



Bulletin

League of Women Voters® of Dane County, Inc.

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

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

office@lwvdanecounty.org | www.lwvdanecounty.org

May 2023

President's Message	1
Lively Issues Luncheon	2
Outstanding Voter Service Award	4
Where We Live: A LWVDC Virtual Forum	5
May Book Discussion: <i>Palaces for the People</i>	6
March Book Discussion Recap: <i>Dark Money</i>	7
The Many Forms of Leadership at LWVDC	8
50-Year Member Recognition: Carol Carstensen	8
State League Annual Meeting	10
A Note from Mara Eisch	10
April 2023 Board of Directors Meeting	10
Contributions	11
New Members	11
Discussion Units	12
Upcoming Events	12
The League in the News	12

Executive Committee

Barb Feeney, President
Jean Jacobson, Treasurer
Sue Jennik, Program Director
Wendy Hathaway, Executive Director

Bulletin Staff

Amanda Hingst, Editor

President's Message

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

Since April 4, the buzz in political circles is the record-breaking turnout in Wisconsin's spring primary elections. Coming in at about 39%, the election brought in the highest ever percentage of potential voters for a Spring election when there was no presidential primary race on the ballot. The high turnout rate is generally attributed to the hotly contested Supreme Court race, although there were many contested seats for local offices on the ballot as well.



2023 Annual Meeting

Sunday, June 4

Noon-2:30 p.m.

The 2023 Annual Meeting of the League of Women Voters of Dane County will be on Sunday, June 4, at the enclosed shelter at Elver Park in Madison. We'll have social time from noon-1 p.m. and the business meeting will be from 1-2 p.m. League members should have received a letter with details.

You can find more details—including the Annual Report, Ballot Materials, a Sample Ballot, and a link to register—[on the League's website](#). Registration is helpful but not required.

See you in June!

The lowest turnout rate since 2000 was 11.8% in 2006 when Patrick Crooks ran uncontested for a seat on the Wisconsin Supreme Court, while the previous high of 34% was in 2011 when David Prosser and JoAnne Kloppenberg ran for a Supreme Court seat.

The election generated unprecedented interest among younger voters, likely because the issue of reproductive rights was front and center in the first Wisconsin Supreme Court race held since the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* that the Constitution of the United States does not confer a right to abortion. The court's decision overruled both *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), returning to individual states the power to regulate any aspect of abortion not protected by federal law. A Wisconsin law, first enacted in 1849, makes it a felony to perform an abortion at any stage of pregnancy unless it's done to save a pregnant person's life.

Our thanks to the LWVDC Voter Service team that led voter outreach before the February primary and April 4 election. Thousands of contacts were made through tabling, canvassing, distributing flyers to numerous outlets, producing and distributing *Candidates' Answers*, holding candidate interviews, moderating candidate forums, and reaching out to potential voters at the two DMV offices in Madison. And there is likely more not on this list.

Thanks also to the many LWVDC volunteers who supported the excellent online forums on election-related topics, including those who worked behind the scenes to produce resource materials, line up speakers, moderate the forums, and handle all the logistics. The forums lived up to the high quality that people have come to expect from the League of Women Voters.

Working behind the scenes throughout are the folks who manage and monitor LWVDC finances, connect members to opportunities, support our technology, and handle the thousands of details that go into running an organization of more than 500 people.

We are extremely grateful to our financial supporters who make so much possible.

Finally, I appreciate the hundreds of thousands of voters who showed up at the polls or mailed in their ballots to make it clear that democracy still matters.

Lively Issues Luncheon

Lisa Ryan

Thank you to the more than 70 members and guests who attended or supported our Lively Issues Luncheon on April 29 and enjoyed a celebratory return to gathering in-person! We savored a festive Southwestern lunch in the bright, modern space at Madison College's Truax campus and are grateful to the staff for their hard work and kind welcome.

Beth Fultz, Voter Service Co-Chair, presented Brianna Stapleton Welch with the Outstanding Voter Service Award for her commitment to registering new voters as the Student Program Advisor at Madison College. Learn more about Brianna's work later in this issue.

We had the pleasure of recognizing Carol Carstensen, Bonnie Orvick, and Julia Weiser for their 50 years of membership with the League. President Barb Feeney described their various services to the League and thanked them for their work.

- Carstensen focused on education issues with the League and also served five terms as President of the Madison Metropolitan School District Board.
- Orvick was active in the League from Minnesota to California. When she moved to Vincennes, Ind. and found there was no local League, she helped create the League in Knox County.
- Strong family role models led to Weiser's involvement with the Stevens Point League. She worked on *Candidates' Answers* and educating members about school funding issues.

