



Bulletin

League of Women Voters® of Dane County, Inc.

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

office@lwvdanecounty.org • www.lwvdanecounty.org

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DECEMBER 2020

President's Message	2
Voter Helpline Success	2
Participate in the Dane County Redistricting Commission	4
Help Us Continue the Vision	4
Recognizing Leadership: Carol Kiemel	5
Prison Gerrymandering:	
A Distortion of Democracy	7
Why I Give – Brook Soltvedt	8
Ranked-Choice Voting on the Ballot	9
What Laws Govern WI Voting Systems?	10
How Would RCV Have Affected the August 2020 Primaries?	12
Centering Our Work on DEI	15
Girl Scout Democracy Badge	16
Letter to The Editor	16
In Remembrance: Lori Kay	18
New Members	18
Contributions	18
Discussion Units	19
Upcoming Events	19
2021 Elections	19

Executive Committee:

Christine Clements, President
Marilyn Stephen, Vice President
Jean Jacobson, Vice President
Georgiana Hernandez, Program Chair

Bulletin Editors

Maria Spinozzi, bulletin@lwvdanecounty.org
Lauren Surovi, Copy Editor
Jaclyn Jacobson, Editor
Lisa Janairo, Editor
Kathleen Rause, Editor
Emily Weiss, Editor

Thursday, December 10, 2020

7:00 p.m. – 8:15 p.m.

Reimagining Public Safety

A Virtual Public Issues Forum

Anthony Cooper, Sr., Vice President of Strategic Partnerships & Reentry Services at Nehemiah Center for Urban Leadership Development

Colleen Clark-Bernhardt, Manager of the Division of Policy and Practice Innovation and Coordinator, Dane County Criminal Justice Council

Keith Findley, Professor of Law, University of Wisconsin Law School

This forum will explore new opportunities for ensuring public safety in Dane County, with information about the County's recent initiatives on criminal justice reform, about Madison's Independent Monitor and Civilian Oversight Board, and about innovative community response efforts such as the Focused Intervention Coalition. Speakers will address critical issues, including racial disparities in law enforcement, inadequate responses to and treatment of mental illness/substance abuse, and community solutions to escalating violence.

Registration is required. [You can sign up here](#). A Zoom link will be sent to all registrants a day before the event. For more information about the event, please visit the forum [webpage here](#).

Forums are free and open to the public.

President's Message

Christine Clements, president@lwvdanecounty.org

The work of the League is never done. As we move forward together after the November 2020 Election, we focus on the shared values that got us here — values like democracy, justice, and fairness. And we honor our many active LWV Dane County volunteers and their never-ending reserve of creative ideas and effort.

A tremendous amount of intense effort over recent months has been committed to Voter Service activities: encouraging and assisting citizens in registering, voting, and supporting elections. This will continue to be a central part of the work we do. But if you are one of the many new members who has joined the League over the last year or two, you may not yet have had the opportunity to participate in some of the other study and action work of the League.

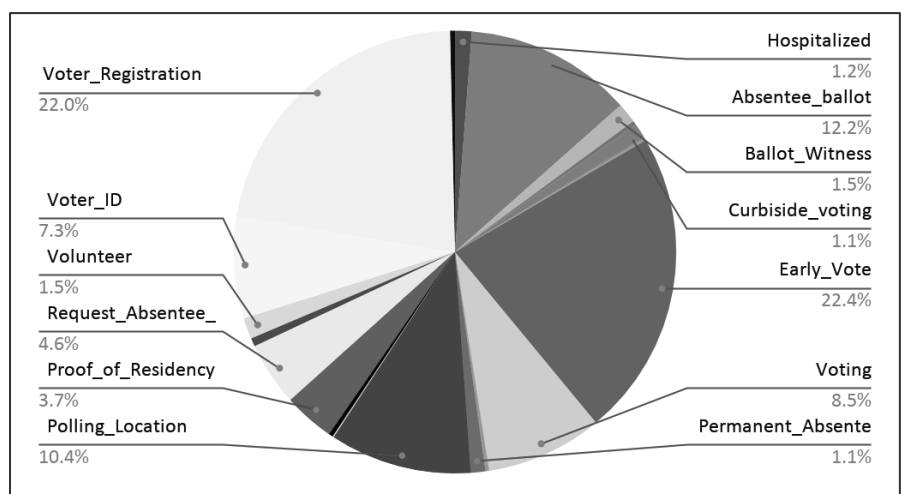
Inspired by their experiences with recent and past elections, a new study committee has emerged focused on ranked-choice voting and its potential for bringing greater choice to our elections. The LWVDC Book Club is investigating dysfunction in our current political system and the need for innovation in the most recent book club selection, *The Politics Industry: How Political Innovation Can Break Partisan Gridlock and Save Our Democracy*. A LWVDC-led Dane County Working Group on Fair Maps is organizing to end gerrymandering, and our Program Committee is offering a virtual public issues forum on *Reimagining Public Safety* that will examine new opportunities for ensuring public safety in Dane County. Developing critical understanding of the political landscape and exploring options and opportunities for greater fairness in our democracy is an important part of the League's agenda. I encourage you to consider some of these engagement opportunities.

Please mark your calendar for the annual Lively Issues Forum, to be held virtually on January 16. Dr. Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins, past president of LWVUS and author of *The Untold Story of Women of Color in the League of Women Voters*, was originally scheduled as our keynote speaker at last spring's Centennial Celebration, which was canceled due to COVID-19. We are excited to hear her share this story and reflect on issues of racial justice in the history of the League.

Voter Helpline Success

More than 2,100 voters contacted the Voter Helpline (608-285-2141) this summer and fall with questions about a range of topics. The majority of the contacts were handled by paid staff, but about a quarter were fielded by League volunteers.

This remarkable achievement was made possible when the Dane County Voter ID Coalition, founded by the League of Women Voters of Dane County and the NAACP of Dane County, received a grant from Dane County, facilitated by Dane County Clerk Scott McDonell and approved by the Dane County Board.



Reasons for calls to the Voter Helpline in summer and fall 2020.

