



# FORWARD

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WISCONSIN

## State Board Proposes Activities for a Busy Year Ahead

*Note: Local Leagues have reviewed the following draft and provided feedback to the State Office. Following the State Board's approval, a final draft will be available in early April. It will have a vote by delegates at the Annual Meeting on June 3.*

### League of Women Voters of Wisconsin State Program Planning Proposal For 2016-17

#### Background/Introduction

Since the state League moved from a biennial program cycle to an annual one in 2007, the State Board has been asking local Leagues to review all of our state positions every year and propose State Program and Action items. We have heard from some Leagues that this is burdensome. Given that Leagues have a special challenge this year in educating voters about the new photo ID requirements, the State Program Planning Committee is proposing a specific program plan which is designed to fit into the work that Leagues already will be doing in 2016-17. Of course, local Leagues are still invited to submit proposals for other State Program items, if they prefer.

#### Context

The League year we are planning for is July 2016-June 2017. In the first half of the year, local Leagues will be busy preparing voters for the election. The second half will be state budget time.

#### Proposal

The State Program Planning Committee proposes that 2016-17 state program be devoted to:

1. LWVWI assists local Leagues in focus on voter education and voter registration efforts (July-November 2016);
2. A stronger public education and lobbying effort on the state budget coordinated by the State League with clear, easy-to-apply action items for local Leagues. This will focus on areas which are priorities for the League and may be targeted in the state budget (January-June 2017);
3. Funding dependent: The state League will apply for a Coastal Management Grant, or similar grant funding, which will allow us to hire a coordinator to develop an educational presentation to be hosted by local Leagues around the state. The purpose of the presentations will be to educate

people about problems related to storm water runoff and actions that citizens, communities and regions can take to prevent and alleviate flooding, with an emphasis on green infrastructure. It will be emphasized that the effects of climate change are an integral part of the problem. This would be a follow-up on the State Water Position Update and public education that have been a focus in the past couple of years;

4. Under grants from The Joyce Foundation and The Brico Fund, the State League will continue to lead advocacy for redistricting reform, campaign finance reform and voting rights. The State League will provide informational resources, sample letters to the editor, talking points, action alerts, as needed.

Local Leagues were invited to respond online to these proposals and/or propose a different State Program item.

#### Program Planning Committee

**Ethel Himmel**, Janesville

**Linda Jorgenson**, Ashland-Bayfield Counties

**Pat Finder-Stone**, Greater Green Bay ❖

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# SAVE THE DATE: 2016 ANNUAL MEETING

Friday, June 3 - Sunday, June 5, 2016

Landmark Resort, Egg Harbor

## **A Matter of Perspective:**

*New Viewpoints, New Voters, New Election Environment*

At the LWVWI's 2016 Annual Meeting, League members from around the state will hear from a variety of new perspectives and explore the changing electorate. LWV Door County will host the meeting, which will take place in Egg Harbor at the Landmark Resort on June 3-5.

The Annual Meeting is when delegates from across the state come together to agree upon new positions, new programs, new leaders and a budget to ensure success in the coming year. Although the agenda is still in draft form, we have two exciting speakers confirmed.

### **Friday Evening Speaker**

Even a banker can figure out that we have serious water quality challenges in Northeast Wisconsin—so says Robert B. Atwell, Chairman and CEO of Nicolet National Bank, our featured speaker for Friday evening's program. Atwell is a business leader and a frequent speaker on a number of topics, including the economic case for improving water quality. A Wisconsin banker for 32 years, he graduated from Beloit College and the Yale School of Management.

### **Saturday Morning Speaker**

Colleen Gruszynski, our 2016 Zabelle Malkasian Lecturer, will speak about how to engage the emerging electorate, which includes a younger and more diverse population of voters. A member of LWV Greater Green Bay, Gruszynski is the data and targeting manager of Wisconsin Voices, and she manages that organization's statewide list of voters. She is the go-to person for information about how to reach various groups with needed voter information.

Zabelle Malkasian was a member of LWV Milwaukee County who was active in the League at the local and state levels. Her son, Bill Malkasian, made a generous gift to LWVWI in 2013 to create a lecture series to honor and extend his mother's legacy as an advocate. Gruszynski will deliver the third annual Zabelle Malkasian Lecture.



