

LWW[®] Bulletin

August 2023

League of Women Voters of Dane County

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Office hours: Monday–Thursday, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

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Welcome to the New *Bulletin*!

Amanda Hingst (she/her), *Bulletin* Editor, bulletin@lwvdanecounty.org

As you can see, the *Bulletin* has a new format. This format makes the *Bulletin* more accessible because it is easier to read on different devices, such as mobile phones and tablets. It will also allow us to promote stories from the *Bulletin* on social media, broadening our reach.

Please send any feedback about the new format to bulletin@lwvdanecounty.org.



President's Message: Annual Meeting

Barb Feeney (she/her), president@lwvdanecounty.org

For the first time since 2019, League members had the simple pleasure of gathering in person for our Annual Meeting. The shelter at Elver Park was the setting for carrying out our necessary business of approving a budget, electing new Board members and approving program topics for the upcoming year. Newly elected Board members include Lili Crane (Vice President), Julie Allen (Treasurer), Amber Rottier (Secretary), Beth Fultz (Director of Voter Service), and Jill Jokela (Director of Fund Development).

The highlight of the meeting was bestowing the Defender of Democracy award on Aileen Nettleton. This award is given annually to a member who has made a significant contribution to LWVDC over a period of years. You can read more about Aileen's significant contributions below.

In the months ahead, our members will learn more about the strategic plan that was recently completed. The plan includes practical, action-focused steps to strengthen our organizational structure and expand our reach in the community. An important element of the plan is to make a shift from being a "working board" to becoming a "strategic board." The path to that end is not completely clear,

but one way it will manifest is fewer Board meetings and a tight focus on prioritizing implementation of the plan elements over the next nine months. With this, LWVDC will be well-positioned for the whirlwind of the 2024 election season.

Management consultant Peter Drucker said: “Unless commitment is made, there are only promises and hopes... but no plans.” We thank and honor Aileen and other members like her whose commitment to “empowering voters and defending democracy” has exceeded simple promises and platitudes by making and implementing the plans that have kept LWVDC moving forward.

To all of you, our members and friends who faithfully show your commitment with your contributions of time and money—thank you!



2023-2024 Board members (from left) Sue Jennik, Lili Crane, Jill Jokela, Beth Fultz, and Barb Feeney



Excellent turnout at the Annual Meeting

Defender of Democracy Award: Aileen Nettleton

The Defender of Democracy Award recognizes outstanding service as a champion of the League's mission of empowering voters and defending democracy. This year's award went to Aileen Nettleton.



Aileen Nettleton grew up in northeast Ohio and central Washington. Though she lived in small communities, her parents regularly discussed international affairs at home. In high school, Aileen further expanded her worldview as an exchange student in Sweden.

Aileen attended Central Washington State College and was involved in the civil rights movement. She met and married Al Nettleton. After some detours to Washington and California for graduate school, Al and Aileen moved to Madison in 1969.

Aileen worked as a reading specialist for the Madison Metropolitan School District. During the last 20 years of her career, she worked in schools with many low-income students and families.

Along the way, the couple had two children, Anna and Greg, who in turn brought

Al and Aileen the joy of four grandchildren. The Nettletons were active in the Dudgeon Monroe Neighborhood Association and Aileen served as the newsletter editor. They also served in various board and committee positions of the Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society. Aileen continues to be active on its Caring Committee, which provides personal assistance to members of the congregation.

Aileen retired from her job and joined the LWVDC in 2007. Her volunteer time with the League was initially limited to short-term voter registration projects as she took on grandchild-care responsibilities. As her grandchildren needed less of her time, she was asked to serve as the LWVDC President in 2018 for a two-year term. Some initiatives during her tenure included:

