

★ 1920

2021 ★

101
years!



OHIO VOTER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF OHIO WINTER 2021

Our Fight for Fair Maps Is Now!

By Lisa Wurm, LWVO Redistricting Consultant

This is THE year for redistricting. LWVO will center much of this work in 2021 around leading Fair Districts Ohio. In partnership with our good friends at Common Cause Ohio and several other organizations, including past plaintiff partner APRI and legal ally ACLU, we will lead the nonpartisan coalition for fair maps and mapmaking.

LWVO is hosting regular redistricting programs through Zoom, and we will continue that throughout the year. We are also happy to assist local Leagues with redistricting programming. We've also launched a new website www.fairdistrictsohio.org as well as trained and organized hundreds of volunteers for a statewide (currently virtual) Speakers Bureau. Both projects will continue to evolve and improve as we move along this year.

All the redistricting reforms LWVO helped to pass in 2015 and 2018 have led us to this moment. This will be our first shot at enacting the new rules and regulations. The good news is that it will be much harder to draw districts that don't represent us. To make sure mapmakers follow both the spirit and the letter of the law, we will be working hard to hold mapmakers accountable and prevent partisan gerrymandering.

We expect there will be many challenges this year to our advocacy. The first came early in February when the US Census Bureau announced that it could be as late as September 30 before it will be able to provide states with the data necessary to draw new state legislative and congressional district lines. In a normal year, we would expect the data to arrive in March.

The problem is not just that the data will be months late, it's that it will arrive AFTER the first deadlines for approving newly drawn maps — deadlines that have been set in the Ohio Constitution and challenging to change. LWVO and our partners are still developing the best plan of action to adapt to this delay, so stay tuned for more on our path forward. But we will definitely not allow mapmakers to use this delay as an excuse to reduce transparency in the process, limit public participation, or gerrymander.

We need as many League members as possible engaging with their legislators and spreading the word that the majority of Ohioans want fair districts, not rigged outcomes. LWVO's Statehouse Day helped to accomplish this, League members and supporters from around the state called mapmakers to demand a transparent process and fair, representative maps.

While we may not know exactly what other challenges we will face this year, we can predict people power will help see us through. Please visit www.fairdistrictsohio.org to learn more about how you can get involved!



Old Issues Pop Up in the New General Assembly.

Several critical issues that legislators could not come to an agreement on by the end of 2020 have resurfaced at the start of the 134th General Assembly.

Beginning with democracy/voting issues, LWV Ohio strongly supports Senate Bill 14, which would help make voter registration systems more secure and accurate. Although this proposal passed both the House and the Senate as Senate Bill 194 in the final stretch of 2020's lame duck session, the House State and Local Government Committee amended HB282 (regarding electronic bingo) into SB194, and the Senate did not concur with the changes.

Despite overwhelming support through Ohio and in both chambers of the legislature, the Fair School Funding Plan was thwarted when it arrived in the Senate Finance Committee after a 87 - 9 favorable vote in the House. Despite the pushback by a handful of powerful actors, this plan was developed by a broad, bipartisan working group of professionals, experts, and advocates over the course of many years and is still the best hope for Ohio's public schools according to public school advocates. This GA, it was reintroduced as House Bill 1, sponsored by representatives Callender(R) and Sweeney(D), and is currently being heard in the House Finance Committee. LWVO fully supports HB1 and is working closely with a coalition to pass the bill.

After House Bill 6 - the Nuclear Bailout Bill - became publicly steeped in corruption and scandal, there was even more disdain for it among Ohioans and lawmakers finally reached the conclusion that they needed to do something to address the issue. However, they failed to agree exactly what to do and how much of the bill should be repealed. At the end of 2020, a number of bills were introduced to repeal it, partially repeal it, or delay the enactment of it - none of which passed. And at the beginning of 2021, we again find ourselves with at least 6 different bills in the House and Senate addressing the HB6 repeal in different ways. The League has sided with consumer and environmental groups, calling for a full repeal, as well as with Common Cause for closing dark money loopholes.

Another bill to move in the final hours of the previous GA was HB317, now reintroduced as House Bill 99, which would allow some school employees to be armed while in a school zone without training. The League is currently concluding a study on the effect of arming school personnel and opposes the proposal.

