



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF GREATER ROCKFORD

101st

Annual Meeting

Saturday, June 3, 2023

Rockford Country Club

Ballroom

2500 Oxford Street

Rockford, Illinois

Doors Open at 8:15 a.m.

8:15 a.m.

Check-in, pay dues, view displays, enjoy beverages, and socialize.

9:00 a.m.

Welcome and Acknowledgement of Special Guests  
Claire McIntyre, LWVGR Co-President

Introduction of  
Kaila Anderson,  
City of Rockford Youth Poet Laureate 2023

Introduction of Keynote Speaker  
Sue Theden, Co-President and Mary McNamara Bernsten, Moderator

“Women in Government: Building for the Future We Want”  
Illinois Comptroller Susana Mendoza

Fmr. IL Representative Litesa Wallace: On Advocacy

Break

10:00 a.m.

10:15 a.m.

Brunch

10:45 a.m.

LWVGR Annual Meeting (30 minutes)

*Meeting reservation and payment must be received and paid by Friday, May 21, 2023  
\$30.00 for members, \$35 for guests. Members are now able to pay dues by credit  
card, cash, or by check at the Annual Meeting, or online at [www.lwvgr.org](http://www.lwvgr.org).*



Featured Keynote Speaker

## “Women in Government: Building for the Future We Want”

The League of Women Voters has evolved from a mighty political experiment designed to help 20 million newly enfranchised women vote in 1920, to a nonpartisan organization that is a recognized force in molding political leaders, shaping public policy, and promoting informed civic participation. The League has grown as an organization to encourage the active and informed participation of all citizens in government and to increase understanding of major public policy issues.

We have invited Comptroller Susana Mendoza to hear her assessment of the impact of women in government. As more women are elected to public office, particularly high-level positions, does their presence make a measurable difference? How can we build on their accomplishments?



*Illinois Comptroller Susana Mendoza*

### ABOUT SUSANA MENDOZA

Susana Mendoza graduated from Bolingbrook High School where she earned All-State and All-Midwest honors in varsity soccer, the first female to be inducted into the Bolingbrook High School Wall of Fame.

She has a B.A. in Business Administration Northeast Missouri State University (now Truman State University) on a soccer and academic scholarship, earning All-Midwest honors.

**Elected in 2000 as the youngest member of the 92nd Illinois General Assembly**, Susana Mendoza proudly served six terms as a Democratic member of the Illinois House of Representatives from 2001 to 2011 for the 1st District. She was a leading sponsor of HR 1650 which created the panel to impeach former Governor Blagojevich.

**Susana Mendoza was the first woman elected as Chicago City Clerk.** In her first term as Chicago City Clerk, Susana successfully transitioned 1.3 million customers away from an inefficient and archaic annual Chicago City Vehicle Sticker sales program dating back 105 years. Clerk Mendoza spearheaded and passed the Companion Animal and Consumer Protection Ordinance.

**Susana Mendoza was elected Illinois Comptroller** in 2016 as the first Hispanic to a statewide office.

As Comptroller, Mendoza led a transparency revolution because she believes that taxpayers deserve to know how their tax dollars are being spent. She fought for and passed, over Governor Rauner’s veto, the Debt Transparency Act, requiring State agencies to report monthly, instead of annually the number of unpaid State bills they are holding.

A lead architect of Illinois’ financial turnaround, Mendoza has successfully navigated the state through unprecedented crisis – the 736 day budget impasse and the Covid-19 pandemic. She has eliminated the state’s backlog of unpaid bills, down from a historic high of \$16.7 billion to a healthy accounts payable of \$1.8 billion, delivered the fastest vendor payment cycle in decades – down from over 200 days to well under 30 days today, and led the state to its first credit upgrades in over 20 years, for a total of 6 upgrades in less than a year. [Learn more about the Illinois Comptroller’s office.](#)



# 101st ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, June 3, 2023

## A G E N D A

### **Call to Order**

Claire McIntyre, Co-President

### **Motion to Adopt Roberts Rules of Order**

### **Announcement of LWVGR Scholarship Recipient**

### **Minutes of the June 4, 2022 Meeting**

Valerie Hanserd, Secretary

Action Item: Acceptance of 2022 Minutes

### **Financial Report**

Christina Hiltrop, Treasurer

Action Item: Approve Proposed Budget 2023-2024

### **Co-President's Report**

Sue Theden & Claire McIntyre, Co-Presidents

Review and Discussion of 2021-23 Goals

Membership discussion for the 2023-25 Biennium

This will be an opportunity for members to review our 2021-23 goals as well as propose new goals for the 2023-25 Biennium.

If you are interested in proposing a direction or goal, please review corresponding League positions in "Where We Stand."

<https://www.lwvil.org/where-we-stand>

### **Membership Committee**

Teresa Hill, Membership Chair

### **Formation and Purpose of Issues Committee**

Claire McIntyre, Issues Chair

### **New Business**

Action Item: Approve by-laws amendment

Karen Lytwyn, Bylaws Committee

Action Item: Election of the 2023-2025 LWVGR Board

Christina Hiltrop, Nominating Committee Chair

### **Introduction of the 2023-2025 LWVGR Board**

Christina Hiltrop, Nominating Committee Chair

### **Recognition and Awards**

Sue Theden, President

### **Adjournment**



As you may be aware, LWVGR operates on a fiscal year from July 2023 to June 2024. Member dues are collected every June. As always, you may pay online by going to <https://lwwgr.org/join/>

You may opt-in to arrange an automatic renewal of your credit/debit card-paid membership dues. If you opt-in, every June you will be notified by email that your annual LWVGR membership dues will be automatically charged to the credit card you have on file. You may opt-out from automatic payment at any time.

**Why is LWVGR offering this option?** For many of us, our lives are busy, our computer email inboxes are overflowing, things get lost. Automatic renewal is meant to be a convenience for you as well as save the League the time and expense of sending paper reminders which allows dues collected to be used for programming rather than postage.

