



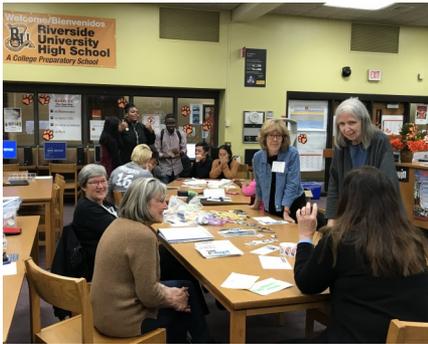
**League of Women Voters
of Milwaukee County**



Member Handbook



Empowering Voters ★ Defending Democracy



Welcome to the League of Women Voters

There are many ways to engage with the League to promote its mission and to discover fulfilling work, new friends, and fun!

What is the League of Women Voters of Milwaukee County?

LWVMC is a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization. Its purpose is to promote informed and active participation in government, to increase understanding of public policy issues, and to influence public policy through education and advocacy.

As a nonpartisan organization, the League of Women Voters never endorses candidates or political parties. Rather, the League takes positions on governmental issues and advocates for policies that serve the public good.

Positions on issues are arrived at through careful study and member consensus, which may be conducted at the local, state or national levels. The League helps bridge the partisan divide by fostering civil discourse on topics of community interest.

Since its inception in 1920, LWV has earned a reputation as a respected and highly effective grassroots organization and a source for unbiased, nonpartisan information on public policy issues and elections.

- We **DEFEND** voting rights and the integrity of the election process.
- We **ADVOCATE** for public policies that improve our communities.
- We **EDUCATE** citizens about voter registration and elections.
- We **ENGAGE** citizens in democracy and our members in League activities.

Board of Directors & Nonpartisanship

LWVMC is governed by a Board of Directors that meets monthly at the League office in West Allis. The board consists of elected officers and directors, as well as appointed directors. An Executive Committee comprising the president, two vice presidents (program and operations), secretary, and treasurer may conduct League business between board meetings. Members are welcome to attend meetings.

The board provides leadership and direction for carrying out member decisions. It is ultimately responsible for all plans and activities. To protect the League's nonpartisan stance, the board frequently reviews its guidelines. The president, as well as the chairs of finance, membership, and voter service committees refrain from partisan activities during their terms of office. Individual members, however, are encouraged to work with the candidates or political party of their choice, being reminded not to use League identity while doing so.

Local, State & National Leagues

LWVMC is one of 700 local and state Leagues active in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Hong Kong. The LWVUS maintains an office in Washington, D.C. A national League convention is held in even-numbered years.

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin (LWVWI), also founded in 1920, has an office in Madison. There are more than 2,000 members working in 20 local Leagues throughout the state of Wisconsin including members-at-large in the state League. League members are invited to attend the LWVWI annual meeting, typically held in early June.

LWVMC holds an annual meeting in May. We maintain an office with very part-time staff in West Allis.

LWVMC's Waukesha County Branch holds monthly meetings in Waukesha.



Principles of the League of Women Voters

We believe:

- in respect for individuals;
- in the value of diversity, equity and inclusion;
- in the empowerment of the grassroots, both within the League and in communities;
- in representative government and in individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States;
- that democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of its citizens and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible;
- that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote, that every person should have access to free public education which provides equal opportunity for all, and that no person or group should suffer legal, economic, or administrative discrimination;
- that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing, and coordination among different agencies and levels of government;
- that cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems, and that development of international organizations and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.



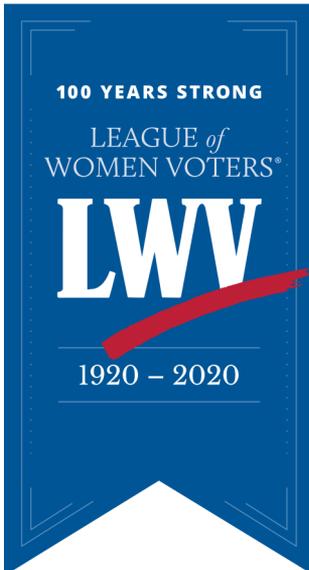
A Brief History of the League

A convention in Seneca Falls, New York, July 19-20, 1848, is often considered to be the start of the suffrage movement in America. Elizabeth Cady Stanton prepared a Declaration of Sentiments, based on the Declaration of Independence, which became the cornerstone of the women's movement.

