

# The Voter

December 2020

## CO-PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

### Greetings, members and friends.

At the League, we're heading into our slower post-election time of year. As co-presidents, we are filing out annual reports, helping create the annual giving campaign and working on membership renewals. These tasks require us not only to look ahead to the coming year, but also to reflect on the past year. As we completed our work, we were humbled by how much our board, committees and volunteers pulled off despite the pandemic. Here are a few highlights:

- Partnered with over 30 organizations to carry out candidate forums, outreach to seniors, get-out-the-vote videos, census work, voter registration drives and educational programs.
- Welcomed two new off-board members to perform communications work  
Distributed more than 400 voter registration and absentee ballot applications
- Engaged youth at five St. Paul high schools through the Student Leaders program

Thank you to all the members and volunteers who helped make this season successful in a challenging time.

As we look ahead, we hope you'll continue your engagement in 2021, when we'll have elections for St. Paul mayor and Ramsey County commissioners. Our board and committees are gathering input to plan for future outreach at senior facilities and through the Student Leader program. Through these efforts, we want to create more education on diversity, equity and inclusion and adopt language that reflects our commitment to DEI.

With 2020's high voter turnout and engagement, we have a lot to celebrate. With your support, we're carrying that momentum into 2021.

— Heidi Kloempken & Amy Perna



## Welcome, New Members!

We're grateful to new and renewing members who have joined LWVSP during the current fiscal year (July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021). Your dues support our League and its work—thank you!

(continued on p. 2)

## IN THIS ISSUE

Regional parks . . . . .	2
Members and donors . . . . .	2
Book club news . . . . .	3
Old but good news . . . . .	4
Upcoming programs . . . . .	4
Key post-election dates . . . . .	4

## MEETING RECAP

### Regional Parks and Public Involvement

The Council of Metropolitan Area Leagues (CMAL), which counts LWVSP as a member, focused on the metro area regional parks system at its October 17 meeting. Speakers were Holly Jenkins, League member and the founder/CEO of Wilderness in the City, and Emmet Mullin, Regional Parks Manager for the Metropolitan Council, who explained how the system is structured and funded, and how citizens can get involved.

The Met Council recently sought public input on its 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan, which outlines the future of 55,000 acres of parks and 44 miles of regional trails within the seven-country metro area. The system encompasses parks owned and operated by 10 agencies, including the City of St. Paul and Ramsey County. It is expected to grow to 70,000 acres and 1,100 trails by 2040.

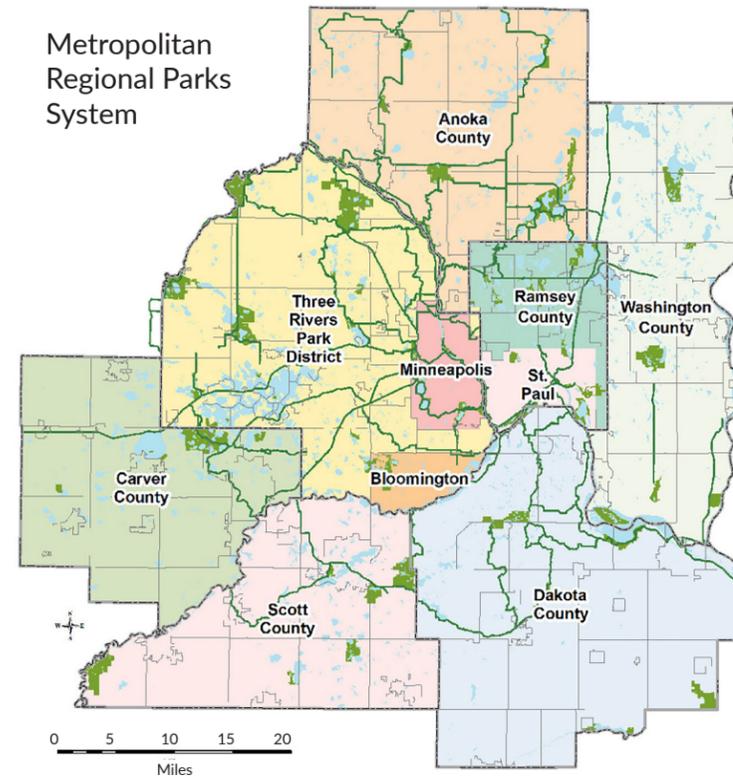
Jenkins founded Wilderness in the City to encourage public involvement in the region-

al parks system, which she referred to as the "state parks of the metro region."

The Met Council's parks staff works with the state legislature and implementing agencies to help fund the system. While the legislature funds improvements, it pays a low percentage of maintenance and operations costs. Jenkins advised caution about new capital improvements without sufficient operating funds. She stressed the importance of public input and encouraged attendees to contact state legislators about funding the system.

Mullin voiced concerns that regional trail users, in particular, tend to be older, white and male. To better reflect the region's demographic, Mullin sees a need to promote the system's trails to a more diverse audience.

Parks and trails have been especially important during the pandemic, providing a respite and sense of normalcy during trying times. Both speakers encouraged people to learn about our regional park system, explore its resources, then advocate on its behalf.



For maps and a list of the parks, [visit the Met Council parks web page](#). The [2040 plan is also available online](#) (though the public comment period closed October 30).