You can learn more about Carstensen later in this issue of the *Bulletin*, and we'll be featuring Orvick and Weiser in future issues.

Our keynote speaker was superb. Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings, Professor Emerita of Urban Education at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, gave a thoughtfully prepared and presented speech titled Race, Education, and Civic Engagement.

She shared how she was shaped by her childhood in Philadelphia; her education at Morgan State University, the University of Washington, and Stanford University; her professional work in California and Wisconsin; and her retirement in Florida.

She highlighted how the pandemic has exposed deep injustices in every aspect of our society—education, environment, economy, and politics. She advocated for providing multiple perspectives in our schools, recommending both the 1619 Project and the 1776 Report and asserted the need for fairness in the funding of our schools.

She recommended we read David Blight's biography of Frederick Douglass, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom*. And we will be eager to read Ladson-Billings' next book, *Justice Matters*, which will be available in December.

Dr. Ladson-Billings gave us a lot to think about and we invite you to watch the video of her presentation on our website.

The Luncheon was planned by Sue Jennik, Sybil Pressprich, Lisa Ryan, and Sue Wellnitz, with the assistance of Executive Director Wendy Hathaway and Office Administrator Kerry Helmer. Thanks to



*Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings delivered the keynote address.
Photo by Mike Hollander.*

Madison College Facilities and Catering, a generous anonymous donor for the table centerpieces, and photographer Mike Hollander.



Photo by Mike Hollander

Outstanding Voter Service Award: Brianna Stapleton Welch

Kathleen Fullin, kathyfullin@gmail.com

Each year at our Lively Issues Luncheon, the League of Women Voters of Dane County presents our Outstanding Voter Service Award to a community member who has worked closely with the League on voter outreach. Past recipients have included students who helped organize voter registration events at their schools, leaders at community organizations that provide voter outreach opportunities, and public servants who have gone above and beyond their job descriptions to advance democracy in Dane County.

At our 2023 luncheon, we honored Brianna Stapleton Welch, a student program advisor at Madison College. Brianna has worked closely with LWV Dane County since 2019 to encourage student civic engagement, voter registration, and voting.

Brianna has been an exceptional partner with the League. She has reached out to us well in advance of significant dates such as National Voter Registration Day or election dates to work out arrangements for voter outreach. She has reserved tables in high-traffic areas at Madison College and made sure our volunteers knew where to park and where to set up. She recruited student interns to work with us at the outreach events.

Brianna worked with the IT Department at Madison College to ensure that student names and addresses were on one screen, with a Madison College identifier, so the screen could be used as Proof of Residence for voter registration. And when the student information screens for the MyMadisonCollege portal changed, she went back to the IT Department and worked with them again to get the required elements back on one screen.

Brianna ensured that the League's information about the issues facing the Wisconsin Supreme Court was available to Madison College students so they understood the importance of the April 4 court election.



Brianna Stapleton Welch received the Outstanding Voter Service Award. Photo by Mike Hollander.

Brianna received her bachelor's degree in theatre from Lawrence University and her master's degree in theatre for young audiences from Arizona State University. We wish her well in her new endeavors with Little Free Library, a national nonprofit, and look forward to her continued contributions to the Dane County community.

Where We Live: Equitable and Sustainable Neighborhoods, a LWVDC Virtual Forum

Thursday, May 11, 6:30-8 p.m.

It's no secret: Dane County is growing. But the housing supply isn't keeping pace, causing a shortage that can negatively impact the health, financial stability, and well-being of historically marginalized communities.

To address these gaps, local organizations are empowering residents through collaboration and connection. Join us for our final virtual public issues forum of the 2022-2023 year, **Where We Live: Equitable and Sustainable Neighborhoods**, on May 11.

Speakers:

- Alexis London, Executive Director, Bayview Foundation
- Robert Pierce, Executive Director, Neighborhood Food Solutions
- Yesianne Ramírez-Madera, Supervisor, Meadowridge Library
- Valerie Renk, CEO, Habitat for Humanity of Dane County

Jeannine Ramsey, LWVDC member, will moderate.

Registration details and resource materials are available [on our website](#).

This event is free and open to the public.

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.

May Book Discussion: *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequity, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life* by Eric Klinenberg

Join us for a lively discussion of Eric Klinenberg's *Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life* on Saturday, May 20, from 10-11:30 a.m. on Zoom.

