



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NEBRASKA

NEBRASKA VOTER

Volume 101, Issue 1

Summer 2023

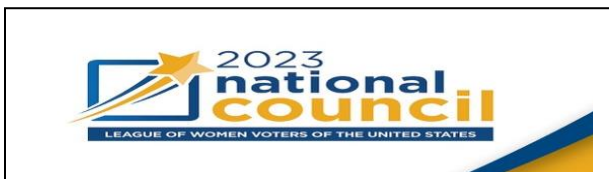
Dianne Bystrom, editor
Charlyne Berens, associate editor
League of Women Voters of Nebraska
P.O. Box 29816
Lincoln, NE 68529
Telephone and text: 402-982-1572
<https://lwnnebraska.org/>

LWVUS National Council focuses on two initiatives

By MaryLee Moulton, co-president

As co-president of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska, I attended the National Council sponsored by the League of Women Voters of the United States in Las Vegas, Nev., from June 23 to 25. Also attending National Council were Candide Santiago, LWVNE office administrator, and Toni Monette, a former member of the LWVNE board who now serves as secretary of the national board.

It is always wonderful to be with LWV members from all over the country. National Council is a great opportunity to share our struggles (mostly legislative this past year), triumphs and ideas as well as connect with the national leadership team. Two major initiatives were discussed at National Council: a “moonshot” goal to abolish the Electoral College and the national League’s Transformation Roadmap and Structure Transformation Plan.



Abolishing the Electoral College falls under the LWVUS campaign for [Making Democracy Work®](#) to improve elections. As an organization whose mission is to empower voters and defend democracy, the League has long supported the direct election of the president.

Abolishing the Electoral College is a long-term goal that may take more than 50 years – thus the term “moonshot.” According to [Darrell West](#), senior fellow at the Brookings Institute, the Electoral College could be abolished by constitutional amendment, which would require approval by two-thirds of the members of the U.S. House and Senate and 38 of 50 state legislatures. Or the Electoral College could be reformed if each state were to establish a direct popular vote.

Although the U.S. Constitution created the Electoral College, it does not spell out how the votes get awarded to presidential candidates, according to West. “That vagueness has allowed some states such as Maine and Nebraska to reject ‘winner-take-all’ at the state level and instead allocate votes at the congressional district level,” West has written. “The Constitution’s lack of specificity also presents the opportunity that states could allocate their Electoral College votes through some other means. One such mechanism that a number of states already support is an interstate pact that honors the national popular vote.”

The [National Popular Vote Interstate Compact](#) is designed to ensure that the candidate who receives the most votes nationwide is elected president. The National Popular Vote bill has been enacted by 17 jurisdictions – 16 states and the District of Columbia – possessing 205 electoral votes. The change will take effect when enacted by states that control 65 more electoral votes. You will be hearing more about this “moonshot” goal over the next year.

The national League’s second major initiative is its Transformation Roadmap and Structure Transformation Plan. This process has been ongoing and began with the League’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. To fulfill its mission to “make democracy work,” the LWVUS is committed to transforming how it is organized; increasing the capacity of state Leagues by streamlining and removing administrative burdens; and growing membership. As part of this process, the LWVUS will introduce a new portal in 2024 for new and renewing memberships. All members will join or renew through a national portal so local and state Leagues will no longer have to track members or send per member payments to LWVUS.

As part of this process, all Leagues across the country will have the same membership structure: pay what you can with a \$20 per year minimum and \$75 per year recommended. Other membership tiers will be available. The League will still offer individual and household memberships. When you join as a local League member, you have always automatically become a member of the state and national Leagues. Now the business model will shift the burden of tracking membership to LWVUS while at the same time increasing resources available at the local and state levels. The LWVNE will provide more information before the new structure rolls out in 2024.

These initiatives will help propel membership and ensure that the League has the resources to build its power. You can read this [summary of council](#) for more information. Please feel free to send any questions you may have about issues discussed at National Council to marylee@lwnmebraska.org.

Santiago reflects on 2023 National Council experience *By Candide Santiago, office administrator*

Attending the 2023 National Council of the League of Women Voters of the United States in Las Vegas, Nev., on June 23-25 was an amazing experience.

The community that we can access nationwide – with League members who are passionately and purposefully supporting their communities by empowering voters and defending democracy just like us – is truly remarkable.

At the conference, I had the opportunity to hear from and make connections with our national League president, Dr. Deborah Turner; LWVUS CEO Virginia Kase Solomón; and Jeanette Senecal, senior director of mission impact for LWVUS along with a multitude of other LWV leaders and members.

Through hearing and learning from League leaders, National Council participants were unified in the mission of "One Voice, One Vote." I am excited to continue connecting with staff and League members around the country as well as using their support to improve our local and state Leagues in Nebraska.



Toni Monette (left) and Candide Santiago, members of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska, attended the 2023 National Council meeting. Monette is secretary of the LWVUS board. Santiago is LWVNE office administrator and director of operations for LWVGO.

LWVNE board appoints directors, committee members

By Dianne Bystrom, director of communications

At its meeting on July 15, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska appointed two directors and members of five committees.

