

THE VOTER

News for League of Women Voters Minneapolis Members and Friends



Ideas Abound at Program Planning Meeting

BY ELLEN VAN IWAARDEN

The more than 50 attendees at this year’s annual Program Planning meeting on February 12 did not let the Zoom format slow down their idea sharing. The group, which included 11 new members, brainstormed ideas for next year’s program topics both for the League of Women Voters US and the LWVMpls.

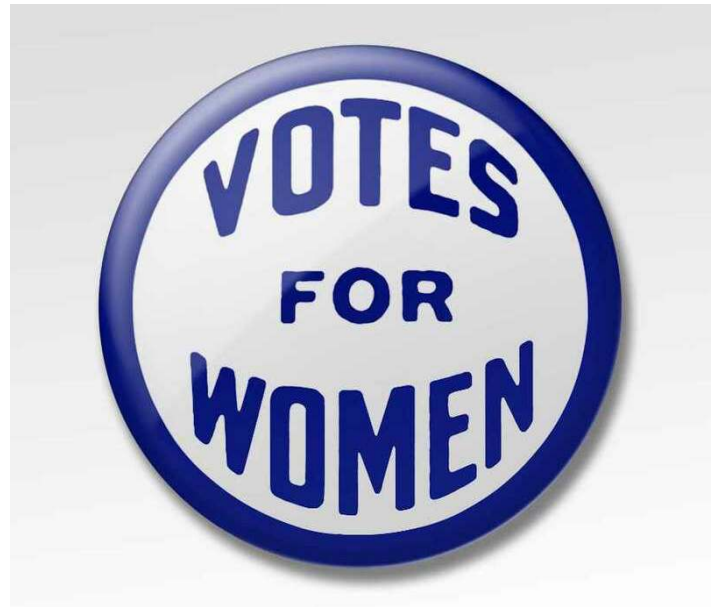
After welcomes from President Colleen Moriarty and Program Chair Ellen van Iwaarden, the substance of the meeting began with a thoughtful discussion on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) facilitated by Alice Moormann, DEI chair.

Julaine Heit skillfully led the two program planning discussions, beginning with taking suggestions from the group on possible additions to the four current priorities of the LWVUS. Those priorities are: Voting Rights, Improving Elections, Money in Politics, and Redistricting. The group approved of the current priorities, and there was strong sentiment for including Racial Justice as a fifth priority.

The group would also like to ask the LWVUS to consider some additional topics: Civics Education, Climate Change, DEI Commitment, Electoral College, Equal Rights Amendment, Expanding Voter Access, Fighting Racism, Truth vs. Lies, Policing, and Gun Control.

Then, the more in-depth idea generation for local planning began with individuals introducing topics of interest and members splitting into caucuses to discuss and flesh out the topics introduced. Dyan Venters was a masterful technical director throughout the morning, especially helping people navigate the caucus-choosing breakout group feature on Zoom.

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From the President

COLLEEN MORIARTY, PRESIDENT



Early last fall a wonderful man named Bill Kelly reached out to me with an idea, and a grand idea it was.

Kelly is a former member of the Minnesota Legislature and has had a successful career. He cares deeply about voting, voters rights, and democracy. Kelly's idea was simple, yet so poignant.

He was concerned about the treatment of election judges and election volunteers. He saw the way election staff were treated during our last election and how they had experienced abuse, verbal threats and attacks. Kelly wanted to partner with LWV Mpls and LWVMN, along with the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, to acknowledge the people who make our democracy work with a simple note of gratitude. He wanted to reach out to the more than 30,000 paid and volunteer election judges who gave their time and talents to make the election a success. He needed those folks to know how much they are appreciated and to thank them for their efforts. We need more Bill Kellys in our lives. We need people who realize the Herculean task it is to make our voting systems hum along and who just want to say thank you,

and we appreciate you. Thank you, Bill, for reaching out and triggering the letter that was sent out.