It's not enough to build physical infrastructure, Klinenberg asserts. We have to build life- and society-sustaining neighborhoods. What does that look like? How can we build infrastructure that bridges, rather than widens, our gaping social divisions?

Although—or perhaps especially because—it was written before COVID and its disruptions, thinking about social infrastructure has the power to help us understand why our emergence from isolation seems so de-centering, why society appears to be even more shattered and polarized than ever. We can see how decisions about how we develop our neighborhoods will shape our future. “Before we lift the next shovel,” the author says, “we should know what we want to improve, what we need to protect, and, more importantly, what kind of society we want to create.”

Louise Robbins will be leading the Zoom discussion, which follows up on our May Forum on *Where We Live: Equitable and Sustainable Neighborhoods*.

To sign up, email books@lwvdanecounty.org.



March Book Discussion Recap: *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right* by Jane Mayer

Kelly Haslam, KellyLHaslam@gmail.com

In March, League members discussed *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right* by Jane Mayer. Nancy Scherr served as moderator for the discussion.

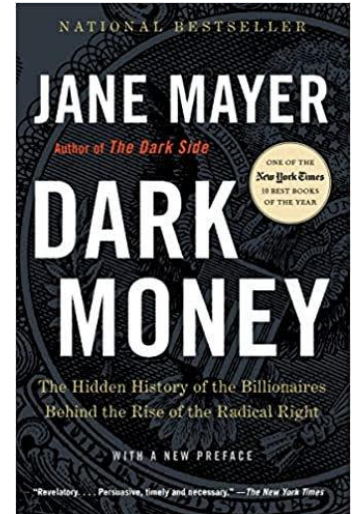
This eye-opening work of nonfiction is extraordinarily well-researched, well-presented, and well-written. Mayer takes the reader chronologically and methodically through the political infrastructure built by the conservative ultra-rich under the guise of nonprofits, foundations, think tanks, and university-based research centers. In addition, she reveals how these funding sources are not only hidden from the public but also how these millions of dollars are leveraged as tax deductions.

This content is sophisticated and nuanced, but Mayer does an excellent job of making the information highly readable. For example, I appreciated how she even explores the backgrounds and personalities of some of the highlighted billionaires. In addition, Mayer makes a convincing case for how early efforts to influence the political system were unsuccessful, but when the ultra-rich modified their strategies and pooled resources, they became more powerful and influential. Ultimately, many politicians and parties have found themselves influenced by a small number of unelected rich billionaires who are essentially directing positions and policies with the power of their money.

Mayer also discusses how there has always been money in politics, but that it became acutely worse with the U.S. Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision, which has resulted in unlimited (and hidden) political spending. In addition, while several billionaires were discussed, the Koch family/corporation is particularly emphasized due to its singular influence and coordinating efforts. Mayer also looks at the impact of the uber-wealthy at the national and state levels. Both North Carolina and Wisconsin are specially featured.

Mayer provides a few liberal parallels as well as political assessments from Democratic operatives to provide some balance and to signal that the equivalent ecosystem did not exist to the same degree on the other side, but perhaps more could have been explored and explained. Nevertheless, regardless of the political side, it was profoundly disturbing to learn how our democracy is affected by the disproportionate influence of the ultra-rich versus the broader citizenry. I knew there was a lot of money spent in politics, but I had no idea how much, in what ways it was spent, or the asymmetrical influence it had to drown out the views of the populace. It has made me more convinced that political spending reforms are desperately needed.

If you are interested in joining a future planned book discussion or simply want more information, please email books@lwvdanecounty.org.



The Many Forms of Leadership at LWVDC

Kimberly Rooney (she/her), LWVDC Leadership Development Fellow,
krooney@lwvdanecounty.org

In the March Bulletin, I wrote on what it means to be a “leaderful” organization, and LWVDC in many ways exemplifies this “concurrent, collective, collaborative, and compassionate” leadership model. LWVDC’s definition of leadership is wide-ranging, and our organization functions in sophisticated ways because we have numerous members who champion projects and chair committees. In fact, at LWVDC there are myriad ways for a member to lead. Some serve on the board, some manage new initiatives, some guide discussions, some recruit volunteers, and some pass on their knowledge to other members. If you are one of these people, you should be proud of the amazing work you do.