**Another thing to consider if paying on-line:** You may also opt to pay for PayPal's transaction fees so that 100% of your dues goes to LWVGR to assist in its work. PayPal currently collects, on average, 3.49% processing fee. (LWVIL and LWVUS percentage of your dues leaves LWVGR only \$11.00, so that leaves \$7.00 per each local League member's dues paid by card.) Question? Contact Treasurer Chris Hiltrop at [billing@lwwgr.org](mailto:billing@lwwgr.org).

## LWVGR Annual Meeting Reservation and Membership Dues Application

League membership fees are due **Friday, June 30, 2023**. You may pay online at [lwwgr.org/join/](https://lwwgr.org/join/) or you may complete this membership form and mail with your check to:

Chris Hiltrop  
2606 Point O' Woods  
Rockford, IL 61114

Questions?

Contact Chris at  
[billing@lwwgr.org](mailto:billing@lwwgr.org) or  
815-262-6166.



Annual Meeting - Sat., June 3, 2023  
Rockford Country Club Ballroom  
2500 Oxford Street, Rockford, Illinois  
\$30.00 for members • \$35.00 for guests

\_\_\_\_\_ Member(s) attending \_\_\_\_\_ Guests(s)

Brunch: Scrambled eggs | bacon | sausage | breakfast potatoes | cinnamon french toast with seasonal fresh fruits, chilled juices, RCC blend coffee, and herbal teas.

### MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS

- ☐ \$75.00 one member
- ☐ \$110.00 two members, same household

### Other available membership categories:

- ☐ Young Member (35 years of age and under) \$40.00
- ☐ Student (F/T HS or college w/student ID) \$40.00
- ☐ Carrie Chapman Catt \$125.00
- ☐ Susan B. Anthony \$150.00
- ☐ Elizabeth Cady Stanton \$200.00
- ☐ Julia Lathrop \$300.00
- ☐ Lifetime Membership \$0.00 (LWV Member 50+ years)
- ☐ Written communications sent to members rather than emailed, \$12.00 per year.

*Thank you in advance  
for renewing your  
membership in a timely  
manner.*

Additional donation to Operating Fund.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

(Dues and Operating Fund donations are **not** tax deductible. Please write your check to: League of Women Voters of Greater Rockford)

Additional donation to LWVGR Scholarship Fund.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

(Scholarship Fund donations are tax deductible. Please write your check to: Community Foundation of Northern Illinois (Memo: LWVGR Scholarship))

Additional donation to Educational Fund.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

(Educational Fund donations are tax deductible. Please write your check to: The LWVIL Education Fund (Memo: LWV of Greater Rockford))

Annual Meeting admission \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

NAME

NAME(S) OF ADDITIONAL MEMBER(S) IN HOUSEHOLD

ADDRESS

CITY

ZIP CODE

PHONE (HOME)

PHONE (WORK/DAY)

PHONE (CELL)

EMAIL ADDRESS

**Chris will also be accepting card, cash or check payments for membership dues at the annual meeting on June 4 – so feel free print this page and pay her then. All Annual Meeting reservations must be pre-paid by May 21 by mail or online at [lwwgr.org](https://lwwgr.org).**







## League of Women Voters Greater Rockford Annual Meeting Minutes | June 6, 2022

### Program

President Claire McIntyre welcomed attendees and acknowledged distinguished guests that were in attendance; Jeffery Bailey of the Rockford Chamber of Commerce, Leslie Luther, Executive Director Rockford Red Cross, 12th Ward Alderwoman Gina Meeks, candidate for the IL 17th Congressional District, Angie Normoyle, IL Senator Steve Stadelman and Pastor Diane Tomlinson of Emmanuel Episcopal Church. She also thanked Comcast for their generous donation. She shared the end of the speech that US Rep Liz Cheney gave when she accepted the JFK Profile in Courage award that resonated with President McIntyre as a league member and what the league represents. She then offered a toast to begin our Centennial Anniversary Annual Meeting.

Judge Kathryn Zenoff by video, presented an illustrious bio and introduced the new and first African American woman to the Illinois Supreme Court, Justice of the 4th District, Lisa Holder White. Justice Holder White's virtual presentation described her appointment as the honor of a lifetime and goes far and beyond personal and professional achievement, but as a recognition that her value and merit as a black woman, wife, mother, and daughter has contributed to the court's work. She shared an excerpt from her mother's journal entry of her appointment which outlined a great-great-grandmother born into slavery, to a great-grandmother with no formal education, to a grandfather sharecropper, to a Mom and Dad who attended one room segregated schools and rode on the back of the bus, to the highest court in the State of Illinois. WOW! WOW! WOW! Go Lisa!" She closed with stating that she is looking forward to leaving a legacy for those who will follow behind her and looking forward to future opportunities to connect with us.

Poems and quotes by Jefferson High School Poetry Out Loud Regional Competition winners Olivia Vereb and Kelcey Dodd. Our own league member Paulette Gilbert read her poem inspired by the colors of the women's suffrage movement which are purple, white, and yellow. The colors are a reminder of the women who were courageous, dedicated, and willing to sacrifice their lives for their belief that women had the right to vote.

Annette Baldwin presented a very inspirational and educational outline of the life of Carrie Chapman Catt, founder of the LWV. Chapman Catt's advocacy for the rights of women during the early 1900's is a testament of what happens when women collectively organize, and strategize for democracy during a time when women were 2nd class citizens.

The keynote presentation was given by our very own Rockford native, Judge Gwyn Gulley, the first African American woman elected to serve on the 17th Judicial Circuit Court for both Winnebago and Boone counties. She spoke on the defining moment of the appointment of Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, the first African American woman appointed to the US Supreme Court and what her presence on the court would bring.

### Annual Meeting

President Claire McIntyre called the meeting to order. Request of motions to accept adoption of Robert's Rules of order, minutes of the June 6, 2021 annual meeting, and proposed 2022-2023 finance budget as printed. Motions made and seconded, motions carried.

President McIntyre presented the President's report as printed.

