



Bulletin

League of Women Voters® of Dane County, Inc.

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Office hours: Monday–Thursday, 8–1

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President's Message

Christine Clements,
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Spring has arrived, marking one year since the pandemic began and we went into lockdown. It has been a year of challenge, resilience, innovation, dogged

Tuesday, April 13, 2021

7:00-8:00 p.m.

Watts Ahead—*financing our energy future*

*A League of Women Voters of Dane County
Virtual Public Issues Forum*

Electric grids keep electrons flowing to consumers, but when renewables are introduced, the grid management has to change. Please join us as we delve into the logistical, legal, and financial realities of the electricity sector and our clean energy future.

This Public Issues Forum in our Climate Crisis Series will power up with a brief tutorial on the U.S. electric grid. Next, our speakers **Scott R. Smith**, Assistant Vice President of Business and Regulatory Strategy at [Madison Gas and Electric Company](#) will discuss the utilities perspective of bringing on renewable energy, **Thomas C. Myers**, Director of Business Development at [Slipstream](#), will talk about the key role of efficiency when scaling up new technologies for use by utilities, governments, foundations and industries, and **Jason MacDuff**, Vice President at [green penny bank](#) will explain how greenpenny helps individuals use their money as their voice for fiscal and environmental advocacy. Together with moderator **Carol Barford**, Director of the Center for Sustainability and the Global Environment (SAGE), and LWVDC Climate Crisis Subcommittee member we will find answers to the following questions, and more: How does the history of the electricity sector contribute to today's current challenges? How can everyone benefit equally/fairly from clean energy and energy efficiency? What specific policies will amp up our shift to a carbon-free energy system?

You can find out more about the forum [here](#). Please register [here](#).

Forums are free and open to the public.

determination, and accomplishment. Let us take a moment to enjoy the arrival of warmer, sunnier days. Soon we will have the opportunity to work together in-person again.

Over the last month, we celebrated International Women's Day, and watched the For the People Act (HR1) and the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021 pass the House of Representatives and move to the Senate. Additionally, the House of Representatives passed a joint resolution to remove the arbitrary ratification deadline for the Equal Rights Amendment. The spring and summer demand additional efforts to support these bills' passage in the U.S. Senate, and continue the fight against voter suppression demonstrated in proposed State bills that disproportionately limit voting access for voters of color, students, and people with disabilities.

We are also preparing to address issues of governance in the Dane County League. In the last three *Bulletins*, you have had an opportunity to review some of the proposed bylaws' changes that you will be voting on later in May. You have also had the chance to review the proposed slate of nominees for Board leadership positions and make "nominations from the floor." You will soon be receiving the full package of materials, including the proposed 2021-2022 budget. In order to give members an opportunity to ask questions, LWVDC will be holding a member Q & A at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 6. Click [here](#) to join; no registration necessary. The packet of annual meeting materials will be mailed out on April 22. Please review the materials and plan to join us with your questions. In addition, please plan to return your ballots to the office so they are received by the May 26 deadline. And do mark your calendars for a general member meeting at 5:30 p.m. on June 2, where Board Members will share brief highlights from last year and strategic priorities for 2021-2022. Our Carrie Chapman Catt Award winner will also be recognized at this event.

On March 17, 2021, the House passed the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act with bipartisan support, just one day after the Atlanta spa shootings where eight individuals lost their lives. With immense sadness and grief, the LWVDC stands with our Asian American allies in mourning the loss of life from the March 16 shootings and denounces the targeting of Asian Americans for COVID-19 scapegoating and other anti-Asian rhetoric. Racism and hate have no place in our democracy. We will continue to work toward the ideals espoused by our poet laureate Amanda Gorman in her inaugural poem to "seek harm to none and harmony for all" and to "lift our gazes not to what stands between us, but what stands before us" in creating a more perfect democracy.

Solidarity with our Asian and Asian American Communities

The League's mission is to create a more perfect democracy. Democracy cannot work if people live with fear of violence and persecution because of their race, gender, or any other aspect of their humanity. What we witnessed in [Georgia](#) on March 16 was not just the act of a single domestic terrorist, but a symptom of anti-Asian rhetoric, harassment and violence, which is on the rise. The League of Women of Voters Dane County stands in solidarity with our Asian and Asian American siblings in denouncing misogyny, xenophobia, hate incidents and hate crimes.

