



www.lwvjvl.org

March/April 2024



April/May President's Report

Submitted by Lisa Johnson, President

Hello Everyone!

I will do my best to be brief for this edition as we have our Annual Membership Meeting in a few days. I will be incorporating updates on DEI and Voter services in this piece as well.

So - One of my favorite sayings is 'go with what you know' ---'if it worked will once or last time, and it is not "broken" – let's do it again'!

Many of the things we are doing now and through the election ---we will be building on or utilizing ideas that have worked well in the past.

Annual Meeting – May 22, 2024 6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Premier Bank – “Garden Level”

6pm-6:30 Social Time & Light Meal

We are keeping the menu relatively the same – We will have a assortment of small wraps , chips and a light dessert or something sweet from Luke's Deli. Also provided – water, soda and a couple of wine selections.

I will be sending out a separate email as a RSVP for food planning in the next few days.

6:30-7:00 –Presentation By County Supervisor Bill Wilson- “The Rock County Housing Authority Crisis” (Q&A Included) Thank you Bill!

Throughout the evening there will be an opportunity to sign up for committees and events—as well as make suggestions for our “Summer Book Discussions”. Coral Swanson and Sue Ellen Madere are coordinating the book discussions for this summer. They will be collecting recommendations and communicating the details,

*See PRESIDENT, Page 2

* President's

Continued from page 1

scheduling etc.

If you wish to pay your annual dues at the meeting, Linda Reinhardt, our treasurer, will be available to handle that as well.

The agenda and meeting package have been distributed. This will be available in a PowerPoint presentation at the meeting. If you wish to have a paper copy please bring a hard copy to follow along or make notes.

DEI

Thank you again to the Hedberg Public Library and DEI Committee for the opportunity to co-sponsor the speaker--- a well timed event with our Land Acknowledgement project. Stephen Kantrowitz, Plaenert-Bascom Professor of History at UW-Madison, and author of the book "Citizens of a Stolen Land", led a discuss of the history of how the Ho-Chunk resisted removal from Wisconsin in the 19th century. Excellent book and what a great event for the community!

Land Acknowledgement Draft project moving forward, with the presentation of the draft to the membership and scheduling discussion with Ho-Chunk representatives.

DEI 2024-25 Planning Meeting to be scheduled soon. We are inviting the LWV-WI DEI Manager **Kole Torres, DEI Manager** to attend via Zoom to gather ideas on projects and studies for the committee. The committee's goal continues to be to promote diversity and inclusion as well as promoting cultural awareness and celebrate diversity through programming and training initiatives. The Beloit League is also interested in doing "joint" meetings.

Voter Services

Voter Services is planning tables at events wrapping up visits to the schools and sponsoring voter registration tables throughout the summer including: Juneteenth Celebrations (Beloit), Fourth Ward Park Party, Tallman Arts Festival, National Night Out, Rock County Senior Fair, and Janesville Farmers' Market **to name a few**. A committee "Zoom Meeting" for planning coming soon!

The VOTE411.org website candidates' responses were published for the Spring 2024 Election and will continue to be updated through the November election.

Voter Services will also be planning effective ways to utilize the Youth Voter Registration Grant from LWV-US. We are receiving \$750 earmarked for Youth Voter Services and there is a deadline on spending the grant funds by November 2024.

We are working with the Beloit League on a program for Voter Registration in the Rock County Jail and coordination of voter services with the county parole officers. We are collecting the current laws and guidelines for registration voters with a felony record. We met with Rock County Sherriff Curtis Fell. He is "on board" and welcomed our support and assistance. Currently the jail has a well-organized voter registration program with a assigned team within the jail. He invited the two leagues to work with his team.

We are hoping to make a difference and provide support for what could potentially be a sector of disenfranchised voters and provide assistance or support with *literacy issues* around the voting process in our county correctional systems.

* President's

Continued from page 2

We renewed our organization memberships in the Diversity Action Team of Rock County (DAT) and the Upper Mississippi River Region Inter League Organization (UMRR ILO LWV) and will look at ways to “partner” with these groups as well as the YWCA of Rock County, NAACP and others during this election “season”.

Sustainability

Susan Johnson organized, and moderated, our fourth annual Earth Week Forum on “Community Sustainability.” Panelists from remote sites participated in the online forum, and the event was recorded for later viewing on our League’s website. The panelists were exceptional. Thank you, Susan, for your work on this project! The event recording will be available in the next few days.

Observer Corp

The Observer Corp continues to do “good work” in monitoring our local government boards and councils. Thank you all for your great work and **Deb Griffith**’s leadership!

LWV Conventions

Reminder on Conventions: (Let me know if you are interested in attending either virtually or in person)
LWV Conventions LWV -WI – Hybrid Event May 31, June 1, 2024 – Green Bay
 LWV-US Hybrid Event – June 27-June 30 -Washington DC

I am looking forward to our Membership Meeting and hope to see you all there!

Thank you for all you are doing for the League!