After years of tireless work by advocates, House Bill 136 was signed into law by Governor DeWine on January 9th, 2021. This bill will exempt individuals with serious mental illness from receiving a death sentence. Meanwhile, Governor DeWine stated that Ohio is under an "unofficial moratorium" and that lethal injection was no longer an option for executions in Ohio. Ohio State Senators Nickie Antonio (D-23) and Stephen Huffman (R-5) have announced a bill that would end the death penalty in Ohio. This bill already has unprecedented bipartisan support; at least four other Republicans are committed to be co-sponsors, and numerous Republican leaders across the state have expressed their support for ending the death penalty. A companion bill in the House will soon follow, with support from Representatives Adam Miller (D-17) and Jean Schmidt (R-65). We are working with Ohioans to Stop Executions to ensure that repeal passes this legislative term (2021-2022).

Join Our Monthly LWVO Lobby Corps Call

LWVO's volunteer Lobby Corps meets via phone twice a month on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays at 12 noon. It's a great way to hear what is happening in the Statehouse and about lobbying. New lobbyists are always welcome. Any member wishing to join this call must contact the state League office to be added to the list-serve.

Here's how to join the discussion: You will receive an email with a ZOOM link along with call information, a day prior to call. Calls end by 1pm.

Moving Membership Forward

As Black History Month comes to a close, the following quote seems timely from one of this nation's great intellectuals. *"Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced,"* wrote the late James Baldwin.

The League of Women Voters is committed to its historic mission moving forward through a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) lens - in principle and practice. But what does that truly mean? It means including but not limited to improving our organizational culture and community outreach in diverse divisions, including a discerning look at our dues structure. DEI is central to LWV's current and future success in engaging all individuals, households, communities, and policymakers in creating a more perfect democracy.

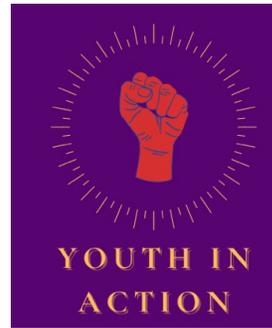
One of the barriers to having people join is membership dues. Dues are one of the primary sources of revenue that local Leagues rely on to support their programs and services. Implementing the right dues structure is critical to attracting and recruiting members, particularly from diverse communities.

Many hands make light work, but this cannot be accomplished without inclusion and diversity of opinions. Doing things the same way with the same people and expecting different results will not help an organization grow and look like the society it serves.

What is your League or chapter doing to look at your organization through a DEI lens? How are local Leagues setting up their membership dues to encourage people across their communities to join? Perhaps establishing one or two reasonable goals with your members will help make your organization more inviting, inclusive, and accommodating to potential members and initiate innovative ideas in 2021.

We would love to hear your thoughts at the next membership chairs call on **Monday, April 12th, at 5 pm**. Please contact the LWVO office at lwvoinfo@lwvohio.org to get call information.

Youth In Action



It has become increasingly apparent that young people have deep concerns about our democracy and society, but are not always provided the platform, opportunities, and resources to promote the change they wish to see.

Youth in Action (YIA), a new addition to the League, hopes to rectify that! YIA is a youth-led youth group aimed at providing the youth of Ohio a safe and empowering space to learn and engage in dialogue surrounding civic engagement and social justice.

YIA has had an exciting start this year! Our first meeting was Sunday, February 7th with guest speaker LWVO Executive Director Jen Miller. We discussed the impact YIA will have on the League's practices and policies, providing greater representation of a younger generation within the League.

YIA intends to have an impact beyond the league, as well: with focus on social justice and civic engagement, YIA will provide opportunities for lobbying, advocacy, activism, and engagement with local and federal government. Want to learn more about Youth in Action? Interested in joining? Please contact Kaiyah Taylor at yia@lwvohio.org or call the LWVO office at 614-469-1505.

Did your local League elect a new board at your annual meeting?

Please remember to send your updated board lists to the LWVO office. Updates can be emailed to the state League office at lwvoinfo@lwvohio.org.

LWVUS encourages each League to keep its active officers list up to date in their database as well. If you have questions, or need help with the LWVUS membership database, please email LWVUS at RosterSupport@lwv.org.

trail·blaz·er /'trāl, blāzər/

noun

1. a pioneer; an innovator, trendsetter.
2. a person who makes a new track through wild country.