*Robert B. Atwell, Chairman and CEO of Nicolet National Bank*



*Colleen Gruszynski, Data and Targeting Manager of Wisconsin Voices*

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## President's Message



*Debra Cronmiller*

It was difficult and sad to witness the dismantling of the Wisconsin Government Accountability Board. With the recent signing of AB 388, legislation the League opposed, two new commissions this summer will replace the nonpartisan Board and staff that for years provided training and guidance to state and local election officials to help every eligible citizen register and vote. We are extremely grateful for the service of the distinguished judges who have served on the Board, as well as director Kevin Kennedy and the GAB's highly professional staff, who have always been open to public input and citizen engagement.

We must now turn our collective attention to working to keep elections free, fair and accessible and to ensure that every qualified voter has the right and the opportunity to cast a ballot and have it counted. Toward this end, the state League has hired Erin Grunze as our new full-time voter education coordinator. She will provide support

to help local Leagues get out the vote, educate voters about new ID requirements and monitor the recent changes in early voting hours and voter registration. She will also coordinate our statewide election observation efforts.

Hiring Erin is a critically important step that demonstrates our firm commitment to protecting voting rights within an increasingly hostile environment. The weakening of the GAB as an important citizen resource means the League must redouble its effort to defend solid election practices. We must ensure the public's right to know how political campaigns are financed, that corruption and undue influence are minimized and that all candidates can compete equitably for public office. The League must also stand ready to promote open government that is representative, accountable and responsive.

In this current environment, there is little wonder that many citizens feel their participation in the political process has been marginalized. At no time in the League's 96-year history has our mission to encourage the informed participation of all citizens been more relevant. We were able to hire Erin as a result of generous contributions from League members and friends, as well as funding from grants we received this year. Your continued support is critically important as we work to protect the basic right of all citizens to participate in their government. Thank you for your advocacy and commitment to Making Democracy Work®. ❖



## In Memoriam Pam Rewey

**September 15, 1946–January 19, 2016**

The State Board and Legislative Committee greatly miss Pam Rewey, who died on January 19, 2016. In addition to her service at the state level, Pam was an active member of LWV Stevens Point Area and later LWV Dane County. She served as President of both local Leagues and volunteered on several state-level committees, including Voter Service and the Meg McLane Advocacy Award selection committee. She continued to serve and contribute despite suffering from Parkinson's in her last few years. LWVWI nominated Pam for a 2014 Backyard Hero Award from Community Shares of Wisconsin, which she received at their annual awards celebration.

Pam and her husband, Mike, raised five children. Her family asked that people wishing to honor Pam make contributions to LWVWI in lieu of flowers. To date, over 70 friends and relatives have contributed more than \$4,000 dollars in Pam's memory, extending her legacy of service and support of the League's work. ❖

**Find the League on Facebook!**

**[facebook.com/pages/League-of-Women-Voters-of-Wisconsin](https://facebook.com/pages/League-of-Women-Voters-of-Wisconsin)**

**Follow @LWV\_WI on Twitter!**

# News from National



*Elisabeth MacNamara,  
LWVUS President*

## **New Position Aims to Safeguard Constitutional Convention**

In February, the LWVUS announced a new position calling for safeguards to govern the constitutional convention process for proposing amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

“The League believes that procedural safeguards must be put in place to protect democratic values and ensure that any proposed amendments

reflect the concerns of citizens,” said Elisabeth MacNamara, LWVUS president. “We cannot afford to have a chaotic or unrepresentative process for amending the Constitution. We can’t afford to let special interests dominate a Constitutional Convention.”

Article 5 of the U.S. Constitution provides for two ways to amend the Constitution. Congress can initiate an amendment, or, if two-thirds of the states petition Congress to do so, a Constitutional Convention can be called to propose amendments. Under either mechanism, proposed amendments must be ratified by three-fourths of the states in order to take effect. There has never been a Constitutional Convention called under the U.S. Constitution.

There are many current proposals for constitutional amendments that have been submitted by both the political right and left, from a Balanced Budget Amendment to one intended to roll back the Citizens United ruling.

“Everyone should be concerned what a runaway, topsy-turvy Constitutional Convention might do. Before we head into uncharted territory that could affect our basic principles of government and our individual rights, we need to make sure some basic rules are in place,” MacNamara advised.

