



THE VOTER

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

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President's Message

By Terese Grant, LWVIA President

By the time this is published, 2020 will finally be over. None of us could ever have imagined a year like this one. So many of our plans, events, meetings and more were sidelined by the Coronavirus and put on hold. With the beginning of 2021, we are hopeful that a vaccine will control the spread of the virus. We are definitely hopeful, but realize that patience is also necessary while we wait for a return of some kind of "normal."

(Continued on page 2)

Legislative Priorities 2021

By Polly Horton, LWVIA Secretary

The LWVIA Board of Directors has set the 2021 Legislative Priorities. The Capitol will be open to the public but there may be limited access to meeting rooms since social distancing is requested. Subcommittee and committee meetings will be live-streamed.

The LWVIA Board of Directors has set up Task Force Teams to educate and advocate on the six main categories from the 2021 Legislative Priorities. The Board intends for membership from all 11 local leagues to volunteer to participate on a Team:

- Redistricting
- Justice (Mandatory sentencing)
- Environment (Bottle Bill/ Water Quality)
- Health (Mental Health/ Women's Health)
- Workforce (Broadband and childcare)
- Accountability in Government and Elections Regulations

Please contact LWVIA President Terese Grant if you would like to volunteer on a Task Force Team.

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One thing that we can all be very proud of from 2020 was the tremendous effort Leagues across the state made in this past election season.

In spite of the pandemic, League members were registering voters in a variety of creative ways. Leagues continued to hold candidate forums to educate voters. They created brochures and print documents to help voters know how to request and vote absentee. The LWVIA had a very successful media campaign to help educate voters and put our brand out there in a positive way. We did everything we could this year to "Empower Voters."

The month of January brings a new Iowa Legislative Session. The League of Women Voters of Iowa has developed once again a set of priorities for this Legislative Session. We will be working with our lobbyists, Amy Campbell and Craig Patterson, to advocate for these issues with our Senators and Representatives. We have learned that the League cannot do this alone. It is very important that we partner with other organizations to create a stronger voice to advance our issues. We have created several Task Forces to work on specific issues that we feel are particularly important. (See left sidebar.)

In 2021, the LWVIA will again participate in Year 2 of the People Powered Fair Maps (PPFM) Campaign. This initiative focuses on Redistricting which is a very important issue in 2021. Our main focus will be to educate our members and the public about Redistricting: What is Redistricting, How is this process done, What is the history of Redistricting in Iowa. Our LWVIA Board member Linda Meloy is the committee chair this year and will lead this initiative. In addition to the educational part of the PPFM, we will also monitor our legislators to ensure that Iowa remains the "gold standard" in Redistricting and that no changes are made to this process.

With the elections behind us, we need to focus on the Legislative Session and our issues that will make Iowa a better place for all. We will need to communicate and educate our legislators to ensure that they make decisions that will benefit everyone. It is time for all Iowa League members to "Defend Democracy."



Will you help us kick off this year with a modest donation of \$10 to the 2020 LWVIA Fundraising Campaign?

Simply go to www.lwvia.org and click on the PayPal button at the bottom of the home page to donate online: enter your donation amount, choose your method of payment, and put "Defend Democracy 2020" in the note box.

**If you prefer to send a check via mail, write "Defend Democracy 2020" in the memo line, and mail to: Treasurer Linda Meloy
605 Larch Lane
Iowa City, IA 52245**

A Very Special Offer: If you donate \$50 or more, you will receive a 16 X 20 inch illustration of Carrie Chapman Catt created by award winning Cedar Falls artist Gary Kelley for the 19th Amendment Centennial Commemoration Calendar.

Our League call to Empower Voters and Defend Democracy has never been more important! Thank you to everyone who has donated. We have raised \$5,000 thus far.

Are you following League on Facebook? Find us at www.facebook.com/lwvia.

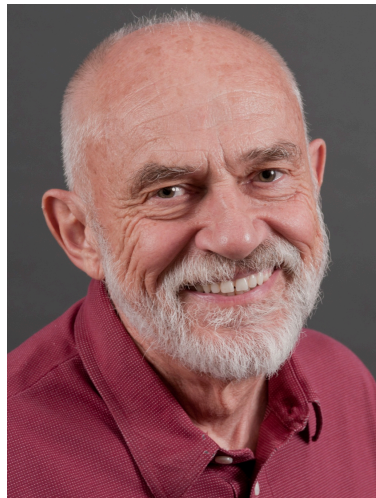


Like our page, share our posts, and stay up-to-date with the latest news!