We encourage all our members to take the following acts of solidarity:

- Make donations to [Freedom, Inc](#) and [The Hmong Institute](#) so they can continue providing direct relief services for the Asian and Asian American community in greater Madison.
- Attend a free virtual [Bystander Intervention Training](#) to learn how to stand up for identity-based harassment in your community and online.
- Use [these resources](#) to understand the historical precedents of this moment and strategies for action.

If you have experienced a hate crime yourself, we encourage you to file a report with local law enforcement. We hope victims of hate incidents will also submit an online report at www.aapihatecrimes.org. Take care of yourselves and each other.

In Memory of Mary Bean

Christine Clements, president@lwvdanecounty.org

In our February Bulletin, we honored the memory of longtime League member and past president Mary Bean, who passed away on November 27, 2020. Inspired by Mary's life and example, League member Sara Markham wrote this lovely poem that captures Mary's spirit.

Mary Bean

Her hair silver, gray, and white,
Braided and long
Her demeanor kind and mannerly
Her eyes alert with interest
Her mind active and engaged
Her ways of working rational, well thought-out, purposeful,
and convincing,
Bringing brightness to us all.
To office workers
She was considerate and patient.
She beautified the office every spring with
A hyacinth, carefully cultivated in her home over wintertime,
Its distinctive fragrance distracting one pleasantly from work
momentarily.
For the League of Women Voters of Dane County
She upheld the League's standards, positions, and
procedures,
Supported its emphasis on community outreach and
information,
Always ready to raise her hand to explain a valid point or to
ask a pertinent question.
Her name became synonymous with the *Candidates' Answers*
publication
And for her many ways to GOTV,
Even by producing a document to demonstrate the historical
legacy of
How one vote actually has made a difference in elections.
A dedicated gardener, she delighted in the summer excess of her cherry tomatoes and red raspberries.
Among the early ones to embrace solar energy in her home,
Ride a recombinant bicycle as her mode of transit,
And request a vegetarian choice in planning an LWVDC event,
She was undeterred from being uniquely unconventional in her time.

—Sara Markham

30 November 2020 (Mary Bean, b. 1936, d. 29 November 2020, Madison, Wisconsin)

In Case You Missed It...

Have you seen the League's Blog, *Swinging for the Fences: At Bat for Climate and Democracy*, lately?

If not, there's lots to catch up on since the Bulletin was last published. In the most recent blog, [Make America's Infrastructure Great Again](#), LWVDC webmaster Brook Soltvedt offers a compelling case on the need to invest in Wisconsin's aged infrastructure; in [Iowa Stubborn—Reducing Carbon on a Major Scale](#), retired meteorologist Ralph Petersen builds on a NYT Op-Ed piece on the strategy of using subsidies to help farmers push an agriculture and food system transformation toward sustainability and climate resilience (2/28).

Since the last Bulletin, the Program/Advocacy Committee has also produced another virtual forum: [How Does a Divided Wisconsin Move Forward?](#) (3/9) featured political science professors and community organizers in conversation about what it will take to reduce the state's political divide. Click the hyperlink if you missed this important forum, and as always, feel free to share it with your friends on social media!

Meet Kate Vickery, LWVDC's First Executive Director

Meg Gordon, mbgordon721@gmail.com

Her laugh is hearty, her words crisp but peppered with lyric *y'all*s that belie her central Michigan roots. When she enthusiastically nods her head in agreement it's an instant uplift. This is Kate Vickery, the first executive director of the League of Women Voters of Dane County. Zoom continues to be our meeting place as this pandemic year drags on. The platform adds tedium from nuances lost in transmission, but Vickery's zeal makes it through loud and clear. She is all in for helping the League as it continues growing and grappling with the current cultural shift that has many organizations with deep, mostly White histories and problematic founders wrestling with this moment.



Kate Vickery with her family. Photo provided by Kate.

"I see myself as adding capacity, but without squelching the organic, grassroots nature of this organization," says Vickery. "A priority for me is to better position the League as a strong and strategic advocacy organization at the city and county level."

Helping the League embody its stated goals to be a more inclusive, partnership-driven organization with communities of color and young people is also a top priority for Vickery. For her, it means helping the League develop what she calls *true thought-partnerships* with other civic engagement groups. Vickery is a strong believer in focusing on what we have in common—seeing others with respect and curiosity. "When we lose our curiosity, we lose our empathy and ability to see each other," she says.