It took more than 70 years until women, in 1920, secured the right to vote. The struggle continued for decades afterward to promote and protect voting rights for all U.S. citizens. The suffragists sought the power of the vote in order to influence public policy for the public good.



Carrie Chapman Catt founded the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) on February 14, 1920. The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guaranteeing women the right to vote was ratified in August that year.



Early League members believed it would be a temporary organization, because once a woman's right to vote was attained there would no longer be a need for such an organization to exist. However, nearly a century later, our mission to empower voters and defend democracy is as vital as ever.

**“To the wrongs that need resistance,
To the right that needs assistance,
To the future in the distance,
Give yourselves.”**

-- Carrie Chapman Catt (b. 1859, Ripon, Wisconsin)

League Membership & Involvement

The League of Women Voters of Milwaukee County is a volunteer-powered organization with a paid staff of one part-time office employee. The League offers many opportunities to be informed and involved in important issues at local, state, and national levels.

Small group discussions, a book club, voter registration and education activities, and grassroots advocacy are just some of the ways League membership can enrich the role of an effective citizen. A glance at the LWVMC annual calendar on its website (lwvmilwaukee.org) suggests an array of educational, social, and community events members can choose to sample.

Membership is open to anyone 16 years or older who wants to be active at the grassroots level. The League of Women Voters is fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice, with the goal that all members find League membership a rewarding experience.

While the organization has been known as the League of Women Voters since its founding, League membership is open to individuals of any gender identity. New members are invited to fill out a survey to indicate how they would like to be involved. Someone from the Membership Committee will follow up to discuss how new members might want to align their interests and talents with current projects.

The fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30, so membership renewals are due each year on or before July 1.

Membership in the Milwaukee County League also includes membership in the state, national and regional Leagues:

League of Women Voters of Wisconsin (LWVWI - lwvwi.org)

League of Women Voters (LWVUS, the national organization - lwv.org)

League of Women Voters Lake Michigan Region (LWVLMR - lwvlmr.org)

League of Women Voters Upper Mississippi River Region
(LWVUMRR - lwvumrr.org)

Members are subscribed to LWVMC email communications including a bi-monthly newsletter, *The Voter*, a bi-weekly emailed *Update*, action alerts, voting and elections information, volunteer opportunities, and event invitations. You will also receive access to a local Member Directory, which provides contact information for other members and League leadership. Be assured that the LWVMC directory is for use by League members only. We do not share or sell our mailing list and remind members to honor this policy.

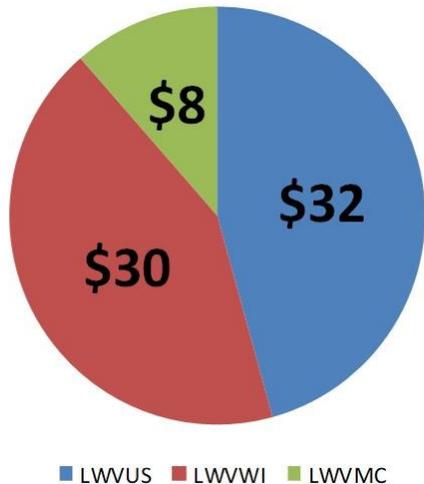
Membership Dues

Membership dues categories are:

- \$70 Individual
- \$5 (Minimum) Open Door
- \$5 Student
- \$100 Sustaining Individual (supports others who need assistance with their membership dues)
- \$170 Centennial
- \$110 Household

Individual annual dues of \$70 are distributed with \$32 going to LWVUS and \$30 going to LWVWI, leaving \$8 at the local level.

The national and state Leagues provide important legislative, litigation, advocacy and organizational support. Donations of money (and time!) are welcome and highly valued. Dues and contributions to LWVMC are tax-deductible as qualified by section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code.



Many Ways to Be an Active League Member



Wherever your time and interests lead you, there's a fulfilling opportunity in the League. Attend or help plan events, serve on the board or on a committee, help with ongoing or one-time tasks and events, and even contribute your time and talents from home.