New board members are Dr. Amber Brown Keebler, director of health care, and Carolyn Thiele, director of voter services. The LWVNE board also includes directors and co-directors in the areas of communications, education policy, government, mental and behavioral health, natural resources and energy, and social policy; co-presidents, action vice president, membership vice president, secretary, treasurer and representatives from each of its four local Leagues in Greater Omaha, Hastings, Lincoln-Lancaster County and Seward County.



Keebler Brown

Keebler Brown is a medical doctor practicing in internal medicine and pediatrics. She is an assistant professor in the division of general internal medicine at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. Originally from rural Mississippi, Keebler Brown attended the University of South Alabama for medical school and completed her residency at the University of Illinois Hospital in Chicago. Passionate about access and integration of care, particularly in the area of mental health, she began working toward a Ph.D. as a member of the clinical translational research mentored scholars program at UNMC in 2021. Keebler Brown lives in Omaha with her spouse and two children. Her personal interests include reading, cooking, playing with kids and weightlifting.

Thiele, also from Omaha, grew up on a farm in southeast Iowa. She attended Creighton University for two years before transferring to the University of Arizona, where she earned a bachelor's degree in sociology. Thiele joined the League of Women Voters 10 years ago when she retired from a career in human services. She began her career as a caseworker in the public sector and moved into administration in the private sector, serving as a vice president at both Lutheran Family Services and Heartland Family Service. Passionate about voting rights and voter education, Thiele was an active member and leader of the League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha's Get Out the Vote action team for a number of years.



Thiele

Appointed to the Budget-Finance Committee were MaryLee Moulton, Omaha, chair; Rachel Gibson, Omaha; Terri Rittenburg, Lincoln; Claudia Stevenson, Ogallala; and Janelle Stevenson, Lincoln. Appointed to the Bylaws Committee were Caroline Sedlacek, Omaha, chair; Dianne Bystrom, Plattsmouth; Aimée Folker, Omaha; Candide Santiago, Omaha; and J. Stevenson.

Appointed to the Education Fund Committee were Cynthia Peterson, Lincoln, chair; Kathy Bass, Omaha; Moulton, Rittenburg and Lori Shriner, Seward. Appointed to the Endowment Fund Committee were Moulton, chair; Keith Bystrom, Plattsmouth; Cindy Hadsell, Omaha; Sherry Miller, Lincoln; and Rittenburg.

Appointed to the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee were Folker, Omaha, chair; Linda Duckworth, Omaha; Krystal Fox, Bellevue; Megan York Lyons, Lincoln; and J. Stevenson.

The board also approved beginning the process to amend the bylaws in order to change the name of the Education Fund Committee to the Grant Review Committee because the LWVNE no longer has a separate education fund but still awards grants to support educational programs.

LWVNE supports petition drive to place LB753 on 2024 ballot

By Rachel Gibson, action vice president

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska joined the Support Our Schools Nebraska coalition in June to work to repeal LB753 – the Opportunity Scholarship Act – which will divert public dollars to private and parochial schools through tax credits. Since then, many of our members have volunteered as signature collectors, attended signing events, shared information on social media and submitted letters to local newspapers.

The LWVNE’s letter to the editor outlining our support of the petition drive to place LB753 on the 2024 ballot has been published in the Lincoln Journal Star, Omaha World Herald, Kearney Daily Hub, Norfolk Daily News, North Platte Telegraph and Seward County Independent. You can read the LWVNE’s letter [here](#).

With the referendum hitting the halfway mark, we still need your help to reach the goal of 90,000 signatures by Aug. 30. You can contribute to this effort by:

- Signing the petition. (Signing events can be found [here](#).)
- Collecting signatures from friends and family.
- Attending or organizing a signature collection event. (The Omaha and Lincoln areas have had great success at farmers markets, community days and parades.)
- Staffing a table to collect signatures at local hotspots like a library or coffee shop or even your driveway.
- Knocking doors to collect signatures from residents (lists of likely signers can be provided).

In particular, we need help collecting signatures in these counties: Cheyenne, Clay, Douglas, Franklin, Gage, Hamilton, Otoe, Saline, Sarpy, Saunders, Scotts Bluff, Seward, Washington, Webster and York.

You can also apply to get paid for collecting petition signatures through a partnership between Support Our Schools Nebraska and FieldWorks, a paid circulation and signature verification firm. Petitioners earn \$25 to \$30 an hour. You’ll be able to make your own schedule whether it’s weekend shifts, weekday shifts, part-time work or full-time work. You can apply at this [link](#).

If you have any questions, would like more information or need petition sheets, please email me at rachel@lwnvnebraska.org or Janelle Stevenson, LWVNE co-president, at jstevenson@lwnvnebraska.org.

LWVNE members also can contact our local League presidents to volunteer for their efforts: Cynde Glismann, Greater Omaha, at cynde@lwggo.org; Cynthia Peterson, Lincoln-Lancaster County, at cynthia@lwnvnebraska.org; Linda Rea, Hastings, at lmhrea@yahoo.com; and Lori Shriner, Seward County, at lori@lwnvnebraska.org.