The \$99,000 grant, which passed through federal money from the CARES Act designated for election purposes, supported paid staff for the Helpline, which was first established in 2015 and is ordinarily staffed by volunteers. Hiring paid staff meant that contacts to the Helpline could be answered in real time, at the moment when the voter is thinking about voting. The grant also paid for a media campaign to publicize the Helpline to Dane County voters. Our League acted as the fiscal agent for the grant.

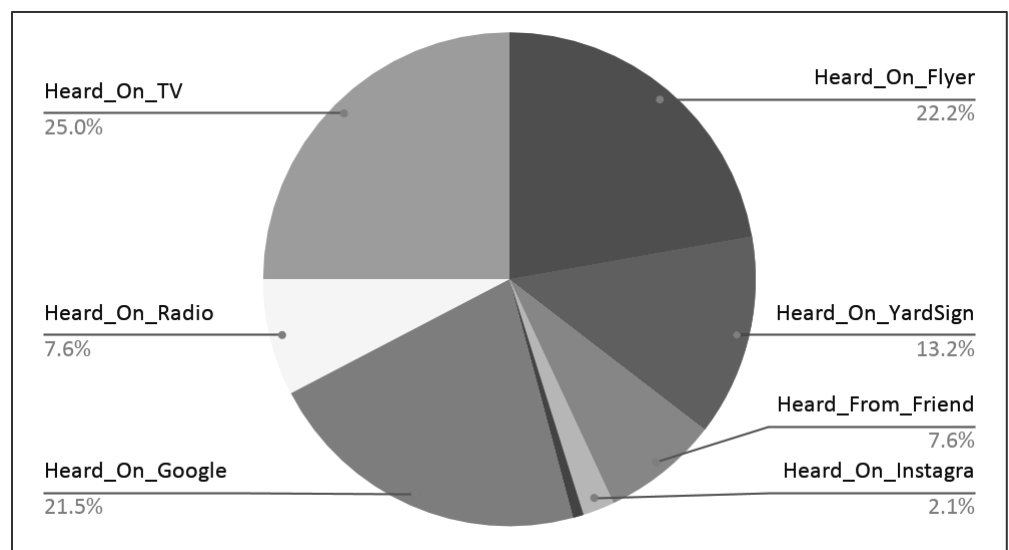
This highly publicized phone/text contact method was intended to replace the in-person voter outreach efforts the League and Coalition normally provide when there is no pandemic.

This effort was managed by a steering committee led by League member Ingrid Rothe, who co-chairs the Dane County Voter ID Coalition along with Earnestine Moss from the NAACP. The committee was responsible for developing the grant proposal, hiring the staff, finding a public relations firm for the media campaign, managing the Helpline technology, coordinating with partners to assist voters who needed local assistance outside of Dane County, supervising the staff, reviewing the media campaign, and helping the staff answer texts and calls from voters.

Rippe Keane Marketing donated thousands of dollars of staff time, designing media that publicized the Voter Helpline to Dane County residents. Rippe Keane also arranged for donated production assistance from NBC 15, Morgan Murphy Media, and La Movida.

When we asked voters how they heard about the Helpline, the impact of paid media was obvious.

The yard signs with the Helpline phone number were distributed by the Dane County Voter ID Coalition. Some members of the statewide Voting Rights Coalition also publicized the Helpline number.



How callers learned about the Voter Helpline.

Helpline volunteers will assist voters in the upcoming

February and April elections in 2021 and into the future. Although we will all eventually be able to return to in-person voter outreach, the continued availability of a Helpline that voters can contact at their convenience improves the effectiveness of all our voter service activities. We will also work to maintain and strengthen the statewide partnerships that allowed us to help voters from all over Wisconsin.

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

Participate in the Dane County Redistricting Commission

Joan Schwarz, schwarzjoan111@gmail.com

The Dane County Redistricting Commission was created by the County Board. The Committee has been tasked with the responsibility of establishing the guidelines that will govern the redistricting process, as well as reviewing and making alterations to draft plans prepared by the consultant or staff. Considering the role that municipalities play in the redistricting process and the obligation of counties to solicit suggestions from those municipalities, the committee is comprised of citizens and voluntary representatives of affected municipalities.

All meetings take place on Zoom and are open to the public. Citizens can submit questions before each meeting. A recording is also made available after each meeting. The public can access the meetings by searching for "Redistricting Commission" on the Dane County Legislative Information Center [calendar](#). Click on the agenda to access the link for the virtual meeting. Meetings that have already occurred will have a video link on the calendar.

The Dane County Redistricting Commission wants the public involved in this very important process. When the Census data is in, the public needs to be fully informed about the redistricting process which must be done with transparency so that our elections for the next ten years are based on fair and representative maps.

Help Us Continue the Vision

As we near the end of a most eventful year, it is time to think of all we have accomplished and all that we are still working to achieve. Our membership has grown, we helped an astonishing number of people to register to vote, and we have continued our popular Forum series despite logistical barriers. We also acknowledged the causes of climate change, embraced diversity, and improved educational opportunities — and above all, we have maintained and expanded our pledge to ensure the rights and responsibilities of free and open elections.

This is only possible because of the hard work and support of our members, volunteers, and community friends who believe in our vision and commitment.

In the coming year, the League of Women Voters of Dane County will continue to evolve, to further its longstanding goals, and to embrace new initiatives.

Please help us show how voices, actions, and words can make lasting changes in our world by considering an end-of-year contribution. [Donate online](#) or send a check to LWVDC, 720 Hill St., Suite 200, Madison, WI 53705-3539. Thank you.

In Case You Missed It...

Have you seen the League's blog, *Swinging for the Fences*, lately?

In [Concerns Related to the Electoral College](#), Joan Schwarz, League member and attorney, brings readers up to speed on the latest rumblings concerning the Electoral College.

In [I Really Don't Care, Do You?](#), League member Pat Patterson reminds us to renew our commitment to preserve and protect our environment if we hope to have a future. She provides a number of actions that individuals can take to reduce their personal footprint and to support government and community actions to address the climate crisis.

And if you missed the Nov. 12 Public Issues Forum, *Wisconsin's Path Forward: Election and Redistricting*, [you can stream a recording of the forum here](#).

Recognizing Leadership: Carol Kiemel

Brook Soltvedt, soltvedtbrook@gmail.com

This article is part of a series of profiles of former League board members. The goal of the series is to recognize member service and to help new members to learn more about how the League has evolved, the path to League leadership, and how they can help shape our future. Carol became a Life (50-year) Member in 2016 and remains engaged today.

