

# The Voter

June 2021

## CO-PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

Dear members,

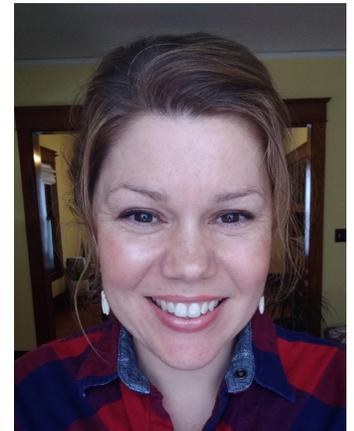
It was great to see so many of you at our 101st annual meeting on May 17. Our favorite part of the meeting is honoring exceptional volunteers with awards. This year, Dan Krivit won the Sunrise Award and Nick Harper won the Lyksett Award (see page 2). Dan and Nick are tremendous assets to our St. Paul team—thank you both!

During the meeting members voted to support a few important changes including closing the 501(c)4 and approving new combined bylaws. Going forward, all donations and membership fees will be tax-deductible and the operations will be consolidated under the 501(c)3. These changes are intended to streamline our organizational structure and governing rules while accurately reflecting the work that we do. A very big thank you to Amy Mino and Diane Power for serving on the bylaws committee.

**Board Updates:** Fiscal year 2022 begins on July 1, 2021, and planning is under way for the fall and beyond. Please help us in welcoming Bridget Adams to our board of directors as co-chair of the Program Committee along with returning director, Beatrice Owen. A very big thank you to outgoing program chair Claudia Dieter who served for two years. We will miss Claudia and are grateful to her for her leadership. Joann Ellis will be stepping into the role of voter service chair with Hayden Kilkenny continuing to plan candidate forums. Lia Pak and Grace Reardon are continuing to serve as Youth Vote co-chairs. Nona Beining is stepping up as our Membership chair. Heidi and I



Heidi Kloempken



Amy Perna

are excited to continue to serve as Co-Presidents for this upcoming year.

**Phone volunteers needed!** Though not our main form of communication, we still receive phone calls from members, public, and possible partners. Please let us know if you are interested in volunteering for a month to check voicemails. It's fun to hear the questions people have and engage with other members and interested citizens.

Looking forward to this summer, we will continue

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# ANNUAL MEETING

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## Awards: Year of the Man

Nick Harper and Dan Krivit were awarded the Lyksett and Sunrise awards, respectively, on May 17.

“Generous and gracious” is how Claudia Dieter described Nick’s seven years of service as a board member, program presenter, event facilitator, go-to tech person and website manager for the St. Paul chapter. This is on top of Nick’s job as community engagement director for the Minnesota League.

Amy Perna described Dan as “someone who knows how to lead from behind and elevate those around him.” He grew the Youth Vote program and its student leader program before and after his board



Nick Harper



Dan Krivit

membership. Before stepping down, he “ensured that systems and people were in place to carry on the work.”

Many thanks to both of these dedicated volunteers.

## Board Chairs and Officers for 2021-22

Here’s the roster of committee chairs and officers for the coming year. For profiles of all directors, visit the [LWVSP website](http://www.lwvsp.org/board) (www.lwvsp.org/board).

**Membership:** Nona Beining, with support from Amy Perna

**Program:** Bridget Adams and Beatrice Owens

**Voter Services:** Joann Ellis, with Hayden Kilkenny coordinating candidate forums

**Youth Vote:** Lia Pak and Grace Reardon

**Co-Presidents:** Heidi Kloempken and Amy Perna

**Vice President:** Hayden Kilkenny

**Secretary:** Helen Losleben (also representative to the Upper Mississippi River Region)

**Treasurer:** Nichole Fairbanks

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## PROGRAM COMMITTEE

### An Update From Claudia

This spring we presented programs on redistricting and rebuilding University Avenue. If you missed them, no worries: You can read about them on page 3, view them on [Facebook](#), or watch on YouTube (links on the [LWVSP website](#)).

While we miss seeing our audience in person, we’ve had a great response to our Zoom programming during the pandemic. And we have been very pleased with the response that we’ve gotten. Attendance has continued to grow, from 26 for the first Zoom program in October to 64 for the March presentation.

