

LWW[®] Bulletin

December 2023

League of Women Voters of Dane County

720 Hill Street, Ste 200, Madison, WI 53705 (608) 232-9447

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

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Highlights of This Issue

- Fall Fundraiser
- President's Message: The Direction You Plan to Go
- Forum Recap: Why Voting Matters
- Book Report: How Minds Change
- Introducing Michelle Phillips, Communications Manager
- Strategic Plan 2023

Other Updates

- January Discussion Units
 - League News & Updates
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Fall Fundraiser

Our fall fundraising drive provides a significant portion of the funding we will need to do our work in 2024.

Our goal is to raise \$30,000 and, thanks to the incredible generosity of several League members who provided a seed gift toward this campaign, gifts will be matched for double the impact.

We are gearing up for an intense year of voter outreach work in 2024 and we need to make sure we have the funds to do it. On a very modest budget, LWVDC is able to deploy volunteers to put in hundreds of hours to meet with voters wherever they are—college campuses, worksites, high schools, festivals, farmer's markets, the DMV, senior centers...and the list goes on.

We are grateful to those of you who have given in the past and invite you to renew your support. If you are a first-time donor, we are thrilled to have you!

Donate Online Here

<https://www.lwvdanecounty.org/donate>

If you prefer to mail in a check, you can send it to:

LWV of Dane County
720 Hill Street, Suite 200
Madison WI. 53705-3539

Thank you for being a supporter.



President's Message

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

Greetings LWVDC Members!

A number of years ago, I was involved in a volunteer effort to build a memorial garden for a much-loved community activist whose life was unexpectedly cut short. The project involved moving dirt, stones, and plants by amateur landscapers. One of the volunteers who emerged as an ad hoc leader said more than once, “Before you start filling the wheelbarrow, point it in the direction you plan to go.” These many years later, I still hear her words in my head when I am doing yard work involving a wheelbarrow.

In this issue you can read about the strategic plan developed earlier this year by the LWVDC Board. The version here does not include all of the details, but it will

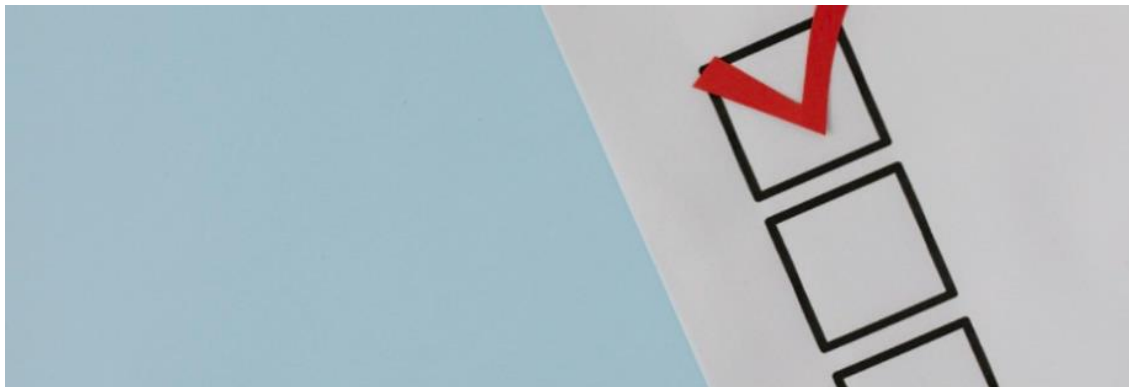
give you an idea of the direction that the wheelbarrow is headed in and what has been accomplished so far.

Powering our work is the funding provided by our loyal “defenders of democracy”—that is you!

We are in the middle of our biggest fundraising drive of the year. Many requests for donations land in your mailbox at this time of year. I hope that the League of Women Voters of Dane County and the cause of democracy is at the top of your list.

Please go here to make an end-of-the-year gift to help us be ready to take in the challenges of 2024: <https://www.lwvdanecounty.org/donate>.

Thank you!



Forum Recap: Why Voting Matters: Consequences for Childcare Funding and Diversity in Education

Ann Lacy (she/her), bulletin@lwvdanecounty.org

On November 7, the League of Women Voters of Dane County and the Urban League of Greater Madison presented a public issues forum on the importance of voting and the consequences of our elections. The forum featured Laura Dresser, Associate Director of the Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS), and Gloria Ladson-Billings, Professor Emerita, University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Education. It was moderated by League member Joy Cardin.

