

# LWW<sup>®</sup> Bulletin

**October 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**

- Forum: Preserving Public Education, Thursday, October 5
- President's Message: Can You Hear Us Now?
- Fair Maps: Are We Getting Closer?
- Organizing the Poor to End Poverty

## **Other Updates**

- September Book Discussion: *Poverty, By America*
- Discussion Units
- League News & Updates

# **LWVDC Forum**

## **Preserving Public Education**

**Thursday, October 5, 2023**

**6-7:30 pm**

**Goodman South Library**

**2222 South Park Street, Madison, WI**

**or on Zoom**

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

Our October program is a hybrid event. Attend in-person at the Goodman South Public Library, or register for a Zoom link to attend virtually.

**This event is free and open to the public.**

**The doors open at 5:30 pm. Come early and enjoy some refreshments!**

Join the League of Women Voters of Dane County for Preserving Public Education to learn about how education funding works and the effect of public education on our community. We will cover

- The result of the latest education budget.
- The motivation behind the voucher system.
- The racial and economic impacts on our children of “school choice.”

The trend toward increasing state aid for private schools and decreasing aid for public schools has racial, economic, and educational impacts on our children.

The League of Women Voters supports the implementation of non-discriminatory policies, disbursement of equitable state aid, and retaining substantial program and personnel responsibilities in the local district to support educational equity.

**Panelists:**

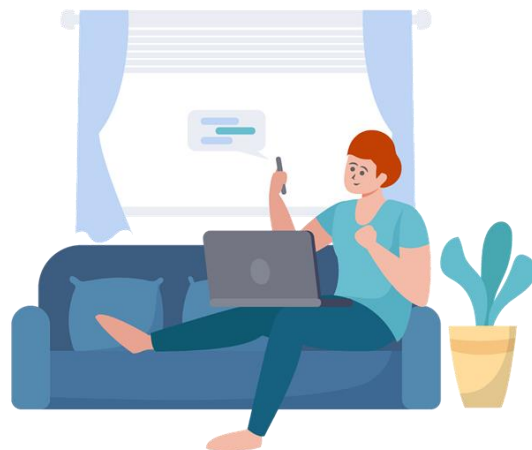
- **Kevin Lawrence Henry, Jr.**, Assistant Professor, Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, UW–Madison. Henry’s interdisciplinary program of research and teaching revolves around two central, interrelated questions: how power and dominance shape and structure educational policies, practices, and reforms; and how Black educational actors understand, resist, reconstitute, and transform educational fields to be equitable, just, and humanizing. Specifically, Henry’s research investigates: the racialized lived realities of charter schools and school choice policy and practice; the persistence of anti-Blackness in education; neoliberalism and educational markets; and culturally relevant and restorative justice approaches in education.
- **Julie Mead**, Professor Emerita, School of Education, UW–Madison; LWVDC member who serves on the LWVWI Legislative Committee. Mead’s research examines topics related to education law. Recent scholarship has proposed policy language to ensure charter schools promote equal educational opportunity, traced the evolution of the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program, examined voucher programs in relation to the education clauses of state constitutions, and analyzed voucher statutes for the presence or absence of nondiscrimination requirements.

**Moderator:**

- **Julie Underwood**, Dean Emerita, School of Education; LWVDC Member who serves on the LWVWI Legislative Committee. Underwood, a nationally recognized authority on school law, served as dean of the UW–Madison School of Education (2005-2015). Underwood holds a law degree from Indiana University and a Ph.D. in educational leadership from the University of Florida. In 1998, she became associate executive director and general counsel for the National School Boards Association. She led a legal advocacy

program on behalf of the nation's public school boards, including producing friend-of-the-court briefs and legal strategies before the U.S. Supreme Court and lower courts. Her research and scholarship focus on school finance and education law and policy.