The first League event I attended was the 2008 annual meeting, at which the Carrie Chapman Catt award was presented to Carol Kiemel. The award presentation was a thoughtful biographical sketch and recounted many of her achievements with the League up to that time, including her term as LWVDC president from 2004–2006. Rather than repeat that information here, I will focus on Carol's reflections on the present moment. I strongly urge you to [read the Carrie Chapman Catt award presentation](#). I expect you will be as impressed as I was!



Path to Leadership—Follow Your Passion

As a young mother and a board member, under the leadership of **Eleanor Fitch** and **Joan Schuette**, Carol was set on the League path: study the issue, come to consensus, and advocate based on agreed-upon positions, both as a League and in coalition with other community groups. Advocacy soon became Carol's focus, and she chaired the first Action Committee. Her first participation in a local coalition was very rewarding and resulted in Dane County going to a County Executive form of government.

Carol Kiemel introduces speakers at our March 2009, issues forum: Four-Year-Old Kindergarten for All Dane County Children: Its Value, Current Status, and Future.

Read our League's 2008 study "[An Ounce of Prevention: Quality Early Care and Education for Dane County](#)."

When Carol retired from early childhood special-needs teaching, her passion to support all young parents and their children led her to become active in the Children and Families at Risk Committee. She knew from first-hand experience the value of early intervention. This led to advocating for safe and secure housing for families of all income levels. She chaired this committee and the state League's Legislative Committee for fourteen years and had a hand in establishing city, county, and school programs that we all take for granted today ([learn more](#)).

Carol has always felt that the League's focus should follow the passions of the current board and committee leadership, using local, state, and national positions and a study of current issues. As a result, she notes "The present passion to provide voter access to the polls under the new voting laws is amazing!" Carol's work in voter service is also remarkable. She chaired the highly successful Go Vote Coalition, whose mission was to register those who did not traditionally vote. She also established our voter outreach at the St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry and led several efforts to have voting materials, including *Candidates' Answers*, produced in Spanish. She also initiated a program to accommodate League membership for those who cannot afford the fee.

Carol's advice for our League as we develop our goals in diversity, equity, and inclusion is to form partnerships. Nehemiah and the YWCA are two Madison organizations that she recommends as leaders in understanding systemic discrimination. Says Carol, "I'd like to see more doing and less talking."

In our conversation, Carol, always humble and gracious, emphasized that she felt the League's impact on her life had been much greater than her accomplishments through the League. She misses the fellowship of the unit meetings during the 60s and 70s. She recalls sitting cross-legged on the living room floor with other women, many with young children, learning and discussing local, state, and national issues, and feeling, when coming to consensus on an issue, that they were involved in something important. The unit meetings have evolved with member lifestyles. General meetings, too, have evolved into forums for both the community and League members—an improvement, in Carol's view.

I asked Carol if she had advice for newer members exploring opportunities for deeper involvement. She suggests, "Get involved with a group or committee following the issue most important to you, at an activity level that is good for you. Or suggest an issue—but be ready to provide some leadership! This doesn't have to mean going to a lot of meetings, thanks to the internet. I remember when I was active when my children were young, the phone calls kept interrupting my time with them. Now the messages are tucked away on our phone or computer for after story time."

What about for older members, looking to step back? Carol thinks it may be okay to disengage a bit to make room for new energy, ideas, and passions. This past election season she appreciated the voter outreach activities she could do from home: "Our financial support will always be appreciated, along with responding to 'calls for action.' The weekly update, website, and *Bulletin* certainly keep me engaged." And, she adds, "Now we all will have the adventure of hiring an executive director! How appreciated and important are those whose passion is ensuring the League maintains and improves on its well-functioning infrastructure. A special 'thank you' goes to Sara Markham, office administrator during my presidency."

Pandemic Life

Carol lives a full life despite the pandemic. She keeps in touch with friends and family and maintains her native plant gardens, enjoying the wildlife they bring. She takes advantage of the abundant online cultural, political, and educational opportunities while "sheltering," including many opportunities announced in League emails. She keeps moving with two "safe" walking groups that walk throughout the winter. Reading real books, one fiction and one non-fiction, is an important part of her day. "I am also thankful to be able to continue visiting by phone another elderly person who is a shut-in."

How lucky we are to be in League with Carol Kiemel!



Prison Gerrymandering: A Distortion of Democracy

Lauren Surovi, surovi.lauren@gmail.com

Lauren is currently serving as a Prison Education Communications Fellow for Odyssey Beyond Bars. This fellowship is funded by a UW-Madison Mellon Public Humanities grant.

One of the most significant outcomes following the decennial U.S. Census is the process of redistricting, which redraws state legislative and congressional district boundaries for electoral purposes. A fair, accurate, and detailed count of who lives where is also essential in determining the distribution of billions of dollars of federal funding to local communities. “Census Day” for the 2020 U.S. Census was earlier this year, on April 1, 2020, and the collected data recorded a total of 330,627,271 individuals currently living in the U.S.

Ever since the first U.S. Census in 1790, the federal government has counted individuals who are incarcerated in both prisons and jails *at the location of their incarceration*, as opposed to the location of their last home address. While there may be some logistical motivations at play, this policy does not take into consideration the modern-day phenomenon of mass incarceration, whereby nearly 2.3 million people are held in confinement and thus are not counted at their home residence during the decennial Census. The problem of mass incarceration is acute in Wisconsin, where 676 of every 100,000 people are held in confinement.

The effect of this Census practice is that towns which are rural and predominantly white ultimately have their population counts inflated by individuals who populate the prisons, a population that is disproportionately made up of people of color. Indeed, more than 40% of incarcerated individuals identify as Black, despite representing only 13% of the U.S. population. This manipulation of the population count is known as “prison gerrymandering.” As the advocacy group Prison Policy Initiative (PPI) explains, “Prison gerrymandering funnels political power away from urban communities to legislators who have prisons in their (often white, rural) districts.” According to PPI’s reporting, prisons account for over half the population in nearly 40 U.S. municipalities.