Born in Arizona, Vickery moved with her family to Vermont, Alabama, Wisconsin and Texas before settling in Ithaca, MI, where she and her younger brother grew up. Her father was a communications professor at Alma College and her mother a public elementary school teacher. After Vickery graduated from Kalamazoo College with a liberal arts degree, she entered a doctoral program in sociology at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD. Finding the culture hyper-competitive and not particularly supportive she opted out and moved to Austin with her Kalamazoo classmate and now-husband Kyle Shelton, where he completed his doctorate in 20th century urban history and transportation at the University of Texas at Austin.

While in Austin, Vickery sought to chart a new path for her career, working a wide variety of nonprofit and public sector jobs and volunteering with community-based organizations and co-ops. Eventually, she got back to her higher education, earning master's degrees in public policy and urban planning. Wrapping up graduate school in 2014, the family moved to Houston where her son, Julius, was born.

In Houston, Vickery consulted and eventually became the first executive director of a nonprofit focused on helping immigrants access legal counsel and other services. Vickery watched the early fallout of the previous administration's anti-immigrant agenda while on maternity leave following the birth of her second child, daughter Etta. "It was our job to help mobilize Houston's legal community to respond," she says, so back she went, clipping her leave short.

Not surprisingly, four years fighting policy-induced trauma took its toll on Vickery and many of her Houston-area colleagues. She comes to the League following a period of "working on my physical and mental health." Her new

League position offers a much-needed change, and she is thrilled to be applying her skills in the civic engagement space.

“I’m very aware that I am a White woman with a privileged education working in the nonprofit space, which is mostly White.” For her part, Vickery says she is doing the “deep internal work where I can be of the greatest service and use my privilege impactfully.”

When not tackling League issues, Vickery can be found taking long walks and enjoying time with her young family. She loves to cook and “experiment with new stuff—Kyle just gave me a new cookbook by the chef at an Austin Thai restaurant where I used to work,” she says. Her literature tastes are broad but for now, fantasy and science fiction books make up her 2020-2021 choices and she is currently making her way through Octavia E. Butler’s works.

Applying wisdom gained from her work experiences, Vickery believes the League’s “high-functioning and meaningful volunteer efforts should pivot away from a culture of urgency, and instead aim for doing less but doing more with intention and care,” she says. “Volunteer time is what makes this organization work and we don’t want to create an organization that burns out volunteers. Justice takes time, equity takes time. We can’t just check the box and call it done. There is no endpoint to the work.”

Kate is interested in getting to know League members and welcomes any opportunities to build community. Please feel free to reach out to her to schedule a conversation: kate@lwvdanecounty.org.

Why I Give – Ingrid Rothe

Megan Severson, meganseverson@gmail.com

About 10 years ago, Ingrid Rothe saw that efforts to undermine voting were rising in Wisconsin, including new voter identification requirements and changes to election administration.

“I was so angry that we were entering yet another period where we were going to deny people the right to vote,” Rothe said. “Even today, the right to vote—especially for people of color, people who are poor, seniors and people like students who move a lot—is made so much more difficult. This is so counter to what we say we all believe in.”

So, when her friend asked her to co-chair the League of Women Voters of Dane County, Rothe couldn’t refuse. She was especially drawn to the work because of her passion for civil rights. “I saw these voting restrictions as another attack on people of color. I thought that after years of struggle we were done with that kind of overt racial discrimination,” Rothe recalled. “I knew we still have a long way to go in terms of subtle and structural racial discrimination. But at the time, I thought at least we were no longer in the business of passing laws designed to target people of color. It was naive.”

Rothe appreciates that the League places an emphasis on educating voters and, while being strictly non-partisan, the organization takes positions on issues that matter.

“Voting rights, non-discrimination, clean water, access to health care, eliminating poverty - these are all things that we need for a healthy society,” said Rothe. “And now is a very good time to donate. For those of us who have received stimulus checks and don’t need the money, donating to the League is a great place to contribute.”

Valentine's Day/Birthday Campaign Thank You

Linda Dietrich, linda.gfd@gmail.com

Every February the League of Women Voters of Dane County launches a combined fundraising campaign to celebrate Valentine's Day and our League's birthday. This year was especially important, as we officially marked the start of our second century.

40 generous member and non-member donors contributed \$4,436.50—funds that are essential in ensuring the work of the League continues.

Despite the challenges of the last 12 months, the League helped a record number of people register to vote, increased the number of our outreach programs and continued to impact local and regional politics. In addition, the League remains committed to addressing issues such as Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; redistricting; social and economic justice; and climate change.