Vice-President Sue Theden introduced the 2022-2023 Board and positions as follows:

- Co-President: Claire McIntyre
- Co-President: Sue Theden
- Secretary: Valerie Hanserd
- Treasurer: Christina Hiltrop
- Membership: Teresa Hill
- Voter Services: Carol Davies
- Communications: Joan Sage
- Members at Large: Patty Stadelman, Paulette Gilbert, and Teresa Wilmot

Janie Wilson-Cook, LWVGR Scholarship Committee Coordinator, introduced the 2022 scholarship recipient, Bella Wandtke, of Belvidere North High School. Ms. Wandtke was awarded \$500.

New Business: **Diane Cushing of the Bylaw Committee read and requested a motion to approve the by-law amendment to add Section 6: Observation of Board Meetings. Motion made and seconded. Motion carried.**

Recognition and Awards: Co-President McIntyre presented the prestigious Mildred Berry Award to a very surprised recipient, Janie Wilson-Cook. Janie has been a tireless member and we count on her expertise year-round.

In closing, Co-President McIntyre thanked everyone for attending the Centennial Anniversary. She encouraged everyone to attend the upcoming partner and other LWVGR events as our work is ongoing.

Meeting adjourned at 12:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Valerie Hanserd,  
Recording Secretary





## Proposed LWVGR By-Laws Amendment

*Changes are italicized and bolded.*

### Article II – Purposes and Policy

Sec. 3 Diversity Policy: The LWVGR affirms its commitment to reflect the diversity of our region in its membership and activities. The LWVGR recognizes that diverse perspectives are necessary for responsible and effective decision making in democratic organizations.

The League seeks to remove barriers to participation in any League activity on the basis of age, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, national origin and socio- economic position and to promote diversity and pluralism through its programs, committees, and partnerships with other organizations.

#### **Section 3 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy**

***The LWVGR affirms its commitment to reflect the diversity of our region in its membership and activities and is fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice. The LWVGR recognizes that diverse perspectives are necessary for responsible and effective decision making in democratic organizations. 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.***

***LWVGR seeks to promote diversity and pluralism through its programs, committees, and through coalitions of which it is a member.***

### Rationale

LWVGR Co-President Sue Theden asked LWVGR members to review the current LWVGR Diversity Policy. The LWVGR policy had been found to be out-of-date with the current LWVIL policy.

After study and review of the statements, the committee recommends that the LWVGR By-Laws Article II. Purposes and Policy, Section 3. Diversity Policy be amended and recommends that the following proposed language be submitted for consideration at the Annual Meeting. The proposed language is consistent with the intent of the current LWVGR policy, is up to date with the current LWVIL policy, and supports the statement of purpose of the LWVGR Diversity Committee.

By-Laws Review Committee

Susan Janson, Karen Lytwyn, and Linda Miller



### LWVGR Officers

**Term: June, 2023 through May, 2024**

President .....	Sue Theden
Vice-President .....	Jennifer Blaisdale
Secretary .....	Valerie Hanserd
Treasurer .....	Christina Hiltrop
Membership .....	Teresa Hill
Voter Services .....	TBD
Communications .....	Joan Sage
Member at Large .....	Patty Stadelman
Member at Large .....	Paulette Gilbert



## Co-Presidents' Report



Sue Theden, Co-President



Claire McIntyre, Co-President

And thus ends the 2021-23 biennium. As LWVGR heads into the new 2023-25 biennium, we review our 2021 goals, our accomplishments over the two years, and how to build on those successes while formulating new goals.

### 2021 - 2023 goals:

Overarching focus: How best to promote LWVGR goals in the three following areas:

1. Promote political responsibility and active participation of citizens.
2. Act on selected advocacy issues.
3. Reflect the diversity of our region in its membership and activities.

Promote political responsibility and active participation of citizens.

#### Internally LWVGR:

- Shared State, National, and Local advocacy information, plus specialty information from selected nonpartisan/bipartisan information such as the Brennan Center, the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, and the Responsible Budget Committee.
- Requested member advocacy through filing Witness Slips on legislation and contacting federal and state elected officials to advocate for various LWV supported positions. A sampling of these include: HR 3119 the Carbon Dioxide Transport and Storage Protections Act (Environmental Issues), an increase in Evidence Based Funding budget (Education), support for Smart Start funding (Early Childhood Education), blocking amendments on the federal Inflation Reduction Act that would hurt immigrant communities (Immigration), contacting Senators to support the Disclose Act opposing dark money in politics (MIP) and to support the

enshrinement of the ERA in the Constitution. Members were also asked to support the Pre-Trial Fairness Act.

- Kept members abreast of issues through the weekly newsletter as well as voting deadline information.

#### Externally LWVGR:

- Partnered with community organizations to form the Go Vote 815™ action network™ action network to broaden citizen participation and education.
- Focused more on communities we have traditionally had difficulty reaching by implementing new partnerships and by providing bilingual materials.

#### Act on selected advocacy issues:

- Gun Violence Prevention: the GVP committee partnered with area individuals and organizations to present a series of well attended forums exploring the issue of gun violence in the Greater Rockford area.

- LWVGR publicly supported preventing the airport from cutting a road through the Bell Bowl Prairie.

- Joined with our coalition partners in support of women's right to reproductive healthcare.

#### Reflect the diversity of the region in its membership and activities:

- Made a point of connecting with a diverse set of organizations to better interact with the population at large, giving LWVGR a better footing to build bridges throughout the community.

- After only 17% of voters participated in the June 2022 mid-term primaries, the board reached out to other non-profits to share the voter turnout data and to discuss solutions. We realized that LWVGR has the voting expertise and materials, and the other non-profit organizations have broad and diverse audiences. As a result, about 20 non-profits decided to work together to educate and inspire everyone in the 815 area code to exercise their right: your voice, your vote, our future.

- During election seasons, the Go Vote 815™ action network™ action network met bi-weekly.

- A media conference with the Rockford Mayor was held to launch the Go Vote 815™ action network™ action network

- Data was analyzed and the Rockford precincts with the lowest voter turnouts were identified. As the team planned future voter events, they placed more emphasis on holding events in these low voter turnout areas.