Leadership is not just about holding a formal position or title. It's about taking initiative, being a positive influence, and making a difference in whatever way you can. By recognizing and embracing our different roles as leaders, we can help LWVDC become a more vibrant and effective organization. For instance, you can:

- Be a role model: Set an example for others by demonstrating a positive attitude, a strong work ethic, and a commitment to the organization's mission. Your actions can inspire others to get involved and make a difference.
- Be a team player: Empowering voters, defending democracy, and building a strong organization is a group effort. You can help to build a strong and supportive team by being dependable, collaborative, and willing to lend a hand.
- Be a problem solver: Leaders are often called upon to solve problems and make difficult decisions. Develop your problem-solving skills by taking on challenging tasks and thinking creatively to find solutions.
- Be a communicator: Keep the lines of communication open by listening actively, expressing your ideas clearly and respectfully, and providing feedback to others.
- Be a mentor: Mentoring is a valuable way to help other members grow and feel a sense of community in the League. As an experienced member or volunteer, you can share your knowledge and expertise with others, provide guidance and support, and encourage them to take on leadership roles of their own.

Leadership development and sustainability was one of the top strategic directions to come out of LWVDC’s ongoing strategic planning process. We want to support these vital members of our organization. Perhaps more importantly, we want to help connect our many leaders and provide spaces where they can exchange ideas, seek advice, share successes, and foster relationships. With these goals in mind, I am drafting a plan for an LWVDC initiative that would connect and empower leaders and help them access important information and tools. I will present the detailed plan as a recommendation to the LWVDC Board at their May meeting. Ultimately, the initiative will help promote our broad definition of leadership at LWVDC and recognize and support leadership in all its forms.

50-Year Member Recognition: Carol Carstensen

The League of Women Voters has a tradition of recognizing those who have been members for 50 years.

Over the next few issues of the Bulletin, we will be honoring these long-time members, many of whom joined a local League elsewhere, but who are celebrating their 50th year of membership with LWV Dane County in 2023. We are grateful for the dedication of our 50-Year Members!

My Life Before LWV

Carol grew up in a working-class family in Cleveland, Ohio. She describes her family's neighborhood as being in "the outer rim of the inner core" of the city. Her parents were active in social causes and provided early role models. While at Glenville High School, Carol was involved with the city-wide Council of Human Relations working on racial issues and concerns.

Carol first came to Madison as an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin. In the year following graduation, she traveled and then worked as a social worker in Cuyahoga County. Carol attended Yale, where she earned a Master of Arts in teaching. Her husband-to-be, Peter, was attending Yale Law School. Carol taught at public schools for a couple of years in New Haven, Conn., before she and her husband moved to Washington, D.C. Carol taught for three years in the D.C. public schools. They adopted their oldest child in 1972. In 1973, the young family moved back to Madison so Peter could take a position at UW Law School. During their first year, they lived on Madison's west side.



Capitol Police arrest Carol for singing in the Capitol during a 2013 protest.

My Life with the League

Carol actively sought out membership in the LWV Dane County. Her in-laws had lived in Madison previously and they had communicated the importance of the League. When Carol first joined the League, her west-side discussion unit provided childcare during the meetings and thus was attractive to several mothers of young children. The next year they bought a house on the near-east side and Carol became a member of the Marquette unit as the family increased to four children.

Education concerns remained a central interest and focus for Carol. She was involved in several of the LWVDC's study programs on education over the years. One of these study groups focused on the issue of vouchers and charter schools. Carol also recalls early study groups focused on the state's welfare department and state prisons. Carol chaired panel discussions and helped to create questions for *Candidates' Answers*. One of Carol's observations regarding her early years in the League is that LWVDC was focused on a broader range of issues and areas of advocacy. In part, this was because other organizations dealing with specific advocacy concerns hadn't yet been created. The League, as a result, drew its membership from those interested in a wide range of areas.

Carol is particularly proud of how the League has maintained its nonpartisan stance during recent challenging election cycles. She encourages others to join the League primarily because its nonpartisan role in protecting voting rights and promoting voter education is so very important.

Carol was elected to the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) school board in 1990 and served until 2008. She served five terms as president of the MMSD school board.

Finally, Carol shared how much she greatly treasures all the people she's met through the League. She admires the commitment and hard work put forth by the members of the LWVDC.

Calling Delegates to the State League Annual Meeting in La Crosse, June 9-10

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

Any LWVDC member is invited to attend the LWV Wisconsin Annual Meeting, to be held in LaCrosse this year, either in person or online. Learn more and register by May 17 at <https://lwvwisconsin.wixsite.com/lwvwi-annual-meeting> if interested.

Please note that LWVWI has reserved a block of rooms with Hilton Home2Suites the night of June 9-10 at a rate of \$129/night. The deadline for reservations at that special rate has already passed, but you can contact the hotel for more information.

