; support for our website and e-mail communications; Zoom platform for online meetings; an array of voter services activities; support to send delegates to the LWV national convention; and action projects in several areas.

Thank you to our generous donors:

**General Fund:** Terri Alberhasky, Clyde Anderson, Janet Barrell Davis, Deborah Brisk, Jayne Brown, Patsy Burnett, Dianne and Keith Bystrom, James Cook, Claudia and Anthony Deeb, Linda Duckworth, Janice Elks, Lynne Elwood, Mary Fieber, Lilia Franciscony, Joyce Grothen, Cynthia Hadsell, Judith Hartlieb, Dorris Heaston, Karren Kerr, Elayne Landwehr, Jill McDermott, Jan McKenzie, MaryLee Moulton, Patricia Neid, Judy Reimer, Terri Rittenburg, Debra Romberger, Lynn Roper, Caroline Sedlacek, Patricia Smith, Sanford and Andrew Smith, Donna and Russell Sommerfeld, Jean Wampler, Peggy Weber, two anonymous donors and the Network for Good.

**Education Fund:** Marilyn and G.E. Abariotes, Suzanne Brady, Elisa and Drew Davies, Eunice Goldgrabe, Janece Mollhoff, the Musco D'Amico Charitable Fund and the Omaha Community Foundation.

**Endowment Fund:** Elisa Booth.

**Sandra K. Powell Memorial Fund:** Terri Rittenburg.

Although we do not have complete records of in-kind contributions made last year, most LWWNE delegates to the national League convention paid at least a portion of their costs. Some asked for no reimbursement for any of their expenses. Thank you to the group that represented us in Denver. We also thank Caroline Sedlacek, who donated funds earmarked toward sending delegates to the national convention.

If you donated in 2022 and your name does not appear here, please contact LWWNE treasurer Terri Rittenburg by email at [treasurer@lwwnebraska.org](mailto:treasurer@lwwnebraska.org) or by phone at 307-343-2540 so we can correct any errors.

To donate to the LWWNE, click [here](#) or send a check (made out to LWV Nebraska) to the League of Women Voters of Nebraska, P.O. Box 29816, Lincoln, NE 68529.

## **LWWNE seeks nominations for 2023-2025 officers, directors**

*By Marilyn Bechtel, chair, Nominating Committee*

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska's Nominating Committee is beginning its work to recruit officers and directors for the 2023-2025 term (after April 29, 2023, annual meeting through 2025 annual meeting.)

We need your help to maintain our strong leadership team. We are seeking nominations for president, secretary and directors in the areas of education, health and social policy.

You can help the committee by nominating another member, or yourself, by completing this online [form](#) by Tuesday, Feb. 28.

Current officers and directors report that having co-leaders is very advantageous, so please do not hesitate to nominate multiple members for positions.

If you have questions or need additional information, contact [mbechtel@lwnnebraska.org](mailto:mbechtel@lwnnebraska.org).

### **Sign up for LWNNE action alerts to stay updated on 2023 legislative session**

*By Rachel Gibson, vice president-action*

Abortion, guns, education funding, voter ID, taxes, LGBTQ+ rights and classroom curriculum are among the topics that will be debated by the Nebraska Legislature this session.

Our state legislators need to hear what you think about policies that will have significant impacts on daily life in our state.

We encourage those who wish to be part of the solution to sign up for action alerts from the League of Women Voters of Nebraska. Throughout the 2023 legislative session this spring, the LWNNE will send email alerts when important legislation is being debated or voted on with details on how you can make your voice heard from emailing senators to protests at the Capitol and everything in between.

To date, 74 people have signed up for the LWNNE's action alerts. You can sign up for action alerts [here](#) or email Rachel Gibson at [rachel@lwnnebraska.org](mailto:rachel@lwnnebraska.org) with any questions or ideas.

Thank you for using your voice to help make Nebraska a better place for all of us

### **Legislature adopts permanent rules changes, addresses voter ID**

*By Joanna Lindberg, government co-director*

The 2023 session at the Nebraska Legislature began with the consideration and adoption of rules changes as well as a flurry of bills to implement the voter ID constitutional amendment approved by voters in November.

Of the record 58 proposed rules changes heard in the Jan. 12 public hearing, only seven – mostly technical in nature – were brought forward for debate by the Rules Committee. Committee chair Sen. Steve Erdman of Bayard said the package consisted of the proposals that the committee believed could be “most readily accepted” by lawmakers. This approach would allow the session to move forward rather than being bogged down in an extended rules debate, he said. In 2017, it took lawmakers two months to pass the permanent rules.