- Leading up to the 2023 consolidated election, 6 of 13 events (46%) were held in school sub-district A, which contains 8 of the 13 lowest voter turnout precincts. In these 8 precincts, voter turnout improved by 27% over the 2021 consolidated election (which was uncontested). In spite of the improvement, turnout was still low, improving from 3.68% to 4.65%.
- Overall the 13 lowest voter turnout precincts maintained about the same turnout as the 2021 consolidated election (4.62% in 2021 to 4.67% in 2023); whereas Rockford overall turnout decreased by 20% (11.2% in 2021 to 9% in 2023).
- LWVGR purchased and distributed 24 yard signs and 8 posters to the 8 most active non-profits – both in English and Spanish.
- A Go Vote 815™ action network™ action network marketing presence was developed through print graphics, Facebook page and website to facilitate the “Get Out The Vote”(GOTV) message.
- Voter turnout improvement is not just a goal of the League and Go Vote 815™ action network partners. Over 30 groups held voter awareness or registration events. Please refer to the Voter Service report for the events hosted by LWVGR.
- LWVGR invited Go Vote 815™ action network™ non-profits to co-sponsor candidate meet and greets: Latino Committee of Boone County, NAACP, Rockford Public Library, AAUW, and the YWCA of Northern Illinois.
- LWVGR also involved student council members from two high schools in the school board Meet & Greets: Harlem and Hononegah high schools.

- The Belvidere North High School Student Voice Club planned, organized and ran a school board candidate forum in March. Their advisor and Social Studies teacher Teresa Kruger reached out to LWVGR for guidance and to provide a moderator. We provided candidate forum checklists, templates and best practices, and facilitated Judge Rosemary Collins to be their moderator.
- At a Go Vote 815™ action network meeting, LWVGR floated the idea of providing election education to grade school students. Rhonda Greer Robinson, NAACP President and Ellis Elementary 5th grade teacher immediately volunteered her classroom. Thus began our co-development of a series of three Kids Vote 815™ classes for 5th graders. In three different weeks, a total of eight volunteers went into the classroom and engaged the students on what democracy means, the danger of apathy, the importance of accurate information, and the importance of voting to make your voice heard.

As LWVGR moves forward into the next biennium, it will be working to solidify and build on accomplishments and continue to work towards those that need further development, while looking to evaluate and set new goals.

We would like to thank the LWVGR board for their guidance and support. We also thank those of you who were able to actively participate by volunteering, those of you who responded to the many requests for legislative action and advocacy, as well as those of you who continue to support the work of the League financially- either through your continued membership and/or through donations.

*Claire Flynn McIntyre, Co-President*  
*Sue Theden, Co-President*

## Committee Reports

### ■ Anniversary Committee

In 2022 the League Women Voters of Greater Rockford celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Anniversary Committee, feeling the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic in meeting and venue possibilities, researched different ways to commemorate this feat

Once internationally-famous, Rockford native Julia Lathrop was a charter member of our nascent LWW Chapter. Janie Wilson-Cook owned a copy of her 1935 biography, *My Friend, Julia Lathrop*, written posthumously by the equally-famous and accomplished Jane Addams. The committee decided that a fitting and “out-of-the-box” celebration could be having the book about the, now, almost unknown social champion adapted



into a play. Margaret Raether, Artist Ensemble playwright, read the book and eagerly agreed to adapt it for a staged reading with minimal props and scenery. The play, held October 14-15, 2022 at the Cheek Theater at Rockford University coincided nicely with the university's 175 anniversary since both Addams and Lathrop were alumni. The pay-as-you-wish play had overflow attendance and was considered a complete success by the

Artists Ensemble and the LWVGR. Margaret and Richard Raether have decided to expand the biographical play for performance in the Spring 2024 schedule.

Respectfully submitted,  
 Janie Wilson-Cook, Chair







## Committee Reports *(continued)*

### ■ Communication Committee

To create a greater awareness of the League's mission and to call our members and the public to action, the Communications Committee uses a number of platforms.

They include:

Social media with our website, Facebook, and YouTube channel

Email notices to members and to our public list with information and requests

Releases to the media

Committee members include:

- Teresa Hill- social media manager — Using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Tiktok to keep the public updated.
- Janie Wilson-Cook—webmaster, technologist, UX, graphic designer, user-friendly with access to the Illinois and US Leagues. Administers email and marketing list servers. Administers the Google marketing aides for YouTube, Calendar, Voice phone and the subscribable Apple Calendar. She has continually upgraded the lwvgr.org e-commerce. Janie created govote815.org collateral and web presence. Janie is ready to train chairs in publishing blog articles and train webadmins to succeed her in retirement.

Media coverage was significant for the following:

Gun Violence Prevention Forum

Candidate Meet & Greets for Rockford Public Schools, Rock Valley College Trustees, Rockton Village Trustees, and Hononegah High School District 267.

Candidate Forum organized by Belvidere North High School students.

Organized the Go Vote 815™ action network Media Conference with Mayor McNamara and non-profit partners.

Due to COVID-19, some committee meetings are being held via Zoom. Committee are starting to meet again in person — committee's choice.

The LWVGR phone number is 815-201-3901.

Respectfully submitted,  
Joan Sage, Chair

### ■ Diversity Committee

The Diversity Committee recommends strategy and tactics needed to have the local League representative of our community by culture, race, gender identity, age, politics, and economic status. The LWVGR wishes to be a

complete reflection of the Winnebago and Boone County demographics and mindset. The Diversity committee has completed a nonmember survey regarding views and attitudes toward the LWVGR and diversity in its membership. This will be available soon. Our next short-term goal is the completion of a member survey. Ultimately, the committee is committed to recruiting LWVGR members who reflect the composition of the communities we serve.

Respectfully submitted,  
Karen Lytwyn, Chair

### ■ Environmental Committee

The Environmental Issues Committee advocates for the protection and preservation of our natural resources through the shared knowledge of local experts, print and online sources and the expertise and talents of our committee members.