A [recent NPR story](#) focused on one of these municipalities, located in Waupun, Wisconsin, where there is a district in which three-fourths of its constituents are incarcerated at Waupun Correctional Institution, a maximum-security men’s facility that houses more than 1,200 individuals. NPR met with the alderman representing these men, who stated on the record that he had “never been inside” the facility, and that as a result, “you have to think for them.” Of course, this is not true—there is no law that prohibits an alderman from communicating with constituents who are incarcerated. As one individual currently housed at Waupun Correctional put it, “It’s like your body being used.”

Only two states in the U.S., Maine and Vermont, allow individuals to vote while incarcerated. In Wisconsin, formerly incarcerated citizens only regain their access to the vote once they are “off paper,” or when the individual has completed their incarceration, probation, supervised release, or parole for a felony conviction. This means that while these individuals are considered to be constituents of a given district, they lack any formalized means of exercising their rights as actual constituents. In other words, prison gerrymandering distorts democracy, violating the fundamental principle of “one person, one vote.”

As seen in the example of Waupun Correctional, the state of Wisconsin engages in prison gerrymandering for state legislative districts, and according to PPI, Wisconsin counties and cities offer some of the most dramatic instances of prison gerrymandering in the nation. Again, 75% of District 2 of Waupun County is incarcerated, which gives every 25 residents of this district the same voting power as 100 residents of any

other ward. Yet according to Wisconsin law, incarcerated people are considered residents of their home addresses, where a person's "residence" is determined by "where the person's habitation is fixed, without any present intent to move, and to which, when absent, the person intends to return" (Wis. Stat. § 6.10). Given that most incarcerated people do intend to leave prison and do not intend to return, prisons cannot rightfully be considered an individual's "residence." Thus, using the Census Bureau's prison count data for the purposes of redistricting is inconsistent with Wisconsin's residence law. While Dane County is not on PPI's list of prison gerrymandering's "worst offenders" (those would be Baraboo, Boscobel, Chippewa Falls, Elkhorn, Fitchburg, Franklin, and Racine cities and Chippewa, Columbia, Dodge, Fond du Lac, Racine, Sawyer, Sheboygan, Waushara, and Winnebago counties), leading to the problem of vote dilution, Dane County does not make the list of communities that have successfully rejected the Census Bureau's prison counts. We must look to these municipalities—the cities of New Lisbon, Portage, Prairie du Chien, and Stanley, and Crawford county—as a model for action.

To combat the negative and undemocratic impacts of prison gerrymandering, activists advocate for legislation that counts individuals at their last home address on record. Several groups based in Wisconsin, including the League of Women Voters (state and local chapters), are working towards fair maps — including the elimination of prison gerrymandering.

Why I Give – Brook Soltvedt

Megan Severson, meganseverson@gmail.com

Brook Soltvedt has been an active member of the League for more than a dozen years, serving in a myriad of leadership roles including as president, treasurer, webmaster, on the membership committee, and gathering candidate answers each year. "The League has been my life since I retired," Brook reflected. "I have my fingers in all of these pies."

Having donated for years prior to getting involved as a volunteer, Brook knew that the League was successful in making a difference for the community. After retiring, she wanted to spend her days supporting the League's mission. "I was raised in poverty," Brook shared. "I have been able to accomplish a lot. I got a great education; I had a great career. I have been able to do a lot because other people and non-profit organizations have stepped in to help me. I've also benefited because of my white privilege." Now that she has time, Brook and her husband dedicate their lives to service: "We want to leverage the passion, dedication, and talent of the League's volunteers so they can have even more impact."



A Brook-of-All-Trades, Brook has served as president, treasurer, webmaster, membership chair and on countless committees.

Over the past decade, Brook says that the League's membership has grown, especially as more people have sought help navigating Wisconsin's ever-changing voter laws. Brook is proud of how much the League's volunteers have accomplished, from new policies to support children and families, including Dane County's 4-year-old kindergarten, to tackling issues of policing and climate change. "When you look at the arc of what we have done, it very much depends on what the active people are passionate about," Brook said. "So, as long as it's all under a League position, if we have the people to do it, we can do it. And as we're doing more and more, we have to have the resources to support people."

Ranked-Choice Voting on the Ballot

RCV Study Committee, rcvstudy@lwvdanecounty.org

Many voters across the country were asked to weigh in on voting systems this November. There were two statewide ballot measures, in Alaska and Massachusetts, and many more local ballot measures. The questions posed to voters ranged from implementing ranked-choice voting or approval voting to changing primary systems and rules.

Massachusetts had an initiative on their ballot to enact ranked-choice voting for all elections in Massachusetts. **The initiative in Massachusetts failed with only 45% of voters voting in favor of it.**

Alaska's initiative asked voters if they should replace their current system of partisan primaries and plurality voting with an open primary system that allows the top-four winners to advance to the general election which then uses ranked-choice voting. This proposed system should sound familiar to anyone currently reading *The Politics Industry* by Katherine Gehl and Michael Porter. **The initiative in Alaska passed in a close election with 50.6% of voters voting in favor of it.**

States aren't the only ones proposing updates to their voting systems. In St. Louis, Missouri, citizens voted on Proposition D. This initiative proposed the use of approval voting for primaries. In approval voting, voters vote for every candidate of which they approve. This means a voter can vote for as many candidates for a given office as they like. **Proposition D, which passed with 68% of voters voting yes, enacts an open non-partisan primary with approval voting.** The top two winners then move on to the general election which maintains a plurality voting system. Their new approval voting system will apply to the offices of Mayor, Comptroller, President of the Board of Aldermen, and Alderman.

Two municipalities in Minnesota voted yes to enact ranked-choice voting. **Both Bloomington, MN and Minnetonka, MN voted to use ranked-choice for electing Mayor and City Council while eliminating the primary for these offices.** Bloomington's ballot measure passed with 51% voting yes. Minnetonka's passed with 55% voting yes.

In addition to those that made it to the ballot, both North Dakota and Arkansas had nearly successful attempts to get statewide initiatives on their ballots this year for open primaries with ranked-choice voting. Despite obtaining the required number of signatures, in both cases the state supreme court struck down the ballot measure due to technical issues. In North Dakota, the ballot measure was not allowed because "sponsors of the measure failed to provide a full text of the initiative while they were gathering signatures." In Arkansas, the "Arkansas Supreme Court ruled that [sponsors] had failed to properly follow the law requiring them to certify that all their paid canvassers passed the necessary background checks." That same requirement disqualified two other ballot measures. The law creating that requirement was later struck down as unconstitutional, but it was too late to revive the ballot measures. We will likely see new ballot measures in North Dakota and Arkansas soon.