As always, we are thankful for our League members and all the work they do across the state.



Janelle Stevenson, Lincoln, co-president of the LWVNE, is helping lead the League’s efforts to collect signatures for the Support Our Schools Nebraska petition drive.

Member spotlight: Family, career inspire Stevenson's LWVNE work

By Charlyne Berens, associate editor

For Claudia Stevenson, commitment to League of Women Voters and its mission is a family thing.

The new co-director of natural resources and energy for the League of Women Voters of Nebraska became a LWVNE member almost three years ago when her daughter, Janelle Stevenson, now co-president of the state League, told her it was time to join.

It wasn't a hard sell, though. "A lot of it had to do with my mom," Stevenson said. Her mother was active in LWV in Dayton, Ohio, where Stevenson grew up. "I felt the impact she made. She was always involved."

After graduating from the Ohio State University with an intent to teach vocational agriculture, Stevenson shifted gears and went to work for DeKalb Swine Breeders instead. Then she shifted again and became a soil conservationist with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Kansas, a career for which her college major provided all the requisite credits.

She worked with farmers and ranchers on private conservation lands for the next 34 years, the last 30 from her base at Ogallala. "I liked working with people one-on-one," she said.

Her experience and background prepared her well for work with the LWVNE's Natural Resources and Energy Action Team. "She brings a lifetime of experience in environmental issues to advocacy in this vital area," said MaryLee Moulton, LWVNE co-president.

Soon after she joined, Stevenson offered an idea the LWVNE latched onto and acted on.

Much of her job with the USDA had had to do with soil health, she said. She noticed the LWVNE's Program on its policy positions didn't include anything on that topic, so the action team did an in-depth study of the subject and presented it to the membership, proposing that the information be included in the program.



Stevenson

"Every decision the League makes regarding supporting or opposing a bill goes back to the policy program," Stevenson pointed out. "Having a standard there enables us to follow proposed legislative bills and have something to stand on as we make a statement."

The fact that Stevenson's daughter was co-chair of the Natural Resources and Energy Action Team as the policy was developed and approved made the work even more satisfying. "To do that with my daughter was fun," Stevenson said.

As an at-large member of the LWVNE, Stevenson sees part of her role with the League as being an educator and advocate for League positions on public policy in a part of the state that does not have a local League. Moulton said Stevenson has already helped the League extend its impact in the Ogallala area.

Stevenson said the fact that the League keeps track of hundreds of bills introduced each year in the Unicameral means "I can talk to people locally about why they should or should not support a bill and give logical reasons" for her position. "The League offers so much good information," she said.

Her first job with the LWVNE was as co-director of voter services for the 2021-2023 term where she helped implement the VOTE411.org database for tracking candidates for local, county, district, state and federal office in Nebraska. Moulton was enthusiastic about the group's accomplishments: "Claudia worked together with Walta Dodd to contact all candidates in all 93 Nebraska counties to get information to Nebraska voters," a significant outreach.

In the near future, Stevenson said, one of the Natural Resources and Energy Action Team's goals is to get involved in local events where they can introduce people to the League and its natural resources information and concerns. They hope to put together a "mobile" presentation that any League member could use to educate Nebraskans about their natural resources.

Like her mother and her daughter, Stevenson firmly believes in the League and its value to the state. "It offers so much good information, such good references. And it's nonpartisan, just for the good of the people, not for one side or the other."

LWVNE focuses advocacy efforts on referendum, litigation, research

By Rachel Gibson, action vice president

The busy legislative session has transitioned into a busy interim, largely as a direct consequence of the actions taken by the 108th Nebraska Legislature. It has also been a time of reflection and debriefing with the advocacy community as we prepare to tackle the challenges that are sure to come with the start of the short legislative session in January 2024. Three main projects are underway: a ballot referendum repealing LB753, litigation of L574 and campaign finance/dark money research.

Support Our Schools and LB753

The most pressing project joined by the League of Women Voters of Nebraska is the [Support Our Schools Nebraska](#) coalition. The coalition was formed in response to legislation that passed last session, specifically LB753 or the "Opportunity Scholarship Act." Led by the Nebraska State Education Association, Open Sky Policy Institute and Stand for Schools, the group has built a volunteer network of teachers, parents and volunteers across the state to gather signatures for a ballot referendum to repeal the law. The Nebraska Examiner has a great article about the [start of the initiative](#) and an update on [more recent developments](#).

In June, the LWVNE officially joined the SOS Nebraska coalition along with a growing number of other groups including the NAACP, local education associations, the Holland Children's Movement and, more recently, the Nebraska Farmers Union. With a highly contentious issue such as this, the LWVNE reviewed its local, state and national position stances and looked at the data and research that informed them before taking a public [position](#). The LWVNE identified two main reasons for supporting this coalition's work:

1. The policy positions of the national and state Leagues. As stated in its [Impact on Issues](#), the national League supports "a public educational system financed by a combination of local and state revenues. Since state government has created the public schools by law, it has a responsibility to aid local school districts in providing adequate and equitable school financing while maintaining local control. The wealth of the local school district in which a student resides should not determine what services are available" (p. 130). As stated in the [LWVNE Program](#): "The LWVNE believes in a public educational system financed by a combination of local and state revenues. Since state government has created the public schools by law, it has a responsibility to aid local school districts in providing adequate and equitable school financing while maintaining local control" (p. 12).