The next program in the series is **Who Gets to Vote? on June 29**. Watch your email or see the LWVSP website for details.

The Program Committee continues to meet monthly via Zoom. While we generally meet on the first Tuesday of the month, our next meeting will be on the second Tuesday, June 8.

—Claudia Dieter

*This is Claudia’s last update, as she turns her Program chair over to Bridget Adams and Beatrice Owen. Many thanks, Claudia, for your leadership the past two years!*

# OUR ST. PAUL: LEARNING WITH THE LEAGUE

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A double dip of program recaps this month! Deadlines prevented us from including the March 30 event in our April newsletter. Below are Cheryl Bailey's account of both March and April events.

## Redistricting Primer and Call to Action

March 30, was the perfect evening for 68 community members to enjoy a Zoom/Facebook presentation on redistricting, part of the monthly series Our St. Paul: Learning with the League. Host Bridget Adams introduced the LWVSP, the topic, and Paul Huffman, the program's featured speaker.

Huffman has been redistricting coordinator for LWVMN since May 2019. He's also voter service director for the Woodbury/Cottage Grove Area League and sits on the steering committee of the OurMapsMN redistricting campaign. The program began with a refresher on the:

- eight Minnesota Congressional Districts,
- 67 Senate and 134 House Districts,
- seven districts served by Ramsey County Commissioners
- seven wards served by the St. Paul City Council.

Some definitions:

- **Apportionment:** The change in Congressional seats based on population movement
- **Redistricting:** The lines drawn for U.S. congressional and state districts after census data is processed. (Each U.S. state has its own policy for the apportionment and redistricting.)
- **Gerrymandering:** The process of drawing wildly irregular district lines to advance a specific party's ability to be elected, named after Massachusetts Governor Eldridge Gerry, who signed a controversial redistricting bill in 1812. Gerrymandered voting maps keep seats politically "safe" for elected officials, who are more likely to pursue extreme policies. Once a voting

*Continued on page 5*

## Emotional and Financial Fallout on University Avenue

Our April 27, program, Rebuilding University Avenue, was a hit with viewers on Zoom and Facebook Live. The panel included Chad Kulas, executive director of the Midway Chamber of Commerce; Gloria Wong, owner of Century Plaza on University Avenue; and Nicolle Goodman, director of St. Paul Planning and Economic Development. League board member Beatrice Owen moderated.

Kulas offered a look back at the history of University Avenue and the Midway area, showing the original streetcar line and the St. Paul Saints baseball stadium, then today's light rail and Citizens United soccer stadium. Small businesses, many owned by members of the BIPOC community, are prevalent along the avenue. They were already feeling effects of the pandemic last spring, and starting to innovate with QR code menus and touchless delivery. An entrepreneur had started Bole Express, an Ethiopian café modeled after Chipotle.

Then came the murder of George Floyd in May 2021. On University Avenue in St. Paul, the ensuing civil unrest resulted in damage estimated at over \$100 million.

Kulas showed photos of the building Bole occupied, reduced to rubble. As the Chamber sought to convey the extent of the damage and the urgent need for help, it worked to arrange visits from Governor Walz, state representatives and senator, and U.S. Senators Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith.

Last year on June 1, the Midway Chamber of Commerce cooperated with the St. Paul Downtown Alliance and the St. Paul Chamber to start a fund

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## Morning Book Club

Meetings are the second Wednesday of each month (except July) at 10 a.m. Our location will be determined each month. Come for the discussion, even if you haven't read the book. [Email Mary](mailto:mgp22@msn.com) (mgp22@msn.com) for info.

On May 12 we met outdoors at Como Park—it was wonderful seeing each other in person and the weather was perfect!

We discussed Anne Applebaum's book, *Twilight of Democracy: The Seductive Lure of Authoritarianism*. Its premise is that democracy is fragile and currently under siege around the globe. We discussed how people are drawn to authoritarianism and how authoritarian leaders use fear, despair, and divisiveness to lure people in. The League of Women Voters is fighting to save our democracy.

Upcoming books and meetings:

**June 9:** *Blowout*, by Rachel Maddow. The history of the oil and gas industry and how it has permeated politics and endangered our environment. Barb will lead.