Lisa Johnson, President

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy

Each month we will be placing our position on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Voter, as a service to our members.

LWV is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice. Diversity, equity and inclusion are central to the organization’s current and future success in engaging all individuals, households, communities, and policy makers in creating a more perfect democracy.



There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, gender

identity, ethnicity, race, native or indigenous origin, age, generation, sexual orientation, culture, religion, belief system, marital status, parental status, socioeconomic status, language, accent, ability status, mental health, educational level or background, geography, nationality, work style, work experience, job role function, thinking style, personality type, physical appearance, political perspective or affiliation and/or any other characteristic that can be identified as recognizing or illustrating diversity.

The Janesville LWV commits to the diversity of Janesville and fully endorses the LWV’s DEI policy.

Observer Corps Update

Debby Griffith
Janesville League of Woman Voters
Observer Corps Chair, Board Director
debragriffith052@gmail.com

2023 was the Observer Corps official first full year of observing our local Government, Councils, Boards, Commissions and Committees. “Sunshine” or openness in government has always been a League priority. We are the League’s “eyes and ears” and make an important contribution to open and transparent governance. Our presence lets elected and appointed officials know that someone is paying attention to what decisions they are making and how they are making them. Observer programs benefit the community by connecting officials with their constituents, creating a civically engaged and empowered group of watchdogs and educating the public about issues impacting our community and lives.

Our local Janesville League currently has 8 active Observers covering meetings of the City of Janesville and Rock County. They are:

- Nancy Stabb—City of Janesville Community Development Authority and Planning Commission
- Linda Stehura—School District of Janesville Board
- Tom Lepinski—Rock County Staff Committee and Janesville Historic Commission
- Debby Griffith—Janesville City Council
- Carolyn Brandeen—Rock County Public Works/Parks Committee
- Neil Deupree—Rock County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

- Kathy Holcombe—Rock County Human Services
- Linda Reinhardt—Rock County Board of Supervisors

These members have been attending meetings on a regular basis and completing the Observer

Corps Reporting Form. They note issues that are related to our current positions or would be of interest to our local League, whether these issues are a part of the meeting’s discussion, and if they should be brought to the attention of the League’s Board of Directors and its members.

Currently we have been closely monitoring items relating to our Local Positions on Housing and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Please consider the opportunity to join us in this vital mission. For newer members or those who have a limited amount of time to spend on League activities, this may be a perfect way to make a contribution to our local League’s work. There are several more Committees that would benefit an Observer, contact me for further details.



In Case You Missed It

In case you missed it – here’s your chance to view our League’s Fourth Annual Earth Week Forum.

Community Sustainability: *Creating an Inclusive and Equitable Process for Building Sustainable Communities* was the focus of this year’s forum, and six panelists from south-central Wisconsin and Milwaukee presented. They were:

Cristina Carvajal, Founder and Executive Director of Wisconsin EcoLatinos, a member of the Sustainable Madison Committee, and named one of the 40 most influential Latino leaders in Wisconsin by [Madison 365](#).

Heidi Deininger, Executive Director of the YWCA of Rock County.

Dr. Kirk E. Harris, Faculty member in the Department of Urban Planning, School of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Candice Owley, League of Women Voters of Milwaukee County member who attended the COP28 in 2023.

Nancy Retana, Resilient Communities Program Director for Clean Wisconsin, Chairs the Milwaukee Estuary Area of Concern Community Advisory Committee.

Brian Vigue, Served in the U.S. House of Representatives, the Wisconsin State Legislature, various Wisconsin State Agencies, and the Office of the Governor. He is also the Audubon Great Lakes freshwater policy expert for Wisconsin and named as one of the 40 most influential Indigenous leaders in Wisconsin by [Madison 365](#).

CREATING INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE PROCESSES FOR BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

by
Susan Amber Johnson

This year's fourth annual Earth Week Forum was about building sustainable communities. It was the second in a series on the meaning of sustainability. Creating a way of life for humans and the planet that can be sustainable over millenia will require a transformation away from Modern Era/Developed World accepted thought and practice in three key areas: environment, equitability, and the economy. Last year, we focused on the environmental pillar. We heard from the City of Janesville, Rock County, Janesville School District, and University of Wisconsin-Whitewater staff who informed us of their progress in reaching their sustainability goals. This year we emphasized the equitability pillar, and next year we'll look at the economy.

The way of life we knew, (those who were born in the twentieth century developed world), needs to change significantly. The global climate crisis is becoming cataclysmic. Our forum began with a summary of the latest report from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change delivered at this year's Conference of the Parties summit in Dubai, UAE, in November 2023. It tells us, the world is not on track to meet the goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement, which set a threshold of warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius of the 1880 pre-industrial levels. In fact, from November 2022-October 2023, the world warmed 1.32 degrees Celsius, nearing the threshold. And, September 2023 saw the world warm by 1.7 degrees Celsius going beyond the threshold. Scientists call the era in which we live today, the Sixth Great Extinction.

