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League of Women Voters of Nebraska Launches Voters' Guide for Primary Election

The League of Women Voters of Nebraska's nonpartisan, online voters' guide – VOTE411 – has been launched with information about candidates running in the May 14 primary for the U.S. Senate, U.S. House of Representatives, Nebraska Legislature, State Board of Education, University of Nebraska Board of Regents and Public Service Commission as well as all races in Douglas County.

Through VOTE411 – which is available at <https://www.vote411.org/nebraska> – voters can input their address to view the names of candidates who will appear on their primary election ballots in the selected races as well as biographical information and answers to three to four questions from the candidates who are participating. "The League aims to provide voters with easily accessible unbiased candidate information so they can make empowering decisions for themselves and their communities," said Jeanne Miller, who is coordinating the 2024 effort for the state LWVNE and League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha.

To compile information for voters prior to the May 14 primary, League volunteers contacted 189 candidates in 63 races, with 115 responding to date for a response rate of 61% overall. "All 189 candidates were mailed a postcard about participating in VOTE411," Miller said. "Every candidate was either emailed, texted, Facebook messaged or called – sometimes multiple times – in addition to the postcard. All responses have been translated into Spanish."

For Douglas County – for which the LWVGO distributes a printed voters' guide in addition to the online version – 73% of the 106 candidates running in 35 races responded, Miller said. "I'm impressed that our Douglas County and overall percentages are closer than in 2022. It took a lot of work by our League volunteers and it shows."

In the U.S. Senate race to complete a two-year term, Republican challengers Mac Stevens and John Glen Weaver as well as Democratic candidate Preston Love Jr. have responded. In the U.S. Senate race for a six-year term, Kerry Eddy of Legal Marijuana NOW has responded. Dan Osborn – who is registered as nonpartisan and can't take part in the primary – has collected enough signatures to run in the Nov. 5 general election for the six-year U.S. Senate term. "We hope that he will participate in VOTE411 for the general election," Miller said.

In races for the U.S. House of Representatives, both Republican challenger Michael Connely and Democratic challenger Carol Blood in the first congressional district have responded. In the race to represent the second congressional district, incumbent U.S. Rep. Don Bacon and Democratic challenger Tony Vargas have responded. In the third congressional district race, two of the three Republican challengers – Robert McCuiston and John Walz – have responded.

"We are disappointed that only one of the five incumbents representing Nebraskans in the U.S. Congress are currently participating in VOTE411," Miller said. "We believe that our federal representatives should be answerable and accountable to all the citizens they represent, not just their political party base. We hope that more incumbents will respond to our invitation to participate in VOTE411."

Of the 10 candidates running in the four districts for the Board of Education, seven (70%) have responded. Of the eight candidates running in four districts for the Board of Regents, four (50%) have responded, including both candidates in Districts 4 and 8. None of the three candidates for the Board of Regents in District 5 – which includes residents of Auburn, Beatrice, parts of Lincoln, Nebraska City and Plattsmouth – has responded

In the 25 races for the state Legislature, seven districts – 3, 7, 13, 15, 29, 31 and 39 – have 100% participation from candidates. Five of these races are to replace term-limited senators in Districts 3, 7, 13, 15 and 39: Blood, Bellevue; Vargas and Justin Wayne, both of Omaha; Lynne Walz, Fremont; and Lou Ann Linehan, Elkhorn. Both candidates have responded in the District 31 race, where Kathleen Kauth of Omaha, who was appointed to the seat, is up for election. Eliot Bostar of Lincoln, who is running unopposed in District 29, also has responded.

Notably, in the race to replace Walz in District 15, all five candidates are participating in VOTE411. And in the race to replace Wayne in District 13, all four candidates have responded. In District 33 – where Senator Steve Halloran of Hastings is term-limited – 75% (three of four) candidates are participating in VOTE411.

Districts in which 67% of candidates have responded to VOTE411 are 5 and 37, where Mike McDonnell, Omaha, and John Lowe, Kearney, are term-limited; 11, where Terrell McKinney, Omaha, is running for re-election; 19, 21 and 25, where senators Robert Dover of Norfolk and Beau Ballard and Carol Bosn, both of Lincoln, are running after being appointed by the governor; and 41, where governor-appointed Fred Meyer, St. Paul, is not running.

The lowest response rates among races for the state Legislature are in District 17, where none of the three candidates running to replace term-limited Joni Albrecht of Thurston have responded, and in District 23, where only one of six candidates (17%) running to replace term-limited Bruce Bostelman of Brainard is participating.

Of the 10 races for the state Legislature with an incumbent, five – Bosn, Bostar, John Cavanaugh of Omaha, Kauth and McKinney – are participating in VOTE411.org.

Candidates can still provide their biographical information and answer the questions posed by the LWVNE for the online voters' guide by emailing VOTE411@lwnnebraska.org before the May 14 primary. "We encourage voters to contact candidates on their ballots who are not currently participating in VOTE411 to respond to our invitation to do so," Miller said.

After the primary, Miller will archive candidates who did not advance, add candidates who "auto-advanced" to the general election, and then work with local Leagues in Lincoln/Lancaster County, Hastings and Seward County to add races and candidates to the VOTE411 database for the Nov. 5 general election.

"In August, we will start all over again in contacting candidates and asking them to respond to VOTE411," Miller said. "Those candidates who will appear on the Douglas County ballot will be included in the LWVGO's printed voters' guide, which will be distributed in time for early voting prior to the Nov. 5 general election," she added.

"The League remains dedicated to providing nonpartisan information for voters," Miller said. "Through VOTE411, 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 nonpartisan voters' guide for the 2024 primary election."

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