

The Voter

April 2021

CO-PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

Hi, members and supporters.

Happy (belated) Women's History Month!

As we reflect on the incredible women who paved the path for us, we encourage you to learn more about some of the longtime members of the LWV Saint Paul chapter. In the first of a series, board member Nona Beining presents highlights from a 2016 interview with Bobbie Megard (page 7), part of our oral history project. You'll find complete interviews with Bobbi and eight more women on the [LWVSP history web page](#).

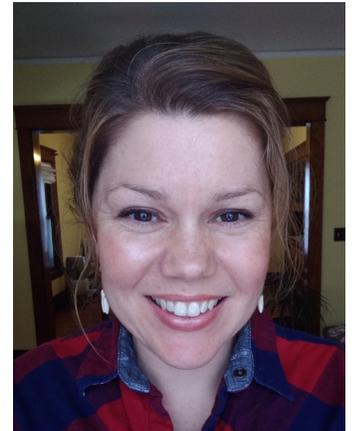
Another rich resource is the Minnesota Historical Society's [Votes for Women web pages and online exhibition](#). LWV Minnesota was a project partner.

Speaking of amazing women: Please help us welcome two new board members, Grace Reardon and Lia Pak, who will co-chair the Youth Vote Team. Grace, who just graduated from Macalester College with a degree in political science, was our Youth Vote Coordinator and a 2020 Youth Civic Engagement Fellow. Lia is a sophomore at Macalester majoring in political science and biology. She's been involved with the LWVSP since last fall. Find out more about them on page 3.

Planning for the annual meeting is underway! The Nominations Committee has started its work to fill open board positions for the 2021-22 year, which begins July 1. The election of officers and directors will take place at the annual meeting, Monday, May 17. If you are interested in serving on our board, please [email us](mailto:office@lwwsp.org) (office@lwwsp.org). Open positions and other volunteer opportunities will be posted on our website.



Heidi Kloempken



Amy Perna

If you missed our last new member meet-up or just want to learn more about us, join us via Zoom on Saturday, April 17, 11 a.m. This is a chance to meet board members, interact with other new or potential members, and learn about the nuts and bolts of the LWVSP.

Please reach out with thoughts, questions, or ideas anytime. We'd love to hear from you.

—Amy & Heidi

IN THIS ISSUE

Book Club News	2
Board Spotlight	3
Program Committee & Event Recap	4
League News	5
Oral History Spotlight: Bobbi Megard . . .	6

BOOK CLUB NEWS

Evening Book Club

Meetings are the first Monday of each month at 6 p.m. [Email Heidi](mailto:heidi.kloempken@gmail.com) (heidi.kloempken@gmail.com) for the Zoom information.

April 5, *Her Honor: Rosalie Wahl and the Minnesota Women's Movement* by Lori Sturdevant

May 3, *Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All* by Martha S. Jones

June 7, *Turnout: Making Minnesota the State that Votes* by Joan Anderson Grove with Lori Sturdevant

Morning Book Club

Meetings are the second Wednesday of each month at 10 a.m. [Email Mary](mailto:mgp22@msn.com) (mgp22@msn.com) for the Zoom information.

April 14, 10 a.m. *American Harvest: God, Country, and Farming in the Heartland* by Marie Mutsuki Mockett. A Japanese-American woman inherits a Nebraska wheat farm and spends a summer following the conservative Christian harvesters from Texas to Idaho. It's a story of religions, agriculture, technology, geography, landscapes, history (including the Comanches and Quanah), and identity.

May 12, 10 a.m. *Twilight of Democracy: The Seductive Lure of Authoritarianism* by Anne Applebaum

Anti-Racist Resources

At the March morning book club meeting, discussion of *How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi generated the following resources for learning more or contributing to groups working for racial equity:

Four Hundred Souls, A Community History of African America, 1619-2019, essays edited by Ibram X. Kendi and Keisha N. Blain

[Charles M. Blow on Firing Line](#), PBS. The New York Times columnist and author of "The Devil You Know: A Black Power Manifesto," discusses his plan for Black Americans to amass political power by reverse migration to the South to achieve Black majorities in multiple states.