With a "think global-act local" mindset, we focused on several common themes happening throughout the world, and in our own backyards. Low-income and developing countries, as well as low-income and BIPOC communities, those contributing least to climate change, are struggling most to protect themselves against climate-induced natural disasters. They don't have enough money to build sufficient resilience, nor do they have the funds to clean-up, and rebuild after a disaster occurs.

Professor Kirk E. Harris, UW-Milwaukee Professor of Urban Planning, shared his slides and short video with us, but could not attend the forum. He met with the Vice Chancellor of UW-Milwaukee discussing the creation of a Center for Equity in Planning and Practice. This Center would play a key role in changing how our municipalities, counties, and state does their community planning and development. Too often, the real decisions are made away from public view, and the public views the plan, and can comment after the fact. And, typically those who will be most affected, are never even considered.

Kirk reminded us that historically, BIPOC indi-

viduals lacked freedom of movement and freedom of choice in the United States. Our common law history, as well as our written laws were racialized. Local control was racialized through zoning and land use control. As a result, too often, Blacks and other BIPOC individuals find themselves living in highly industrialized areas with high levels of air and water pollution. Highway infrastructure built after WWII ran through BIPOC communities, segregating families and destroying Black-owned businesses and communities. "Urban Renewal" policies after WWII created "white flight." Communities of color more often than not were considered blighted even if they were not actually blighted.

Nancy Retana is Clean Wisconsin's Resilient Communities Program Director, and Chair of the Milwaukee Estuary Area of Concern Community Advisory Committee, a group that works to ensure that Milwaukee residents, especially those historically underrepresented and excluded from environmental decision-making become part of community planning and practice. She told us how she reaches BIPOC residents by coming to neighborhood community centers, to educate residents regarding green infrastructure, which might include workshops on native gardens, use of rain barrels, and sharing best practices. Her audiences include common council members, city staff, developers, property owners and renters. Retana's neighborhood program builds community as residents learn about living green.

Another panelist was Cristina Carvajal, the founder and Executive Director of Wisconsin Eco-Latinos, a non-profit organization that focuses on empowering the Latino community in south-central Wisconsin to participate in environmental conservation, sustainability, and especially action against actual and potential environmental hazards. Carvajal is also a member of the Sustainable Madison Committee, and formerly lived in Janesville. Her community outreach to Latinos includes environmental literacy, pollution and health advocacy, climate change action, climate change adaptation, and transition to clean energy.

Carvajal also speaks to general audiences informing them on topics affecting BIPOC, such as the energy burden many low-income residents face in Wisconsin cities. The formula for determining energy burden is to divide household energy expenses by household income. Results higher than 6% represent an energy burden. The average overall energy burden in Janesville is 2%. However, the average energy burden for low-income residents, who earn less than 80% of the Average Median Income in Janesville, is 5%. The average energy burden for extremely low-income residents in Janesville, those making less than 30% of the Average Median

Income, is 13%.

Panelist Brian Vigue is the Great Lakes Audubon Fresh Water Policy Director for Wisconsin. He has worked in the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as the Wisconsin State Legislature, various State Agencies, and the Office of the Governor. This year, Madison 365 named him as one of the 32 most influential Indigenous leaders in Wisconsin.

Vigue focused his presentation on the adverse effects of flooding events in Wisconsin due to climate change. He is the person largely responsible for getting the recent Wetlands Bill passed. This bill is not only essential for birds and wildlife. Wetlands are a natural infrastructure that mitigates flooding. Due to climate change, many areas in Wisconsin (and around the world) are experiencing flooding more frequently, and with more extreme effect. In the past ten years, individual Wisconsinites have lost \$365 million in property damage from flooding. When 5-10% of properties are at risk of being impacted by flooding, people tend to move away, creating Climate Abandonment Areas.

These areas lose representation in Congress, and much needed federal funding for cleaning up and rebuilding. Flooding in our state has washed away public infrastructure like roads and bridges, and destroyed businesses. Much like the lower-income, and less developed countries, our own vulnerable communities suffer the most from disinvestment and bear the burden of the cost of clean-up, and building greater resilience.

Last, but not least, Candice Owley, a former Registered Nurse and current member of the League of Women Voters of Milwaukee had the opportunity to attend the 28th Conference of the Parties in Dubai, UAE, November 2023 as a representative of the U.S. League of Women Voters. She attended daily caucuses of the Trade Union NGO as they strategized how to influence the final outcome of the COP28 talks, including workers' rights during the transition to green jobs. She also focused on gender, and the health threats from the climate crisis. She observed the weaknesses of COP28, but also signs of hope: agreeing to wean the global economy from fossil fuels, committing to halting deforestation by 2030, putting money into the new Loss and Damages Fund, and reducing methane leaks.

League of Women Voters of Wisconsin, Inc.

Located in the Center for Change
612 W. Main Street, Suite 200, Madison, WI 53703
(608) 256-0827
lwwisconsin@lwwwi.org

View our website at: lwjvl.org
Contact at:
janesvillelwv@gmail.com