Dresser, a labor economist specializing in low-wage jobs, emphasized that early care and education—as well as eldercare—is highly privatized, poorly paid, and primarily employs women. This structure is the direct result of policy choices made by elected and appointed officials. While most other developed nations begin their public investment in children at birth, investment in children in the U.S. typically starts with their entrance into school.

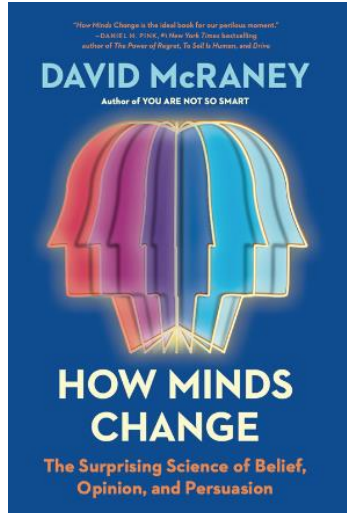
Paying for childcare is a challenge even for middle-income families, yet childcare workers are paid so little that the service they provide is often out of reach for them. The pandemic exacerbated the long-simmering childcare funding crisis nationwide and only the investment of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds at the state level kept many childcare facilities open. In Wisconsin, Governor Tony Evers recently allocated enough federal monies to keep Wisconsin's ARPA-funded program, Child Care Counts, running through June 2025.

Ladson-Billings, a nationally-recognized expert on culturally relevant education, described how public education is under siege across the country, with efforts ranging from school board action to legislation dictating what can and cannot be taught at the local and state levels. Book banning in schools and public libraries is proliferating. In Wisconsin, the state legislature has withheld \$32 million in employee wage increases unless the University of Wisconsin system

dismantles its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives.

Ladson-Billings defined Critical Race Theory, or CRT, as a way to explain racial inequality as a systemic issue, not a matter of personal prejudice. As an illustration, she shared the story of her father, a WWII veteran, who was unable to use GI Bill funds to purchase a home in Levittown, PA, because a restrictive covenant allowed only whites to live in the planned community. The home her family was able to purchase for the same amount as a Levittown house at the time is now worth \$95,000, while a Levittown house is worth \$500,000.

Both panelists stressed the necessity of staying informed about issues in our communities and in our state—even issues that may not seem to affect us directly as individuals, like childcare funding and diversity in education—as a way to make informed choices about the people we elect to represent us.



How Minds Change: A Report on the November LWVDC Book Discussion

Jeannine Ramsey, books@lwvdanecounty.org

How Minds Change: The Surprising Science of Belief, Opinion, and Persuasion by David McRaney was the November book for the Dane County League of Women Voters book discussion and also the 2023 [Go Big Read](#) selection for UW-Madison. McRaney is a journalist and writer who specializes in science and psychology topics. In this book he investigates current research on human perception and the social aspects of belief. The author breaks down how we arrive at our beliefs and then looks at the science behind why those beliefs persist and how they can change, sometimes unexpectedly. The evolution of perceptions in the United States regarding gay marriage is an example.

McRaney interviews former members of the extremist and vehemently anti-LGBTQ+ Westboro Baptist Church to find out why they left and how their perceptions changed over time. Readers also learn about people and organizations who are skilled in the art of persuasion including “street epistemology” practitioners and activists who engage in “deep canvassing.” What are the steps that we can take to change minds? They involve building rapport; listening respectfully to a claim, however wacky; exploring the reasons behind it; and encouraging believers to judge the quality of their reasons. The goal is getting people to think about their own thinking, something all of us could benefit from.

Book discussion participants met over Zoom. We had lively discussions about key elements of the book including why we have differences in perception and how the author suggests we might approach other people in discussions where there are differences of opinion and perspective.

Copies of the book are available for check out from the LWVDC office.

Those interested in future discussions can add their name to the book

discussion email list by emailing the League office at office@lwvdanecounty.org.

Introducing Michelle Phillips, Communications Manager

Michelle Phillips, michelle@lwvdanecounty.org

I am very happy to have been recently selected as the communications manager at the League of Women Voters of Dane County (LWVDC). This is a newly created position, which will put the communications within the organization under one umbrella.

