

# The Voter

December 2022

## CO-PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

Dear members,

Thank you.

Thank you so much for your work during the election season.

Thank you for your contributions—financial and volunteer—to LWVSP.

Thank you for your support of the work we do to provide candidate forums, voter guides, educational programs, Youth Vote services, and member events.

Thank you for taking time to learn with us about the census, voting access, history, and other topics important to League members.

In this time of thanks and giving we are so grateful for you.

Looking ahead to 2023, we're excited to continue our series of virtual programs to watch live or later, including "Welcoming The Dear Neighbor? The Historical Impact of Racial Covenants" on January 24. Find program details and Zoom registration information on [the LWVSP website](https://www.lwvstpa.org).



As always, our book clubs are open for you to join whenever you're able. And we hope to host more membership events where we can spend time together and collaborate on more great work.

If you'd like to be more involved with a specific committee or are interested in learning more about where your interests and skills would be a fit, feel free to reach out for a chat. Write us at [office@lwvstpa.org](mailto:office@lwvstpa.org).

—Amy Perna & Heidi Kloempken

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Mapping Prejudice and Welcoming the Dear Neighbor?:  
A collaboration and partnership

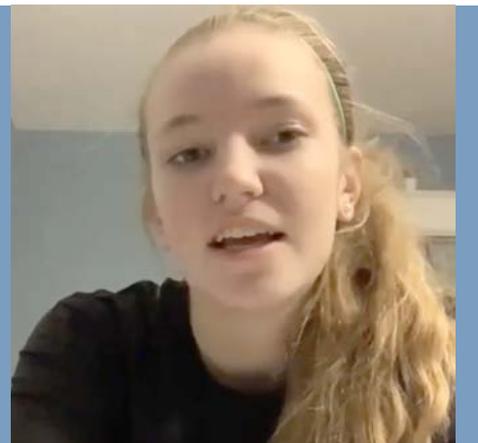
## Media-Savvy Student Leaders Engage Their Peers Pre-Election



Betty H.



Maggie M.



Delaney N.

**Our Saint Paul: Learn with the League** presented its final 2022 program on November 22: “Gen Z to the Rescue: The 2022 Youth Vote Projects.” LWVSP Co-President Heidi Kloempken led a discussion with Grace Reardon and Lia Pak, co-chairs of the Youth Vote team, on all the work that had been done in the months before the November 8 election. Then three student leaders described their projects, which educated their peers on voting registration, elections, and candidates.

To grow the program, Grace and Lia have continued to collaborate with established partners, both high school teachers and previous student leaders. From 2018 to 2021, they’ve engaged 55 student leaders (40 of whom returned for a sec-

ond project) in 11 high schools. Social media has allowed the Youth Vote committee to touch 1,300 students with information about voting and the League. They’ve registered some new voters and have enrolled students to receive League text reminders for important election and registration dates.

All student leaders receive a stipend, which the committee funds via grants from Ramsey County and state and national Leagues. Grace and Lia spoke to the committee’s commitment to diversity in the program; each year, from 20 to 50% of participants were students of color—a reflection of the League’s mission of including and serving all St. Paul communities.

Grace and Lia have found that despite COVID-19’s disruptions, it sparked a creative change in the projects students developed. There were social media bursts, videos, student voiceovers for school announcements, and communications via other school platforms.

Typically, spring session participants focus on voter registration, since more of their peers are closer to age 18 at that time, while the fall group highlights election issues. This was true for the



Grace Reardon



Lia Pak

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## Jacquelyn Kelly's Service and Advocacy

Jacquelyn Kelly, an active LWVSP member since 2018, is Secretary of the Board. She has extensive experience advocating for those in the disability community.

These are excerpts from an October 31, 2022, conversation with LWVSP board member Cheryl Bailey.