Our sincere thanks go to the donors who contributed to this campaign and to our other requests for support. Your gifts to the League sustain these programs and so much more.

Please consider helping us maintain this impressive tradition with a donation of any amount by sending a check to LWVDC, 720 Hill St., Suite 200, Madison, WI 53705-3539 or by visiting our website at lwvdanecounty.org to give online.

Notice to Members: Memorial Trust Fund

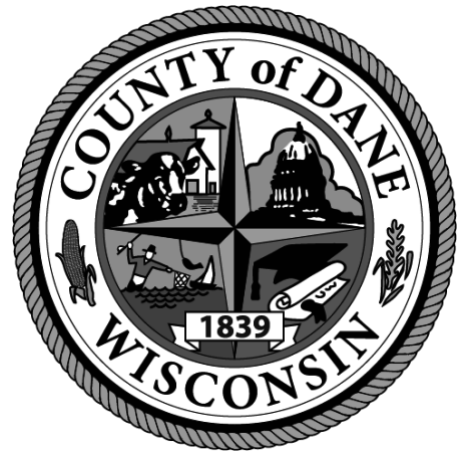
In compliance with League policy related to the Memorial Trust Fund, the Board gives notice of intent to withdraw up to 15% of the market value of the Memorial Trust Fund as of January 1 upon approval by 2/3 of the LWVDC Board and approval of a majority of the members present at the fiscal year 20-21 general meeting.

The Board welcomes questions about this via email [treasurer@lwvdanecounty.org] and at the Member Q&A on May 6 at 6:30 p.m. Click [here](#) to join. No registration necessary. To receive the link by email, contact office@lwvdanecounty.org.



The Dane County “Justice League”

Laurie Egge, laurieegre@gmail.com



As a member of the League’s Observer Corps, I’ve learned quite a bit about local criminal justice. Recently, I chose to observe the Dane County Criminal Justice Council (CJC). It was formed to implement more efficient, data-driven criminal justice and to ensure use of the best practices for justice, equity, and public safety in the legal system.

CJC members are County Board Chair Analeise Eicher, District Attorney Ismael Ozanne, County Executive Joe Parisi, Sheriff Dave Mahoney, Presiding Judge Valerie Bailey-Rhin, and Clerk of Courts Carlo Esqueda. Advisory members include local police departments, the Public Defender, and others. The CJC has also partnered with seven national groups such as the Institute for Justice Planning in order to study justice policies. To delve further into issues and resources, the CJC formed three subcommittees: Behavioral Health, Racial Disparities, and Pretrial Services.

Currently, the CJC is looking at a “sequential intercept model” prepared for Dane County by the Policy Research Center. This would start before an individual might intersect with the justice system and will go all the way through probation and parole, focusing on people with behavioral health needs and how to “intercept” their involvement with police, courts, and jails.

Mental health crisis intervention is a critical first step. The Madison city council has endorsed two teams consisting of a medic and a social worker to respond to some 911 calls, based on the CAHOOTS model. CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Street) is a program developed in Eugene, OR, to provide crisis counseling, suicide prevention, substance abuse, housing services, and transportation to social services and medical care. The CAHOOTS program in Eugene responded to 24,000 calls in one year, and police backup was needed for only 250 of them.

In addition, Dane County now has a Behavioral Health Resource Center to help any Dane County resident seeking access to behavioral health services. This center on Badger Road operates independently of insurance and financial status, age, ability or legal status. It is not a treatment center, but a clearing house to provide advice on the confusing myriad of treatment services available.

For more information about the Criminal Justice Council, [please visit their website](#).

To learn more about the Observer Corps, [please visit our page](#) on the LVWDC website.

Amended Bylaws, Part 3: Good Governance Provisions

This is the third and final of three articles you will see in the *Bulletin* about proposed amendments to the LWVDC Bylaws. At our Annual Meeting in May, members will be asked to approve these amendments. Bylaws provide a broad blueprint for how the Board operates and in our League, the bylaws can only be amended by a vote of the members. Links to the current bylaws and the draft that is being submitted to the members for approval can be found at the end of this article.

There are four areas of change in the amended bylaws that reflect sound management practices. The first reflects League practices during 2020 and 2021 by authorizing “Electronically-Conferenced Meetings.” Early on, the LWVWI offered advice and processes for the use of virtual meetings, but this provision will be helpful when the pandemic ends because it gives LWVDC the choice between in-person and virtual meetings.