Doesn't that just about explain the League of Women Voters?

Pioneers.
Innovators.
Trendsetters.
Making tracks through wild country.

And what a wild time this is, politically and socially. However, through these wild times, the League of Women Voters of Ohio has remained a steady, non-partisan voice of change – always poised and ready to pioneer more inclusive voting and election rights legislation. LWVO also continues to be to the trusted voice in voter education, setting the standard for all voting rights' organizations.

From our first meeting at the Southern Theater in downtown Columbus to our upcoming 64th Annual Convention, LWVO continues to blaze new trails.

LWVO first introduced "Trailblazer" at the 2019 Gala when we presented our first ever Trailblazer Awards. Last year, we held the Trailblazer Event with Virginia Case, Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins and Jennifer Smith, as well changing the name of the Annual Fundraising Campaign to the Trailblazer Campaign. And this year, we will be holding our first Trailblazer Virtual Silent Auction, in conjunction with our State Convention.

Our goal is to make Trailblazer synonymous with the men and women of LWVO blazing new trails each and every day.

As a part of this branding effort, we are excited to announce our new Trailblazer logo:

Trailblazer

You will find this new logo paired with Campaign, Gala, Awards, Silent Auction and other events as they arise.

We look forward to having you participate in this year's Trailblazer Silent Auction. Be watching email and social media in the weeks ahead for more details.

If you have any questions, or are interested in donating to the Trailblazer Silent Auction, please contact LWVO Development Director, Sherry Rose: srose@lwvohio.org

DONATE TODAY!

Yes, I want to support the work of the LWVO!

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other ____

Gifts can be made payable to:

- LWVO (non-tax deductible)
- LWVO Education Fund (tax deductible)
- Split evenly between LWVO and LWVO Education Fund

You can also donate at www.lwvohio.org and click "Donate."

Thank you!

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Tel: _____

Email: _____

Please return to: League of Women Voters of Ohio,
100 East Broad Street, Suite 1310, Columbus, OH 43215

From the President's Desk

As so many (including I) have noted, the last year has taken us on a wild ride. The state-wide shutdown happened almost a year ago. Many of us have been informally quarantined at home, avoiding such usually simple tasks as going shopping, dining out, visiting friends and family, and going to the office. Many of us lost friends and family to the pandemic and some faced their own illness. Added to that was a fraught election when everything from registering voters to helping potential voters request absentee ballots had to be rethought. Then, although the outcome of the Presidential election was clear, the loser of that election has refused to concede. Domestic terrorists took over the US Capitol and the former President was impeached (but not convicted) for the second time. I am sure there are events that would have made the last twelve months even wilder than they were, but I can't think of any.



Iris Meltzer

Through it all I have found and relied on my lodestar. It is the League of Women Voters. My role with the state League has filled my days with important work that makes me think—and act. I have been able to feel part of something larger, even as my world shrank in so many ways. The League gave and gives me a way to interpret some of what is happening in the political realm and to respond in ways that are amplified as I know League members throughout the country are responding similarly. The League has made my voice louder and stronger and I count on it to continue to do so. The League provides a framework for action—for all of us with Action Alerts, Updates and webinars. As with all League activities, they and we are guided by our Positions.

Most, if not all of you, have just completed the possibly arduous, but always instructive task, of holding your Positions and Priorities meetings (formerly known as “Program Planning”). In mid-March, your LWVO Board will meet and consider your recommendations for new studies or updates, as well as your priorities. We look forward to that review. The review doesn't occur in a vacuum. It is a major part in the preparation for our 2021 Convention and it is what I am currently focused on.

The first Call to Convention has been sent to all Leagues. Convention will be held virtually from May 11 through 22, with caucuses (proposed and facilitated by local Leagues), workshops, key note speakers, a silent auction and two business meetings (plenary sessions). We are scheduling these activities to account for people's schedules and tolerance for sitting at a computer staring at a screen. (If your League would like to present a caucus, please let the office know what you have in mind, but April 1. We will contact you by April 15.) Convention is usually a time for networking and informal discussions and sharing. We will miss that this time, but hope that the virtual nature of the event will allow more of you to participate. Without travel costs, meals, and hotels, Convention is more than affordable this year. Convention gives us the opportunity to connect, albeit virtually, and bring some order out of the chaos that many of you may have been feeling for the past twelve months.