**Cheryl Bailey:** Jacqui, how did you start your work with the St. Paul League?

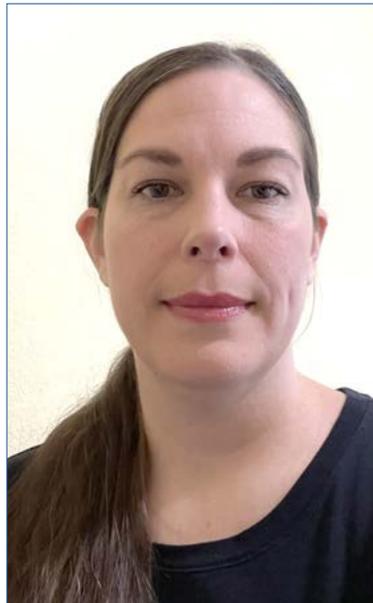
**Jacquelyn Kelly:** My friend Hayden Kilkenny knew me from the St. Patrick's Association. She always spoke so positively about the League, urging me to join. After her gentle persuasion, she convinced me and recruited me directly to the Board.

**Cheryl:** How did that go?

**Jacquelyn:** Well, it took a few meetings to feel I added value to the Board. At first, my experience with the disability community helped me be the member to ask if we'd considered accessibility for meetings and programs. I started small, you know, by asking simple questions: "Are there stairs?" "What's the parking situation?" "Are the bathrooms accessible?" "Is there a ramp?" Literal first steps to ensure accessibility. These are all critical issues to those who don't walk well, or use wheelchairs or other implements for mobility, or have vision issues. I'm pleased that we as a Board are learning to vet our spaces so that everyone can attend our functions.

**Cheryl:** Then COVID hit, and programs and board meetings went to a Zoom platform.

**Jacquelyn:** Yes, and while that has worked super well for many in the disability community, we all remember how difficult it was for others! Some people hadn't used technology much, and no one could teach them how to use their computers in person. Not everyone has steady hands or good internet access in their home space. Hearing can



be a real problem on Zoom as well, especially if people try to talk at once.

**Cheryl:** How has your work informed your time in the League?

**Jacquelyn:** Well, I've worked as a certified nursing assistant for years, and have cared for people in nursing homes, day programs, memory care centers, and even hospice situations. This has really enriched my perspective on how systems work, or don't work, for older folks, kids, people with physical disabilities, etc. I've especially noticed how many barriers there are to forming community for these different people.

**Cheryl:** Where's the voting connection?

**Jacquelyn:** I'd say in how clear it is to me that everyone has value. Not just those who work. Not just the able-bodied. Not just the richest or the fittest or the most assertive. We all have value and should be represented, and should be included in policy, and should be heard. I think the League really gets that. We promote that sensibility that citizens must be afforded their rights, especially with respect to removing barriers to voting.

I see League members as incredibly well educated and informed. To me, the current political environment of hopelessness and doom is almost intentional. The League can support, uplift, and reassure the public at large. There are solutions to

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## Where Democracy and Economics Meet

At our November meeting, we discussed *Evil Geniuses: The Unmaking of America*, by Kurt Andersen.

“We must make our choice,” he writes. “We may have democracy, or we may wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we can’t have both.”

His book summarizes how, in the 1980s and ‘90s, big business and its political allies convinced Americans that it was in our best interest to allow corporations to increase their profits through tax cuts.

This economic and societal re-engineering, as Anderson calls it, got support from trickle down economic theory, touted by Ronald Reagan, and supply side economics, promoted by Bill Clinton, which aimed to lower taxes, decrease regulation, and encourage free trade to boost the economy. The Libertarian movement contributed, too, in its platform against redistribution of wealth via entitlement programs such as Social Security and welfare.

Per Andersen, the “geniuses” who came up with this plan spent decades laying the groundwork. They used academia, Harvard Law School in particular, to promote the soundness of their theories and indoctrinate a new generation. The old doctrine—that corporations had a responsibility to the public—changed to a singular focus: making money for shareholders. Free trade and other policies allowed companies to move factories out of the U.S. and suppress wages; family farms largely disappeared. As the income of the top fifth of Americans rose, most Americans’ incomes flatlined. The “Rising wealth inequality drives the stock market, which then drives more wealth inequality,” said Edward Wolff, professor of economics at New York University.

Andersen calls for systemic transformation so that everyone in our country has the opportunity to thrive.

Our group highly recommends this book, which led to a great discussion on our changing societal values, the media’s use of nostalgia to make people believe we were better off in eras past. It is amazing how far-reaching these changes has impacted law, economics, business and citizens.