The second amendment pertains to member requests for a meeting of the membership. Currently 15 members can make this request to the Board. The only amendment suggested is that the members making such a request state the reason for the meeting.

The third amendment is the addition of Article XI that spells out the LWVDC policy of indemnifying officers, Board members, and League volunteers to the full extent of Wisconsin law. While we hope this never occurs, this provision would be important if a League member were sued based on allegations arising from the member’s League activities.

The final amendment shifts the responsibility of naming delegates to the state and national conventions to the Board instead of requiring a vote of the membership. Of course, a call for volunteers will go out from the Board in a timely manner.

Click [here](#) to access the Current Bylaws.

Click [here](#) to view the Amended Bylaws that will be submitted to the members for approval at the 2021 Annual Meeting.

Contact Maria Spinozzi (mspinozzi@gmail.com) with any questions.

Upcoming Annual Meeting Materials Information Session

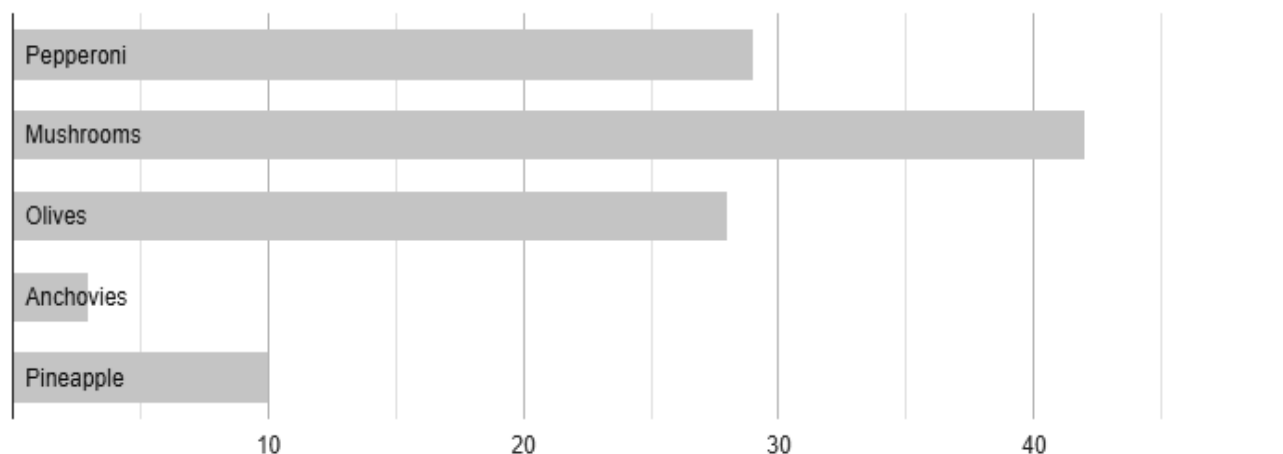
You’ll soon be receiving materials for the annual member meeting, including some items that you’ll be voting on. Have questions before you vote? League members will be available on Thursday, May 6 at 6:30 p.m. to answer any questions you may have. Click [here](#) to join. No registration necessary.

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

Alternative Voting Systems Study: Mock Election Results

Approval Voting

Thanks to all who participated in this month's online poll using approval voting!
With 50 ballots cast, [here](#) are the results:



Mock election results using Block Approval voting. Since this election had two winners, both Mushrooms and Pepperoni won.

In approval voting, voters simply choose *all* options of which they approve rather than selecting just one. This system was most recently approved by voters in St. Louis, MO for use in municipal elections in Fall 2020's [Prop D](#), which was [endorsed](#) by the Metro St. Louis LWV.

Since this was a multi-winner election, the mock election used block approval voting. In block approval voting, all the votes are counted, and the top X vote-getters win, where X is the number of intended winners. In this case, the two winners are mushrooms, with 42 approvals, and pepperoni, with 29 approvals.

As discussed in last month's article on proportional representation, another form of approval voting for multi-winner elections is sequential proportional approval voting (SPAV). In SPAV the voting process is exactly the same. The only thing that changes is how the votes are tallied. We've tallied the ballots from this mock election using SPAV below to compare the SPAV results to the block approval results.

Pizza Toppings
Choose as many as you like.
Top two will win.