—Amy Mino

## BOOK CLUB NEWS

### Two Groups, All Welcome

Morning and evening book clubs continue to meet via Zoom.

For info on the morning group, which meets the second Wednesday of each month, [email Mary](mailto:mgp2167@gmail.com) (mgp2167@gmail.com).

Not a morning person? Join the evening club on the first Monday of each month. [Email Heidi Kloempken](mailto:heidi.kloempken@gmail.com) (heidi.kloempken@gmail.com).

Everyone is welcome, even you haven't read the book. Here's the full list of upcoming books for both clubs:

#### December

Evening Book Club: Monday, December 7, 6 p.m. *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander

Morning Book Club: Wednesday, December 9, 10 a.m. *The Fire is Upon Us* by Nicholas Buccola, chronicling James Baldwin's history 1965 debate with William F. Buckley Jr.

#### January

Evening: Monday, January 4, 2021, 6 p.m. *Indigo: In Search of the Color That Seduced the World* by Catherine E. McKinley

Morning: Wednesday, January 13, 10 a.m. *The Enigma of Clarence Thomas* by Corey Robin

#### February

Evening: Monday, February 1, 6 p.m. *The Story of More: How We Got to Climate Change and Where to Go from Here* by Hope Jahren, author of the acclaimed memoir, *Lab Girl*

Morning: Wednesday, February 10, 10 a.m. *The Populist Explosion: How the Great Recession Transformed American and European Politics* by John Judis

## MEMBER AND DONORS

(continued from page 1)

If you haven't yet renewed, you can still do so. It's easy to do online, at [lwgsp.org](http://lwgsp.org), or you can send a check to the office: LWVSP, 75 Fifth St. W., Suite 224, St. Paul, MN 55102.

Memberships are \$75 for individuals (\$60 for first-year members), \$90 for households and \$20 for students and others with limited incomes.

The following individuals joined since August 2020:

Gayle Brackin  
Chris Courtney  
Tiffany Dreher  
Elizabeth Drumm  
Ruth Erdmann  
Clotilde Earl  
Molly Flowers  
Martha Goodwill  
Debbie Green  
Annice Gregerson  
Lesia Guderyon  
Lily Hennesse

Frances Hillier  
Ann Huidekoper  
Mary Jackson  
Sara Kruper  
Tina Marier  
Sara Kruper  
Tina Marier  
Sarah Nowlin  
Marcy Otypka  
Lia Pak  
Jillian Paulsen  
Catherine Peterson

Kay Pope  
Emily Ravits  
Laurie Reed  
Christine Schnieders  
Jeanne Steele  
Anna Svercl Hetzer  
Barbara Swanson  
Ann Taylor  
Jeffrey Willius  
Emma Wolters

### St. Paul Education Fund Donations

Thank you to members and others who gave to this important fund. We look forward to listing these generous donors in our next newsletter.

## OLD BUT GOOD NEWS

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### League Helps Quash Illegal Voter Intimidation in Minnesota

The Council on American–Islamic Relations of Minnesota (CAIR–MN) and the League of Women Voters of Minnesota celebrated a major victory October 29 in their federal lawsuit against a private mercenary contractor, Atlas Aegis, for voter intimidation in Minnesota.

Their lawsuit alleged that Atlas Aegis’s plan to hire and deploy armed ex–soldiers to polling sites in the state constituted illegal voter intimidation under the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The suit responded to an advertisement for armed security on election day in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area and in interviews with Anthony Caudle, the chairman of Atlas Aegis, in *The Washington Post*.

Within hours after the lawsuit was filed on October 20, Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison announced that a criminal investigation of Atlas Aegis was underway. Later that week, Atlas Aegis agreed to an injunction that it “not provide any protective agent services ... in Minnesota from October 22, 2020 through January 1, 2022,” and “not seek to intimidate voters, in Minnesota or elsewhere, in connection with the election.”

“We are grateful to the Minnesota Attorney General for negotiating an agreement that prevents the unlawful and threatening occupation of polling locations,” said Michelle Witte, LWVMN executive director. “New citizens and other voters of color have the right to peaceful, unimpeded access to the ballot, and the League will continue to stand up for these voters against any and all attacks on their safety and constitutional right to vote.”

## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

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### Zooming Into 2021

While the pandemic continues to challenge LWVSP’s outreach efforts, the program committee is planning more virtual events for 2021. Formats and topics being developed include:

- A moderated discussion with journalists who covered the 2020 elections
- Social studies standards: How civics is (or will be) taught in public schools
- Upcoming redistricting bills
- Rebuilding University Avenue following spring uprisings in response to George Floyd’s death.
- Homelessness, housing and impacts of closing St. Paul hospitals

A post–election discussion panel planned for November 17 was cancelled due to scheduling difficulties.

—Claudia Dieter

### Key Post-Election Dates

**Dec. 8:** “Safe Harbor” deadline for states to resolve election disputes and choose electors

**December 14:** Electoral College delegations meet in each state and Washington, D.C., to vote for president.

**December 23:** Results delivered to designated officials

**January 3:** New Congress is seated.

**January 5:** Georgia Senate runoff election

**January 6:** Joint Session of Congress counts electoral votes and declares official election results. This is also when any formal challenges occur.

**January 20:** Inauguration Day

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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).