After considering several changes, lawmakers adopted their permanent rules on Jan. 19. The rules of the Legislature govern the legislative process and are adopted at the beginning of each biennium.

#### **Approved rules:**

- Sen. Danielle Conrad's request that the Rules Committee provide public notice of proposed rules changes at least three calendar days prior to conducting a public hearing passed unanimously, 47-0.
- A change that impacts the speaking order after a motion to kill a bill (known as IPP, indefinitely postpone) is made but prior to general file debate. The change will allow the introducer of the bill to speak first during debate on their proposal. After that, opponents can still try to kill a bill. Sen. Machaela Cavanaugh opposed the change, but it passed, 46-2.

- Sen. Mike McDonnell’s request to allow active or reserve members of the military to lead the Legislature in the daily Pledge of Allegiance at the invitation of individual senators passed 44-0.
- Technical changes were passed as follows: allowing the clerk of Legislature to note that charts or graphs are included in legislation rather than print them in the daily journal; clarifying the dates when priority bills can be designated; adding a link to an appendix outlining the committee process to the online version of the rule book; and eliminating language prohibiting “the use of any mobile, portable, or wireless communication device that emits an audible signal” from being used in the legislative chamber while business is being conducted.

**Defeated rules:**

- Sen. M. Cavanaugh’s request to prohibit open carry of firearms at the Capitol was not approved. Currently, concealed carry is prohibited in the Capitol, but open carry is allowed. Sen. John Lowe opposed the change to prohibit open carry, calling it an “overstep” that threatens Second Amendment rights. He said, “anything from a comb to a pen could be used as a deadly weapon.” The rule was defeated 7-32. M. Cavanaugh has introduced LB749 this year that would prohibit open carry in the Capitol.

**Among the proposed rules not advanced for debate on the floor:**

- A proposal to require public votes for election of the speaker and chairs of the Legislature’s 14 standing committees. Erdman has said he expects to bring up the secret ballot issue later in the session. If so, the proposal would have a new public hearing and go through committee deliberations again.
- A proposal to close committee executive sessions to members of the media, who have been able to cover the discussions of senators behind closed doors for nearly 90 years.



League members (from left) Sheri St. Clair, co-director of government; Rachel Gibson, vice president-action; and Taylor Sterba, education action team, attended the Rules Committee hearing on Jan. 12. St. Clair and Gibson testified on behalf of the LWVNE. Sterba testified as an individual.

In addition to the rules changes, a flurry of bills have been introduced to address the constitutional amendment approved in November 2022 requiring voters to present a photo identification at the polls. It is the Legislature’s responsibility to determine what procedures will be needed to implement this change.

The following are the voter ID bills to watch. Go to [nebraskalegislature.gov](http://nebraskalegislature.gov) and enter the bill number in the upper right corner of the page.

- Sen. Erdman is sponsoring LB228 to declare Election Day a holiday and LB230 to require in-person voting with no voting by mail.
- Sen. Julie Slama is sponsoring LB535, which is a strict interpretation of voter ID.
- Sen. Jen Day is sponsoring LB675, which is a comprehensive voter ID bill that defines qualifying identification to include driver’s licenses, learner’s permits, state ID cards, school-issued student IDs, military ID cards, tribal ID cards and other lawful forms of identification commonly used in other states that require voters to present identification.

The voter ID bills are among the 843 bills and constitutional amendments that have been introduced since the Nebraska Legislature convened on Jan. 4, 2023. Nearly 80 of these bills have been assigned to the Legislature’s Government and Military Affairs Committee. The LWVNE’s Government/Voter Services Action Team has identified 45 bills that warrant further review.

## LWVNE ending fiscal year in good financial standing

*By Terri Rittenburg, treasurer*

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska is in good financial standing as it nears the conclusion of its fiscal year, which ends March 31, 2023.

The move out of our office space in Lincoln has saved costs on rent and insurance. Our annual income also benefited from an award from the national League for our work on Fair Maps (thanks to Sheri St. Clair, Rachel Gibson, Carol Dennison and all who helped with the project); a grant from the Nebraska Civic Engagement Table (thanks to Walta Dodd, Claudia Stevenson and all involved with VOTE411.org and state voter services efforts); our generous donors (see article on fundraising in this issue); and those who contribute to the LWVNE by purchasing through Amazon Smile. However, we just learned that Amazon Smile will be discontinuing this program on Feb. 20, 2023.

Consistent with most investments at this time, our endowment account has lost some value, but the picture improved somewhat over the fall months.