2. The League’s long-standing use and support of ballot initiatives to engage the public in policy decisions.

If you are interested in volunteering for signature collection or want to sign the petition, visit the Support Our Schools Nebraska website for [upcoming locations and opportunities](#). If you have any questions, concerns or want to know more about the LWNNE’s involvement, please email me at rachel@lwnnebraska.org.

ACLU and LB574

Shortly after the passage of LB574, which combined two separate bills, one restricting access to abortion after 12 weeks and the other prohibiting gender affirming care for trans youth, the ACLU of Nebraska filed a lawsuit against the state. While both the ACLU of Nebraska and the LWNNE oppose the content of both bills, the legal basis for the lawsuit is that the bill violated the “one subject” rule of the Nebraska Constitution. [Article III, section 14](#) states: “No bill shall contain more than one subject, and the subject shall be clearly expressed in the title. No law shall be amended unless the new act contains the section or sections as amended and the section or sections so amended shall be repealed.”

Following the filing of the lawsuit, leadership of the LWNNE and ACLU of Nebraska met to discuss how the state League can support these efforts in the future as the next steps depend on the rulings of the district court. It is likely that the lawsuit will eventually go before the Nebraska Supreme Court. At that point, the LWNNE and ACLU of Nebraska will revisit options for collaboration.

Common Cause and Campaign Finance Research

The final primary collaboration this summer is in its very initial stages. After LWNNE action team members expressed interest in looking into “dark money,” I met with Common Cause Nebraska to discuss what types of research would be possible and most beneficial. Conversations are ongoing, and we are looking for volunteers for the project. If you are interested in this topic, email me at rachel@lwnnebraska.org.

This busy summer reminds us that the work doesn’t stop “after session”; it simply looks different. Efforts now lay the groundwork for strong advocacy during the next legislative session and beyond. If you are interested in joining important work on one of the above-mentioned initiatives or one of the LWNNE’s six action teams, please reach out to me at rachel@lwnnebraska.org. As always, I am filled with gratitude, hope and encouragement by the wonderful volunteers who give their time, knowledge and effort to help make our state better.

LWNNE joins in advocacy efforts challenging LB574, LB753

By Janelle Stevenson, co-president

Representatives of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska participated in meetings this summer that focused on the results of the 2023 legislative session with a look toward 2024.

On June 21, along with seven other LWNNE members, I attended the “2023 Legislative Wrap-Up + Planning for the Interim” session hosted by the Coalition for a Strong Nebraska, Nebraska Civic Engagement Table and the Nonprofit Association of the Midlands. Representatives from Nebraska Appleseed, the Open Sky Policy Institute and ACLU Nebraska as well as state senators Jane Raybould, Wendy DeBoer and John Frederickson spoke about the positives and negatives of this past legislative session. They echoed each other in saying they had never experienced a session quite like this one in their careers. They were frank; it was rough.

However, they also said they witnessed more engagement from Nebraska citizens than they had ever seen. “Sustain the energy. Keep engaging,” said Scout Richters, senior legal and policy counsel with the ACLU of

Nebraska. Data is powerful; politics are more powerful. Persuade (with calls, emails) against the political instinct to vote party lines. “Truly it is a marathon, not a sprint,” Richters said.

On June 23, MaryLee Moulton, Rachel Gibson and I joined in a call with the ACLU of Nebraska to understand the next steps in the lawsuit fighting the 12-week abortion ban and the gender-affirming care ban that were both included in LB574. The ACLU of Nebraska and Planned Parenthood of the Heartland, which are representing a physician and clinic that perform abortions, maintain that LB574 violates the Nebraska Constitution’s requirement that a legislative bill be confined to a single subject. Legal arguments were heard by the Lancaster County District Court on [July 19](#) with the judge taking under advisement a request to block the law’s enforcement. The ACLU believes that the lawsuit will skip the appeals court and go straight to the Nebraska Supreme Court, which is in recess until August. The LWVNE has volunteered to write an op-ed educating people on the lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the bill.

The LWVNE joined the Support Our Schools Nebraska coalition in early June along with Stand for Schools and the Nebraska State Education Association. The coalition is circulating a referendum petition to collect signatures of registered Nebraska voters to ultimately repeal LB753, a dollar-for-dollar tax credit to those who donate to private schools. If 60,000 validated signatures are collected, the referendum will appear on the 2024 ballot for a vote of Nebraska citizens.

The LWVNE supports public education and believes that public dollars must have public oversight, ensuring transparency and use in accordance with state and federal laws. Consistent with our position in past legislative sessions, we oppose this tax-credit-voucher program and support the current referendum to repeal LB753.