[Meda gets \\$1 million from Cummins to help Black-owned businesses](#). Read about a Fridley manufacturer funding loans and grants via the Metropolitan Economic Development Association (Meda).

[Hallie Q Brown Community Center](#) provides services, including early learning, youth enrichment and senior programs, as well as basic needs to people in the community.

[Minnesota Voice](#), a coalition of non-profits working toward racial, social and economic justice.

Welcome, New Members

Thank you to those who've joined since December!

Bridget Adams	Barbara Morin
Maura Donovan	Charlotte Sebastian
Susan Ellingson	Holly Windingstad
Dianna Erickson	Emma Wolters
Amy Gaffin	



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Follow us: [@LWVStPaul](#)

Youth Vote Participants Step Up to Lead

Macalester student leaders Lia Pak and Grace Reardon worked closely with Dan Krivit during his tenure as chair of Youth Vote. When Krivit stepped down this year, Grace and Lia stepped up. They begin as LWVSP Youth Vote co-chairs this month.

Lia is a sophomore at Macalaster College studying political science and biology with a global health concentration. Grace recently graduated from Mac with a B.A. in political science and a minor in anthropology.

The following remarks are from a Zoom interview by Bridget Adams in March.



Lia Pak



Grace Reardon

What are your plans for Youth Vote as you take on your new roles?

LP: Dan has created such a solid foundation for Youth Vote through all the time and effort that he has put into it over the years, so building on what's there is important to us. At this time, we don't have any drastic changes that we want to see within the program, rather we want to work with what we do have.

GR: We want to develop new relationships with high schools and make deeper connections with the high schools we have relationships with. Students and teachers directed us to different clubs and other groups that we can make connections with. It's really been about taking that feedback from students and teachers and using it to develop Youth Vote based around them and their suggestions to do it justice.

How has working with Youth Vote helped you develop your personal and professional skills?

Grace Reardon: It has taught me a lot about organizing and effective communication— especially working with high school students. It also has made me much more connected to St. Paul—as someone from Atlanta—to help me be engaged

with my local community outside of the college.

Lia Pak: “I started working with Youth Vote in September as a part of an internship for a class I was taking at the time. I am very interested in politics and I care a lot about community engagement . . . and [this] was a way to explore my passion in a new way. Working with the high school students and the League has been a super helpful way to be engaged in a new way that translates into professional skills, especially given the new role and responsibilities we are taking on.

How has your involvement affected your leadership abilities?

LP: It's definitely weird at times since I am not that much older than the high school students I am overseeing; I was in their shoes not that long ago. I hope that it makes it easier for them—seeing someone close in age to them to talk to. High school students can be difficult to talk to; it is a learned set of skills that has helped me to adapt my communication to who I am overseeing. It helps that I am continually impressed with their work.

Continued on page 6

PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Zoom, Zoom!

Thirty-four people attended February's Zoom discussion, Civics in Our Schools: What's Going On? (See recap below.) The Program Committee was pleased to note an average viewing time of 53.5 minutes for the one-hour program. ("They came and they stayed!") Also encouraging: The average audience rating was 8.5 out of 10, with a median of 9.5. Nine non-LWV members attended; we continue to reach beyond our membership and into the community.

If you missed this or any other program (for instance, the March conversation on redistricting), visit the our [Facebook page](#) or the [LWVSP website](#) for links to the recordings for all our past Zoom programs.

We'll be discussing Rebuilding University Avenue April 27 at 7 p.m. Watch for the link online.

—Claudia Dieter

Social Studies Standards: Perspectives from St. Paul

On February 23, LWVSP hosted a timely program: Civics in Our Schools: What's Going On, focusing on Minnesota's academic social studies standards, now in a review process that has generated more attention than usual (as noted this [recent Star Tribune article](#)).

Heidi Kloempken, LWVSP co-president, moderated the conversation with Rebecca Biel, K-12 social studies supervisor for St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS), and Eric Erickson, who teaches AP government, economics, and U.S. history at Como Park High School.

Heidi teed up the panel with an overview of Minnesota's current standards and the required review process, which occurs every 10 years. (Social studies is an umbrella term that includes history, geography, economics, and civics.)