Des Moines Metro League invites all Iowa League members to their February 16th program with Dr. David Osterberg!

Dr. David Osterberg is a power-house speaker who will present a good overview of the problems and solutions facing Iowa's waterways. He will address why the voluntary Nutrient Reduction Program is not enough to clean up Iowa's streams and rivers and what really needs to be done to stop the pollution of our drinking water sources, the degradation of our fertile Iowa soils and the Mississippi River Gulf of Mexico "dead zone."

This Des Moines Metro League of Women Voters 5:00 - 6:00 pm, February 16th, 2021, program will be offered via ZOOM and is open to any League member in Iowa; a pilot project to encourage greater program sharing between Leagues. To receive the ZOOM link for this event, email Karen Person at lwvkaren@yahoo.com.



David Osterberg is a former Iowa state representative who was chairman of the House Energy and Environmental Protection Committee as well as the Agriculture Committee. He holds an M.S in water resources management and another in agricultural economics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is professor emeritus in the Department of Occupational and Environmental Health at the University of Iowa.

David co-founded the Iowa Policy Project (IPP) and served as Executive Director from IPP's inception through June 2013. He is co-author of several IPP energy and environmental reports. IPP recently joined with the Child and Family Policy Center to form Common Good Iowa, a non-partisan, nonprofit with a focus on smart policymaking to turn Iowa values - pragmatism, fairness, empathy and accountability - into solutions that advance opportunity for all Iowans.



Important Dates

Monday, January 11th

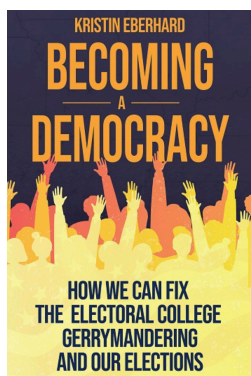
First Day of Iowa Legislative Session

Monday, January 18th

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Wednesday, January 20th

Inauguration Day



Special Offer

Any League member can use the coupon code **LWV25** to get 25% off a copy of the book shown above at

<https://www.sightline.org/becomingademocracy/>

A Primer on Iowa's Reapportionment Process Installment #1

...from the National Conference of State Legislatures 4/06/2018 Newsletter...

"Iowa stands alone in how it handles redistricting responsibilities. Traditionally, state legislatures are responsible for redistricting. That is true for legislative redistricting in 37 states, and for Congressional redistricting in 43 states. Other states give this responsibility to a commission.

Iowa is among the states where the legislature has responsibility, but its method is unique: nonpartisan staff draw the lines with a nonpartisan approach." Only six other states (Alaska, Arizona, California, Idaho, Montana, and Washington) have a similar approach to counter gerrymandering, or incumbent manipulation of district formation

The Iowa process is based on A. a 1968 Constitutional Amendment that did **three major things**:

1. Required the legislature to reapportion every ten years, following the decennial census.
2. Directed a reapportionment plan be adopted by the legislature by September 1st, and if not, the Iowa Supreme Court would reapportion the state.
3. **Provided that any qualified elector had the right to appeal the legislature-created plan to the Iowa Supreme Court. If the Court found the plan unconstitutional, the Court would create and adopt a plan within 90 days;**

And B. on statutory law passed in 1981 placing the responsibility for redistricting plans with the **non-partisan Legislative Services Agency** which has constructed the plans every ten years since then. LSA staff follow a strict set of criteria, including a prohibition on the use of political data. Iowa is one of only a handful of states with such a prohibition. The prohibition is broad in scope, and encompasses the addresses of incumbents, the political affiliations of registered voters, previous election results and demographic information not required by the federal constitution.

Watch for more information soon from the LWVIA Board's Reapportionment Task Force, Linda Meloy, Chairperson.

Water

Nancy Porter, LWWIA Board of Directors

UMRRILO (Upper Mississippi River Region InterLeague Organization)

MRN (Mississippi River Network: 1Mississippi)

A New Year and a renewed resolution for clean Iowa waters

Yazoo Pumps: LWWIA agreed to support the elimination of the yazoo pumps.

We have written and signed letters twice this year to encourage the use of natural swamp backwaters rather than the pumps. The pumps dump "low level" nuclear waste into regular landfills. They also dump PFAS pollution into waterways.

PFAS are perfluoroalkyl substances that are very stable manmade chemicals with properties that allow them to repel both water and oil. These chemicals are used to make household and commercial products that resist heat and chemical reactions and repel oil, stains, grease and water. Removing this contaminate from our drinking water is a challenge the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) has been working on for decades.