The LWVNE’s letter to the editor on this topic has been published in the Kearney Daily Hub, Lincoln Journal Star, Norfolk Daily News, North Platte Telegraph, Omaha World Herald and Seward County Independent. We encourage voters to sign the petition so that all Nebraskans’ voices can be heard on this issue.

Treasurer reports on LWVNE finances

By Terri Rittenburg, treasurer

As demonstrated by the statement of net worth and budget sheets, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska is solvent and in good shape financially.

We are in a position to grow our endowment fund, which is in a TIAA brokerage account. The fund has helped defray administrative costs through a planned withdrawal over the last two fiscal years. The Endowment Fund Committee has discussed moving the fund to a different company, and I expect this conversation to continue and a decision to be made this year.

League of Women Voters of Nebraska	
Statement of Net Worth	
July 14, 2023	
Checking account total	\$ 51,904.44
PayPal balance	\$ -
Endowment	\$ 63,146.10
Total Assets	\$ 115,050.54

Our annual financial review will be underway soon.

LWVNE emphasizes member recruitment

By Marilyn Bechtel, membership vice president

As the new membership vice president of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska, my goal is to provide information to our at-large members throughout the state.

I began my 2023-2025 term by emailing at-large members to formally introduce myself. Shortly after that, the LWVNE joined the Support Our Schools Nebraska coalition to gather signatures for a petition to place LB753 on the ballot. I emailed at-large members about their important role in this effort as they, along with other coalition members, represent all areas of the state. For the petition drive to be successful, signatures must be gathered from at least 38 Nebraska counties.

What does it mean to become a Member at Large of the LWVNE?

A Member at Large is part of the state League instead of one of our four local leagues in Hastings, Lincoln, Omaha or Seward.

Becoming a LWVNE member at large provides you with a community that spans the state and enables you to take action on issues that affect all Nebraskans.

In a rural state like ours, a Member at Large can spread the mission and vision of the League's non-partisan commitment to strengthen democracy by empowering and educating voters through grassroots advocacy in their communities with the support of the state League's resources.

Members at Large can attend state board meetings and participate in all programs offered through the state League.

Join as an LWVNE Member at Large Now!

SCAN HERE or go to LWVNebraska.org

How you can become involved in the LWVNE

Making Democracy Work®

Voting Rights
Work to expand voting rights through early voting, online voter registration and opposition to voter suppression.

Education
Study the issues affecting our state and educate voters and elected officials.

Legislative Advocacy
Before each legislative session, the LWVNE state board of directors reviews bills to identify areas of interest to League members and legislation that would impact League program issues. The LWV does not take a position on an issue without careful study. The League has program positions on its legislative priorities at the local, state and national levels.

Get Out the Vote (GOTV)
Register voters and educate youth throughout Nebraska.

Campaign Finance/ Money in Politics
Support campaign finance reform proposals.

VOTE411.org
Contact candidates across the state to make sure they participate in our VOTE411.org candidate information portal to provide voters with information to make informed decisions.

Join an Action Team!
LWVNE has 8 Action Teams that engage with the Nebraska Unicameral on the issues of Education, Government, Health Care, Mental and Behavioral Health, Natural Resources and Energy, Redistricting, Social Policy and Voter Services.

Follow @LWVNE on:

My goals for the rest of 2023 are to continue to provide information to the LWVNE's at-large members, with a special emphasis on information pertinent to the upcoming election season: voter registration and voter identification training.

The LWVNE joins with the national League of Women Voters in emphasizing member recruitment. If you are a member of one of the four local Leagues, please invite someone who might be interested in the League to a meeting or to become involved in a League activity. If you are an at-large member, please think of others who might be interested in becoming part of the LWVNE. If you have any questions, please contact me at mbechtel@lwnvnebraska.org.

Communications Action Team publicizes work of LWVNE

By Dianne Bystrom, director of communications

Communication efforts of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska include maintaining an up-to-date website; generating posts, tweets, threads and paid ads on social media platforms; regular emails to members via MailChimp; news releases and letters to the editor; and the publication the LWVNE's quarterly newsletter, the Nebraska Voter. The Communications Action Team also assists in proofing and editing official correspondence sent by the LWVNE, including all letters to state senators and legislative committees.

Communication efforts completed from Jan. 1 to July 15 are summarized below.

WEBSITE: MaryLee Moulton continues to serve as the LWVNE's website administrator. I provide support by posting content, editing and proofing. The LWVNE's website, <https://lwnvnebraska.org/>, provides news posts on its homepage and drop-down menus for About the LWVNE, including mission and vision, DEI, leadership and staff; Legislative Advocacy with information on the Legislature, including the 70 letters sent to Nebraska state senators – primarily members of committees hearing bills and resolutions – in 2023; Voting, including Know Your Voting Rights in Nebraska and VOTE411.org in English and Spanish; Get Involved and Local Leagues.