Despite the increasing frequency of such ballot measures around the country, we won't be seeing similar ballot measures in Wisconsin anytime soon. Wisconsin does not have statewide citizen initiatives or what is commonly referred to as 'direct democracy.' The only path to changing voting systems in Wisconsin is through the state legislature.

What Laws Govern WI Voting Systems?

RCV Study Committee, rcvstudy@lwvwdanecounty.org

When thinking about the laws affecting our elections, we often focus on hot topics such as voter ID laws or redistricting. We don't often think about the more basic laws that define which voting systems are in use, because they so rarely change. These laws, however, govern the very nature of our elections. They determine how a person wins an election, which and how many candidates may run, who can vote in which races, and in what way a voter can voice their support for a candidate. The way our elections work today may seem like the only logical option because it is all we've ever known, but these were in fact deliberate choices made by people and codified in law. Below are a few excerpts from the WI State Statutes that affect our elections.

Plurality Shall Elect

Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 5 instructs that elections shall use a plurality voting method. This statute applies to all elections, including congressional, statewide, county, municipal, and school boards.

Chapter 5
ELECTIONS — GENERAL PROVISIONS; BALLOTS AND VOTING SYSTEMS.
SUBCHAPTER I
GENERAL PROVISIONS

5.01 Scope. (1) CONSTRUCTION OF CHS. 5 TO 12. Except as otherwise provided, chs. 5 to 12 shall be construed to give effect to the will of the electors, if that can be ascertained from the proceedings, notwithstanding informality or failure to fully comply with some of their provisions.

(2) GENERAL PROVISIONS OF ELECTION LAWS APPLY. The general provisions of chs. 5 to 12 apply to all elections.

(3) PLURALITY SHALL ELECT. (a) Except as provided in par. (b), in every election to choose any officer, each elector has one vote for each office unless clearly indicated otherwise. The person receiving the greatest number of legal votes for the office shall be declared elected, and the canvassers shall so determine and certify.

(b) In an election to fill a nonpartisan state office, if no names are certified to appear on the ballot, no person may be declared elected.

Excerpt from WI State Statutes Chapter 5. Highlighting added.

Open Partisan Primaries

WI State Statutes instruct that Wisconsin use what is referred to as an 'Open Primary' for partisan offices. Each party has its own ballot. A voter is given all party ballots regardless of political affiliation. A voter may vote in any party's ballot without requiring party registration but must only vote in one party's primary.

Chapter 5
ELECTIONS — GENERAL PROVISIONS; BALLOTS AND
VOTING SYSTEMS.
SUBCHAPTER II
BALLOT FORM

5.60 Spring election ballots.

(8) BALLOTS FOR PRESIDENTIAL VOTE. (am) Except as authorized in s. 5.655, there shall be a separate ballot for each recognized political party filing a certification under s. 8.12 (1), listing the names of all potential candidates of that party determined under s. 8.12 and affording, in addition, an opportunity to the voter to nominate another potential candidate by write-in vote or to vote for an uninstructed delegation to the party convention. The order of presidential candidates on the ballot shall be determined by lot by or under the supervision of the commission. Each voter shall be given the ballots of all the parties participating in the presidential preference vote, but may vote on one ballot only.

Excerpt from WI State Statutes Chapter 5. Highlighting added.

No Sore Losers

Often referred to as a 'sore loser' law, Wisconsin State Statutes prohibit a candidate who ran and lost in a party primary from running as an independent candidate in the same race. Sore loser laws are common, existing in some form in 47 states.

CHAPTER 8
NOMINATIONS, PRIMARIES, ELECTIONS
8.15 Nominations for partisan primary. (7)A candidate may not run in more than one party primary at the same time. No filing official may accept nomination papers for the same person in the same election for more than one party. A person who files nomination papers as the candidate of a recognized political party may not file nomination papers as an independent candidate for the same office at the same election.

Excerpt from WI State Statutes Chapter 8. Highlighting added.

Questions one might ask when reviewing these laws:

What other options were discussed while this statute was being written?

What effects does this statute have on the outcome of our elections?

What other events were happening in the country or state when this statute was written?

Who might have opposed this statute?

Only Two Candidates

WI State Statutes define the number of candidates allowed on election ballots for many races. In the example below, most of these nonpartisan offices on the spring election ballot are limited to two candidates. This limit dictates how many candidates can win in the spring primary and be presented as options to voters in the following spring election.

Chapter 5 ELECTIONS — GENERAL PROVISIONS; BALLOTS AND VOTING SYSTEMS. SUBCHAPTER II BALLOT FORM

5.58 Spring primary ballots.

(3) NAMES ON SPRING BALLOT. Only 2 candidates for state superintendent, for any judicial office, for any elected seat on a metropolitan sewerage commission or town sanitary district commission, in counties having a population of 750,000 or more, only 2 candidates for the office of comptroller and only 2 candidates for member of the board of supervisors within each district, in counties having a population of less than 750,000 only 2 candidates for each member of the county board of supervisors from each district or numbered seat or only 4 candidates for each 2 members of the county board of supervisors from each district whenever 2 supervisors are elected to unnumbered seats from the same district, in 1st class cities only 2 candidates for any at-large seat and only 2 candidates from any election district to be elected to the board of school directors, in school districts electing school board members to numbered seats, or pursuant to an apportionment plan or district representation plan, only 2 school board candidates for each numbered seat or within each district, and twice as many candidates as are to be elected members of other school boards or other elective officers receiving the highest number of votes at the primary shall be nominees for the office at the spring election.

Excerpt from WI State Statutes Chapter 5. Highlighting added.

These statutes affect elections at every level in our state. Do you have thoughts or comments about how these laws affect our elections? The study committee would love to hear from you. Email us at rcvstudy@lwdanecounty.org.

How Would RCV Have Affected the August 2020 Primaries?