### **The League supports the following safeguards for a Constitutional Convention:**

1. The Convention must be transparent and not conducted in secret;
2. Representation at the Convention must be based on population rather than one state, one vote; and delegates should be elected rather than appointed;

3. Voting at the Convention must be by delegate, not by state;
4. The Convention must be limited to a specific topic;
5. Only state resolutions on a single topic count when determining if a Convention should be called; and
6. The validity of state calls for an Article V Constitutional Convention should be determined by the most recent action of the state.

The new League position is especially relevant because the Balanced Budget Amendment is close to achieving the number of states needed to require Congress to call a Convention.

“There are many unresolved questions about the powers and processes of an Article V Constitutional Convention,” MacNamara concluded. “These problems must be solved before America embarks on a dangerous journey.”

*Adapted from an article by Kelly Ceballos posted on the League’s website, [lwvus.org](http://lwvus.org). ❖*

## **Save Trees and the League Money!**

Money doesn’t grow on trees, but we can save both by using email for League communications! Send an email to [lwvwisconsin@lwvwi.org](mailto:lwvwisconsin@lwvwi.org) to sign up for any of the following (be sure to tell us which items you wish to receive by email):

- *Forward Newsletter*
- *League Updates and Action Alerts*

## **Make the League Part of Your Legacy**

*Many of our donors use their wills or living trusts to make their most generous gifts. Please remember the LWVW when you create yours. For more information, contact Andrea Kaminski at 608.256.0827. ❖*

## Support the LWVWI from Your IRA

Now you can make charitable gifts to the League of Women Voters from your IRA without triggering any federal income tax. Congress made the Qualified Charitable Distribution permanent in 2015.

### Some Simple Caveats Apply:

- You are at least 70½ years of age, and your contributions are no more than \$100,000 per year.
- This distribution could satisfy your Required Minimum Distribution.
- A married couple can each give \$100,000 but each person must be over 70½ and the contribution(s) must come from each individual's own IRAs.

### Benefits of a Qualified Charitable Distribution Include:

- You avoid tax on the distribution. This is true even if you do not itemize or even if your gifts exceed the percentage-of-income limits for charitable deductions.
- The Qualified Charitable Distribution comes out of the pretax portion of your aggregated IRAs. This is an exception to the usual rule regarding recovery of IRA basis.
- The distribution does not increase your adjusted gross income for purposes of reducing itemized deductions, nor does it limit the amount of deductible medical expenses or increase the tax of your social security benefits.
- If the state where you live determines taxable income based on federal adjusted gross income, there is no state income tax on the distribution.

### It is Important to Note That:

- The distribution must come from your traditional IRA or ROTH IRA, not active SEPs, SIMPLE IRAs or qualified plans.
- The receiving charity can be any qualified non-profit except a donor-advised fund, a supporting organization or certain private foundations.
- The distribution must go directly from the IRA to the charity.
- For decedent IRAs, the beneficiary must be at least age 70½ by the date of the distribution.
- You must be at least age 70½ by the date of distribution.
- The distribution must be one that would normally be 100% deductible.

The League of Women Voters does not provide tax or legal advice. Please consult with your independent tax or legal advisor. ❖

## Executive Director's Message



*Andrea Kaminski*

It must have been a matter of New Year's resolutions. During the first week of January, the State Office fielded two calls each day from seniors—all women—or their adult children. All were calling with questions about voter photo ID.

These women, who are the daughters of women barred from voting until the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was ratified, probably have been voting dutifully for 60 or 70 years. Now they have a new barrier that makes it more difficult to participate as citizens and that could potentially disenfranchise them.

They no longer have a driver's license. They don't have a passport or any of the other forms of acceptable ID. They have no idea where their birth certificate is, if they had one. These are all documents they have not needed in many years, if at all. And they are lucky if they have transportation to the DMV to apply for a state ID.

For some of the calls, we were able to tell the woman that she is exempt from the ID law because she is "indefinitely confined" and it would be difficult to get to the polls. In other cases we offered guidance on how to obtain a state ID along with a promise of assistance if needed.

The legislature has not allocated the Government Accountability Board any money this year to promote its educational campaign about the new voter ID requirements. So it's up to organizations like the League of Women Voters and to every concerned citizen to fill that void. The League is in a better position to do so now that we have Erin Grunze as our voter education coordinator. She will help our local Leagues to be even more effective in reaching out to seniors and other groups at risk of losing their vote because of the photo ID law.