In mid-March, we were notified by SiteGround, our hosting program, that our website was full and we needed to upgrade to the cloud platform. Although we upgraded the platform, we have continued to experience

problems. I met with MaryLee in July to review the website and decide what could be cut and what needed to be updated. MaryLee has deleted content to move the website hosting platform to our previous plan. I will then update content. Eventually, the LWFVNE will move its website to the same hosting platform selected by the League of Women Voters of the United States; that selection is expected by the end of 2023.

SOCIAL MEDIA: MaryLee and I also maintain the LWFVNE's active presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Threads. As of July 15, the LWFVNE had 920 followers on Facebook, 2,429 on Twitter, 421 on Instagram and 43 on Threads.

EMAILS VIA MAILCHIMP: From Jan. 1 through July 15, I sent 17 emails via MailChimp to 450+ members in the LWFVNE audience. Open rates ranged from 57.2% to 68.9% with all opened by more than 50% of LWFVNE members and 10 (59%) opened by more than 60%. Topics included Legislative Day; Lincoln-Lancaster's Lunch and Learn programs; Earth Day activities; registration for the LWFVNE annual meeting; election of co-presidents for 2023-2025; a summary of legislative advocacy in 2023; and links to the Winter and Spring issues of the LWFVNE's quarterly newsletter, the Nebraska Voter, with a summary of the content for each issue.

NEWS RELEASES AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: On May 5, I sent a news release on the election of MaryLee and Janelle Stevenson as the 2023-2025 co-presidents of the LWFVNE to newspapers throughout the state. The news release prompted articles in the Lincoln Journal Star and Keith County News. On June 30, I sent a letter to the editor to all daily Nebraska newspapers about the LWFVNE joining the Support Our Schools Nebraska coalition and explaining the League's support of signing the petition to place LB753 on the ballot. As of July 15, the letter has been published in the Omaha World-Herald with Cynde Glismann's signature; the Lincoln Journal Star with signatures by Janelle Stevenson, MaryLee Moulton and Cynthia Peterson; the North Platte Telegraph, Kearney Daily Hub and Norfolk Daily News with Janelle's and MaryLee's signatures; and the Seward County Independent with Lori Shriner's signature.

NEBRASKA VOTER: The LWFVNE's quarterly newsletter was published on Jan. 24 (Winter 2023), May 11 (Spring 2023) and July 20 (Summer 2023) with the fall issue anticipated for October 2023. The newsletter is published as a PDF on the LWFVNE website – at first as a post on the homepage and then under the Get Involved drop-down link – with an email sent to all LWFVNE members via MailChimp with a link to the PDF on the website as well as a summary of content.

Charlyne Berens, a retired journalism professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and a member of the LWFV-Lincoln-Lancaster County, serves as associate editor of the Nebraska Voter.

DEI Committee seeks members to cultivate inclusive community

By Aimée Folker, co-chair

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska has established a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee to cultivate a community in which all members feel valued, represented, respected, enabled and supported.

We are looking for new members and new ideas for this critical work, including collaboration with LWFVNE action teams and local League events. If you are interested in joining this committee or have ideas about the implementation of its work, please reach out to me or co-chair Linda Duckworth. We are planning a meeting for all new committee members in August.

Our framework for DEI embraces all backgrounds, identities and experiences as constituted by gender identity and expression, transgender identity, socioeconomic class, disabilities, age, race, ethnicity, religion, generation,

sexual orientation, regional origin, nationality, active duty/veteran status, occupation, language, political ideology (especially those that have not been historically and widely embedded) and intersectionality among identities.

As such, this committee goes beyond inclusion and participation; it requires deep cultural work in examining contested identities and creating spaces for such identities in the following areas:

- **Diversity:** Our engagement with and valuation of difference, culture and varied identity backgrounds and identity experiences.
- **Equity:** Our confrontation of structured inequalities, systemic oppressions and power differences among cultural groups, identity backgrounds and identity experiences.
- **Inclusion:** Our work to address the societal, historical and internal structural barriers to the full participation, contribution and success of members across varied identity backgrounds and experiences.
- **Justice:** Our work to disrupt unequal power relations and contexts.
- **Accessibility:** Our ongoing commitment to creating environments that meet the needs of all by recognizing that all bodies are unique and that they change depending on the enabling and constraining dynamics of space and time.

The LWNNE is committed to the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy of the League of Women Voters of the United States:

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

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



Legislature passes ‘best possible’ voter ID bill

By Joanna Lindberg, government co-director

Since 2007, the League of Women Voters has opposed proposed state legislation that requires a photo ID to either register to vote or to vote. However, the League recognizes that 65% of Nebraska voters casting ballots in the 2022 election approved Initiative 432 to amend the state constitution to require a valid photo ID to vote and authorized the state Legislature to pass laws to specify the photo ID requirements.

Thus, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska – particularly through its Government Action Team – worked to support what it believed to be the best legislation among the voter ID bills introduced in the 2023 legislative session. The LWNNE supported LB675, introduced by state Senator Jen Day (District 49), as it would mitigate potential barriers that may arise as a result of the passage of Initiative 432. When LB675 as well as other voter ID bills opposed by the LWNNE were not advanced out of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs

Committee, LB514 – introduced by state Senator Tom Brewer (District 43) – emerged as the best possible voter ID bill that the Legislature could pass.