Two years ago the LWVGR Board supported the preservation of the Bell Bowl Prairie from its destruction by the Chicago Rockford International Airport Authority. On March 9, 2023 the Airport Board destroyed a significant portion of this 5-8,000 year old gravel prairie to build a road which already existed elsewhere. Currently 20 dumptruck-loads of dirt are being searched by volunteers for plants for replantation at a recovered prairie site at Klemm Arboretum. Volunteers were not allowed to do this before the site was plowed for stated liability reasons.

The Environmental Committee is in a revitalization phase. Former and new members are welcome to contact the new chair, Patricia (Penney) Kenney at [environment@lwvgr.org](mailto:environment@lwvgr.org). We will be meeting soon to decide a scheduled meeting location, time, and day.

Respectfully submitted,  
Patricia Kenney, Chair

### ■ Gun Violence Prevention Committee

The Gun Violence Prevention Committee has been very busy this past year. On June 14, 2022, we held a forum at Second First Church, 318 N. Church. Our panelists were: Rockford Mayor Tom McNamara, Winnebago County Chair, Vince Chiarelli, Mr. Chiarelli's assistant, IL Rep. Maurice West (67th district), Jennifer Cacciapaglia, Executive Director of the Family Peace Center, State's Attorney J Hanley, and Carla Redd, Chief of Police.

Each spoke about the gun violence in Rockford and efforts they were taking in their departments to help stop the problem. The Police Chief talked about efforts in her



## Committee Reports *(continued)*

department and among her officers. They have started programs to involve youth in activities with police officers to foster a bond. We heard about their crime reporting data and improvements being made to use the data to develop more programs.

Mayor McNamara, County Chairman Chiarelli, and their assistants discussed trauma programs to help teens and children deal with these issues in a caring and positive manner. They also discussed data being collected to help with new initiatives. There are also programs they are instituting to add summer activities for at-risk youth.

The State's Attorney discussed the problems with the Juvenile Court System and their effects on at risk youth who are reported for lesser offenses and those reported for major crimes. There are programs to keep these youth from repeating offences and helping them integrate back into the community. State's Attorney Hanley addressed the effect of poverty on crime. The high rate of poverty adds to the disillusionment and helplessness of youth and the problems of their parents.

It was attended by over 100 community members and there were many positive comments,

Our second forum held February 12, 2023 at Second First Church dealt with the Rockford Public School District 205 and programs it's instituting to help students with trauma in their homes and community. It has instituted a program with the city called "Handle with Care" to alert teachers and Administrators to problems children may have had before their school day that may need understanding and guidance. It is also adding summer programs for preschool children in addition to those it is running for older students. It has joined with many non-profit community groups like the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club.

We also heard from Tony Turner, head of Conscious Coaching, who is a community advocate for our youth and operates one of the programs with the District at Auburn High School. It is a mentoring and hands-on program by adults to help ease the transitions of teens and offers an alternative to gang participation. Again, it was a well-attended forum and we received many positive comments.

We are in the process of planning our last forum for this year. It will be June 11 or 25 (TBD) with one or two survivors of gun violence or family members of victims. We hope to add an ER doctor and the Chief of Police and/or the Sheriff. We want to hear their experiences and thoughts they may have on curbing this ongoing epidemic. We must come together as a community to take concrete steps to reclaim our community and our safety. This forum is not to point blame but to see how we may thwart this

problem together. As soon as we have firmed up our panel, more information will be forthcoming.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jo Minor, Chair

### ■ Healthcare Committee

Healthcare Committee did not meet during 2022-23. It was not possible to visit Day Care Centers due to Covid. Attempts to meet with any committee people was not successful. The continuation of the Healthcare Committee probably needs to be evaluated.

Wanda Hoover, Chair

### ■ Immigration Committee

The immigration committee did not meet in-person this year due to scheduling conflicts. The committee did correspond by email with the membership and encourage individual actions around Illinois state legislation involving immigration including HB3215 "SAFER Communities Act", and HB3878 increasing rental housing assistance as well as HB3882 drivers licenses for all regardless of immigration status. On the federal level LWV successfully advocated to keep anti-immigrant amendments out of the Inflation Reduction Act and supported introduction of the DREAM Act of 2023.

Committee Chair Sara Dady attended Zoom LWV presentation on continuing, urgent need for bipartisan immigration reform. The immigration committee will continue to keep membership updated on local, state and federal work around immigration issues.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sara Dady, Chair

### ■ Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)

The League of Women Voters Greater Rockford sends a representative to the EPCRA – Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-know Act of 1986. It meets monthly.

EPCRA was passed in response to concerns regarding the environmental and safety hazards posed by the storage and handling off toxic chemicals. EPCRA establishes requirements for Federal, State, and local governments, Indian Tribes, and industry regarding emergency planning and "Community Right-to-Know" reporting on hazardous and toxic chemicals. The Community Right-to-Know provisions help increase the public's





## Committee Reports *(continued)*

knowledge and access to information on chemicals at individual facilities, their uses, and releases into the environment. States and communities, working with facilities, can use the information to improve chemical safety and protect public health and the environment.

Diane Cushing has been attending this committee and is available to speak to anyone wanting more information.

### ■ Local Government Committee

The Local Government Committee promotes community vision/leadership by citizens. The Local Government Committee meets on the second Thursday of each month. The goal of our committee is to educate and inform the community and candidates running for office on current and local issues. This included setting up Meet & Greets and obtaining information from candidates for the Illinois Voter Guide.

#### Illinois Voter Guide

The Local Government Committee has increased the use of the Illinois Voter Guide to provide more information on the candidates for the voters to review at their leisure. The Illinois Voter Guide is an online voter resource powered by the Women Voters of Illinois, including links to check your voter registration, online voter registration, request a ballot, see what is on your ballot, etc. The Illinois Voter Guide also provides comprehensive, nonpartisan information on the candidates. The Local Government Committee sends individual emails, as well as follow-ups, to invite candidates in Winnebago & Boone Counties to submit their information to be included in the Illinois Voter Guide.