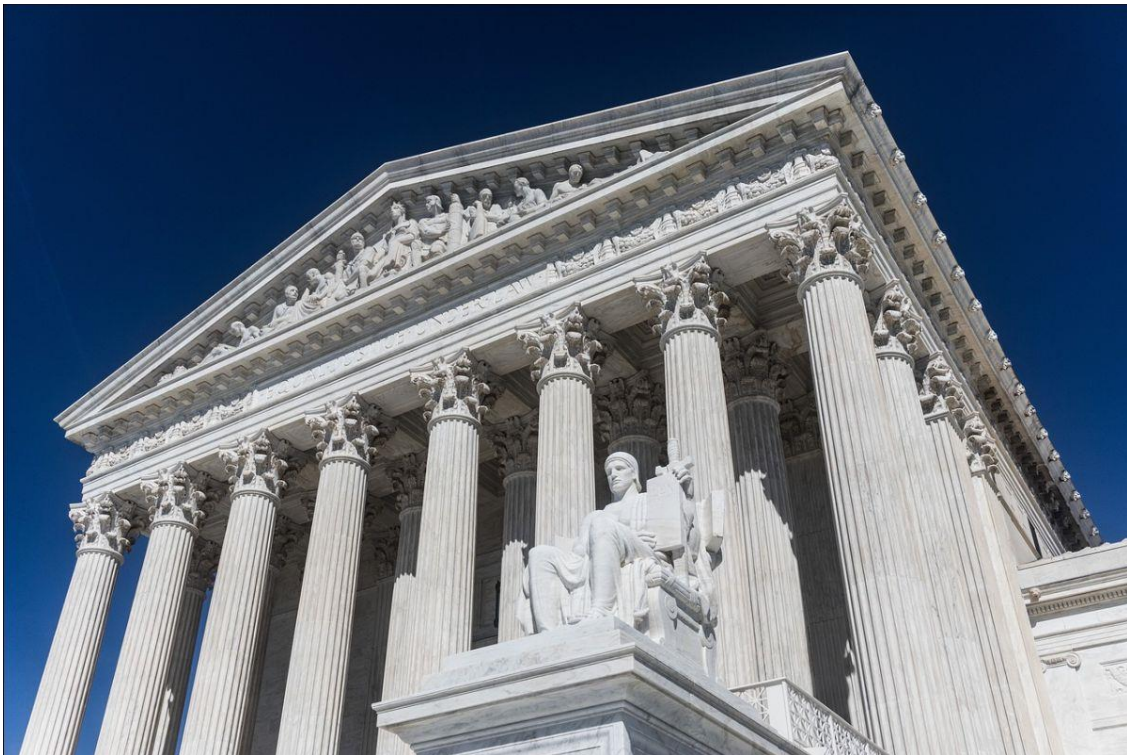
- Adoption of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policy and the addition of a DEI Director on the Board
- Increase in membership from 250 to 500, a response to voters facing increasing restrictions
- Expansion of opportunities for member involvement
- Creation of two new Unit Discussion groups at UW-Madison and Prairie Ridge/Oakwood
- Development of the Observer Corps, which evolved into the Advocacy Corps
- Initiation of a study for the Executive Director position

As we all know, the world changed in March 2020. The highly anticipated Centennial Celebration had to be canceled. Not all was lost, however. LWVDC mailed the Centennial booklet to members and Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins, former president of LWWUS and author of the "The Untold Story of Women of Color in the League of Women Voters," addressed members virtually in 2021.

Since her term as President ended, Aileen has continued to be active in the League. She served as the Chair of the Social and Racial Equity Subcommittee of the Program and Advocacy Committee and chair of the member survey work groups, and co-leads the Capitol Lakes Discussion Unit. She continues to

register voters at Capitol Lakes and serve as a poll worker.

Aileen has appreciated her work with the League, stating, “It’s been an education in so many different ways: learning how the League works in a nonpartisan way and how we can have an impact through voter registration and education, even in very difficult times. I have found working with the League to be tremendously challenging and rewarding.”



U.S. Supreme Court Holds the Line on Gerrymandering

Sue Jennik, LWVDC Program Director and LWVWI Legislative Committee Chair, program@lwvdanecounty.org

In two recent decisions, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected attempts to expand

the authority of state legislatures to gerrymander. The decisions did not break new ground but continued long-standing precedents which were under attack.

[Moore v. Harper](#)

In 2021, the North Carolina Supreme Court struck down maps drawn by the state legislature, ruling that they were a partisan gerrymander that violated the Free and Equal Elections Clause of the state Constitution. The legislature appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, asserting that a state supreme court cannot overturn legislative decisions regarding federal elections.

Supporters of the so-called “independent state legislature” theory argue that the U.S. Constitution gives absolute power to state legislatures to regulate federal elections in Article I, Section 4, which states:

The times, places and manner of holding elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each state by the legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by law make or alter such regulations, except as to the places of choosing Senators.