Brewer worked closely with the Secretary of State to develop a bill that election commissioners and county clerks could implement. LB514 was supported by the election officials of 92 of Nebraska’s 93 counties. Only the Sarpy County election commissioner opposed it. Instead, she supported LB535, a much more restrictive bill, which was introduced by her sister, state Senator Julie Slama (District 1). However, the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee declined to support LB535. In opposition, Slama filibustered LB514.

LB514, which was approved by the Nebraska Legislature on June 1 by a vote of 38-1 with 10 not voting or absent, allows voters to use veterans’ IDs, college photo IDs and Native American IDs. A hospital, assisted-living facility, nursing home or other skilled care facility record that includes a photo or digital image also qualifies. Those voting via mail-in ballots must include a copy of the voter’s photo ID or Nebraska driver’s license number or state ID card number, according to the May 24 Unicameral Update.

LB514 was signed into law by Gov. Jim Pillen on June 1. It will go into effect on April 1, 2024, in advance of Nebraska’s primary election that year.

MABHAT invites members to join efforts
By Aimée Folker, co-director, mental and behavioral health

After a busy and unprecedented legislative session, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska’s Mental and Behavioral Health Action Team – MABHAT – will begin meeting regularly again in August. As part of that process, we will meet with League leaders and re-examine the scope of our action team to maximize our legislative impact and collective knowledge.

If you would like to join MABHAT as a returning or new member, please fill out this [form](#).

MABHAT also welcomes a new co-director, Angela Gleason, for the 2023-2025 term. Our team thanks our previous co-director – Palistene Gray-Moore – whose wisdom, experience and guidance have shaped MABHAT over the last four years. Palistene helped build the foundation of MABHAT and has been instrumental in its advocacy. We look forward to continuing to lean into her expertise in the behavioral health world as she continues to serve on MABHAT.

Action team advocates, educates on environmental issues
By Megan York Lyons and Claudia Stevenson, co-directors, natural resources and energy

At the state and national levels, the League of Women Voters is involved in advocacy and educational efforts promoting climate smart agriculture, conservation and protecting the environment.

With the federal Farm Bill up for reauthorization this fall, the League of Women Voters of Iowa brought the importance of keeping funding for “climate smart” agriculture and conservation programs to the attention of the national League. As a result, the LWVUS signed a [letter](#) with more than 650 other organizations to support such conservation measures.

On the state level, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska’s Natural Resources and Energy Action Team plans to create an introductory postcard to send to the Nebraska Legislature’s Natural Resources Committee members and governor just before the start of 2024 legislative session.

The action team is considering having a display at events sponsored by Nebraska’s Natural Resources Districts. These are held throughout the state. We plan to include a tabletop display featuring LWV information, a fun interactive activity for children and a QR code-style flyer that parents/adults can download and read.

Claudia participated in the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Society workshop held June 28-30 at the Lied Center in Nebraska City. The main event was a technical talk and tour of the Buck and Duck Creek watersheds located to the west of Peru, Neb. The Nemaha Natural Resources District and the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service spent 14 years on the project, which involved 41 out of 43 landowners and 18,000 acres. The cost of the project was \$1.9 million with benefits estimated at \$2.8 million. The [Duck Creek Recreation Area](#) is a wonderful place to have a day picnic, camp in a recreational vehicle or just fish along the edge of the creek.

The Natural Resources and Energy Action Team continues to monitor the cleanup of the AltEn ethanol plant at Mead. A year after shutting down, the plant finalized a pilot study work plan to determine the best way to dispose of 99,000 tons of hazardous corn waste that contaminated the environment. Wastewater has leaked from the facility and contaminated the town’s waters, and the “wet cake” waste remains piled outside the facility and exposed to the atmosphere.

Contractors started cleaning up solids on May 23. About 8,000 tons of trash, unused materials and piles of soil are being moved from the former ethanol plant south of Mead to the Pheasant Point Landfill near Bennington. “People may not be aware that the wet cake is poisonous because of coated seed corn which was neonicotinoid-coated, [a chemical] that’s been banned in many countries,” said state Sen. Carol Blood in a [story](#) about AltEn that aired May 26 on WOWT Channel 6 in Omaha. Blood believes the clean-up plan is detrimental to the environment.

AltEn was issued a Title 123 permit in September 2022. A new permit is needed because the AltEn Facility Response Group hired a different contractor that is constructing a new wastewater treatment works. The treated wastewater will continue to be stored in the wastewater lagoons on site and will ultimately be applied to agricultural land.

The AFRG’s permit application and the permit issued can be found on the Nebraska Department of Energy and Environment’s [public records portal](#) in documents titled, “Construction,” filed June 25, 2023, and “Construction,” filed July 7, 2023, respectively.

LWVNE sets 2023-2024 meeting dates

At its July 15 meeting, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska board of directors approved the following meeting dates for 2023-2024. All meetings will be held on Zoom unless otherwise noted and are open to LWVNE members. Members are particularly encouraged to attend Legislative Day and the annual meeting.