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



## President's Message: Can You Hear Us Now?

*Barb Feeney, President, [president@lwvdanecounty.org](mailto:president@lwvdanecounty.org)*

Dear Friends in League,

You may be aware that LWVDC is in the process of hiring a Communications Manager. As a prelude to having this new staff person, the LWVDC Board met in September to consider how to more effectively communicate with you, our members. We are well aware that we are one voice that is only too easily lost in the deluge of communications that you experience every day.

In addition, our effectiveness in the larger community depends on us reaching many others outside our organization. Dane County is home to hundreds of nonprofit organizations, many of which work in the citizen engagement space to some degree or another. We don't view these as competitors but as potential partners. There is room for many—especially at this time when it is easy to throw up one's hands and walk away from our role as citizens out of a profound sense of discouragement.

Effectively getting our message out is essential to our success. I hope you will take a moment to complete a short, anonymous survey to tell us more about your experience with LWVDC communications so we can reach and serve you better. Please [click here](#) to share your experience and help us improve our member communication.

# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WISCONSIN: PUSHES FOR STRONGER REDISTRICTING BILL, MORE NONPARTISAN SAFEGUARDS



## Fair Maps: Are We Getting Closer?

Sue Jennik, Program Director of LWVDC, Chair of LWVWI Legislative Committee, [program@lwvdanecounty.org](mailto:program@lwvdanecounty.org)

For our September program offering, we encouraged our members to watch an online presentation about *Clarke v. Wisconsin Election Commission*, the case before the Wisconsin Supreme Court that charges that the current district maps violate the Wisconsin Constitution. On August 2, 2023, 19 Wisconsin voters filed a petition with the Wisconsin Supreme Court alleging that the maps are partisan gerrymanders in violation of the Wisconsin Constitution's guarantees of equal protection, free speech, and free association. The petition also alleges that the majority of both Senate and Assembly districts consist of non-contiguous districts in contravention of the State Constitution.

The suit asks the Court to declare that the current maps violate the State Constitution and to enjoin those maps from use in any election. The petitioners request that the parties submit proposals for new maps to be determined by the Court. The attorneys for Law Forward, who represent the petitioners, hope that

new maps would be in place by March 2024.

While this case is pending, the State Assembly passed a bill (AB415) that proposes a new process for redistricting. The vote was taken without any public hearing less than 48 hours after being introduced. The bill proposes that district maps be drawn by the Legislative Reference Bureau, a nonpartisan state agency, using the following standards:

- Districts should vary in population by not more than 1%.
- District boundaries should coincide with municipal ward boundaries and boundaries of political subdivisions.
- Districts should be composed of convenient contiguous territory and be compact.
- Districts should be nonpartisan and should not favor a political party, incumbent legislator, or other person or group.

While these standards are welcome, the proposed bill would allow a simple majority of the Legislature to reject the resulting maps twice and then adopt district maps without reference to the standards in the bill.

Debra Cronmiller, Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, stated: "This bill, if enacted, could result in more of the same extremely gerrymandered Legislative maps that we have now. This bill needs to require a supermajority (or 3/4 vote) of the Legislature, to ensure one party does not overrule the process."

Wisconsinites have been fighting long and hard for fair maps. We deserve a strong solution.

# Organizing the Poor to End Poverty

Danielle Thai, [ppcdaneco@gmail.com](mailto:ppcdaneco@gmail.com)

According to recently released [data from the Census Bureau](#), the poverty rate in the United States rose by 4.6 percentage points in 2022, its first increase since 2010 and its largest increase in over 50 years. Many attribute this rise to policy decisions that roll back or discontinue programs that provided extra assistance during the pandemic such as the American Rescue Plan's Child Tax Credit increase and the moratorium on evictions. The crisis of poverty in the United States has been recently amplified by the success of Matthew Desmond's new book *Poverty, By America*, which lays bare the many ways that poverty is perpetuated and the need to empower the poor to fight back by using our voices and our votes. (A review of this book appears below.)