The Des Moines area has an alarming rate of growth of this chemical in the water. The suspect is thought to be the firefighting foam used around the Des Moines International Airport.

As of November, our letters didn't work and the Corporate Arm won again. Yazoo pumps will continue to stop flooding and add pollutants to the water that are dangerous and have been linked to cancer, thyroid disease, weakened childhood immunity and many other health problems according to the Environmental Working Group (ewg.org). We lost a battle but we must stay vigilant. The good news is the omnibus appropriations bill passed December 2020 by Congress provides almost \$300 million to help cleanup the toxic "forever chemicals" known as PFAS. This a drop in the needed bucket.

What can you do?

- Be aware that plastic bottles need recycling but the polyester you wear and all the polar tech and great fabrics keeping us warmer should be worn forever or recycled. Any product made from oil contributes to water pollution.
- Did you know it takes 800 gallons of water to produce a pair of jeans? Wear them forever. Make sure they are recycled.
- What cleaning supplies do you use? Read the labels.

Iowa Supreme Court at last hears arguments on River Water Pollution

(My resources for the following come from USA Today Network, Des Moines Register.)

You may remember that five years ago a lawsuit was brought against the northwest counties dumping waste (nitrites) into the Raccoon River due to hog containment and crop runoff from factory farms. This lawsuit was thrown out of Iowa Courts and refused by the Supreme Court because Agriculture is what we are as a state. Only the Legislature can change the required laws governing Iowa.

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The Supreme Court heard a case brought by the environmental groups: Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (ICCI) and Food & Water Watch (FWW) on December 16, 2020. There is no due date for the decision of the hearing as of this writing. The groups are asking for relief for the public's use of the Raccoon River.

The argument is that the Court could declare unconstitutional the state's **voluntary** approach to ensuring water quality by the farmers. The fishing industry of the Mississippi River is also a victim of the nitrite runoff. Sustainable agricultural practices support Gulf fishing families as well as the drinking water in Des Moines. Iowa budgeted \$270 million over about a decade to clean Iowa's waterways. Maybe the law should upgrade to address the problems of drinking water and recreation waterways.

The EPA found unsafe levels of lead in twelve Des Moines schools. Anything above 15 parts per billion (ppb) is considered unsafe. Levels as high as 112 ppb to 77 ppb were found.

LWVIA Convention

The LWVIA Board of Directors has agreed to hold a virtual convention in 2021.

Our initial plans were to have the Dubuque LWV host us this year. However, with the ongoing concerns of the spread of the Coronavirus, the Board felt we need to go virtual for the safety and well being of all LWV Iowa members.

The date of the 2021 virtual convention will be Saturday, June 12, with more specific details to come.

The agenda will include discussion of proposed issues for concerted study and action, using the following procedures as required by LWVI bylaws:

- Local League boards may make recommendations to the board of directors at least 12 weeks prior to the convention;
- The board of directors shall consider the recommendations and formulate a proposed program which shall be sent to the local Leagues, member-at-large units and all of the members-at-large at least four weeks prior to the convention;
- Any recommendation for the program submitted to the board of directors, but not proposed by the board, may be adopted by the convention provided consideration is ordered by a majority vote;
- A three-fifths vote is required for adoption of a study program.

League Forum Guidelines

Coming in 2021

The general public -- including some League members -- may not fully appreciate the valuable contribution the League's candidate and legislative forums are to the democratic process.

What sets such League events apart (and far above) other organizations' is the way in which participants have an opportunity to be heard on issues of importance to their constituency. Rather than individuals in the audience commandeering the process by asking questions that are more about making statements and airing complaints, the League process of submitting written questions contributes greatly to keeping the discussion on point.

Even as political discourse has seemingly dissolved into mean-spirited name-calling, the League can be proud to have an effective process to offer voters.

To ensure that process is understood and adapted to whatever the League-sponsored occasion may be, LWVIA Past President Mary Rae Bragg will be working this year with local Leagues to compile forum guidelines based on real or possible situations that locals encounter.

"Sharing best practices is the League way," Bragg said. "Gathering information and real-life experience, then providing guidelines, can only make the process -- and our democracy -- stronger."

Local League presidents or members who are charged with organizing and running local forums are welcomed to contact Bragg at bragg.maryrae388@gmail.com with suggestions and concerns. Otherwise, she will be contacting presidents by email or telephone.