Here is the text:

Dear Election Official,

The League of Women Voters of Minnesota, along with several of your constituents, are writing today to thank you for the important work you do as a local election official to support our democracy.

We understand the hard work it takes to plan and execute local, county, state and federal elections each year, in collaboration with election judges and volunteers from within your local communities, to provide fair, accessible and accurate elections – especially during a global pandemic. Please accept our gratitude and support for all you and your team does to ensure we can all cast our votes freely and with confidence, knowing that they will be carefully counted. And please extend our appreciation to your fellow staff members and volunteers as well.

Sincerely,

The League of Women Voters of Minnesota

Editor's Note

BY DEBORAH JINDRA



As we head to press for this spring issue, a terrible war is being waged on Ukraine. Witnessing the horrendous pictures of people who only a month ago were leading happy ordinary lives is terrifying. I am reminded of a trip I took many years ago before the fall of the Berlin wall, sponsored by LWVMN to Eastern Europe.

We visited Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Yugoslavia. Each country had so much beauty and history, and we met with women's organizations at each stop. I was especially impressed with how well everyone seemed to get along in Yugoslavia with marriages between Muslims and Christians and so many optimistic young people looking toward a happy future. I obviously missed a lot that was under the surface. Two of the countries have

since split apart and many people were killed, lives were upended, and atrocities were committed in the Bosnian War. Cultural genocide was attempted and refugees ended up in many other parts of the world.

So much can change in a very short time. Our own government was assaulted on January 6, 2021, and there are attacks on democracy through voting restrictions and unwarranted claims of election fraud.

Our organization knows elections, and so many of our members work hard to see they are carried out fairly and honestly. I am happy to see that LWV at all levels is working diligently to protect our democracy and strengthen citizen participation. As we meet once again at our annual meeting, I'm sure we will keep in mind the importance of preserving our fragile democratic structures as we plan for a future where anything can happen.

Opinion: Democracy at Risk

BY BINKY WOOD, AT-LARGE MEMBER

It would be hard to pick a winner from this year's Program Planning topics in terms of the urgency of the issue. In line with priorities set by LWVUS and LWVMN, Voting/Democracy should lead the pack.

Freedom House is the oldest American organization devoted to the support and defense of democracy around the world. It was formally established in New York in 1941 to promote American involvement in World War II and the fight against fascism. From the beginning, it was notable for its bipartisan support. In its annual report, *Freedom in the World*, which rates established democracies based on civil liberties and political rights, Freedom House recently downgraded the U.S. by 11 percentage points from just a decade ago. We are now considered a "flawed democracy," putting us in league with countries such as Romania and Croatia, and demoted from a "full democracy," which includes Canada, France and Germany.

In February, Norway House's Minnesota Peace Initiative held a virtual talk (*Wake Up Call - A Conversation About Democracy*) with historian/writer Anne Applebaum and Judge John Tunheim. Applebaum blames the current pace of change for creating an American sense of loss, a "radical disappointment." This has resulted in what Applebaum identifies as a kind of dangerous "restorative nostalgia; wreck it and build anew." She finds economic uncertainty as being much less of an issue than cultural displacement. And the fast pace of technological advances plays a role. She sees an urgent need to "open the black box of algorithms" through regulation – something she deems difficult but possible, given the general population's negative feelings towards technology.

Judge Tunheim says that historically "democracy has had an unspoken agreement to abide by the rules." But where once the US led the world by example, we now seem to have lost that status, along with trust in our institutions and in each other, something Tunheim believes should be addressed through civics education. He recently announced the formation of two Justice and Democracy Centers (to be housed in Twin Cities federal courthouses) "to encourage students to study and understand civics and the law...to inspire them to look forward to voting...to inspire them to understand all points of view...to inspire them to be good American citizens."