Current balances in our accounts are:

### LWV of Nebraska Statement of Net Worth

**Jan. 17, 2023**

Checking account total		\$55,132.38
Designated General Fund	\$31,240.83	
Designated Education Fund	\$23,891.55	
Endowment		\$57,460.96
<b>Total Assets</b>		<b>\$112,593.34</b>

The Budget and Finance Committee has been working on next fiscal year's budget proposal. We are implementing more integration of general fund and education fund money, which is all in one bank account but has been separated into two budgets in the past. I believe that presenting all budget lines in one document will be clearer for everyone.

If you have questions, please email me at [treasurer@lwnvnebraska.org](mailto:treasurer@lwnvnebraska.org).

### **Member spotlight: League informs Hemphill's work as journalist**

*By Dianne Bystrom, director of communications*

Emily Hemphill's work as a reporter helped lead her to joining the League of Women Voters.

It was 2018, and Hemphill had been named manager of the newspaper group that includes the Seward County Independent.

With a bachelor's degree in journalism and public relations from Concordia University in Seward, Hemphill said she "realized I didn't know enough about how elections worked to be able to report on them at the level I would have liked." The League offered a way to learn.

"Tobin and Ellen Beck – both longtime, successful journalists – are members of the Seward League and have been mentors to me throughout college and my career," Hemphill said. "I thought being around them and others who had a better understanding of the political process would help me learn."

Now president of the League of Women Voters of Seward County, Hemphill said she has “gained a lot of insight into elections and surrounding issues because of my League membership” over the past four years. That insight “has helped me in my career and enabled me to share more factual information with voters,” she said.

As a member of her local League, Hemphill has helped organize several candidates night forums to educate voters about the candidates and issues on local election ballots. “I’ve also helped orchestrate programs and activities on redistricting, downtown revitalization and housing as well as the League’s 100th anniversary, which was celebrated a year later in 2021 due to COVID,” she said. “I was elected president of the Seward League in 2021, and we hosted the state annual meeting in 2022.”

Since graduating from Concordia University in 2014, Hemphill has served as managing editor of the Seward County Independent and its four sister papers, the Crete News, the Milford Times, the Friend Sentinel and the Wilber Republican.

Hemphill also spent a year as the assistant director of communications and publications for the Nebraska State Education Association, where she was in charge of content and design of the NSEA Voice magazine, which is distributed to 28,000 educator members across Nebraska each month. In this role, she covered the Legislature and reported on education news through the pandemic.



Currently, Hemphill is reporting on government matters for the Seward County Independent and Milford Times.

Aside from work, Hemphill serves as secretary of the board of directors of the Bright Beginnings Child Development Center in Seward. She also is in her 18<sup>th</sup> year as a trustee on the Seward County 4-H Foundation, having served since she was just 13 years old. “I volunteer to teach youth classes on aerospace and other science-related fields,” she said.

Involvement in 4-H is a longtime passion for Hemphill. “I’ve been passionate about 4-H since I first joined at age 8,” she said. In addition to her current involvement, she served as a 4-H assistant for Nebraska Extension in Seward County, teaching through the 4-H Youth Development Program.

Hemphill is married to Layne Dahlquist, a mechanical engineer who designs aerial components for fire trucks for departments across the country. They have two children, Isla, 7, and Izyk, 2 months.

## **Natural Resources and Energy sets legislative priorities for 2023**

*By Janelle Stevenson and Megan Lyons, co-directors*

In the 2023 legislative session, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska’s Natural Resources and Energy Action Team will focus on bills dealing with water quality and public power.

At the Jan. 21 legislative priorities meeting held via Zoom by the LWVNE, the action team identified the following bills as its priorities to support or oppose:

### **Water Quality (drinking water, nitrates)**

- LB506 (Sen. Eliot Bostar, Appropriations Committee) – Support state intent to appropriate federal funds to the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Environment and Energy.
- LB534 (Sen. Julie Slama, Appropriations Committee) – Support appropriating federal funds to the Department of Environment and Energy for community water systems.

- LB766 (Sen. Barry DeKay, Appropriations Committee) – Support appropriating federal funds to the Department of Environment and Energy for reverse osmosis systems.

### **Public Power (top bills identified by Nebraska State Energy Table)**

- LB255 (Sen. Tom Brewer, Natural Resources Committee) – Oppose changing eminent domain and renewable energy generation provisions relating to certain power suppliers.
- LB120 (Sen. Bruce Bostelman, Natural Resources Committee) – Oppose eliminating obsolete provisions relating to a Nebraska Power Review Board study.
- LB49 (Sen. George Dungan, Judiciary Committee) – Support changing provisions relating to solar energy and wind energy, declare certain instruments void and unenforceable, and provide for a civil cause of action.