It's going to take a village to keep our seniors voting—and they deserve that.

Check with the seniors you know, the seniors you love, and make sure they are able to comply with the new ID requirements. ❖

# Urban Policy Position Update

Proposed by the Urban Policy Position Update Committee and forwarded to local Leagues for discussion and feedback. The State Board will consider feedback and propose a final draft to be voted on by delegates at the Annual Meeting on June 3. Proposed deletions are shown as ~~strike-outs~~ and proposed insertions are underscored.

## Urban Policy

Promote the fiscal well-being and the quality of urban life:

Promote the fiscal, social, cultural, residential, educational and environmental quality of life for all residents.

## Support of the Following Positions and Measures:

The state government State, county and local governments should develop a policy interrelated policies to improve urban fiscal and growth management through such means as:

- “smart growth” practices that encourage sustainability, green space, population density and equitable development. These practices should consider the future service needs of aging community members, while also addressing the needs of the younger people who are replacing them in the workplace;
- consolidated governmental services;
- investments to increase the tax base;
- subsidies that enable and expand affordable housing near urban centers, workplaces and public transit for low- and middle-income and senior populations, as well as persons with disabilities and persons experiencing homelessness;
- investments to secure and maintain infrastructural integrity and modernization;
- sustainable practices for meeting energy needs, food security and recreation;
- planning and programs that promote inclusive, multi-modal transit, including bicycle-friendly and pedestrian-friendly passage, as well as wired and wireless communication networks;
- programs in housing, education, recreation, job training, energy efficiency, child and elder care should be available to complement measures intended to enhance the economic base and to further the quality of life for all residents.

State aids should be targeted to both declining and/or distressed Wisconsin communities urban areas. In grant allocations further consideration should be given by state agencies to distressed rural communities, as well as distressed cities.

*(NOTE: the following two sections have been incorporated in the bullet points above.)*

~~Wisconsin's urban policy role should emphasize measures that enhance the local economic base. The use of aid for particular programs is considered essential to the encouragement of local development programs. Supportive services through technical assistance from state agencies should be available.~~

~~Appropriate programs in housing, education, and job training should be available to complement measures intended to enhance the economic base. The overall goal is to create or preserve productive, self-reliant neighborhoods and communities.~~

## Background

At the 1976 national convention, delegates added cities/urban crisis to the national program. The 1978 convention adopted an “evaluation of urban policy options, with emphasis on fiscal policy.

In Wisconsin, League members also studied the appropriate role of the state government in urban policy. They felt aid should go to both declining and distressed communities in the state, using these definitions:

## Fiscally Declining Cities Have These Characteristics:

- a stabilized tax base, showing little change over a long period of time; and
- a stabilized or declining population (with growing numbers of elderly and poor, which is unable to support a major increase in property taxes).

## Fiscally Distressed Cities Have the Above, as Well as These Additional Characteristics:

- a loss of a major portion of the employment base and/or employers who are unable to provide job opportunities for low-skilled and low-income residents;
- a rapidly deteriorating housing stock including significant numbers of housing units constructed prior to 1939;
- a rapid incremental increase in labor costs to municipalities, due in part to escalating labor and pension costs.

In 1978, concurrent with the study, the Wisconsin Educational Communications Board and the LWVWI produced the film, “QUIET CHANGES: Small Towns in Crisis,” which examined the urban problems of seven small cities in Wisconsin. Funded in part by a grant from the Wisconsin Humanities Committee, the film was intended to stimulate viewer discussion.

The position has been used in action on laws governing such development techniques as Tax Incremental Financing and Industrial Revenue Bonds.

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After a number of Leagues noted that the Urban Policy position was outdated, delegates at the 2015 Annual Meeting of LWVWI authorized an update of the position. It was found that while some Leagues felt the position applied to rural and suburban communities as much as urban, others had never attempted to use the position because they felt that the term “urban” did not apply to their community. The position was updated with the idea that nonurban communities would use portions of the policy as they deem applicable.

*(For details, see Government.) There has been no action specifically using Urban Policy positions in recent years. ❖*



## State League Welcomes Voter Education Coordinator to Staff

The State League staff has a new member with the addition of Erin Grunze, our Voter Education Coordinator. Erin will provide important support to local Leagues with voter registration and education in this newly created position.