#### Meet & Greets

Meet & Greets were chosen as opposed to forums to encourage more candidates to attend. In a forum, all candidates were given a few minutes to speak and then each candidate was given the same questions to be answered in a panel like setting. The League has a “no empty seat” policy. So, when a candidate declined to attend, the forum for that race needed to be canceled. Meet & Greets were set up for the candidates to give a 3 minute introduction on who they were and why they were running for that position. A separate room was set up for the candidates to pass out their literature and speak with the voters. These Meet & Greets were more successful because the candidates felt less pressure in attending because of their fear of answering questions directly from the audience on a person-to-person setting, resulting in some candidates, who turned down forums from other groups to attend our Meet & Greets.

#### Cooperation

The Local Government Committee has been working closer with LWVIL to use available resources. The Local Government Committee has also joined other Local Leagues to host candidate forums.

#### November 8th General Election

Congressional District 17 Candidate Forum – October 3, 6pm, Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois

A Congressional District 17 Candidate Forum between Esther Joy King and Eric Sorensen was set up through a committee of LWV local branches for Oct 3 at 6pm at the Bradley Campus. The broadcast was broadcasted on both WCBU and WGLT that evening and streamed on WCBU’s Facebook page.

The following local Meet & Greets also were scheduled:

#### Boone County Candidates Meet & Greet

Monday, October 17th at 6 pm

Poplar Grove Village Hall

200 Hill Street, Poplar Grove Illinois

Co-sponsors: Latino Committee of Boone County, LWVGR, and GoVote815™

Invited Candidates: Boone County Candidates, Illinois State Senate District Candidates: 35, 34, 45; Illinois State Representative District Candidates: 68, 69, 89, 90; US Congressional District Candidates: 16 and 11

#### Illinois State House, Illinois State Senate and US Congressional District Candidates Meet & Greet

Nordlof Center, Rockford, Illinois

October 26th, Wednesday, 6-8pm

Co-Sponsors: LWVGR, AAUW, RPL, and GoVote815™

Invited Candidates: State House Representatives for District 67,68, 69, 89, and 90; Illinois Senate Districts 34, 35 and 45; and Congressional Districts 16 and 17

#### Winnebago County Candidates Meet & Greet

Winnebago County Candidates for Coroner, and Treasurer Offices and County Board District Races

October 23rd, Sunday, 2-4pm

Hope Fellowship Church,

1135 E State Street, Rockford, IL

Co-Sponsors by: LWVGR, NAACP, and GoVote815™

#### The April 4, 2023 Consolidated Election

The local offices up for this election included: Village Officials, Fire & Library District Trustees, Park District Commissioners, School Boards and the Rock Valley College Trustees.

During this election season, we included the assistance of local student groups. This was a great opportunity for students to get a great education in local elections and provided the League with more workers at the Meet &





## Committee Reports *(continued)*

**Greets.** Due to the success in this program, the Local Government Committee will continue the practice of including students in future Meet & Greets.

The following Candidate Meet & Greets were scheduled for the April 4 Consolidated Election:

Rockford Public School District RPS #205 and Rock Valley College Trustee Candidates Meet & Greet:

March 16th, 6-8:00 p.m.

Pilgrim Baptist Church

1703 S Central Avenue, Rockford Illinois

Co-sponsors: LWVGR, NAACP, Alpha Kappa Alpha, and GoVote815™

Rockford Public School District RPS #205 and Rock Valley College Trustee Candidates Meet & Greet:

March 12, Sunday, 1-3:00 p.m.

United Unitarian Church

5959 Turner Avenue, Rockford, Illinois

Co-sponsors: LWVGR, AAUW, and GoVote815™

Hononegah Community School Board & Rockton Village Trustee Candidate Meet Greet:

March 22, 6-8:00 p.m.

Rockton Community Center

302 W Main Street, Rockton, Illinois

Co-sponsors: LWVGR, YWCA, Hononegah Student Council and Key Club, and GoVote815™

Harlem School Board Candidate Meet & Greet

March 22, 6-8:00 p.m.

Windsor Elementary School

935 Windsor Road Loves Park, Illinois

Co-Sponsors: LWVGR, YWCA, Harlem School Council, and GoVote815™

*Over 400 people signed in to attend these Meet & Greets.*

### **Members: Join Local Government Committee**

The Local Government Committee will continue to review and study issues important to our community and State and to host Candidate Meet & Greets. Interested league members are encouraged to join our committee. Meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month at Noon via Zoom.

Local Government Committee Members: Terri Schierer, Chair; Sue Theden, Susan Janson, Angie Goral, Faye Marcus, Paula Lind, Dyanna Walker, Janie Wilson-Cook, Carol Davies, Wanda Hoover, Joan Sage, Jo Minor, Teresa Hill

Respectfully submitted,  
Terri Schierer, Chair

### ■ **Membership Committee**

The League of Women Voters, Greater Rockford has 107 current members as of 4/8/2023. The number includes 8 life members, 86 renewed members and 16 new members. Of those 107 members, 6 are household and 10 are student members.

The membership committee planned the Holiday gathering at Mary Kowing's home this year and it was a wonderful time to get to know fellow members and share in the joy of the holidays. We plan to host more social events in the upcoming year. If anyone has any suggestions for activities, please share with us.

Membership committee will be hosting a new member orientation in the near future and will also begin focusing on recruiting new members throughout the year. The committee is also ready when needed to help support any meetings/forums/events that each committee has planned for the upcoming year.

As always, many hands make light work and also more enjoyable. Please consider joining our committee.