To learn more about natural resources and energy issues, we recommend the following:

- **Opinion column outlining concerns about study on power districts conducted without public hearing** – An op-ed written by Sherry Miller – a longtime member of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska who recently served as the state board’s vice president-action – was published Dec. 22, 2022, in the Lincoln Journal Star. Signing on to the letter were Al Davis of the Sierra Club of Nebraska and Jennifer Glazer of the Citizens Climate Lobby. We hope you read the column, which follows this report.
- **Federal Inflation Reduction Act** – To address climate change, the United States is making a historic investment in farmers, ranchers and rural communities to help them cut emissions, prepare for climate impacts that are already here and create good jobs along the way. The Inflation Reduction Act will direct about \$20 billion toward agricultural conservation programs and nearly \$14 billion toward clean energy for the rural United States. Through rebates and tax credits, people can save money by making home weatherization and efficiency upgrades, installing new electric appliances, and purchasing an electric vehicle or rooftop solar system. Go to [White House Clean Energy](#) to learn more.
- **Widespread nitrate contaminants in Nebraska water** – Nitrates leach into water sources (rivers then groundwater) from fertilizer overuse in Nebraska. Many wells that have been tested contain a higher nitrate level than the Environmental Protection Agency’s drinking water standard. The Flatwater Free Press, a non-profit newsroom, has conducted extensive research on this issue in [“Our Dirty Water: Nebraska’s nitrate problem is growing worse. It’s likely harming our kids.”](#)
- **Omaha Public Power District** – OPPD is using a \$3.46 million grant from the Nebraska Environmental Trust to build a solar power plant at a former landfill site. The first step in the development process is a feasibility study, which is slated to begin late this summer.
- **Perkins County Canal (aka South Platte Compact)** – The Legislature passed LB1015 during its 2022 session in conjunction with funding that authorizes the Department of Natural Resources to continue to advance preliminary planning and design for infrastructure necessary to fully protect Nebraska’s non-irrigation season flows (Oct. 15-April 1) authorized under the terms of the South Platte Compact.
- **Individual industrial storm water permit to AltEn** – On Jan. 1, 2023, the Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy issued an individual industrial storm water permit to AltEn. The permit can be seen on the agency’s public records portal in a document titled “NPDES Industrial,” filed Dec. 29, 2022. This permit outlines requirements necessary to reduce pollutants in storm water runoff from the AltEn site near Mead to an undesignated tributary of Clear Creek. It requires AltEn to maintain a stormwater pollution prevention plan, conduct biweekly inspections of its storm water outfalls, conduct monthly sampling of its outfalls, submit quarterly discharge monitoring reports and conduct site inspections.

## **Guest column by LWFNE member voices concerns about power districts study conducted without public hearing**

A guest column written by Sherry Miller – a longtime member of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska who recently served as the state board’s vice president-action – was published Dec. 22, 2022, in the *Lincoln Journal Star*. Also signing the column were Al Davis of the Sierra Club of Nebraska and Jennifer Glazer of the Citizens Climate Lobby.

The column concerns Legislative Resolution 355, an interim study to examine Nebraska statutes related to power districts and corporations. The resolution was introduced by State Sen. Bruce Bostelman in the 2022 legislative session. He is the sponsor of current legislation related to this topic – [LB120](#) – which would eliminate obsolete provisions relating to a Nebraska Power Review Board study. The LWFNE is opposed to this bill.

*The text of the column, titled “Local View: Nebraskans need to know,” follows:*

State Sen. Bruce Bostelman, chair of the Natural Resources Committee, introduced Legislative Resolution 355 on March 23. The purpose of this interim study was to examine and review Chapter 70 of the Nebraska statutes relating to power districts and corporations.

Specifically, the review would cover statutes relating to electric generation and transmission, governing the approval and decommissioning of electric generation facilities, governing the Nebraska Power Review Board and adherence by public power suppliers to the laws and policies of the state.

The scope of this resolution was extremely broad with few details in its wording to inform the public about its intent. The legislative session concluded seven months ago, and there has still been no posted information about a public hearing on the resolution and, again, few leads about the direction the committee may have taken.

Public power affects every household in the state of Nebraska. Therefore, every ratepayer has an interest in this interim study and what Sen. Bostelman intended when he introduced LR355.

Unfortunately, the Natural Resources Committee seems to have proposed an interim study to be conducted within the confines of the committee only, but any bill has ramifications for the entire state. This is poor public policy and not the way the Legislature has operated in the past.