There is a movement that is growing around the country and here in Wisconsin to fight the injustices of poverty by organizing and mobilizing poor and low-income workers along with faith and moral leaders. The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival consists of grassroots volunteers who believe that poverty in the richest country in the world is a national disgrace that **can** and **must** be eradicated. The current Poor People's Campaign (PPC) is a continuation of work that began in 1968 when Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. along with many others called for a "revolution of values" and sought to build a broad, fusion movement that could unite the poor and those impacted by injustice across division and difference in order to shift the false narrative of scarcity in our land of plenty.

The Poor People's Campaign is non-partisan and believes strongly in the expansion of voting rights, recognizing that mobilizing low-income voters can build the power needed to demand the implementation of effective anti-poverty



policies. The PPC has organized voter outreach drives targeting both urban and rural areas where the majority were low-income eligible voters. In 2020, this drive across 16 states reached over 2.1 million voters, and in 2022, in the weeks leading up to the midterms, the PPC reached over 5.1 million voters in 15 priority states, including Wisconsin.

Here in Wisconsin, there is an active statewide coordinating committee with local efforts in Dane County, Rock County, Milwaukee, North Central Wisconsin, and more on the way! Members have mobilized to bring awareness to the recent Medicaid cutoffs and to lobby legislators (both state and federal) to support anti-poverty policies including health care for all. If you're interested in getting involved, you can contact LWVDC member Danielle Thai at [ppcdaneco@gmail.com](mailto:ppcdaneco@gmail.com) or visit <https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/committee/wisconsin/>.



*Wisconsin Poor People's Campaign Healthcare Day of Action at the State Capitol (March 2023)*



*Wisconsin Poor People's Delegation to Washington D.C. (June 2022)*

## **September Book Discussion: *Poverty, By America***

Kelly Haslam, [KellyLHaslam@gmail.com](mailto:KellyLHaslam@gmail.com)

In September, League members discussed *Poverty, By America* by Matthew Desmond. Jeannine Ramsey and Louise Robbins served as moderators for the discussion.

While I'm not sure if this book is as strong as *Evicted* (also written by Desmond), it is a valuable read and the subject matter is one that needs to be discussed and addressed significantly more. This book also had a bit of a different approach and tone than *Evicted*. While *Evicted* was an enlightening ethnography, this was a well-researched and persuasive argument to become a poverty abolitionist. In the process, Desmond wrote with urgency and passion. He did not mince words about the challenge of eliminating poverty but also was encouraging about the capacity for positive change.

My favorite chapters were "How We Force the Poor to Pay More" and "How We Rely on Welfare." These chapters were so compelling and well-argued. For example, Desmond reasons that many of us benefit from welfare programs in the form of mortgage interest tax deductions or untaxed health insurance deductions on paychecks. He explains how in those and other cases the government is subsidizing our homeownership or health insurance.

I hope many people read this book. I found it informative and soul-searching. I wished there had been more in the way of actionable steps, but there were some suggestions as well as the poverty abolitionist mindset to possess. Desmond is a skillful writer. Through his choice of words and the upending of entrenched perspectives, he was effective in totally reframing the poverty debate and did so with compelling evidence and truth-telling. If you think you play no role in America's poverty, I challenge you to read this book and see if you still feel the same.

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

# Discussion Units

*Aileen Nettleton, Discussion Unit Coordinator*

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 Units 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. Oakwood Village Prairie Ridge on the far east side, with a new leader, Alan Zuckerman, is now open to all League members and will meet in person regularly.