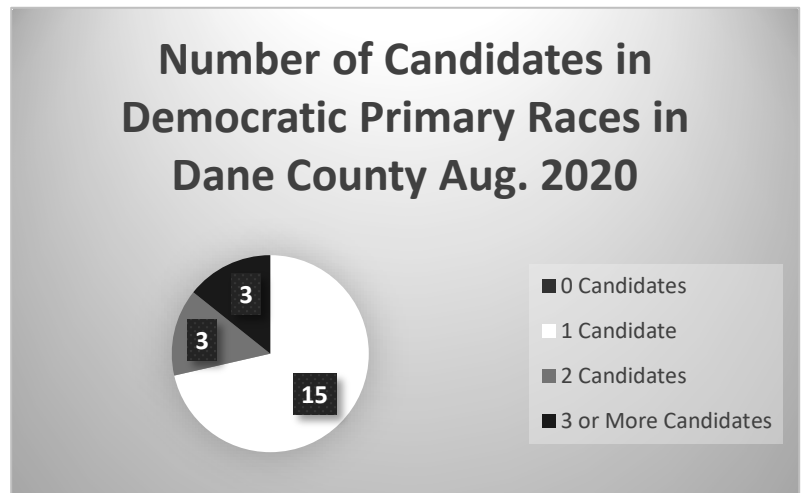
RCV Study Committee, rcvstudy@lwvdanecounty.org

As you know, LWVDC is conducting a study on ranked-choice voting (RCV) and other alternative voting systems. As part of this research, we are looking at recent local election results to determine what effects RCV may have had.

At the time of this analysis, November election results were not yet available, so we focused on the local races in August 2020. This was a partisan primary election. There was a Republican ballot and a Democratic ballot. There was also a Constitution Party ballot that offered no candidates but allowed for write-ins.

Of the twenty-one Democratic primary races in Dane County, only six were competitive. The other fifteen races had only one candidate. Since this was a primary election, some of those fifteen races went on to be competitive in the general election. Of the competitive races, the only races where a majority vote was achieved were those with only two candidates. Three out of twenty-one races, or 14%, were won without a majority vote.

Another way to look at this data is that three out of six (or 50%) of the competitive races in the Democratic primary were determined without securing a majority of the vote. **Winning without a majority of votes is a weakness in our current election system which relies on plurality voting.**



Only six races in the Democratic primary had more than 1 candidate. Data from <https://elections.countyofdane.com/Election-Result/122>.

One of these local Dane County races, Assembly District 76, was won by Francesca Hong with only 28.1% of the vote.

DEM Representative to the Assembly District 76 - Official Canvass

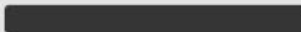

Candidate	Vote Percentage	Number of Votes
Heather Driscoll (DEM)	<div><div></div></div> 16.3%	2,780
Dewey Bredeson (DEM)	<div><div></div></div> 0.8%	143
Tyrone Cratic Williams (DEM)	<div><div></div></div> 22.4%	3,810
Francesca Hong (DEM)	<div><div></div></div> 28.1%	4,793
Nicki Vander Meulen (DEM)	<div><div></div></div> 9.3%	1,586
Marsha A. Rummel (DEM)	<div><div></div></div> 16.5%	2,803
Ali Maresh (DEM)	<div><div></div></div> 6.5%	1,099
write-in: (DEM)	<div><div></div></div> 0.1%	15

100% of Precincts Reporting (26 of 26)

The Democratic primary race for district 76 had 7 candidates and was won with only 28.1% of the vote. Data and chart from <https://elections.countyofdane.com/Election-Result/122>.

But this was *only a primary*, you might say. That's true. Often, winning a primary without a majority vote doesn't seem like a significant issue, because the winning candidate will get a majority vote in the general election. However, due to geographically polarized politics, this specific primary essentially determines the general election winner. The Democratic candidate is nearly guaranteed a win in the general election for this seat, and the Republican Party often does not have a candidate at all.

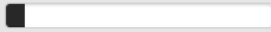







Assembly District 76 does have a Republican candidate this election cycle, but only 304 people cast a vote in the Republican primary for this race, while thousands cast votes in the Democratic primary for the same seat. Given that disparity, this was unlikely to be a competitive race in the general election.

REP Representative to the Assembly District 76 - Official Canvass		
Candidate	Vote Percentage	Number of Votes
Patrick Hull (REP)	 99.3%	302
write-in: (REP)	 0.7%	2
100% of Precincts Reporting (26 of 26)		

The Republican primary race for district 76 had only one candidate and 304 total votes. Data and chart from <https://elections.countyofdane.com/Election-Result/122>.

The result is that the representative for Assembly District 76 was determined by 28.1% of primary voters. Keep in mind that turnout tends to be significantly lower for primary elections than general elections. Independent voters are even less likely to participate in partisan primaries. Voters that do vote in partisan primaries can only participate in one party's primary, so the total number of people that vote in each primary race is less than the total turnout for the primary election. This exposes another weakness in our current system: **low-turnout partisan primaries are determining the de-facto winners of the general election in highly polarized, uncompetitive districts.**

In another example, State Senate District 26, the Republican Party had no candidate running, and there were no independent or third-party candidates. The Democratic primary winner in this race, Kelda Helen Roys, who won the primary without a majority of the votes, ran uncontested on the general election ballot.

DEM State Senator District 26 - Official Canvass		
Candidate	Vote Percentage	Number of Votes
Aisha Moe (DEM)	 7.4%	3,632
Nada Elmikashfi (DEM)	 26.8%	13,220
Amani Latimer Burris (DEM)	 8.9%	4,370
Brian Benford (DEM)	 9.5%	4,699
Kelda Helen Roys (DEM)	 40.2%	19,801
William Henry Davis III (DEM)	 0.8%	408
John Imes (DEM)	 6.2%	3,074
write-in: (DEM)	 0.1%	44
100% of Precincts Reporting (82 of 82)		

The Democratic primary race for senate district 26 had 7 candidates. The winner had 40.2% of the vote and faces no contender in the general election. Data and chart from <https://elections.countyofdane.com/Election-Result/122>.

Speaking of uncontested races, of the twenty-one Republican primary races in Dane County in August 2020, seven had no candidate at all, and thirteen had only one candidate. There was only one competitive race on the Republican primary ballot.