Public power has served the people of Nebraska well for many years. We have the benefit of electric service that is low-cost, reliable and the envy of other states.

Publicly elected boards that govern our power districts have chosen to establish goals to move from reliance on fossil fuels to renewable sources. It is important to support them against legislative efforts to halt this progress.

Furthermore, concerned Nebraskans opposed LB1046, legislation that was introduced by Bostelman to drastically change the makeup of boards of directors of public power districts. LB1046 would reduce the people’s power to elect their representative directors and hand it to the governor to appoint directors. Fortunately, LB1046 did not advance after it was heard.

Apparently, the Natural Resources Committee has chosen to conduct the LR355 study without a public hearing as the year comes to a close. Obsolete language is often repealed in other legislative resolutions without fanfare or controversy, a necessary tool to adapt language to current situations.

However, if significant changes have been proposed, these must be revealed in a timely manner so that the "second house" – the public which so many senators cite regularly – can also be informed. Please don't keep Nebraskans in the dark.

## **Social policy action team identifies six focus areas for 2023**

*By Jill McDermott, director*

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska's Social Policy Action Team has decided to focus on six key areas of legislation in 2023.

More than 200 bills pertaining to social policy have been introduced in the 2023 legislative session.

The action team's six members are working hard to isolate and prioritize the bills that fall into the following categories.

1. Prison reform – transitional housing, probation/parole, work release and clean record.
2. Juvenile justice and services – transition foster care, solitary confinement, and pre-trial and risk assessment.
3. Housing – expansion of affordable housing and tenant/landlord relations.
4. Gun safety – “constitutional carry” and local authority restrictions.
5. LGBTQ+ – nondiscrimination and marriage.
6. Childcare.

## **State board approves changes to L WVNE bylaws, general policy**

*By Dianne Bystrom, director of communications*

At state board of director meetings in fall 2022, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska approved changes to its bylaws and general policy.

Changes to the bylaws were approved at the board's Oct. 15 meeting. The recommended changes were either housekeeping or administrative and do not require that they be sent to local League presidents and members-at-large for comments.

One recommended administrative change to the bylaws was extending the deadline for the president to report actions taken at the annual meeting from 30 to 60 days, which was viewed as a reasonable amount of time to notify members either through the Nebraska Voter or MailChimp email.

The current L WVNE bylaws can be viewed [here](#).

At its Dec. 3 meeting, the L WVNE board approved changes to its general policy. Most of the revisions were grammatical, including for consistency throughout the document. Others updated terminology and practices. For example, off-board members are now called coordinators, and groups working with board directors are

known as action teams. Also, instead of documents being filed in an office, they are saved and shared on a Google drive.

The board decided to keep its excused/unexcused absences policy for attendance at state board meetings, but asked the office administrator to remind board members when the meeting agenda is sent that they are expected to respond if they cannot attend.

The current L WVNE general policy can be viewed [here](#).

Caroline Sedlacek, L WVNE parliamentarian, chaired both committees charged with reviewing the bylaws and general policy. Other members of the Bylaws Committee are Dianne Bystrom, Aimée Folker, MaryLee Moulton and Candide Villard Santiago. Other members of the 2022 General Policy Review Committee are Bystrom, Moulton, Joanna Lindberg and Sheri St. Clair.

## **Seward LWV to work with Concordia University students on research project**

*By Emily Hemphill, president*

Notable local women will be the subject of a research project conducted by Concordia University students with the Seward County League of Women Voters.

Professor Kathy Miller once again approached the League about working with her sociology students, who participate in a 35-hour service project each semester. The League will work with two students who will research notable women who were active in the League or who were involved in politics in early Seward County. This project could result in an interesting presentation for the state League's annual meeting in April.

The Seward County LWV kicked off 2023 with its Jan. 12 holiday gathering, which had been postponed from December because of weather.

At the February meeting, participants plan to discuss member recruitment ideas and a possible presentation about two Seward High School graduates – Jana Hughes and Danielle Conrad – who are now serving in the state Legislature.

The nominating committee reported it will begin its search to fill the president and secretary positions, which are open in April.

An invitation was extended to members to participate in the state League's priority bill meeting on Jan. 21.

### **Upcoming 2023 L WVNE Meetings**

Legislative Day Training – Saturday, Feb. 11, 9-10:30 a.m. via Zoom  
Legislative Day – Tuesday, Feb. 14, in person beginning at 9 a.m. at the State Capitol  
L WVNE Board Meeting – Saturday, March 11, 9-11 a.m. via Zoom  
L WVNE Annual Meeting – Saturday, April 29, in person in Lincoln