Here are the main players and roles:

- Minnesota Department of Education creates the committee (this year, 39 individuals from across the state)
- Minnesota Legislature sets statutes, makes rules and provides funding.
- The committee sets academic standards and benchmarks.
- School districts determine curricula and local assessments.

A partial draft of the standards, released in December, set forth basic standards; benchmarks will be added later.

Social studies in the 21st century are dynamic. Students don't just learn facts, but skills in asking questions, finding reputable sources, and engaging with others.

Biel said SPPS concentrates civics curriculum in grades K through 3 (understanding citizenship, community membership, and voting) and high school years (more detailed courses on the structure of the US government, elected officials, law making and the constitution). Due to an emphasis on STEM courses in recent years, she noted that social studies have been somewhat neglected. She welcomes the recent attention to the topic.

Biel highlighted a collaboration between the [YMCA Center for Youth Voice](#) and the University of Minnesota Law School to provide multi-language translations of a children's book on voting, elections, and how to choose a candidate.

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State LWV Board Seeks Members

The LWV Minnesota board of directors seeks to fill open board positions for 2021–22, including: at-large members, volunteers for the membership and development committees, chair of voter service, and a 2nd vice president. If you are a member who's interested in serving, you'll find information and a link to apply on the Board Nominations page of the state website.

Social studies standards, continued

She asked us to realize that social studies in the 21st century is a dynamic topic. Students don't just learn facts, but skills in asking questions, finding reputable sources, and engaging with others. Biel urges interested parents and others to convey their support of civics education to both teachers and school administrators.

Erickson discussed his social studies courses, which incorporate current events, local issues, and actions of elected officials. His goal: to impart skills such as finding reliable information and constructing intelligent arguments.

On an annual trip to Washington, D.C., Erickson's students meet their legislators, see committees in session, and visit monuments. Erickson works to raise money for scholarships so that every student who wants to participate can do so. He calls the trip life-changing for students—encouraging them to become lifelong voters and engaged citizens.

For more information as the review process continues, visit the [Department of Education website](#). You'll find a link to the draft standards there, too.

A link to the recorded program is on the Voter Blog, on the home page of the [LWVSP website](#).

—Cheryl Bailey

Upcoming Events

Redistricting, the Good Bad, and the Dirty Work, Tuesday, March 30, 7 p.m.

New Member Meet-Up, Saturday, April 17 11 a.m.

Rebuilding University Avenue, Tuesday, April 27, 7 p.m.

Annual meeting Monday, May 17, 6–8 p.m.

Volunteers Needed for CMAL Study

The Council of Metro Area Leagues (CMAL) is beginning a study to compare and contrast our seven metro area county governments. Over the next few months, CMAL members and other volunteers will research each county and write a position statement on what works well and what needs to change.

As the St. Paul LWV representative on CMAL, I'll be researching Ramsey County. I'm looking for two to three volunteers to help find out all we can about how Ramsey County operates. Much of the work can be done online from the comfort of your home. If you're interested can contact me, [Joann Ellis](mailto:JoannEllis@eastsidemom16@hotmail.com) (eastsidemom16@hotmail.com).

CMAL has a history of in-depth studies about governmental issues. In 2019, CMAL presented its study on the Metropolitan Council to Governor Waltz.

Volunteering for this next study is a great way to get involved in the League and learn everything you ever wanted to know about county government. I hope to hear from you soon!

—Joanne Ellis

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).

Youth Vote Leaders continued from page 3

GR: I feel more comfortable taking ownership of a project rather than being directed task by task. This is my opportunity to run the meeting and be in charge of creating the tasks, so it was definitely a new set of skills I developed in this position.

How was it to work with high schoolers during COVID times?

LP: The students got very creative with the methods that they used to present their projects. It was very rewarding to see the payoff.

GR: I started with Youth Vote last February, right before COVID, and [it] was very interesting [to hear] how they wanted to use social media to help mobilize themselves and their friends. Being able to see these students be the experts was really impressive and important.

What was your role in guiding students in their projects?