I share the mission of the organization of “empowering voters and defending democracy.” I have long been vocal about voting rights and opposed the effort to diminish those rights. In addition, I have fought against many elements of the current political situation including gerrymandering, discrimination, few term limits, lack of criminal justice and most importantly, money in politics, which I view as crippling most areas of our democracy.

I have been lucky to have a platform as a newspaper editor—my last position was editor of the Middleton-Cross Plains Times-Tribune—over the last 23 years, so I could speak out about the inequities and injustices that I see in the world. However, my career in the media started in newspapers while I was still in high school. In between editor positions and a three-year stint as a coffee shop owner, I held positions as both a communications director and social media director.

I was fortunate to attend Drake University in Des Moines, IA, and hold degrees

in both journalism and English literature. The first publication I worked on in college was about Martin Luther King Jr. and was sponsored by an ecumenical group who sought to teach about King and his mission.

Although I have never held a paid position for a non-profit until now, I have volunteered my time and money to many charitable causes throughout my life. Volunteering was instilled in me by my family. In fact, I think of my late parents constantly during this time of year because, although we were poor, every Thanksgiving and Christmas we served meals at the homeless shelter in a town near where I grew up in Michigan. Although I hated it at the time, as I grew into an adult, I began taking up causes of my own.

I hope that I can put all these experiences together to create a volunteer communications team that will help promote the LWVDC and raise funds to continue the mission.

In my spare time my husband and I like to travel, attend concerts and do projects on our home on the south side of Madison. I also like to read and garden, and I sell vintage jewelry on eBay as a hobby.

I look forward to educating people about topics, candidates, and the League through this position as well as meeting and supporting the members along the way.

Summary of Strategic Plan 2023 and Progress Report

November 28, 2023

In the Spring of 2023, the LWVDC participated in a series of three workshops, led by UW Extension Specialist Sharon Lezberg, to develop a strategic plan to guide its work for the next year and beyond. Below is a summary of the directions and initiatives selected by the Board and a brief description of progress during the first six months of plan implementation.

Strategic Direction 1: Engaging our members as volunteers and leaders

Strategic Initiatives

1. Expand volunteerism and implement practical processes to more fully engage more members to do the work.
2. Expand member engagement along a leadership continuum to nurture new leaders.
3. Develop opportunities for members to build relationships (social).

Progress to Date

- The Member Service team has been working on an approach to reach new members and help those who wish to be involved as volunteers find their place.
- An ad hoc team is working on developing a plan for developing leaders.
- The Program team has held several hybrid forums to allow in-person contact. One member has initiated monthly lunches, and a social event has been planned for December.

Strategic Direction 2: Enhancing our organizational capacity by attending to systems and practices

Strategic Initiatives

1. Shift “working Board” model to higher level strategic thinking and direction.
2. Strengthen governance and problem-solving processes.
3. Develop a leadership culture that embraces change, experimentation, and ability to shift practices to address changing external needs.
4. Develop an organizational culture that is compassionate, caring, and recognizes limitations to volunteer time and commitment.

Progress to Date

- The number of Board meetings has been reduced to lighten the load and keep the Board’s attention on policy and planning matters, while details are handled by the teams.
- The Board adopted a code of conduct and has done a first review of a revised technology policy and a new complaint procedure.
- Discussion is underway about how to structure Board positions to require a reasonable number of hours and thus can be done by members with work and family responsibilities.
- Standardized language describing Board member qualifications and expectations has been developed.

Strategic Direction 3: Accelerating our efforts to be an inclusive organization

Strategic Initiatives

1. Revisit, revise, and implement plans to increase equity, inclusion, and diversity within the organization.
2. Develop partnerships with organizations that serve specific audiences in order to increase the League's ability to reach diverse audiences.
3. Effectively help our members to connect with, and become advocates for, communities of people in Dane County with diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Progress to Date

- LWVDC is continuing to develop partnerships with other organizations in Dane County with shared goals in the area of civic engagement.
- LWVDC has been represented at events held by other organizations to stand in solidarity around their goals for justice and recognition and to meet potential members from groups currently under-represented in the League.