Be safe, be well and I hope the League can play a role in centering and grounding you, too.

Quarterly President's Call

The call with local League Presidents will be held at **7 pm on Wednesday, March 10**. Expect a call from LWVO President, Iris Meltzer, to find out what topics or issues you would like to discuss that evening. We will continue to have these quarterly calls in 2021. Please check your emails for information on future calls.

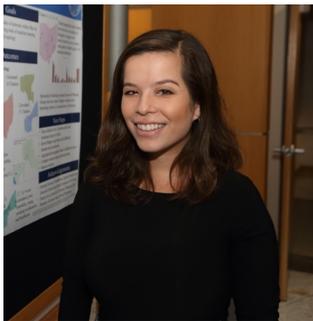


Meet Our New Redistricting Consultant!

Lisa Wurm — Lisa is a lifelong Ohioan and grew up in central Ohio. She graduated from the Ohio State University and started her career working for an environmental non-profit. For the past fifteen years, she has worked both inside and outside of state government. She has been an aide in the state legislature and also helped manage a team on the SB 5 ballot issue campaign. She gained experience working on voting rights issues while at the ACLU of Ohio and directing policy, communications, and development at Disability Rights Ohio. Most recently she contracted with the Ohio Voter Rights Coalition, assisting with election protection efforts. Lisa currently lives in Hilliard and participates in her three bookclubs as much as she can. She enjoys hiking, biking, and lovingly tending to her indoor plants.



Meet Our New Interns!



Leia Ashikawa — Leia Ashikawa is a senior undergraduate student double majoring in Data Analytics and Politics and Government at Ohio Wesleyan University. In addition to being the current redistricting intern, she is the data analytics intern at Research Methods Made Easy Inc. Prior to interning at the League of Women Voters, she was a student researcher at the University of Washington, Tacoma, conducting redistricting work. She is the creator and President of the Ohio Wesleyan University – Soka Gakkai International Club, a Buddhism organization that promotes peace and education. Leia spends her free time watching documentaries, snowboarding, and being one with nature.



Lauren Hoffman — My name is Lauren, and I'm one of the LWVO interns for the winter and spring. I'm participating in my internship through the Ohio State University, but I'm still finishing up my senior year of high school! I chose to intern with the League not only to expand my opportunities in the public affairs sector, but also to explore the world of civil service and see the many ways we can contribute to democracy. Outside of the League, music and art is my passion, and I work closely with the arts education groups in my school district. Right now I assistant direct for the middle school theatre department and play instruments in both our wind ensemble and pit orchestra. I'm heading off to college in the fall, but I'm hopeful that I can continue work with the League and watch us achieve our many goals!



Julianna Rittenberg — Julianna is in her senior year at Thomas Worthington High School while taking classes at Ohio State University. She is a member of Student Council which is where her passion for governing started. She has a passion for helping others through advocacy, having grown up in an era of increasing political awareness. Next year, she plans to major in political science in college to hone these skills and make a difference. Julianna specifically wants to make change in the policy areas of equality, gun safety reform, and accessibility to voting and voter information.

From the Executive Director, Jen Miller



I'm a voter advocate, a defender of democracy, and a daughter of this great state, with a deep and abiding commitment to all who call her home. Whether they are regular voters or dues-paying members or not, I'm committed to every Ohioan. Despite a wellspring of hope that bubbles deep inside me, I am weary and worried.

Our mission has always been bigger than our resources, and now we are left defending democracy through some of the most troubling times that many of us have seen. Our friends and neighbors are sick and dying, countless Ohioans are going hungry or facing eviction, and our treasured democratic institutions are under siege, all while racial and gender inequality in healthcare, criminal justice, education, and financial systems grow. To be a League member is to answer the call of service to others, but the onslaught of challenges is draining.

I am humbled at all that LWVO is accomplishing during these times. Last year, we reached 1 million Ohio voters with nonpartisan voting info. This year, we have already worked with allies to train hundreds of volunteers for our Fair Districts speakers bureau and community mapping. Statehouse Day, Lunching with the League, and other programs feature experts and leaders in innovative formats. By the first week of March 2021, we have had 16 public events with 4,200 attendees.