Because the Republican primary had seven races with zero candidates, the winner of the Democratic primary would be uncontested in the general election unless an independent or third-party candidate files. These races are additional examples of low-turnout partisan primaries determining election winners.

Examining the results of the August 2020 partisan primary has identified multiple examples of two weaknesses in our current election system that affected these specific races. Does ranked-choice voting address these issues?

1. Winners are determined without majority support.

Assembly District 76 was won with only 28.1% of the vote, and Senate District 26 was won with 40.2% of the vote. This is not to assert that Francesca Hong or Kelda Helen Roys are not supported by the majority of voters in their district. The reality is that we have no way of knowing. We don't know if Tyrone Cratic Williams supporters would have supported Francesca Hong over Marsha A. Rummel. We don't know if the voters for Aisha Moe, Amani Latimer Burris, or Brian Benford would have preferred Nada Elmikashfi or Kelda Helen Roys. Our current plurality voting system does not give voters the option to provide that information. Ranked-choice voting would have allowed voters to voice those preferences. Voters could have ranked all the candidates that they supported. The winners may or may not have changed, but a majority win would have been achieved, a near impossibility in a 7-candidate plurality election.

2. Low-turnout partisan primaries are determining general election winners in highly polarized, uncompetitive districts.

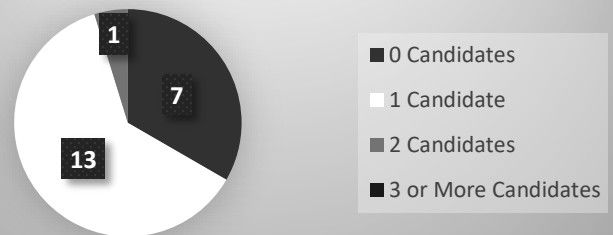
We've seen in these districts that by the time the general election rolls around, the winner has already been determined by a small group of voters in a partisan primary. A lot of factors contribute to this outcome, including having only two dominant parties, highly polarized districts, party-specific primary ballots, and lower voter turnout in primary elections. Certain ranked-choice voting implementations can eliminate this weakness.

One implementation is to not have primaries at all. In this case, all the candidates, regardless of party, could be ranked on the general election ballot. This ensures that all voters get a voice, rather than only partisan primary voters who choose to vote on the competitive party's ballot.

Other implementations include top-X primaries, where X is a certain number of candidates that move forward to the general election, often four or five. In this case, the primary is non-partisan and results in X number of candidates moving forward regardless of their party. With more than one candidate moving forward to the general election, the primary is no longer determining the final winner. The general election then employs ranked-choice voting to ensure a majority winner.

By viewing the August 2020 partisan primary through the lens of ranked-choice voting, we see how RCV can mitigate issues that are evident in our own local elections. Of course, RCV does not solve all election issues and we need to further determine if RCV introduces other issues. Do the pros outweigh the cons? To join in on the discussion, contact the study committee at rcvstudy@lwvdanecounty.org.

Number of Candidates in Republican Primary Races in Dane County in Aug. 2020



Seven out of 21 races in the Republican primary had more than 0 candidates. Data from <https://elections.countyofdane.com/Election-Result/122>.

Centering Our Work on DEI

Lisa Janairo, ljanairo129@gmail.com

“DEI work is something that every member of the League should be doing in some way and centering in their work in some way.” I was thrilled to hear Christina Davis, LWVUS Special Projects Manager, make this statement during the November LWVUS webinar on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). The webinar was the most recent event in a series of DEI webinars conducted by the national League over the past two years to help members learn the basics of DEI principles, conduct self-assessments, and make personal commitments to this lifelong work.

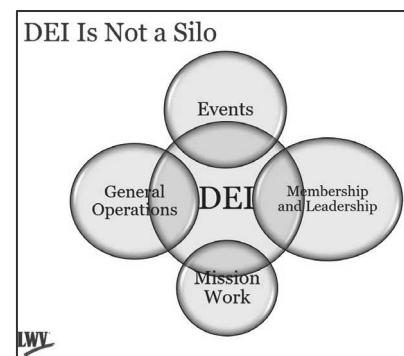
Doing DEI work requires a commitment of time, energy, and emotion as we literally undo years or decades of societal influences that have shaped how we think about and interact with people who are different from us. DEI work isn’t easy, but it is incredibly rewarding and absolutely necessary in a multicultural society. Working at the individual level is the first step in transforming our League — national, state, and local chapters — into an equitable, inclusive organization that reflects the diversity of our society.

To help members on their journey, the LWVUS maintains an excellent collection of [DEI-related resources on its website](#). In addition to posting the League policy and definitions, the website offers guidance on how to see our thoughts, actions, and products through a “[DEI lens](#)” — that is, to examine how these things may be perceived by a variety of different people and what barriers stand in the way of making these things equitable for or inclusive of everyone.

For those interested in self-study, the [DEI Guides](#) on the website are excellent resources. The four guides progress from DEI basics to individual learning and evaluation, and finally applying that DEI lens to our work as a League. These guides include links to League webinars, videos from other sources, and written materials that are recommended to help LWV members learn about themselves and the people around them so that they can center their work around creating a more equitable and inclusive League. As noted in the November webinar, “DEI is not a silo” — meaning that it isn’t a concept that stands alone but rather is something that should be reflected in all the things we do, in all functional areas of our organization.

The national League is actively working to bring about this transformation, and so is our local chapter. The Dane County LWV made the commitment to embracing DEI principles by organizing a DEI Committee well over a year ago. It’s my privilege to chair the committee this year and I’m excited about the opportunities we have to help our fellow LWVDC members educate themselves and to help our domains build DEI principles into their operations. With the election behind us, the DEI Committee will be ramping up its efforts to examine past practices and current positions through a DEI lens. We’ll also be planning several educational opportunities for members in 2021. If you are interested in helping us with this transformative work, please contact me at ljanairo129@gmail.com to learn more about the committee and a possible role for you.

Next time, we’ll look at the plans for DEI Cafés in 2021 that will bring members together to explore what we’re learning and how to put those ideas into practice.