LP: We oversaw the creation of projects by high school juniors and seniors who created projects on voter registration, the census, and other civic engagement topics. We helped the high schoolers educate themselves and finalize these projects to the point where they could teach what they had

learned to their classmates.

GR: We also did more administrative tasks like planning when training for these high schoolers would be, making sure they are on track and on task for success, and then coordination communication between the [participants].”

Q. What would you say to encourage a young person that their vote matters?

GR: When people are feeling apathetic [about voting], I like to talk about the local change that voting makes at the local level in their community. For example, the St. Paul School Board is holding elections and that is an issue that directly relates to them as high school students—so really finding those personal connections between students and the civic process to encourage engagement.”

LP: Everything that Grace said. This year it’ll be important to have those conversations about local elections. Also, in terms of apathy, we aren’t saying that voting is the only way to get your voice heard, but one small vote can go a long way, so we need that.”

What resources would you recommend for any voter who wants to engage in the civic process?

LP: League of Women Voters St. Paul and the League as a whole do candidate forums. Vote 411 is a great website that the League partners with that has great information on candidates and their stances.

GR: Another source is the Minnesota Secretary of State—Steve Simon has lots of great resources on his website regarding voter and census information that would be a great starting place.

—Bridget Adams

2021 Voting Dates

Is it too early to start planning? We think not!

- Early voting: September 17 through November 11
- Early registration deadline: October 12 (you can also register on Election Day)
- Recommended deadline to apply for a ballot: October 19
- Election Day: November 2

ORAL HISTORY SPOTLIGHT

In 2015, LWVSP received grants from the Minnesota Historical Society and the Minnesota Legacy Amendment's Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund to gather oral histories from nine longtime members. In the months to come, we'll be publishing highlights from these interviews.

Below are summaries and excerpts from a May 2016 interview by oral historian Kate Cavett.

Roberta "Bobbi" Megard

Bobbi Megard is the 1987 recipient of the Faye Lyksett Award, honoring League members who have demonstrated outstanding service to the League and the community. Bobbi served as both president and executive director of LWVSP.



"I was the Community District Council organizer for the St. Anthony Park neighborhood for eight years before I ran for

the City Council in 1993 and was elected for two terms," said Bobbi. "And then I decided to run for mayor and was defeated and left public office. But I loved every minute of it."

At the time of the interview, she'd been a League member for 46 years. "I'm not yet at the point where I get free membership, but pretty soon," she said, with a laugh. (Bobby reached the 50-year mark in 2020, earning her recognition as a Lifetime Member.)

Observer Corps

Like many Leagues across the country, LWVSP had an active Observer Corps, which monitored local government meetings to help inform citizens about current issues and elected officials.

"You went in and you sat and listened through the agenda, and you made notes and so forth. And then you went back to your board or to the com-

mittee that you were working with and decided whether you were going to speak out about this.

"One of the first things I did when I joined the League [was] observe the district court and watch the sentencing guidelines finally come in. You know, that was a big deal. And the League was very much in favor of sentencing guidelines so we could hold these judges accountable for what was happening, particularly to minority people.

"One of the things we've lost in Saint Paul [is] a group of people that go to observe the City Council or observe the Metropolitan Council."

If you're interested in filling that gap, contact [Nona Beining](mailto:nbeining@gmail.com) (nbeining@gmail.com).

Youth Voting

Years ago, LWV partnered with a national program that provided curriculum to schools.

"I became the executive director of the program called Kids Voting Minnesota," said Bobbi. "The really unique part of the program was that children were able to go to the polls on election day and cast their ballots in their precinct with the adults, and have their votes counted and announced on the Kids Voting website."

Saint Paul's Kids Voting evolved into Youth Vote, which supports high school students in projects to encourage their peers to become voters.

Read more about Bobbi and eight other women on our [History of the League](#) page.

What is Your League Story?

How have you been inspired to engage in your community on issues of civic importance? What is your favorite thing about League or how would you like to contribute? The LWVSP membership committee wants to hear from you! Email your story to [Nona](mailto:nbeining@gmail.com) (nbeining@gmail.com).

—Nona Beining