Even though I am currently the only full-time staff person, as staff care for kids/elders during this pandemic, we actually continue to increase our support to League leaders too. Some efforts include: monthly fundraising trainings, calls for local League Membership Chairs to share best practices, quarterly conversations with local League presidents, reducing online voter guide subscription costs for local Leagues, launching additional youth engagement efforts, providing technical assistance on various digital tools, and working with the Ohio Debate Commission to provide training/materials to improve local candidate forums. We are also reinvigorating our volunteer lobby corps and planning an incredible convention, which will be sure to have something for everyone.

This year is stressful, but also has the potential to be immensely rewarding. We are the steadfast, nonpartisan experts on redistricting, and we have worked for years on the reforms the state will now implement. We will not let Census delays, partisan divides, or the global pandemic stop us from working for fair maps. But we need all hands on deck. Volunteer for the speakers bureau, help with community mapping, call lawmakers, recruit new members, share social media posts, and/or increase your donations. Find where you can plug in and do so!

I also ask that you say a kind word to all the hardworking staff, interns, board members, and volunteers at LWVO. We feel honored to serve you and every Ohio voter, but we need your support now more than ever. The truth is we are going through a time that continues to ask more from us while stripping away the support systems that help us do our work well. Rest assured, there are brighter and better days ahead, but nonetheless we will never forget those who dig deep now and stand shoulder to shoulder with us through the hours of our greatest need.

Join Us On Our Monthly Member Calls

LWVO Voter Service Call

We kindly request League presidents and members engaged in voter service work to join our monthly voter service call. This call is typically held the third Tuesday of every month at 7pm.

Please note that League Presidents and voter service chairs are automatically on the list-serve to receive notice about this call. Other members wishing to join this call must contact the state League office to be added to the list-serve.

LWVO Monthly All Member Call

The state League hosts a conference call open to all members on the first Tuesday of every month at 12 noon. The monthly call is a great way for League members across Ohio to connect, share ideas, get updates on hot topics, and plan action.

Here's how to join the discussion:

You will receive an email with a ZOOM link along with call information. Watch your email several days in advance for an announcement of that month's call topic. Calls typically end just before 1pm.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF OHIO
100 East Broad Street
Suite 1310
Columbus, OH 43215

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
COLUMBUS, OHIO
PERMIT 544

PRESIDENT

Iris Meltzer, LWV Kent

1ST VICE PRESIDENT

Deborah Schmieding, LWV Athens County

2ND VICE PRESIDENT

Deb Peluso, LWV Metro Columbus

SECRETARY

Lee McLaird, LWV Bowling Green

TREASURER

Gail Pytel, LWV Kent

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Scott Britton, LWV Metro Columbus
- Ana Crawford, LWV Cincinnati Area
- Belen de Leon, LWV Metro Columbus
- Marti Kleinfelter, LWV Clermont County
- Karen Leith, LWV Hudson
- Susan Murnane, LWV Greater Cleveland
- Susan K. Smith, At-Large Member
- Cynthia Peeples, LWV of Hudson
- Carolyn Perkins, LWV Greater Dayton Area
- Venezuela V.T. Robinson, LWV Greater Cleveland
- Jocelyn Travis, LWV Greater Cleveland
- Sarah Warner, LWV Metro Columbus
- Pam Wilson, LWV Licking County

STAFF

Executive Director

Jen Miller

Membership and Project Manager

Munia Mostafa

Office and Program Associate

Nazek Hapasha

Administrative Assistant

Alice Pressler

Inspire Campaign/Development Director

Sherry Rose

Accountant

Jeff Keith

Redistricting Consultant

Lisa Wurm

Interns

Leia Ashikawa, Ava Brady, Eryka Harper,
Lauren Hoffman, Haanya Ijaz, Julianna Rittenberg,
Kaiyah Taylor.

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

To become a member or for information,

(614) 469-1505

lwvinfo@lwvohio.org



Facebook.com/lwvohio



Twitter.com/lwvohio

MEMBERSHIP FORM



YES, Sign me up as a Member of the League of Women Voters of Ohio!

\$60 INDIVIDUAL \$90 HOUSEHOLD

\$5 STUDENT ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIP (check www.lwvohio.org)

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Mail this form with your check to
LWV Ohio, 100 East Broad Street, Suite 1310
Columbus, Ohio 43215