- ☒ Pepperoni
- ☒ Mushrooms
- ☒ Olives
- ☐ Anchovies
- ☐ Pineapple

As you can see, in SPAV all ballots start with a weight of 1. The votes are tallied, and the first winner is determined, in this case, mushrooms has won the first spot.

	Ballot Weight	Pepperoni	Mushrooms	Olives	Anchovies	Pineapple
Ballot 1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Ballot 2	1	0	1	1	0	0
Ballot 3	1	0	1	0	0	0
Ballot 4	1	1	0	1	0	0
Ballot 5	1	1	0	1	0	0

...						
Totals		29	42	28	3	10

First round of tallying using SPAV. All ballots have a weight of 1.
Only a sample of ballots are shown here, but the totals reflect the totals of all 50 ballots.

After the first winner is determined, SPAV requires that all ballots that contributed to that winner be reweighted. So, in our mock election, all ballots that contributed to mushrooms now have a weight of .5, and the totals are recalculated. Pepperoni wins the next spot in our mock election using SPAV.

	Weights	Pepperoni	Mushrooms	Olives	Anchovies	Pineapple
Ballot 1	0.5	0.5	1	0	0	0
Ballot 2	0.5	0	1	0.5	0	0
Ballot 3	0.5	0	1	0	0	0
Ballot 4	1	1	0	1	0	0
Ballot 5	1	1	0	1	0	0

...						
Totals		17.5		16.5	1.5	6.5

Second round of tallying using SPAV. Ballots that contributed to mushrooms' win have been reweighted.
Totals are recalculated to determine the next winner.
Only a sample of ballots are shown here, but the totals reflect the totals of all 50 ballots.

In our mock election, using SPAV instead of block approval voting to tally the votes leads to the same outcome. Mushrooms and pepperoni were the two winners in both methods.



Alternative Voting Systems Study: Consensus Questions & Study Summit

In the coming months members will be asked to respond to some consensus questions by the committee studying alternative voting systems. Your responses to these questions will help inform the study committee's recommendation to the Board regarding whether LWVDC should adopt a position on alternative voting systems and what that position may be. We have provided a sample of potential consensus questions that members may see below.

Members have access to many resources to educate themselves prior to responding to the consensus questions. These [resources can be found here](#) and include:

- Written Study
- Video Presentations
- Compilation of Related Bulletin Articles

We will be hosting a **Study Summit on June 3 at 7 p.m.** Members can attend this event to discuss the consensus questions. Members will also have an option to respond to the consensus survey without attending the event. The finalized consensus question survey will be sent out in the May *Bulletin*.

Sample Potential Consensus Questions

1. Plurality voting is serving the needs of Wisconsin voters. Agree / Disagree / Unsure
2. Wisconsin statutes currently require that plurality voting must be used in all elections. Wisconsin statutes should allow for more local control over which electoral systems are used in local elections. Agree / Disagree / Unsure
3. Wisconsin should eliminate separate partisan primaries and hold unified primaries. A unified primary, sometimes called a jungle primary, is a single multi-winner primary in which all candidates run in the same race regardless of party. Agree / Disagree / Unsure
4. Single-winner general elections should employ any of the following electoral systems. (choose all that are acceptable) Plurality / Approval / Ranked Choice / Unsure

Rothstein's *The Color of Law* to be Discussed in April

Lisa Janairo, ljanairo129@gmail.com

The phrase “systemic racism” is used widely today to describe the infrastructure of government policies that create favorable conditions for White Americans while denying these same benefits to African Americans as well as other populations.

A clear illustration of this type of built-in bias in public policy is the treatment of Section 8 housing vouchers for low-income renters compared to the mortgage interest and property tax deductions for homeowners. The latter is available to any homeowner that chooses to itemize deductions on their taxes: if you qualify, you receive these deductions (with some restrictions for high-income filers). In contrast, not all eligible applicants for Section 8 housing vouchers actually receive assistance. Instead, millions of Americans who qualify for such assistance have to go without. They're put on a waiting list, often for many years, because Congress doesn't appropriate enough money to meet the need.

Why the difference in treatment of these two expenses for the federal government — tax deductions versus voucher payments? Could it be because most (not all) Americans who take the mortgage and property tax deduction are White, while most (not all) Americans who apply for Section 8 housing vouchers are African American? According to author Richard Rothstein, this is exactly the reason for the difference. In his impressive work *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, Rothstein documents numerous examples of implicitly racist policies, like housing subsidies, and explicitly racist ones implemented at the federal, state and local levels of government in the United States.