During the last two election cycles, LWVMpls zeroed in on low-hanging fruit to greatly expand voter education and voter registration, focusing in particular on marginalized communities. But how can we partner with others to make democracy relevant for the long haul? Clean Elections Minnesota proposes an "80% solution," a giant citizens' lobby named for our outstanding voter turnout, to make a potential 3.3 million voices heard between elections.

In a series called *Reimagining American Democracy* from December 2021, Freedom House suggests that citizens will vote if they believe their votes impact their own lives and if by voting, they feel included in the democratic process. Freedom House recommends that alienated youth can be engaged through their athletic and arts programs when led by activists of their own age. The organization also proposes that "Super Voters," those who vote in every election, like seniors and black women, should be given a stepped-up role in the democratic process.

Much of the distrust in democracy is structural. Unlimited funds, both foreign and domestic, being funneled to both parties, lead to top-down corruption and to politicians who have forgotten whom they represent. Gerrymandered Congressional districts that guarantee a specific party outcome, coupled with voter suppression, deny a healthy plurality of voices and encourage political extremes to drown out the middle. These structures must be fixed, because in fixing them they have the potential to give voice to the majority of Americans who don't reside on the fringes.

Freedom House champions setting a big, overarching goal: "The Abolition of Bigotry." It's an obvious take-off on "The Abolition of Slavery." As Black Lives Matter reminds us: "Nobody is free until all of us are free."

Communications Update

BY DEBORAH SUGERMAN

The Communications Committee has been busy this past year. Last summer staff member Anna Treimer, social media coordinator, joined our committee. She brought her experience as a “digital native” [AKA younger than I] and her graphic skills to our organization. Working mostly behind the scenes, she creates LWVMpls’ online presence. Treimer is especially enthusiastic about wanting to engage more young people and interest them in joining LWVMpls.

The following highlights some of Treimer’s accomplishments.

- Worked with North Community High School students to create a blog post.
- Kept our social media up to date, posting on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.
- Reintroduced an events calendar. You can now visit our website and find a link to the calendar on the homepage: lwvmpls.org.

There is a version on the public-facing site, as well as on the member-only page.

- Created a webpage For Voters. This page was instrumental in helping LWV members and the public access timely information about the 2021 election. Among its features were candidate forum videos, candidate questionnaires, the Voters Guide, and educational articles (also distributed to the media) about voting and the election. Posting the questionnaires and videos in particular involved many hours of back-end website work. While numerous LWV members contributed content to the For Voters page, Treimer pulled it all together for us. The Voter Services Committee is ramping up its work for the 2022 election, but the 2021 content has been archived and is available with one click.

Treimer is a valuable addition to our communications team and we welcome her expertise.

Farewell to Nancy Witta

BY DEBORAH JINDRA



Nancy Witta, fifty-year member, passed away on March 19 at the age of 91. Witta embodied what it means to be an LWV leader. She was intelligent and strong minded, and when she saw a job to do, she got it done. She believed passionately in democ-

racy and put her efforts into making it work at many levels. Jan Midtbo wrote that she “definitely let people know where she stood on issues. Discussions with her were stimulating and she was fun to be with.”

Other LWV members remember her droll sense of humor and that she was such an interesting conversationalist. She made time in her busy life for family and many friends, and she spent every summer at the lake without exception! Her legacy lives on in the numerous members she invited to join. She became a mentor to many, such as past president Marion Hall who called Witta “a role model as a community activist, neighbor, and respected friend.”

For years Witta was LWVMpls’ go-to authority on parliamentary procedure. Look at the characteristics of a Bess Mlnarik award winner and that was Witta. As an example of her long-time commitment to LWV she was nominated for the Mlnarik Award in 1977. Nominated again in 2014, she won the award.

Witta was a graduate of the University of Minnesota in International Relations and served LWVMpls in various roles: Treasurer, Program Co-Chair, Mission and Governance Chair, and President in 1972-73. For a time, she managed the LWVMpls office. She also chaired the Minneapolis Charter Commission and was a Metropolitan Airports commissioner.