- Attend LWVMC events
- Respond to action alerts by contacting public officials
- Serve on a standing or ad hoc committee
- Engage and inform citizens about voting and elections through our Voter Services activities, which include: high school voter education and registration; new citizen voter registration; Latinx outreach; community drives; online voter registration training; VOTE411.org election information; candidate forums
- Participate in League Cafe small-group discussions and book reviews related to LWV positions and social policy issues
- Join the efforts of standing committees: Natural Resources, Membership, Social Policy, Representative Government (municipal government observer corps)
- Help plan a Public Issues Forum to educate members and the public about important issues
- Attend Waukesha County Branch meetings to help bring LWV activities to communities west of Milwaukee
- Help coordinate advocacy and action related to LWV positions
- Join the Communications Team to help with printed pieces, website updates, social media messaging, or photographing/recording events
- Be an election observer or poll worker, or report election results as part of the Election Night Reporting Team
- Research potential funding sources and plan fundraisers on the Development Committee

LWVMC public issues forum, "Immigration Policies: DACA and Keeping Families Together" (March 2, 2019 at Alverno College).



Program and Positions

League program consists of governmental issues that the League has chosen for concerted study and action at the national, state or local level. LWVMC is organized into four program areas:

- **Representative Government** – To promote an open governmental system that is representative, accountable, responsive, and capable of making decisions.
- **Natural Resources** – To promote wise management of resources in the public interest and promote an environment beneficial to life.
- **Social Policy** – To promote social justice by securing equal rights and equal opportunity for all and by combating discrimination and poverty.
- **International Relations** – To promote peace in an interdependent world by working cooperatively with other nations and strengthening international organizations.

LWV program, positions on issues, and advocacy (promoting our positions) are carefully coordinated at the national, state and local levels.

Advocacy and Action: Making Our Voice Heard

League advocacy, based on member study and agreement on selected issues, involves concerted efforts to achieve public policies consistent with League positions.

The League is respected for its reputation for thorough study and thoughtful open-mindedness. Facts are gathered and pros and cons are researched before acting. Members study and discuss issues in small units so that everyone has an opportunity to express an opinion. A position is reached through member study, discussion, and finally, consensus of the membership.



The LWV's Legislative Committee and paid lobbyist advocate on behalf of, and speak for, the LWV. The League also offers informative workshops that teach members how to advocate *on their own behalf* with their elected representatives, as well as how to participate in LWV advocacy, based on League positions on public policy issues.

League advocacy can take many forms:

- Member grassroots lobbying through an action alert (letters, phone calls, visits to public officials)
- Public issues forums to educate members and the community
- News releases, news conferences, letters to editor/op-ed pieces
- LWV statements at public hearings
- LWV lawsuits

Only an authorized person (the president or someone designated by the president) is allowed to speak for the League itself to ensure the message is based on LWV positions and represents the organization as a whole. LWV members are encouraged to **take action as individuals** (not mentioning their affiliation with LWV) to add strength of numbers to policies the League hopes to see implemented. This is one of the most important tenets of the League.

League Lingo - An Alphabetical List of LWV Terminology

Action: Strategies for stimulating interest in, giving information about, and urging support of League positions. Can include public issues forums, press conferences, lobbying, letters, etc.

Board: The Board of Directors. Because each level (local, state, national) has a board, check for context to determine which board is referred to.

Consensus: Substantial agreement of members developed through study and discussion.

Forums: Public meetings about issues, usually held four times per year (two in the fall and two in the spring); often held on Saturday morning.

Item/Issue: Any specific topic on local, regional, state, or national programs.

Observers: LWV volunteers who visit polling places on Election Day to determine that eligible voters are enabled to exercise their right. Local government meetings and actions may also be monitored by LWV observers.

Orientation: Informational gathering for new members.

Portfolio: A Board member's specific area of responsibility.

Position: LWVMC stance on an issue for which action can be taken because consensus was reached -- as determined by the board of directors at the appropriate level of the League.

Program: 1) local, state, and national governmental issues under study; 2) issues on which the League has reached member agreement (or consensus) to formulate a position, which is the basis of the League's advocacy work at the national, state or local level.

Units: Small-group meetings of members to discuss LWV program and events and to meet fellow League members in an informal setting.





**Help keep politics a process for the people.
Support the League of Women Voters.**



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