The subject of next month's LWVDC book discussion and quarterly Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Café, *The Color of Law* is an essential read for anyone who wants to understand how and why our cities became segregated and remain so despite intentional efforts to integrate them. Rothstein explodes the myth of “*de facto* segregation,” or private acts of discrimination being the cause of housing segregation. Instead, he traces the long history of “*de jure* segregation,” or intentional action by governments at all levels to keep the races separate and to confer favor on White Americans while explicitly excluding Black Americans from housing-related opportunities. The book tells the story of Supreme Court decisions, starting with the 1917 *Buchanan* decision prohibiting race-based zoning (on libertarian grounds, not progressive ones), and the subsequent actions to circumvent these decisions. From the National Association of Real Estate Boards' 1924 code of ethics requiring agents to keep neighborhoods segregated, to the condemnation of land for public purposes like parks and highways, Rothstein weaves together the many threads of discriminatory practices that our government enacted and defended or in which our government was complicit.

Rothstein's core argument “is that African Americans were unconstitutionally denied the means and the right to integration in middle-class neighborhoods, and because the denial was state-sponsored, the nation is obligated to remedy it.” As one example, he cites a 1973 study by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which found that property taxes in low-income African American neighborhoods were systematically overassessed, while White middle-class neighborhoods were under-assessed. In Chicago, for example, a White middle-class neighborhood was assessed one-half the property tax burden of an African American community. In Baltimore, the tax burden for a White middle-class neighborhood was one-ninth that of an African American neighborhood on the east side of the city.

Rothstein observes that one result of African American homeowners having to pay higher property taxes than their White counterparts is that their neighborhoods were more inclined to deteriorate. Another outcome in some cities, like Chicago, was greater likelihood of tax delinquencies for Black homeowners, which allowed speculators to pay the property taxes, seize the property, and evict the homeowners. Rothstein underscores that these

“discriminatory assessment practices” were “not simply a result of vague and ill-defined ‘structural racism’ but a direct consequence of county assessors’ contempt for their Fourteenth Amendment responsibilities” to provide all persons equal protection under the law.

The Color of Law offers up a number of policy “fixes” to consider for promoting an integrated society, including improvements to high school and middle school curricula to teach the complete history of housing segregation; reforming and fully funding the Section 8 housing program; and banning exclusionary zoning ordinances or those that impose high minimum requirements for the square footage of lots intended for single-family homes. Rothstein acknowledges the sad truth, however, that “it will be impossible to fully untangle the web of inequality that we’ve woven” over nearly a century of deliberate government-sanctioned segregation.

To learn about this “forgotten history,” discuss how our own neighborhoods may have been affected, and brainstorm about ways the LWVDC might contribute to “untangling” this “web of inequality,” grab a copy of *The Color of Law* from your local library and sign up to discuss the book with other members. We’ll be hosting separate book discussions on **April 17 and April 19**, both on Zoom at **10-11:30 a.m.** In addition, for readers who wish to continue the conversation started at the book discussions — or for other members who simply want to be part of the conversation but cannot attend one of the book discussions — the DEI Committee welcomes all members to attend our second **quarterly DEI Café on Zoom on April 24 at 10-11:30 a.m.** There is no charge to attend any of these events and we welcome nonmembers as guests. Register for the book discussions and/or the DEI Café using [this Google form](#). Contact me at ljanairo129@gmail.com if you have any questions about these April events on *The Color of Law*.

Book Group Readings Prompt New Questions

Louise S. Robbins, louise.s.robbins@gmail.com

League members have been deeply engaged with tough topics that require our full attention. I recently finished Isabel Wilkerson’s *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* and was contemplating how I would write about this challenging book. I had begun reading the next book for discussion, Kathleen Belew’s *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America*.

Then, on January 6, 2021, an insurrection was under way at the United States Capitol.

I was unable to write about *Caste*. I was unable to write at all, but followed television coverage of what was most certainly a White-supremacist paramilitary-led action that seemed foreshadowed by the pages of Belew’s book, published a few years earlier.

Commentators asked why the preparations for the rally called by supporters of the defeated president had not been more adequate. Observers recalled that the peaceful Black Lives Matter rally months earlier had been met with a military-like response. Could it be that caste was the major issue: people of color could be thus policed; White people could not?