Strategic Direction 4: Broadening our core work of Empowering Voters, Defending Democracy

Strategic Initiatives

1. Promote civic engagement through educational programming, issue advocacy, and voter outreach.
 2. Support civic education in new learning environments (for example, high schools).
 3. Expand our influence by doing more outreach in outlying communities and seeking pockets of communities that we are currently missing.
 4. When doing outreach, highlight issues that are current.
-

5. Seek large employers who will partner with us to do voter outreach on site.
6. Connect to student organizations or develop LWVDC units at all college campuses.

Progress to Date

- Very successful voter registration events were held in the spring of 2023 with several high schools in Dane County. These events were student-led with LWVDC members serving as the support team.
- Mellon Fellow Sadie Dempsey is developing approaches and materials for volunteers to engage with potential voters about issues that go beyond the logistics of voting.

Strategic Direction 5: Accelerating fund development, financial sustainability, and organization visibility

Strategic Initiatives

1. Create and roll out an integrated fundraising strategy.
2. Develop and support Board and member involvement in fund development.
3. Create and implement an external branding/communications strategy.
4. Create short videos for the website of real people talking about their commitment to citizen engagement.

Progress to Date

- Fund Development team created a newsletter mailer for the fall fundraising drive.
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- Communications Manager Michelle Phillips was hired to increase League visibility and improve the effectiveness of communications,
- Board developed core messages to more effectively reach multiple audiences.

January Discussion Units

Aileen Nettleton, Discussion Unit Coordinator

You are invited to join one of our January Discussion Unit Meetings for an opportunity to share more in-depth about the January Program, "Voting Rights and the Criminal Justice System." Please note that the Virtual Dane group is changing the date this month and the Central West and West/Middleton groups will be meeting via Zoom in January. Contact the Unit Leader for the link and other details.

Unit: Oakwood Village Prairie Ridge

Time: Monday, January 15, 3:30 p.m.

Location: In Person, Perennial Learning Center, Oakwood Village Prairie Ridge, 5565 Tancho Dr.

Leader: [Alan Zuckerman](#)

Unit: West / Middleton

Time: Monday, January 15, 6:30 p.m.

Location: Virtual via Zoom in January

Leaders: [Helen Horn](#) and [Ralph Petersen](#)

Unit: Central West

Time: Tuesday, January 16, 12:45 p.m.

Location: Virtual via Zoom in January

Leader: [Kathy Johnson](#)

Unit: Virtual Dane County (Formerly Northeast Side)

Time: Wednesday, January 24, 4 p.m.

Location: Virtual via Zoom in January

Leader: [Karen Gunderson](#)

Unit: Downtown

Time: Wednesday, January 17, 5:30 p.m.

Location: In Person, Premier Room at Capitol Lakes, 333 West Main St.,
Madison

Leaders: [Aileen Nettleton](#) and [Ingrid Rothe](#)

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

Contributions

General Donations

Claire Dick

Erica & Scott Diehl

Linda Eisele

Eve Galanter
Peggy & Carl Glassford
Alison Mix
Earnestine Moss
Bonnie Orvick
Joanne Plunkett
Kenneth Potter
Luke Sackash
Julie Urban
Donna Winter & Liz Dannebaum

Memorial Donations - In Memory of Joan Schuette

Carol Kiemel
Pam & Charles Peterson
Eve Galanter
Peggy & Carl Glassford
Alison Mix
Earnestine Moss
Bonnie Orvick
Joanne Plunkett
Kenneth Potter
Luke Sackash
Julie Urban
Donna Winter & Liz Dannebaum

Additional Membership Donations

Betty Cohen
Terri Cronk & Jack Connelly
Beverly Davison

Nancy Hochstetter
Becky & Jonathon Kaiser
Gundega Korsts
Mary & Donald Metz
Gloria Meyer
Christine Milligan-Ciha
Joan Niebauer
Peg O'Donoghue
Inger Stole & Robert McChesney
Lindsey Thomas
Becky Tradewell
Deborah Umstead
Marcia Wright

Sustaining Donations

Zachary Levin
Amy Moran

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.](#)

Terri Cronk
Robert McChesney
Judy Olingy
Michael Leaderman

League in the News

[Urban League of Greater Madison to host “Why Voting Matters” on Tuesday night](#), Madison365, November 6, 2023

Calendar

Check out [the calendar](#) on the League website for upcoming events.

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Lili Crane, Vice President-Governance

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Sue Jennik, Program Director

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