All members in attendance will be able to act as voting delegates. This event is a wonderful opportunity to meet and network with your League peers and learn more about the League's work at all levels. Please email Barb Feeney at president@lwvdanecounty.org if you intend to attend as a delegate, because delegates will be approved by the LWVDC Board. Note that LWVDC does not have funds to reimburse attendees for expenses.

A Note from Mara Eisch

I want to thank you for the opportunity to serve the LWVDC as Vice President. It has been an interesting year. I regret that I have had to resign my position. I hope only the best for the League as it moves forward with Strategic Planning and Governance. I want to thank UW-Madison graduate student McKenzie Zdrale for her work on developing the Governance Charter and Code of Conduct Policy. It will serve as a foundation for future work. I want to encourage those with an interest in Governance to step forward and participate in this exciting future work for the LWVDC.

April 2023 Board of Directors Meeting Highlights

Sharon Lezberg, Community Development Educator from Dane County Community Development (a division of UW–Extension), joined the Board for her final facilitated Strategic Planning session. The next steps include action planning/implementation and sharing strategic directions and initiatives with all members this spring and summer.

UW-Madison graduate student McKenzie Zdrale presented the final report from her two semesters with LWVDC. This included recommendations for a Board Governance Committee Charter, Code of Conduct Agreement, and Board Succession Planning and Projections.

The Board reviewed and approved updates to the Member Interest Survey, submitted by the Member Service Committee. LWVDC's annual membership renewal campaign will begin in May; watch your email and mailboxes.

LWVDC Board meeting agendas and approved minutes can be found online at www.lwvdanecounty.org/board.

Contributions

Thank you to these supporters who donated in February 2023.

General Donations

Debbie Collins
James Cory
Mary K Dick
ML Dombrowski
Barbara Feeney
Erin Grunze
Sharon Hamilton
Hatheway Hasler

Nancy Homes
Laura Jasper
Tom Karls
Christina Koch
Kathleen Krusiec
Elizabeth Lentz
Zachary Levin
Amy Moran

Ann Pooler
Louise Robbins
Luke Sackash
Kathleen Shurts
Edith Sullivan
Sandi Vandervest
Tom Vandervest
Sharon Brainerd Whitney

Memorial Donations

In memory of Margaret McEntire and Sue Larson
Brook Soltvedt

New Members

We welcome these new members who joined us in March 2023. An [updated member directory](#) is available on our website. NOTE: The password for the directory page was changed on April 26, 2022. If you need the new password, contact the webmaster for help. Please know that we respect your privacy! Information about members is used only for internal LWV purposes; it is never shared with other organizations or non-League individuals.

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

Beth Whittemore
Richard Russell

Nancy Homes
Janice Kehler

ML Dombrowski

Discussion Units

Many League members meet in one of five units to discuss the topic of each forum, using the resource materials provided by the program planners to guide the conversation. The discussion concludes with recommendations for further study or action. Units meet regularly at different times and locations, including via Zoom. All in-person meetings occur in Madison unless otherwise noted. Find a unit meeting that's convenient for you and participate! Details below.

Please contact the Unit Discussion Leader if interested in participating in a Unit Discussion so that you will get a Zoom link. Consult [the calendar](#) for the most up-to-date information about specific meetings.

Unit: Prairie Ridge (*For Prairie Ridge residents only*)

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

Location: In person, Prairie Ridge

Leaders: [Dot Whiting](#)

Unit: West / Middleton

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

Location: In person, Meadowridge Library, 5726 Raymond Rd.

Leader: [Gloria Meyer](#) (608) 347-9713

Unit: Central West

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

Location: Virtual, via Zoom

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

Unit: Northeast Side

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

Location: Virtual, via Zoom

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

Unit: Downtown (Capitol Lakes)

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

Location: In person, Premiere Room at Capitol Lakes, 333 W. Main St.

Leader: [Aileen Nettleton](#)



Upcoming Events

May 11	Virtual Forum: Equitable and Sustainable Neighborhoods
May 15	Member Services, noon
May 15	Prairie Ridge (Oakwood Village) Discussion Unit, 3:30 p.m.
May 15	West/Middleton Discussion Unit, 6:30 p.m.
May 16	Central West Discussion Unit, 12:45 p.m.
May 17	Northeast Side Discussion Unit, 3:30 p.m.
May 17	Downtown Discussion Unit, 5:30 p.m.
June 4	LWVDC Annual Meeting, noon
June 6	Advocacy Corps, 5:30 p.m.

The League in the News

[Isthmus](#) highlighted the May 11 forum on Where We Live: Equitable and Sustainable Neighborhoods.