A couple of days after the siege, Rep. Dean Phillips (D-Minn), spoke of his experience during that day and apologized to his colleagues of color. He recounted that he realized that Democrats in the chamber had no way to defend themselves and “I screamed to my colleagues to follow me, to follow me across the aisle to the Republican side of the chamber, so that we could blend in—so that we could blend in.” Blending in would be a way for Democrats to protect themselves—if they could be mistaken for Republicans. Phillips suddenly realized that “blending in” was not an option for his colleagues of color. To understand White privilege, “It took a violent

mob of insurrectionists & lightning-bolt moment in this very room," he said. To understand hierarchies of race, Wilkerson says that if you can't change it (unlike class, for example), it's caste.

While there is still much we don't know about January 6, we do know that it reflects the United States' caste system, which posits that opportunity and success is a zero-sum game. It subjugates people of color based on contrived and deeply ingrained theories ranging from the religious to the pseudo-scientific to who knows what. By subjugating the low caste group, the subjugating group "wins." The caste system violently fights any movement that seeks to change it. While links to previous White power violence may not be obvious in the January 6 Capitol invasion except in the names of some of the groups, the kind of terrorism that has been used to maintain the caste system runs as a thread through our history. So too does suppression of voting, now going on ostensibly legally in state houses across the country even while Congress takes up legislation to protect and expand those rights.

In the days of the Ku Klux Klan, maintaining the caste system was carried out by men in sheets, who hid their identities and saw themselves as supporting the proper order of things, maintaining the great chain of being, and, in parts of the country at least, working in concert with the government. Since the Civil Rights movement, and the expansion of voting rights, domestic terrorists instead proudly snap selfies as they try to take down our democracy. They work against the government.

Maintaining the United States' caste system has always been at the root of much overt violence that appears to come from lone actors and to be aimed at a variety of targets. How can we convince our fellow citizens that the caste system harms not only the oppressed but the oppressor, as Wilkerson shows? How do we move ahead as one country, as one country indivisible, with liberty and justice for all?



New Members

We welcome these new members who joined us in February. An [updated member directory](#) is available on our website. If you have forgotten the password, there is a link to contact the webmaster for help.

Do you want to join the League?
[Sign up for a membership online.](#)

Mary Christian
Nancy Gloe
Anna Hauser

Margaret Karls
Gundega Korsts
Kate Parsons

Betty Ptacek
Laura Riggs
Kate Vickery

Contributions

Our work is supported by financial contributions beyond membership dues. Thank you to these supporters who donated in February.

Valentine's 2020-2021 & Birthday Campaign

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Discussion Units

Many League members meet in one of six units to discuss the topic of each forum, using the study materials provided by the program planners to guide the conversation. Each discussion concludes with recommendations for further study or action. Units meet regularly at different times and locations (all are in Madison unless otherwise noted). Find a unit meeting that's convenient for you and participate! Visit this [web page](#) for more information.

During the pandemic, all unit meetings will be held virtually. If you are new to a unit, please let the host know that you plan to attend so they can send you a link to the Zoom meeting.

Please consult the [calendar](#) for details about specific meetings.

Unit: Prairie Ridge (Oakwood Village). *This group is open to Prairie Ridge residents only.*

Time: 3:30 p.m., third Monday of the month

Leaders: [Dorothy Wheeler](#) (608-630-5163)

Unit: West / Middleton

Time: 6:30 p.m., third Monday of the month

Leader: [Merilyn Kupferberg](#) (608-831-3267) and

[Gloria Meyer](#) (608-288-8160)

Unit: Central West

Time: 12:45 p.m., third Wednesday of the month

Leader: [Kathy Johnson](#) (608-238-1785)

Unit: Northeast Side

Time: 3:30 p.m., third Wednesday of the month

Leaders: [Karen Gunderson](#) (608-729-4351)

Unit: Downtown Dinner

Time: 5:15 p.m., third Wednesday of the month

Leader: [Ingrid Rothe](#) (608-556-3174)

Unit: Campus

Time: 6:30 p.m., third Sunday of the month

Leader: [Laura Grueneberg](#) (502-235-0023)

Upcoming Events

Apr. 13	Virtual Issues Forum, 7 p.m.
Apr. 14	Board Meeting, 5:30 p.m.
Apr. 19	LWVDC Book Group, 10 a.m.
Apr. 24	DEI Café, 10 a.m.
May 12	Board Meeting, 5:30 p.m.
June 2	Annual Meeting, 5:30 p.m.

2021 Elections

Apr. 6 Spring Election