Her family said at her passing that she “created a home filled with love, adventures , parties and, most importantly, laughter.” We remember her for her steady hand, no-nonsense demeanor, and dedication to making our organization run smoothly.

New Member Spotlight: Suzanne Bross

BY NANCY ALBRECHT



Suzanne Bross is one of the newest members to join the League of Women Voters of Minneapolis. Bross is new to Minneapolis but not new to the League of Women Voters nor to Minnesota. She was born and grew up in South Fork, Pennsylvania.

Bross attended Eastern Michigan University where she earned a B.A. in social work. She continued her education and received an M.A. in counseling at Winona State in Minnesota. Along with her career in social work, she managed McDonald's restaurants in Detroit and Grand Rapids, Michigan and Columbus, Ohio. She also lived in Colorado for a few years where she worked for Vail Resorts.

Bross and her husband lived in Austin, Minnesota for several years where they raised their two daughters, Elsa and Allison. Elsa works as an ESL teacher in Hopkins and Allison owns her own business, b. Resale, a consignment store in Minneapolis. Bross has four grandchildren whom she frequently cares for, especially during this time of

Covid. "They are my love." While living in Austin, Bross used her social work skills with kids in the foster care system. She also taught human relations at Austin Community College.

Being a member of the League of Women Voters in Austin for several years and holding various offices, she found LWV members very well-read and stimulating. As a new member of LWVMpls, she has a strong interest in housing. She is concerned about the lack of housing for people of low income. Her most driving question is, "How do you get people educated to what is happening in our country?"

Bross is an active volunteer. She supports many organizations but puts in time at a Meals on Wheels kitchen and People Serving People. Please welcome her to LWVMpls. You might want to ask her what it was like to walk across several countries including Ireland and England.

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Ideas Abound at Program Planning Meeting

In the end there were seven caucuses: Climate Change, Diversity Equity and Inclusion, Education, Health Care, Housing and Homelessness, Public Safety, and Voting/Democracy. Time flew as each group narrowed down their interests to a few areas that they'd like to focus on next year. At the conclusion of the caucus discussions, the whole group came back together to hear summaries of what each caucus had planned. The 2022-2023 Program year promises to be an interesting one!

During the meeting, members enjoyed the surprises that had been delivered to their homes by members of the Program Planning Committee: a teabag, a retro Votes for Women button, and a ribbon sash for new members to wear.

Planning Committee member Libby Bottem wrote the short history note included with the surprises about how the women's suffrage movement actually arose out of conversation and idea-sharing at women's tea parties. In a bit of serendipity, the Votes for Women button was actually designed for one of those suffrage parties. Committee member Susan Hellstrom's ideas for special outreach to new members also made a big difference in increasing new member participation.

Many thanks to Program Planning Committee members Libby Bottem, Julaine Heit, Susan Hellstrom, Patrice Kunesh, Anne McLaughlin, Ellen van Iwaarden, and Dyan Venters.

Bess Mlnarik Award Nominations

BY DOT LILJA

At the annual meeting we usually present the Bess Mlnarik award to one of our special members. Mlnarik gave loyal service to LWVMpls but eschewed formal leadership positions. Mlnarik developed a civics course for north side residents, which she taught at Twin Cities Opportunities Industrialization Center (TCOIC). She was energetic and supportive, and she brought new members to LWV.

Honoring each nominee and announcing the winner during the meeting in front of members is a big part of the honor. We have not presented the award the last two years when we met virtually. The board is looking at revamping the award.

A committee is weighing different options to recognize our exceptional volunteers. If you would like to express your opinion about how we should proceed, please contact the last honoree, Dot Lilja, at dorothylilja@gmail.com or any of the committee members—Jennifer Johnson, Marilyn Dean, Julaine Heit or Rosemary Lawrence.