### For More Information and to Take Action

#### Read and View

Book: *The Fifth Risk* by Michael Lewis (2018)

TV series:

- [The G Word, with Adam Conover](#) (Netflix)
- [Occupied](#) (Netflix)
- [The Red Election](#) (Hulu)

Movie: *Wall Street* (1987)

Website: [Trends in income and wealth inequality](#), Pew Research Center

#### Take Action

Consider supporting economic justice organizations such as:

- [Interfaith Worker Justice](#)
- [Working America](#)
- [Coalition on Human Needs](#)

Contact your local, state and congressional leaders and express your thoughts on a fair economic system.

### Our Next Meeting

December 14, 10 a.m. at the Highland Park Library, 1974 Ford Parkway (probably in the second-floor meeting room). We’ll be discussing *The Singing Wilderness*, by Sigurd Olson.

January’s book is *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution*, by Eric Foner.

—Mary Palmer

## EVENING BOOK CLUB

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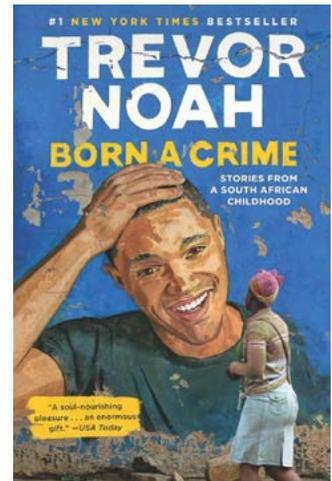
### Winter Reading: From Memoir to History, a Justice to a Comedian

Evening Book Club continues its focus on the Supreme Court for the next few months. Then we'll take a break to read a few history books, a memoirs, and books by comedians.

We meet the first Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. on Zoom. All are welcome, even if you haven't read the book.

Upcoming books:

- **December 5:** *My Beloved World* by Sonia Sotomayor
- **January 2:** *Born a Crime: Stories From a South African Childhood* by Trevor Noah
- **February 6:** *Fight Like Hell: The Untold History of American Labor* by Kim Kelly
- **March 6:** *Assassination Vacation* by Sarah Vowell



Contact [Karen Williams](mailto:kare14will@gmail.com) (kare14will@gmail.com) to be added to the email list for reminders and to receive the Zoom link.

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## ELECTION HUMOR

From Twitter on November 8:



### The Voter Seeks Writers and Editors

Itching to do some writing or editing? Know a young person who's looking for experience?

The Voter welcomes those with a penchant for journalism or public relations to propose, write, and/or edit stories, help with planning, and condense oral histories into compelling nuggets for publication.

[Email Diane](mailto:dianeReally@hotmail.com) (dianeReally@hotmail.com) to find out more.

The Voter is published every other month by the League of Women Voters St. Paul. To submit suggestions or news, [contact Diane Hellekson](mailto:dianereally@hotmail.com) (dianereally@hotmail.com). Deadline for submittals is two weeks before the first of the month of publication, with exceptions for time-sensitive information.

## Youth Vote continued from page 3

evening's three panelists: Betty H. (Como High School), Maggie M., and Delaney N. (both from Central High School). A fourth student, Faith T. (Highland Park High School), was unable to join us, but we did hear about her project. In addition, all three panelists served as student election judges November 8.

Betty, a returning League student leader, created 10 posters with data on elections and a QR code, then posted them throughout the school. Students scanned the code on their phones and answered a poll it generated. Betty found that 72% were not yet 18; those who were old enough had already registered to vote. Since voting is a first-time experience for high school students, Betty felt it was critical to provide specific information on the ballot and the candidates. Comments from the poll included: "Voting will determine the future leaders" and "AP Gov and my mom have told me it's important."

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## To help young people become politically savvy, adults can talk to them about politics and current affairs, and lead by example

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Maggie and Delaney made a large poster board with details on how to register, what would be on the 2022 ballot, and how to find a polling place, and a sample of candidate views from non-partisan websites. By circulating through the lunchroom to engage with as many students as possible, they hoped to reach everyone in the school. They saw this project as an opportunity to be sure their peers understood why voting matters and who the candidates would be. Delaney recounted the day they accidentally occupied a table set up for Armed Services recruiters; the two groups engaged and taught each other about their work.