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

## **Unit: Oakwood Village Prairie Ridge**

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

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

**Leader:** [Alan Zuckerman](#)

## **Unit: West / Middleton**

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

**Location:** Meadowridge Library, 5726 Raymond Rd., Madison, in September, October, November; Virtual via Zoom in December, January, February

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

**Unit: Central West**

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

**Location:** LWVDC office, 720 Hill St. in Madison in September, October, November;

Virtual via Zoom in December, January, February

**Leader:** [Kathy Johnson](#)

**Unit: Virtual Dane County (Formerly Northeast Side)**

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

**Location:** Virtual, via Zoom

**Leader:** [Karen Gunderson](#)

**Unit: Downtown**

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

**Location:** Premiere room at Capitol Lakes, 333 West Main St., Madison, in September, October, November; Virtual via Zoom in December, January, February

**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**

# Remembering Joan Schuette

*Kathleen Fullin*

Joan Schuette, President of LWVDC from 1970–72, passed away August 25 at the age of 92. Her obituary noted that in addition to having served as President, Joan was a 50-Year Member (she had joined in 1962).

Joan was also an active volunteer for the Girl Scouts and the First Unitarian Society of Madison, and served on several City of Madison boards and commissions in the areas of housing and community development.

Joan recently commented to her friend Carol Kiemel (also a former LWVDC President) that when they worked together drafting letters advocating for action on issues, she “felt we were doing something, not just sitting on the sidelines.”

Former LWVDC and LWVWI President Kathy Johnson attended a talk about the League that Joan gave to wives of Memorial High School teachers and staff. Kathy says “I always blamed her for getting me involved in league.”

Carol Toussaint, former President of the LWV Wisconsin and Vice President of LWVUS, noted that “Joan was a leader who delivered well beyond what was asked of her.”

As a thank you when Joan stepped down from her post as President, some friends from League (including Anne Arnesen) planted a saucer magnolia tree in the front yard of her house on Farley Avenue. Joan moved out a few years later, but soon another League member, Kathleen Fullin (who later served as LWVDC President), moved in and she has enjoyed the blooms for 45 years!

The obituary requested that memorials in Joan's honor be made to the First Unitarian Society of Madison or to the League of Women Voters of Dane County. Online condolences may be made at [www.gundersonfh.com](http://www.gundersonfh.com).

## **Contributions**

### **General Donations**

Jeremiah Cahill  
Elizabeth Conklin  
Erica & Scott Diehl  
Sue Goldwomon  
Alice Gould  
Luke Sackash  
Jane A. Smith  
Jerry Steinhauer  
Sandra Ward  
Patricia Schubert  
Madison Community Foundation

### **Sustaining Donations**

Zachary Levin  
Amy Moran

### **Additional Gift with Membership Renewal**

Barbara Beale Arnold  
Nico Bartholomew  
Ruth Ann Berkholtz  
Catherine Berndt  
Sybil Better

Nancy Jensen  
Charlotte Jerney  
Patricia Kippert  
Judith Kleinmaier  
Elizabeth Kohl  
Kathleen Krusiec  
Caroline Liedtke  
Lynn Maki  
Sara Markham  
Marian Matthews  
Phyllis Menne  
Marta Meyers  
Kate Morand  
Judith Munger  
Valerie Murphy  
Mary Murrell  
Marilyn Mussallem  
MaryAnn Olson  
Mary & Stephan Ploeser  
Joan Provencher  
Victoria Robertson  
Catherine Rotter  
Nancy Scherr  
Gail Shea  
Larry Sromovsky  
Rose & Trevor Stephenson  
Sandra & Thomas Vandervest



## 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](#)

Lynn Felhofer

Mary Ann Fix

Don Golembiewski

Sadie Dempsey

Fiona Rataj

## Upcoming Events

October 3: Advocacy Corps, 5:30 pm

October 5: Forum: Preserving Public Education, 6 pm

October 16: Membership Team, 12 noon

October 16: Oakwood Village Prairie Ridge Discussion Unit, 3:30 pm

October 16: West/Middleton Discussion Unit, 6:30 pm

October 17: Central West Discussion Unit, 12:45 pm

October 18: Virtual Dane County Discussion Unit, 3:30 pm

October 18: Downtown Discussion Unit, 5:30 pm

October 19: LWVDC Board Meeting, 5:30 pm

**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

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Poor People's Campaign: Danielle Thai

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