Previous LWV Minneapolis Bess Mlnarik award winners are:

Bess Mlnarik, Margaret Ueland, Rosemary Booth, Louise Sheeley, Dimitra Mitchell, Betsy Sterrie, Mary Sandbo, Marguerite Benson, Shirley Ungar, Margaret Bracken, Peggy Lucas, Carol Pidcock, Jan Hively,



Mary Lou Hill, Janet Midtbo, Barbara Flanigan, Kay Kessel, Karlynn Fronek, Polly Keppel, Donna Bening, Karen Ringsrud, Barbara Dols, Peggy Pluimer, Barbara Kimer, Florence Gray, Catherine Shreves, Deborah Jindra, Susan Reinhart, Ann Duff, Alice Moormann, Mary Lou Loud, Kathy Kolb, Patricia Werner, Claire Olson, Pamela Telleen, Patricia Kovel- Jarboe, Ann Pugliese, Joan Niemiec, Carol Green, Kay Schimke, Joan Higinbotham, Janet Gendler, Margit Berg, Marion and Don Hall, Nancy Witta, Julaine Heit, Marilyn Dean, Rosemary Lawrence, Jennifer Johnson and Dorothy Lilja.

Volunteer Opportunity: Minneapolis Community Connections Conference

LWVMpls will host a booth at the Minneapolis Community Connections Conference, Saturday May 21, 8 AM to 4 PM. The event will be held at the Minneapolis Convention Center, Hall B, Level One. This is a great opportunity for LWVMpls to make connections in various Minneapolis communities to help further our voter service work and civic engagement.

Volunteers will be needed to help set up and take down the booth, staff the booth, and to walk around to meet and learn about other exhibitors. Volunteers will also have an opportunity to attend workshops that the conference will hold throughout the day. You can volunteer for the amount of time that works for you.

Mark your calendars now and look for further information soon on how to volunteer.

2022 Midterm Elections— Your Power is Your Vote!!!

BY MARILYN CANTISANO

The Voter Services Committee is preparing for the 2022 midterm elections, and we invite you to join us. We will focus on voter education and voter registration by engaging and collaborating with our community partners.

What will be on your Minneapolis ballot in 2022? U.S Representative, Governor and Lt. Governor, Secretary of State, State Auditor, Attorney General, State Senator, State Representative, County Commissioner, County Sheriff, County Attorney, Minneapolis School Board, judicial seats, and perhaps a ballot amendment question. The primary election is on August 9; the general election is on November 8, 2022. Remember that redistricting may have changed the boundaries for your state senators or representatives.

Voter Services will provide voter registration opportunities, and we will offer voter registration training again this year. In addition, we will provide outreach to engage the youth vote, and educate the community with candidate forums,

our voter guide, and a series of articles on voting provided to the local newspapers. We plan to help with neighborhood elections and continue to form partnerships with neighborhood associations, community organizations, and houses of worship.

Get involved with candidate forums and sign up for moderator and question facilitator trainings offered by LWVMN. See The Voter Update emails for current sign-up information.

The Voter Services Committee meetings are the second Wednesday of each month via Zoom at 7PM. Contact Marilyn Cantisano (Marilyncantisano@gmail.com) or Judy Zaunbrecher (jrzaunbrecher@gmail.com) for more information.

Thank You to Donors (December 2021 and January-February 2022)