Faith, from Highland Park High School, wasn't able to attend, but the others explained how she created a voiceover announcement explaining

## Upcoming Programs

The 2023 Our St. Paul series starts off strong:

**January 24:** Redlining and real estate covenants in Ramsey County, with guests from St. Catherine University working on Welcoming the Dear Neighbors? project. (Read more in the Presidents' letter or on LWVSP.org) <https://lwwsp.org/events>

**February 21:** Restorative Justice, including Ramsey County Attorney John Choi, among others. This event is co-sponsored by the Roseville League.

same-day registration and promoting election day. She also created an Instagram account (Happy Election Day—Go Get Out and Vote!) to display a sample ballot, a link to find polling places, cues about registering to vote, and more. She then promoted it on her own Instagram account.

The student leaders answered multiple viewer questions with flair. While none plan to run for office, all three want to stay active in this democracy. Serving as student election judges was an excellent experience for them all.

Using posters in their schools, they felt, was an effective way to reach visual learners and, of course, social media was key. "Almost everyone I know uses it and engages with it multiple times daily," said Maggie. When asked what older adults can do to help their generation become politically savvy, they all said to talk about politics and current affairs and to lead by example. As the QR code poll showed us, "AP Gov and my mom" can influence the next generation.

Many thanks to our Gen Z panelists Betty, Delaney, and Maggie—and to Faith—for their efforts to promote an informed and educated electorate. Kudos to Grace and Lia for continuing to grow the Youth Vote program. Please reach out if you're interested in joining their team—just send a note to [office@LWVSP.com](mailto:office@LWVSP.com) and we'll get you in touch.

If you missed the presentation, you can watch it on [our YouTube channel](#).

—Cheryl Bailey

## Jacquelyn Kelly continued from page 3

problems, and levelheaded, truth-telling candidates exist.

*Cheryl: Would you care to share a little of your background? Books you're reading, series you're watching?*

**Jacquelyn:** Love to! I live in Oakdale with my husband and two kids, Jack 18, and Evelyn, 6. I'm also disabled, which is not uncommon for caregivers. I've lobbied legislators for labor rights for personal care attendants (PCAs) and family home care workers, and am extremely comfortable talking to the media and our elected officials about these issues. As for reading, gosh I have so little time with round-the-clock work, but I like to listen to podcasts. I gravitate toward those focused on policy issues, like public health or housing. Sometimes I find a long form storytelling podcast about civics.

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### We can act as an assistant to those groups who already have their own organizations, taking a back seat and asking what they need, not telling them what we'd like to offer.

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*Cheryl: As your friend Nikki Villavicencio told us on the "Equity & Accessibility in Voting: Physical Barriers to the Polls" program a year ago (which [can be viewed on YouTube](#)), "About 30% of the population is disabled, and even if you aren't disabled now, you may have the opportunity to join our community in the future!" What wisdom can you share about how the League can improve in this area?*

**Jacquelyn:** We're all clearly interested and motivated to diversify our membership, and have roles for our members to play with communities of color, youth, the disabled, ESL folks, etc. This works best when we go where they are, as the St. Paul League did in voter registration events at se-

nior high schools when the graduates are getting their caps and gowns, or to apartments designed for people with physical needs to offer voting information.

We can act as an assistant to those groups who already have their own organizations, taking a back seat and asking what they need, not telling them what we'd like to offer. We should continue to be curious, and have an awareness of those around us. And of course, we should record our programs and use closed captioning on them. Keep all people in mind when deciding topics to cover. I really envision us not just thinking about physical spaces in voting booths, but really reaching out to the disability community. We have so much to offer.

*Cheryl: Jacqui, thanks for talking with me and sharing your story with The Voter. What advice do you have for new members about volunteering in the League?*

**Jacquelyn:** I really found it helpful to dive in—just start doing the work. This helped me learn what I really cared about. I tried Voter Services, then Membership, and suddenly found my niche as secretary in the board. I certainly wouldn't have predicted that. Each of us have skills, and some roles will suit a member better than others. Don't worry. Just join a committee and see how it feels. We're all volunteers, after all, and the others will help you fit in.



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