Erin’s Wisconsin roots run deep. She grew up in West Milwaukee, and has early memories of going to the polls with her parents when they voted. They kept it a secret who they voted for, but always stressed the importance of the process. She attended UW-La Crosse (and once stood in line there over two hours to vote!), where she earned a degree in Secondary Education for Broad Field Social Studies. She particularly enjoyed studying United States history and political science and teaching young people about their civic responsibilities of being informed and engaged citizens. Erin completed her Master’s Degree in Sociology at UW-Milwaukee, for which she studied identity and social movements. Prior to joining the League, she worked for *The Progressive Magazine* for thirteen years where she became the Associate Publisher.

While Erin loves Wisconsin, she also enjoys traveling the states and the world with her husband and two sons. When not chasing her boys, she enjoys music, movies, books and spending time with family and friends. Erin is very excited to join the staff and team of volunteers at the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin and will work diligently to protect and educate voters in our state. ❖



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### In Addition, the Annual Meeting Will Feature Workshops On:

- How to engage and assist voters under the new election laws;
- How to convert “interest in the League” into active membership;
- How to ensure a smooth transfer of leadership to keep the League strong.

And for fun, the Door County League is planning to have a silent auction featuring local goods. There will also be an optional Sunday morning lighthouse tour if we can get at least 16 people to sign up. Bring your bathing suit, because the Landmark resort has whirlpools, indoor and outdoor pools and steam rooms.

Register using the form enclosed in this newsletter. Please make your own lodging reservation by Tuesday, May 3, 2016. See details on the registration form.

Watch for updates about the Annual Meeting in the state League’s weekly e-news or from your local League. If you are not receiving the e-news and would like to do so, send an email to [lwwisconsin@lwwi.org](mailto:lwwisconsin@lwwi.org) and let us know. ❖

# Around the State • Around the State • Around the State Around the State • Around the State • Around the State Around the State • Around the State • Around the State

**Beloit:** received a grant from the LWVUS Education Fund for a first-time voter registration project aimed at students ages 18-29 who attend local high schools, technical schools and college.

**Dane County:** honored Government Accountability Board Elections Division manager Mike Haas with its annual Voter Service Award.

**Janesville:** hosting a series of presentations about mental health issues in Rock County and available support services.

**Manitowoc County:** co-sponsoring the 2016 Great Decisions lecture series, which will address topics about the Middle East;

the rise of ISIS; the future of Kurdistan; migration; the Koreans; the United Nations; climate change; and Cuba.

**Milwaukee County:** presented a forum on how recent changes in election law impact turnout among the new American majority—a younger and more diverse electorate; exploring risks related to oil trains passing through Milwaukee.

**Upper St. Croix Valley:** has been recognized as a League by the State and National Boards; distributing voter ID education materials to area schools and community centers.

**Whitewater Area:** hosted a holiday dinner program that recognized producers of the

top three videos from a League-sponsored high school video contest on voting—watch the winning video on the LWVWI YouTube Channel and at our state Annual Meeting, June 3-5 in Sturgeon Bay!

**Winnebago County:** hosted journalist John Nichols, who discussed his book *Dollarocracy: How Money Has Harmed Wisconsin Democracy and What We Must Do to Reverse the Harm*.

**Wisconsin Rapids Area:** sponsored a free, public showing of *MALALA: A Girl From Paradise*, a film about Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani activist for female education and the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate. ❖

## 2016 CALENDAR

### LWVWI Board Meeting

March 26, Madison

### State Board Sends the Following to Local Leagues:

First call to Annual Meeting; report of the Nominating Committee; proposed budget; and recommended State Program based on proposals.  
April 1

### Spring Nonpartisan Elections and Presidential Preference Primary

April 5

### State Board sends Final Call to Annual Meeting

May 3

### LWVWI Board meeting

June 3, Egg Harbor

### Annual Meeting

June 3-5, Landmark Resort, Egg Harbor

### LWVUS Convention

June 16-19, Washington, D.C.

### LWVWI Board Planning Meeting & LWVWI Advocacy Network Annual Meeting

July 22-23, Madison

### State Issues Briefing

October 22, Madison



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612 W. Main Street, Suite 200, Madison, WI 53703  
Phone: (608) 256-0827, Email: [lwwisconsin@lwwwi.org](mailto:lwwisconsin@lwwwi.org)  
[www.lwwwi.org](http://www.lwwwi.org)