Andrea Rubenstein	Deborah McNeil	Janet Mayer	Kathryn Westin	Mary Kay Eastman	Sharon Emery
Ann Manning	Debra Rappaport & Robert Zelle	Janet Merrill	Katie Anthony	Mary McEvoy & Terence Fruth	Shelby Couch
Anne Jones	Dina Bizzaro	Janice Gepner & Eric Newman	Laura Austrian	Mary Steinmetz	Susan & Charles Reinhart
Anne McLaughlin	Elisabeth Heefner	Jennifer & David Thomas	Laurel Paller-Rzepka & Andrew Rzepka	Ming-Yee Li	Susan & Steven Ellis Brown
Barb Schlaefer	Elizabeth Frampton	Joan Higinbotham	Linda Conley	Nan Upin	Susan Anderson
Barbara Jessica Shaten	Ellen Hughes	Joan Niemiec	Linda Holt	Nancy Johnson	Susan Dean
Binky & Win Rockwell	Erin Harvey	Joan Rothfuss	Lindsey Thomas	Patricia Gale	Susan Freeman
Britt Lundgren	Esther Brokaw	Joanne Strakosch	Lisa Mills	Patricia Kovel Jarboe & Mark Jarboe	Susan Hill
Camille Burke	Gail & Stuart Hanson	Josie R Johnson	Marcia & Thomas Garton	Peg Lonquist	Susan Hnastchenko
Carol & Ray Waldron	Gail Hanson	Judith & Richard Zaunbrecher	Marcia Marshall	Penelope Franchot	Susan Steffen
Carol Dines	Gay Clapp	Julia Wallace	Margaret Alberg	Polly Keppel	Susan Verrett
Carol Green	Gloria Woog Kamish	Karen Groves	Maria Henly	Rebecca Thoman	Susan Westerman
Carol Moller	Gwen Myers	Karen Ringsrud	Marie Hauser	Robert Henderson	Suzann Willhite
Carrie Lichtenberg	Harriet Johnson	Karlynn Fronek	Marilyn Borea	Sally Jorgensen	Suzanne Bross
Catherine & Patrick Egan	Jan Emerson	Katharine Fournier	Marilyn Cantisano	Sally Pundt	Suzanne Moseman
Catherine Shreves	Jan Wagner	Katherine Low	Marion Hall	Sally Sawyer	The Head Foundation
Christine Bremer	Jane & Jennifer Starr	Kathie Cerra	Marsha Carlson	Sandra Duclos Field	Virginia Pirrotta
Christine Bremer	Jane Greenberg	Kathleen Oganovic	Mary Katherine Johnson	Sandra Evenson	Wendy & Sidney Farrar
Colleen Moffatt Kimer	Jane Olmstead Papageorgiou			Sandra Sweat Hull	



Office:

310 East 38th St, Ste 205
Minneapolis, MN
55409

Mailing:

P. O. Box 7570
Minneapolis, MN
55407-7570

612.333.6319 | vote@lwwmpls.org | lwwmpls.org

MISSION

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

2021-2022 LWV Minneapolis Board of Directors

- Colleen Moriarty, President
- Alice Moormann, Past President
- Lisa Reed, Secretary
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- Kitty Westin, Advocacy and Action Director
- Nancy Albrecht, Membership Director
- Rebecca Thoman, Development Director
- Marilyn Cantisano, Voter Services Director
- Ellen van Iwaarden, Program Director
- Deborah Sugerman, Communications Director
- Saralyn Romanishan, Community Engagement Director

Welcome New Members (December 2021 - February 2022)

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Linda Bormann | Virginia Pirotta |
| Shelby Couch | Barbara Jessica Shaten |
| Sandra Field Duclos | Mary Steinmetz |
| Peg Lonquist | Suzann Willhite |
| Kathleen Oganovic | |

Important Dates

for April 2022 - June 2022

LWVMpls Board of Directors Thursday, April 21, 2022,
6 PM via Zoom.

LWVMpls Board of Directors Thursday, May 19, 2022,
6 PM via Zoom.

Units will meet at their regularly scheduled times in April and May 2022. For full information visit our website www.lwwmpls.org.

NOTE: We do not yet have a date for the Annual Meeting.

Civic Buzz

Civic Buzz: Tuesday, April 5, 2022
Topic: Sustainability and Efforts to Combat Climate Change by the City of Minneapolis

Civic Buzz: Tuesday, May 3, 2022
Topic: Education