### **New Members:**

Margarita Arango Joined 06/04/22  
Bonnie Jeanne Baker Joined 10/01/22  
Linda Butkovich Joined 08/11/22  
Andrea Capriotti Joined 11/04/22  
Meredith Dady Joined 08/24/22  
Jacqueline Delahanty Joined 01/09/23  
Silvia Diaz Joined 11/04/22  
Jane Gottlick Joined 07/22/22  
Andrew Ilijic Joined 03/18/23  
Patricia (Penney) Kenney Joined 12/15/22  
Elaina Murray Joined 05/25/22  
Christina Pascucci Joined 03/18/23  
Caitlin Pusateri Joined 09/08/22  
Ruth Swanson Joined 10/07/22  
Diane Tomlinson Joined 06/04/22  
Millie Zimmerman Joined 08/05/22

### **Fifty Year Members**

Mary English  
Maxine Hadley  
Alice Heath  
Colleen Holmbeck  
Sandra Locke  
Faye Marcus  
Joan Morton  
Sally Trefz

Respectfully submitted,  
Teresa Hill, Chair

### **In Memoriam:**

Justine Walhout 7/6/2022





## Committee Reports *(continued)*

### ■ Scholarship Committee

The Community Foundation of Northern Illinois (CFNIL) scholarship committees met in-person in March and April, 2023. League of Women Voters of Greater Rockford (LWVGR) members were Janie Wilson-Cook and Shawn Stacey-Choinard (who served on the committee for the LWVGR scholarship). Only two members of any donor group can be on the committee for their scholarship. Each committee made decisions for 4-6 scholarships. The CFNIL continues to improve the process.

CFNIL computed that this year the amount capable of being awarded was \$944.00. After a kind, anonymous \$56.00 donation, the coordinator, with Board approval, recommended to award two \$500.00 scholarships or one \$1,000.00 scholarship (if only one applicant was eligible). The LWVGR scholarship received three potential recipients, chosen by CFNIL computer algorithms.

Syeria Scott, a 2017 graduate of Auburn High School, was the recipient of the League \$500.00 scholarship. She attends University of Georgia to study social work. An alternate was not chosen. The LWVGR scholarship will be awarded at a June 15 ceremony to be held at Riverview Event Center, formerly Cliffbreakers.



**Syeria Scott**

Her Mother, Tiltya Stone, was the 2019 recipient of the LWVGR Scholarship.

Please remember the LWVGR Scholarship Fund in your charitable giving. Donation directions are on the dues renewal form on paper and onsite.

Respectfully submitted,  
Janie Wilson-Cook,  
LWVGR Scholarship Coordinator

### ■ Sunshine Report

This year it has been my privilege as a committee of one to write to 12 members and one friend of the League, sending congratulatory notes, get-well cards, and expressions of sympathy as needed.

If you know of a League member who would appreciate such a note, please notify the president.

Respectfully,  
Kathy Scarpaci

### ■ Voter Services Committee

This past year, three elections—the June 2022 Primary, the November 2022 Midterm and the April 2023 Consolidated—kept the Voter Service Committee busy following LWV directives to register voters and get them vote ready. Although the underlying goals remained the same, the Voter Service Committee tailored them into five specific objectives which informed the Committee's initiatives and actions during this hectic time.

- Hold registrations targeting youth voters, eligible citizens in traditionally low voter turnout areas, pre-trial citizens being held in the Winnebago County Jail, and re-register those with a criminal record who have been released from jail.
- Participate in National Voter Registration Day, September 20, 2022.
- Increase educational outreach, focusing on underserved areas, ones with a high concentration of non-English speaking residents, and areas with low voter turnout.
- Increase media coverage to raise LWVGR visibility and promote [illinoisvoterguide.org](http://illinoisvoterguide.org) and VS events.
- Encourage civic engagement and voter turnout by collaborating with the Local Government Committee and Go Vote 815™ action network™

Overall, the Voter Service Committee addressed all objectives and met its goals. This was a productive and rewarding year.

**REGISTRATIONS:** From March 2022 to April 2023, the VS Committee hosted 33 voter registration drives in 24 separate locations across the city of Rockford and in both Winnebago and Boone Counties. Venues included area schools, local churches and libraries, neighborhood block parties, cultural festivals, the Winnebago County Probation Office, and the Second Chance Summit. Deputy Registrars took 301 in-person registrations: 272 during the Midterm Election cycle and 29 prior to the Consolidated Election.

**NATIONAL VOTER REGISTRATION DAY:** Instead of a single day, multi-venue event, NVRD 2022 spread out over two days. September 19th began with an interview on WTVO/WQRF's Good Day Stateline. The VS Chair discussed the importance of voting, presented voter registration information, and promoted Monday's pre-NVRD events at Hart Interim Library and Montague Branch Library. On NVRD DAY, an all-day registration drive was held at Roosevelt Community Education Center. DRs took 87 registrations--the year's single event record.



## Committee Reports *(continued)*

**INCREASE COMMUNITY OUTREACH:** The VS Committee printed the ACLU flyer “Voting with a Criminal Record,” LWVIL educational materials, and the LWVGR Election Guide in both English and Spanish. A two-day registration drive was held at Fiesta Supermarket in Belvidere.

Several registration/education events were scheduled in low voter turnout areas including the 11th Street Neighborhood Party, a backpack giveaway at Blackhawk Park, and a presentation to ORCHiD Neighborhood Association on the city’s southeast side. A NVRD event was held on the southwest side, and VS members participated in a Trunk or Treat event on the northwest side.

**INCREASE MEDIA COVERAGE:** The Voter Service Committee created a slide-deck for digital information boards. The slide-deck, which was updated for each venue, advertised an upcoming event and promoted [illinoisvoterguide.org](http://illinoisvoterguide.org).