The Supreme Court found that state courts can supervise a state legislature’s exercise of its responsibility to regulate federal elections. Acceptance of the independent state legislature theory would have meant that state courts could become powerless to strike down gerrymandered Congressional maps, voter suppression laws, and other anti-democracy legislation in violation of the state’s Constitution or laws guaranteeing fair elections.

The League of Women Voters of the United States, on behalf of all fifty state Leagues and LWV of the District of Columbia, filed an amicus brief urging the Court to rule against the Legislature and protect state courts’ power to use state law to protect free and fair federal elections.

[Allen v. Milligan](#)

After the 2020 Census, the Alabama legislature drew maps for its seven congressional districts with only one Black-majority district even though the state's population is nearly 40% Black. The maps were challenged under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which forbids voting practices and policies that intentionally discriminate based upon race, color, or membership in a non-English language group or have a discriminatory result. In redistricting cases, Section 2 has been interpreted to require that political districts—including congressional districts—not be drawn to prevent voters of color from electing a candidate of their choice. The plaintiffs asserted that the maps diluted Black representation by packing Black voters into a single district when Alabama could have drawn two congressional districts that allowed more Blacks the opportunity to elect candidates of their choice.

The Court majority relied on accepted precedents interpreting the Voting Rights Act to reject Alabama's redistricting plan.

The League of Women Voters of Alabama and LWWUS filed an amicus brief opposing Alabama's congressional map, along with the Southern Poverty Law Center and Stand Up Mobile.

On July 21, 2023, the Alabama Legislature defied the Supreme Court ruling by adopting redrawn maps which provided for only one Black-majority Congressional district. Stay tuned.





Wisconsin Pride PBS Documentary

Jeannine Ramsey, j9.ramsey@gmail.com

"Wisconsin Pride" is a two-hour documentary that explores the often-hidden history of the LGBTQ+ experience in Wisconsin. A collaboration between PBS Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Historical Society, "Wisconsin Pride" aired on PBS Wisconsin in June in honor of Pride Month. It is available for streaming on the PBS Wisconsin website at [Wisconsin Pride Videos](#).

The documentary features and celebrates R. Richard Wagner's work as a historian and author. Wagner, who died in 2021, was a beloved activist, gay rights leader, elected official and public servant who worked for the state of Wisconsin for 33 years. His two-volume history from the Wisconsin Historical Society Press—*We've Been Here All Along: Early Gay History in Wisconsin and Coming Out and Moving Forward: Wisconsin's Recent Gay History*—provides guidance and inspiration for the program.

The first hour of the documentary explores sexual orientation, gender identity and expression in Wisconsin from accounts documented in our history. It tells stories of Indigenous two-spirit people before and after European settlement

and Wisconsin statehood and continues with stories of specific LGBTQ+ figures through the 19th and 20th centuries.

One example given was Ralph Warner. Called Wisconsin's first out gay man, Warner defied the gender expectations of his time, beginning in the 1920'. The show also discussed Charlotte Partridge and Miriam Frink who founded the Layton School of Art; their love and commitment for each other thrived for more than 50 years.

Episode two focuses on how people in Wisconsin built a movement to challenge LGBTQ+ harassment and injustice long before such efforts received national attention, including the role of LGBTQ+ radio and publishers in creating awareness and community that resulted in passage of the nation's first gay rights bill in 1982 right here in Wisconsin. [LGBTQ Rights Milestones Fast Facts | CNN](#)

Stories of LGBTQ+ people, like those of other marginalized communities, are often lost to history, making intentional research and documentaries like "Wisconsin Pride" an essential element to a full and inclusive historical understanding of our state.

Both episodes of the documentary are available on the Wisconsin PBS website at [Wisconsin Pride Videos](#) and the website has an application for those who may want to host a screening free of charge.

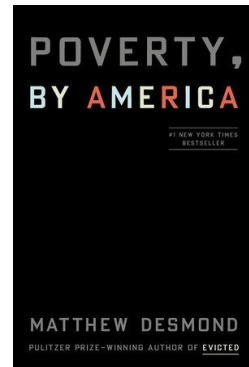
BOOK DISCUSSION

***Poverty, by America*, Matthew Desmond**

The next book for the Dane County League book discussion group will be *Poverty, by America* by Matthew Desmond.

The Pulitzer Prize–winning author of *Evicted* reimagines the debate on poverty, making a “provocative and compelling” (NPR) argument about why it persists in America: because the rest of us benefit from it.