2023: Aug. 26; Oct. 14; and Dec. 9, preparation for legislative session.

2024: Jan. 27, meeting to review bills and choose legislative priorities; Feb. 10, training for Legislative Day; Feb. 14, Legislative Day (in person); March 16, final regular board meeting; and April 27, annual meeting hosted by the League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha (in person).

LWVGO participates in festivals, gears up for 2024 election season

By Cynde Glismann, president

It is festival season in Omaha. The League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha was proud to join our community at the Cinco de Mayo, Juneteenth and Heartland Pride festivals recently.

If you attend the Maha Music Festival on July 28-29, be sure to stop by the LWVGO's booth titled "Camp Democracy" to say hello to our deputy registrars; to play ring toss, corn hole and wheel of democracy trivia; to make bracelets and to win awesome prizes. Volunteers also will be at National Night Out and Homerun for Health in the coming month.

Our teams are already gearing up for a busy 2024 election season. Voters Guide meetings are underway, and planning is in process for fall and spring presentations at Omaha Public Schools, advocacy projects and voter registration. The first step in a youth outreach program – sending approximately 2,600 postcards to first-time voters under 29 years old to let them know how much their vote matters – just wrapped up.

LWVGO continues its coalition building and advocacy by working with and supporting the following: Support Our Schools Nebraska referendum initiative to repeal LB753, Nebraska Reproductive Justice Coalition, election accessibility/voter ID education, voting rights restoration, Courageous Conversations East/West Dialogues, Paid Sick Leave Ballot Initiative, trans rights/abortion ban lawsuit and the Black Political Summit.

After a three-year pandemic hiatus, it is exciting be able to participate in naturalization ceremonies again. League volunteers are able to celebrate new citizens and help them register to vote. It is truly an honor to be at these ceremonies and share in everyone's joy and pride.

Look for information soon about deputy registrar training in August. Deputy registrars are authorized to conduct voter registration drives anywhere in Nebraska. This will be a virtual class instructed by Chris Carithers, Douglas County deputy election commissioner, and open to all counties. All deputy registrars must be recertified every three years.

Finally, save the date: LWVGO's annual meeting will be held on Sept. 24, 2023, at noon. Details to come.



Representatives of the LWVGO presented a certificate of appreciation to Lindsay Behne, director of social studies curriculum for the Omaha Public Schools. She worked with high school social studies teachers to arrange time for LWVGO volunteers to meet with their classes in the library, where they explain the voter registration process and register students to vote. Prior to the voter registration, a PowerPoint prepared by the LWVGO on the process is given to the teachers to present to their classes. LWVGO volunteers also provide guidance to students on advocacy projects. Pictured (left to right) are Boris Forte, NAACP; Joanna Lindberg, LWVGO; Behne; Lina Traslavina Stover, Heartland Workers Center; and Cynde Glismann, LWVGO.

LWVLL sets communication, engagement goals

By Cynthia Peterson, president

As the new board president of the League of Women Voters of Lincoln-Lancaster County, I am striving for better and more communication with/among our members and, hopefully, more engagement.

The LWVLL newsletter, *The Voter*, will reappear in July. It will be published at least every other month going forward. A member mixer/garden party/friend-raising event is on the calendar for Thursday, Aug. 10, from 4 to 7 p.m. at the home of Susan Scott.

LWVLL will have a program planning meeting for membership in the next few months to review local policy positions and identify outdated policy positions. Long overdue website updates have been made with more to come, and we want to better utilize social media.

I am also very passionate about raising LWVLL's profile in Lincoln-Lancaster County and building upon the work of our already active committees:

- Voter Services is active and engaged. They have welcomed new deputy registrars and held voter registration events in June. At least four more voter registration events are scheduled through mid-September.
- Membership Services has been busy with membership renewals, collecting dues and welcoming new members. They also are working on a new/updated member packet.
- Our incredibly successful Lunch and Learn series is on hiatus now but will resume in September, hopefully with a few hybrid opportunities.

Several LWVLL members are involved with the referendum petition drive to repeal LB753 and get it on the ballot in November 2024. We have ownership of a signing event in conjunction with the Lincoln Municipal Band concerts on Sunday evenings through mid-August. Some members also have volunteered to help with signing events and door-to-door canvassing in central Nebraska.

Jean McGuire was nominated and elected as co-vice president of the LWVLL at our July 13 board meeting. She wants to focus on action-oriented projects and efforts.

The Directory of Elected Officials of Lincoln-Lancaster County is in the final editing phase and should be printed and published soon.

Discussion is underway about relinquishing our formal office space, both as a money-saving measure and as a matter of convenience. The question will be answered at the next board meeting in August.

Accessing the LWVLL Google workspace and email accounts for board officers remains an issue, but we're close to getting it resolved.

Please contact me at petersoncyns@gmail.com if you have questions or something to share.



Cynthia Peterson, president of the LWVLL, is pictured at the local League's petition signing event to repeal LB753 during a Lincoln Municipal Band concert.