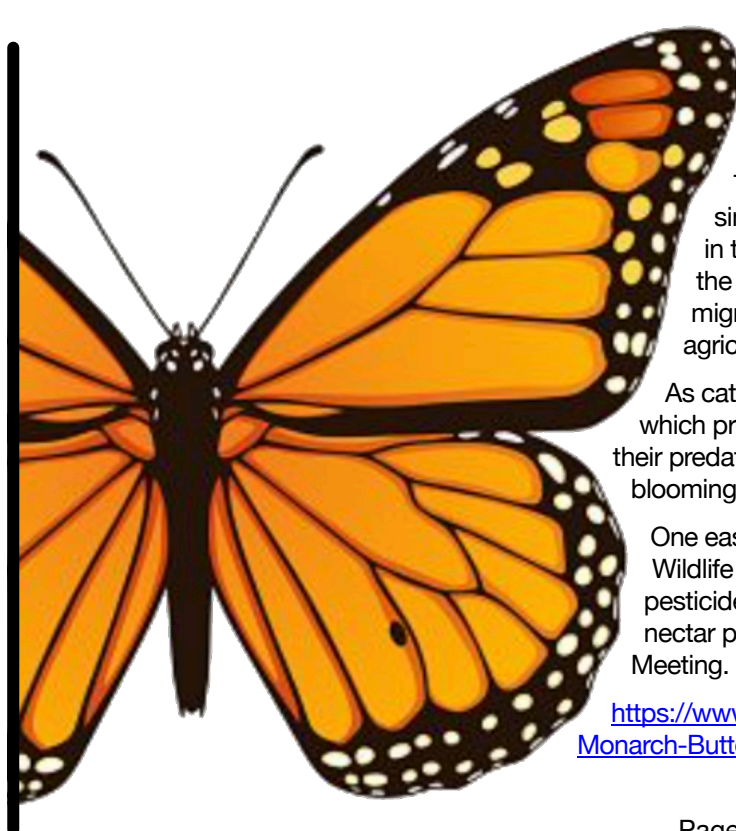
VS members wrote editorials, conducted TV and radio interviews, and recorded NPR “My Perspective” spots. In addition, VS information was posted on the LWVGR website, its Facebook page, and the GoVote815.org site.

VS member spoke to audiences at pre-show presentations of the AE Theater’s production of *The Outsider*. During the presentation, both [illinoisvoterguide.org](http://illinoisvoterguide.org) and LWVGR’s 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary play *Julie and Jane* were promoted.

**ENCOURAGE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND INCREASE VOTER TURNOUT:** In collaboration with Go Vote 815™ action network™, the Voter Service Committee piloted a series of three voter education classes with an Ellis Elementary School 5th grade class. VS also assisted the Local Government Committee with Meet and Greets for the Consolidated School Board Elections. VS members helped the Go Vote 815™ action network™ coalition in a coordinated effort to get out the vote.

As I am stepping down as Voter Service Chair, I end this Annual Report on a personal note. Congratulations to 6 VS members who recently completed Deputy Registrar training. Adding these new DRs to the list of veterans gives the VS Committee 45 trained registrars representing the City of Rockford and Winnebago and Boone Counties. Thanks to VS partners who sponsored and promoted registration and education events. Finally, thank you to VS members for supporting and participating in registration, education, and get out the vote initiatives. It has been my privilege to work with this amazing group of people who care about civic engagement and voter registration.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Carol Davies, Chair/Chairperson



## Monarch Butterflies

**The Monarch Butterfly is the state butterfly of Illinois.**

The monarch population has declined by about 90 percent since the 1990s. Monarchs face habitat loss and fragmentation in the United States and Mexico. For example, over 90 percent of the grassland eco-systems along the eastern monarch’s central migratory flyway corridor have been lost, converted to intensive agriculture or urban development.

As caterpillars, monarchs feed exclusively on the leaves of milkweed, which produces toxins, making them taste bad, which in turn, deters their predators. As adults, monarchs feed on nectar from a wide range of blooming native plants, including milkweed.

One easy way to help monarchs is to participate in the National Wildlife Federation’s *Garden for Wildlife* program by planting a pesticide-free monarch habitat garden filled with native milkweed and nectar plants. Milkweeds seeds are available at the LWVGR Annual Meeting. Please plant them in a sunny space.

<https://www.nwf.org/Educational-Resources/Wildlife-Guide/Invertebrates/Monarch-Butterfly>





## LWVGR was nominated and won one of two “Outstanding Community Partner” awards at the Rock Valley College 2023 Eagle Awards of Excellence in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

The awards lunch took place at RVC’s Atrium and featured remarks by RVC President Dr. Howard Spearman. Sue Theden, LWVGR Co-President, Joan Sage, LWVGR Communication Committee Chair, and Paulette Gilbert, Board Member-At-Large, attended the event.

Dr. Matthew Oakes, RVC Professor, and Go Vote 815™ action network member, nominated the League with these words: *“The League of Women Voters of Rockford is a remarkable local organization whose mission is to ensure a robust and equitable democracy. Their non-partisan work to register voters, establish get out the vote drives, and create opportunities for voters to engage with those running for office are essential functions of any democracy. While the League was founded to campaign for women’s suffrage, it now exists to defend voting rights for all people. Serving both Winnebago and Boone Counties, the League regularly partners with a variety of other community organizations, including the NAACP, Transform Rockford, Eliminate Racism 815, and the American Association of University Women.”*



**LWVGR Co-President Sue Theden with RVC Professor Paulette Gilbert** Photo: J.Sage

Luevinus Muhammad, Director of Intercultural Student Services, presented the award and began by reading our diversity statement. She then stated that LWVGR’s work and effort in creating a sense of belonging for others within this community has been recognized. The results of “doing the work” out of a sense of duty can be rewarding in and of itself. RVC wanted the League to know that our impact on others has not gone unnoticed.

To culminate the event, our own Paulette Gilbert took the stage to present this year’s winner of RVC’s most prestigious DEI award. The award is named in honor of, and in recognition of Paulette’s lifetime of service and is called the “Theresa Paulette Gilbert Award of Distinguished Service.”





## LWVGR Contacts 2023-2024

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Sunshine Committee Chair: Kathy Scarpaci	<a href="mailto:sunshine@lwwgr.org">sunshine@lwwgr.org</a>
Website/Listserver/Email: Janie Wilson-Cook	<a href="mailto:admin@lwwgr.org">admin@lwwgr.org</a>

## LWVGR Public Email List

The League of Women Voters of Greater Rockford sends event emails to the public who opt-in!

Go to <https://lwwgr.org>, head for the form widget on the right, and sign up all your friends today.

*No spam, no tracking, just pure civic involvement.* Tell your friends!

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