There are five copies available at the League office. Please email Kerry Helmer at office@lwvdanecounty.org if you would like to borrow one.



Zoom Book Discussion Dates:

- Thursday, September 14, 2023, 10-11:30 a.m. (Discussion leader: Louise Robbins)
- Saturday, September 16, 2023, 10-11:30 a.m. (Discussion leader: Jeannine Ramsey)

If you are interested, please email Books@lwvdanecounty.org and indicate which date you would like to participate.

May Book Discussion Recap: *Palaces for the People* by Eric Klinenberg

Kelly Haslam, KellyLHaslam@gmail.com

Klinenberg makes a convincing case for the benefits of social infrastructure across multiple domains: reducing crime, increasing civic engagement, building support networks, assembling essential resources for all, improving citizen health and recreation, intensifying resilience to climate change, and invigorating the spirit of communities.

What is social infrastructure? Kleinberg offers several detailed examples as well as the impacts when it is done well or absent. Generally speaking, social infrastructure includes anything that serves as a common space where people can connect with others or find resources. Examples include public places (such

as libraries, schools, playgrounds, parks, swimming pools, gardens and green spaces, plazas/squares, walking/biking paths, and pedestrian areas), community organizations (such as community centers, churches, civic groups, social groups, street markets, and various community events), and commercial venues (such as cafés, diners, barbershops, and bookstores). He also gave examples of effectively combining social and "hard" infrastructure.

Admittedly, I realize I have underestimated the importance of social infrastructure. I have viewed these common spaces indeed as nice but not as critical. Klinenberg persuaded me that they are crucial to a functioning society and democracy. Furthermore, with the increased online activities and the harmful polarization in society, we need to focus more than ever on building this crucial infrastructure. Social infrastructure can help us connect across groups in common places around a shared interest or passion. In addition, for some, it is a vital lifeline to resources and services not otherwise available to them. This is of collective value so that every community member can optimize their life and contributions to society at large.

Volunteer Profile: Linda Syth

Barb Feeney (she/they), president@lwvdanecounty.org

LWVDC proudly wears its identity as a grassroots and volunteer-led organization. Our ability to carry out our mission of “empowering voters and defending democracy” rests on the willingness of our members to take on tasks and carry them out, often without notice or fanfare. We are happy to use this space to introduce you to one of our volunteers.



Please give a description of the way in which you volunteer with LWVDC.

I volunteered on the Finance Committee and am the liaison with the Oregon Public Library for voter services.

Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I am co-founder of [The Layered Onion](#), a collective of artists from all over the world with mental and emotional health challenges sharing the healing power of art.

How did you get involved with LWVDC?

I became involved in 2020 as I felt strongly about helping with the 2020 election.

Who or what inspires you?

Kindness

What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

Gardening, biking, reading, music

Join One of Our Discussion Units!

Aileen Nettleton, Discussion Unit Coordinator, aanett@sbcglobal.net

Do you have questions or opinions about topics raised in our monthly Forums? Would you like a chance to dig deeper into a topic? Joining one of our Discussion Unit Groups is the way members can engage in small group discussions of topics important to all of us. Discussion Units meet a week or two after each of our forums to explore our responses to the forums and plan actions we can take. This year, three of our groups will meet in person for the fall, then move to Zoom during winter months, while one group, Virtual Dane County, will meet virtually via Zoom all year.

Please review the schedules and formats for our four Discussion Unit Groups and consider joining one. Contact the Unit Leader for more information.

Discussion Units: 2023-24

Unit: Central West

Time: 12:45 p.m., third Tuesday of month

Location: LWV Office, 720 Hill St. in September, October, November; Virtual via Zoom in December, January, February

Leader: Kathy Johnson, kjohnson44@ameritech.net, 608-238-1785

Unit: Downtown

Time: 5:30 p.m., third Wednesday of month

Location: Capitol Lakes, 333 W. Main St. in September, October, November; Virtual via Zoom in December, January, February

Leaders: Aileen Nettleton, aanett@sbcglobal.net, 608-238-6053; Ingrid Rothe, irothe@ssc.wisc.edu, 608-556-3174

Unit: Virtual Dane County (Formerly Northeast)

Time: 4:00 p.m., third Wednesday of month

Location: Virtual via Zoom

Leader: Karen Gunderson, jokarjen@gmail.com, 608-729-4351

Unit: West/Middleton

Time: 6:15 p.m., third Monday of month

Location: Meadowood Library, 5726 Raymond Road in September, October, November; Virtual via Zoom in December, January, February

Leaders: Helen Horn, hlhorn@att.net and Ralph Petersen, ralphpetersen47@gmail.com, 608-231-1807

There is a lot going on with LWVDC these days!