Obituary for former LWVIA President Jan McNelly



Janice McNelly, a long-time educator born in Ackley, IA (west of Waterloo), was the League of Women Voters of Iowa President from 2001-03. Jan passed away May 8, 2020, at age 79 from a Covid-19 outbreak in a Cedar Falls care home where she had resided for eight years battling Alzheimer's. Jan is survived by her

two sons, Trent and Dan; two grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. A memorial service will be held in the spring when conditions for gathering are safer. Memorials in Jan's name can be sent to LWVIA Treasurer.

Jan taught English and special education students in Minnesota when her children were young. Then the family moved to Fairbanks, Alaska, where she taught and then served as a vice-principal, followed by a position as director of curriculum. After returning to Webster City, Iowa, from that twenty-year career, Jan became active in the League in the late 1990s. She worked on the Study of Corrections with Jo Ann Finkenbinder and Karen Person, League members currently part of the committee involved with juvenile justice and felon rights that resulted from that corrections study.

As LWVIA president, she and her board would have been involved with work at the national level to pass the Help America Vote Act and the Bipartisan Campaign Finance Reform Act, both adopted in 2002, and pushed for the renewal of the Voting Rights Act.

A review of the work of the Iowa League during the 2000s that Jan would also have been involved with found that LWVIA distributed statewide the pamphlet "More Sunlight: A Review of Electronic Filing and Disclosure"; studied domestic abuse and its ramifications for needed services and funding; and created a traveling display about campaign finance reform that went out to Iowa libraries, community gathering places, and local Leagues, in addition to sharing the information with neighboring states.

Action needed to ratify ERA

by Doris Kelley, Board Member, League of Women Voters of Iowa; Dec. 20, 2020

Please place two items on your **2021 Proclamation To Do List**. First, contact Sen. Chuck Grassley (202-224-3744) and Sen. Joni Ernst (202-224-3254) and request they ask the Senate Majority Leader to place S.J. Res. 6 on the docket for debate. Secondly, request Senators Grassley and Ernst to vote 'yes' on S.J. Res. 6 so the original and extended Equal Rights Amendment ratification deadline for the 1972 bill will be voided, making the ERA the law of the land.

You may also want to go to the LWVIA's website (<https://www.lwvia.org>) and view the video "Ratifying the ERA" so you will become more knowledgeable about the past and current ERA-passage endeavor. There you will learn 1982 was the deadline for 38 states to ratify the ERA but the 38th state did not ratify the ERA until the spring of 2020. The House of Representatives has already approved of a similar S.J. Res. 6 to void the 1982 ratification deadline and now the measure rests with our 100 U.S. Senators.

The LWVIA – along with several other state Leagues – each received a \$5,000 grant for their members and statewide citizens to promote passage of S.J. Res. 6. The LWVIA partnered with several other Iowa pro-ERA organizations and the "Ratifying the ERA" video is also noted on their respective website. Getting S.J. Res. 6 to come up for debate and successful passage is a multi-service organization endeavor, not only in Iowa but throughout America.

You will soon be receiving – via e-mail – a postcard-like message you can share with your friends, neighbors and peers for them to also join the cause and request Senators Grassley, Ernst and the other 98 Senators to pass S.J. Res. 6. As we all know, the 19th Amendment, passed in 1920 was a 72 year long fight for voting rights and passage of the Equal Rights Amendment is the next logical step for women's equality with her male counterpart.

Thank you for your pro-active voice . . . ERA . . . it's about time!

Happy New Year!

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Contact Information: Doris J. Kelley, 515-988-2344; DJKelley@cfu.net; Apr. 1 – Dec. 14 @ 4116 Maryhill Drive, Cedar Falls, IA 50613-5781 and Dec. 15-Mar. 31 @ 55055 Shoal Creek, La Quinta, CA 92253-4728

League Members-at-Large

By Linda Meloy, LWVIA Treasurer

Currently the Iowa League has six Members-at-Large who reside in locales where there is not a local League close enough for membership.

We hope to add more MALs since each individual not only gets League communications such as The Voter and Action Alerts, but can participate – now that we are so proficient with Zoom meetings – in committee work. The state board has just formed six Task Forces, each to educate and advocate for one of the State Public Policy Priorities for 2021: the IA reapportionment process; Justice (mandatory sentencing); the environment (the bottle bill and water quality); health (women's health and mental health); workforce (broadband and childcare); and accountability in government/election regulations. MALs can learn from involvement in one of these task forces and help in decision-making for League action.

If you have a friend or relative in IA that would be a good "recruit" to join us as a Member-at-Large, please invite them to check our webpage or get in touch with the LWVIA Treasurer. Yearly dues are just \$60, for which one can gain a lot of information, be part of a task force, and even do League work at the local level, such as register people to vote with training from LWVIA.