Girl Scout Democracy Badge

Jan Anderson and Susan Sweet

On Sunday, October 18, LWV members Susan Sweet, “Miss 1919,” and Jan Anderson, “Ms. 2020,” met with the Fitchburg-Oregon Girl Scout Troop 7806. The Brownie troop is made up of nine second graders with leaders Courtney Saxler, Sarah Duellman, and Annie Lange, who meet at Swan Creek Park Shelter in Fitchburg. The troop is working on their Democracy Badge.

Each Brownie was asked what she wanted to do when she grew up. Responses included **veterinarian, teacher, pre-school teacher, dancer, and artist**. Miss 1919 sadly had to tell them that because they were female, most of them would not be allowed to pursue their dreams. Girls and boys in the 1800s went to elementary school. But very few girls went to high school because it was thought that “women’s brains are too small”; “They’re not as smart as men”; or “They can’t learn science or mathematics.” However, if the girls did have a high school education, they could work as teachers! For example, Susan B. Anthony was a schoolteacher, one of the best, making **\$2.50 a week** while the male teachers made **\$10.00 a week!** A girl in Miss 1919’s day could not be a veterinarian because she would not be able to go to college. There were dancers and artists in the 1800s and early 1900s, but often that career was not considered appropriate for a lady.

Married women were also treated very unfairly in Miss 1919’s time. When a woman married, everything that she owned would then belong to her husband. All her money, land, personal belongings, even her dresses, would belong to him! In the 1800s, even the children belonged to the father. If there was a divorce, the children and property would often go to the husband.

There was also a discussion about what the girls were wearing compared to the early 1900s. **Dresses vs pants?** Short dresses or long dresses depended on the age of the girl. **Bloomers**, a style of long baggy pants, were invented by Amelia Bloomer. The bloomers were very convenient, but the girls were often laughed at and sometimes had eggs and stones thrown at them!

Women realized that **IF YOU CAN VOTE, YOU HAVE POWER!** So, women (with the help of some men) began the long process to achieve the right to vote. The Convention at Seneca Falls, NY in 1848 was a big push in the Suffrage movement. Susan B. Anthony teamed up with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, and others to win the right to vote. Many of those first suffragists did not live to actually vote themselves. Notably, **Wisconsin** was the first state to ratify the 19th Amendment on June 10, 1919! A year later, on August 18, 1920, **Tennessee** was the last to ratify making the 19th Amendment law. What about the Equal Rights Amendment? The Brownies voted and passed the ERA!



Girl Scout Troop 7806 working on their Democracy Badge with the help of Susan Sweet and Jan Anderson.

Letter to The Editor

The following letter was sent to the editor of the Wisconsin State Journal to thank the many people and organizations that contributed to a successful November election despite many challenges. The letter was published on November 19, 2020.

The Dane County Voter ID Coalition would like to recognize some of the individuals and organizations who assisted the highest ever number of Dane County citizens in successfully casting their ballots in the November election.

Our municipal clerks deserve thanks for persevering and excelling under extremely challenging circumstances. Dane County Clerk Scott McDonnell and the County Board should be applauded for investing resources to fund paid staff and media advertising for the Voter Helpline (608-285-2141), which assisted more than 2,100 voters in navigating the complexities of Wisconsin's requirements for registration, absentee voting, new polling locations and voter photo ID.

Rippe Keane Marketing donated thousands of dollars of staff time, designing media that publicized the Voter Helpline to Dane County residents. Rippe Keane also arranged for donated production assistance from NBC 15, Morgan Murphy Media, and La Movida.

Thousands of poll workers braved pandemic conditions to make sure democracy worked. We encourage all Dane County residents to thank those we have listed and the many other individuals and organizations that contributed to the high turnout and smooth operation of this election.

Christine Clements, president, League of Women Voters of Dane County

Greg Jones, president, NAACP, Dane County Branch 36AB

In Remembrance: Lori Kay

We note with sadness the passing last month of Lori Kay, who joined our League in 1968 and served as president from 2000 to 2002. Her husband, Arlan, remains a member. Lori is remembered for taking the helm at a time when membership was at an ebb, funds were low, and the membership actually considered dissolving this League. She moved the League toward better use of technology and “modern” business practices. Lori used her grant-writing expertise to secure Evjue funds to produce *Candidates’ Answers*. She also recorded many candidate interviews for the city’s cable access programs *Access City Hall* and *Know Your Candidates*. Clare McArdle, who followed Lori as president, remembers her as a generous mentor with a can-do attitude about everything. Beyond the League, Lori lived a life of service to the community, described lovingly in her obituary.

New Members

We welcome these new members who joined us in October. An updated member directory is available on our website.

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

Shawn Ahern-Djamali
Thea Gillespie
Gina Greenwood
Kelly Haslam

Rosemary Lehman
Elizabeth Miller
Jakob Moe
Cynthia Streich

Katrina Willis
Mark Zalewski

Contributions

Our work is supported by financial contributions beyond membership dues. Thank you to these members (bold) and nonmember supporters who donated in October.

Making Democracy Work

Adam Bechle
Mary Boyd
Mary Ann Brow
Harriette Burkhalter
Laura Chern
Christine Clements
Betty Cohen
Johnston Connelly
Angela Deutsch
Linda Dietrich
Martha Frey
Marc Germain

Kenneth Golden
Ellen Hadidian
Lois Harr
Patricia Heiser
Chris Hudzinski
Jaclyn Jacobson
Margaret Jacoby
Nancy Jensen
Maureen Kind
Kathryn Leide
Deborah McNeil
Mary Clare Murphy

Barbara Olson
Mary Palmer
Robert Persons
Ingrid Rothe
Andrew Ruis
Brook Soltvedt & David Nelson
Rose Stephenson
Edith Sullivan
Lori Sulmasy
Deborah & Patrick Turski
Patricia Watson
Thomas Weiss

General or Other Donations

Guy & Joanne Plunkett

American Family Insurance
Dreams Foundation

Madison Mallards

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

Dec. 9	Board Meeting, 5:30 p.m.
Dec. 10	Virtual Public Issues Forum, 7 p.m.
Jan. 13	Board Meeting, 5:30 p.m.
Jan. 16	Virtual Lively Issues Luncheon
Feb. 10	Board Meeting, 5:30 p.m.

2021 Elections

Spring Primary Election – Tuesday, Feb. 16

Spring Election – Tuesday, Apr. 6