Want to stay on top of the most current happenings?

Look for our weekly Enews in your email every Tuesday,
or [subscribe here](#) if you don't receive it.

League News & Updates

Staffing Updates

Changes are underway at LWVDC with regard to our paid staff. Upon receiving notice from Executive Director Wendy Hathaway of her intent to leave her post, the 2022-2023 Executive Committee met to determine the next steps to meeting our staffing needs. Much has been learned in the last two years about the benefits of having additional paid staff to support the work of the organization. The committee members concluded that the two most critical functions needing support from paid staff are managing internal operations and leading the communications area. (It should be noted that the 2023-2024 budget includes funding to hire a fund development consultant, another important need.)

The Executive Committee developed two options for focusing paid staff

resources on the two functional areas of operations and communications. New Board Treasurer Julie Allen provided a cost analysis for the two options that were taken up for consideration by the new Board that was seated on July 1.

The Board voted unanimously to proceed with the option that creates a 25-hour position to manage operations, and a second part-time position to oversee communications. The Board is pleased to announce that our current Office Administrator, Kerry Helmer, has accepted the new position of Operations Manager—a position that includes some of the responsibilities she now handles and responsibilities that were handled by Wendy.

Kerry has proven herself to be a very capable employee in the last year. She is excited about the opportunity to further streamline and improve our operations while continuing to offer support for our volunteers. Kerry has assembled a team of member volunteers who support our office functions; we are very grateful for their assistance. If Kerry and the Board determine that additional help is needed to support some of the administrative functions, there is provision to hire a part-time person to work with Kerry.

The Board will soon be recruiting to fill the Communications Manager position. Consider whether you know a communications professional who is looking to work for a mission-driven organization and watch for the position announcement in the weekly news and on our website. The position will be posted in multiple online locations.

We wish Wendy Hathaway the best of luck in her next endeavors, and welcome Kerry Helmer in her new role as Operations Manager!

Contributions

Thank you to these supporters who donated in May and June 2023.

General Donations

Sally Carpenter

William Feist

Lynn Gilchrist

Dianne Hopkins

Andrea Kaminski

Mary & Kirk Malnor

Barbara Olson

Luke Sackash

Nan & Jim Youngerman

Additional Gift with Membership Renewal

Julie Allen

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Mary Anglim

Barbara E Arnold

Sandra Black

Gail Bliss

Marty Fox & Catherine Briggs

Aimee & Karl Broman

Susan Bruckman

Joy Cardin

Carol Carstensen

Christine Clements

Lili Crane

Debra & James Cronmiller

Susan De Vos

Mary Ann Doll & Michael Williamson

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Planned Giving

From the Estate of Constance Threinen

New Members

We welcome these new members who joined us recently. An [updated member directory](#) is available on our website.

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

Rona Finman	Delany Zimmer
Warren Palmer	Shahana Munazir
Ken Zwick	Vivian Liang
Dorothea Salo	Kimberly Rooney
Julie Conrad	Chuck Stonecipher
Suzanne Peranteau	Danielle Thai
Joan Laurion	

Upcoming Events

Aug 21	Membership Team, 12 noon
Sep 5	Advocacy Corps, 5:30 p.m.
Sep 13	LWVDC Board Meeting, 5:30 p.m.
Sep 18	Membership Team, 12 noon
Sep 18	West/Middleton Discussion Unit, 6:30 p.m.
Sep 19	Central West Discussion Unit, 12:45 p.m.
Sep 20	Virtual Dane County Discussion Unit, 4 p.m.
Sep 20	Downtown Discussion Unit, 5:30 p.m.
Oct 3	Advocacy Corps, 5:30 p.m.



Executive Committee

Barb Feeney, President

Lili Crane, Vice President-Governance

Jill Jokela, Fund Development Director

Sue Jennik, Program Director

Bulletin Staff

Amanda Hingst, Editor

Brook Soltvedt, Webmaster

Andy Rubsam, Copyeditor

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Supreme Court: [Mark Thomas](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Pride Flag: Image by [lillen](#) from [Pixabay](#)