**August 11:** Meet to choose books for the upcoming season.

**September 8:** *America for Americans, A History of Xenophobia in the United States*, by Erika Lee. Irrational fear, hatred and hostility toward immigrants is a defining feature of our nation from the colonial times to the Trump era. Margie will lead.

**October 13:** *The Girl with Seven Names*, by Hyeonseo Lee. As a child growing up in North Korea, she was one of millions trapped by a secretive and brutal communist regime. The story of one woman's terrifying struggle to avoid capture and guide her family to freedom. Sharon will lead.

## Evening Book Club

Meetings are the first Monday of each month at 6 p.m. If you have suggestions or want to join the discussion, [email Heidi](mailto:heidi.kloempken@gmail.com) (heidi.kloempken@gmail.com). We usually read nonfiction related to current events, Minnesota, and other topics of interest to League of Women Voters members

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

**August 2:** Meet to choose books for fall.

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## Co-presidents' letter continued from page 1

to plan voter registration and education events, fall candidate forums, Youth Vote student leader selection and onboarding, and more. If you are interested in joining a committee or figuring out your role in LWVSP, please let us know and we can speak with you about committees, opportunities, and other ways to support the mission.

This last year has been full of pivots, changes and adaptations. Anticipating more of that to come, we'd love your feedback. Let us know what you liked about our online events and what could we

improve. Reach out to us ([Heidi](mailto:Heidi), heidi.kloempken@gmail.com, or [Amy](mailto:Amy) (pernalwvstp@gmail.com) anytime to share your thoughts.

—Amy & Heidi

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).

# OUR ST. PAUL: LEARNING WITH THE LEAGUE

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## Redistricting continued from page 3

map is gerrymandered, it can take decades to repair.

Huffman gave specific examples of the League's premise that redistricting is about community representation. After a ballot initiative overturned a law allowing state-appointed managers to control financially struggling municipalities, elected officials reinstated the program. It exemplifies the concept that the ramifications are most importantly about policy, not party. Huffman stressed that all political parties have abused redistricting.

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## The water contamination crisis in Flint, Michigan, had roots in redistricting issues.

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The 2020 census, fraught with difficulty during the pandemic and legal challenges by the Trump administration, delayed the timeline for Minnesota redistricting. Typically, the Legislative would have had detailed census data by now, then would draw up maps, debate and approve them in the late 2021 or early 2022 legislative session, to be accepted for vetoed by the governor. The process is to follow guiding principles of fairness based on equal population and "convenient contiguous territory" and heed a warning not to target racial or ethnic groups.

Since 1960, however, Minnesota has tended to have divided legislatures in restricting years, re-

sulting in no agreement and maps redrawn by the courts. This process tends to rely exclusively on equal populations, not community interests.

The League's position is that redrawing voting districts should minimize political influence and maximize public engagement and transparency. Further, elected officials should create maps that reflect the needs and interests of the community, be it city, county, legislative or congressional.

Huffman concluded with specific ways community members can help promote a healthier voting map in Minnesota:

- Mount postcard or letter campaigns to elected officials to promote appropriate redistricting.
- Advocate for legislation to improve the existing redistricting process.
- Tell state officials that we expect residents to have input. Specific communities of interest (COI) may submit map suggestions
- Engage local elected officials on preparation and structure for local redistricting.
- Create fair maps and submit them for consideration. Partner with census groups for this purpose.

Huffman ended his presentation by urging all attendees to contact him with questions about any of these next steps. [Email him](mailto:phuffman@lwvmn.org) at [phuffman@lwvmn.org](mailto:phuffman@lwvmn.org).

—Cheryl Bailey



Tweetable, Likable, or Grammable?



Visit us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), or Instagram.



Follow us: [@LWVStPaul](#)

## Welcome, New Members

Thank you to those who joined in April and May!

Mary Hinz

Melissa Seacrist

Hannah Hunter

Eileen Tittle

Susan O'Leary

# OUR ST. PAUL: LEARNING WITH THE LEAGUE

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## *University Avenue continued from page 3*

“We Love Midway” and “We Love Saint Paul” to support the businesses. They have given over \$950,000, in \$5 to 50,000 increments.

Kulas was impressed by the level of support and wide range of contributions—from \$20 donations from former residents of the area to much larger amounts. He recognized the financial help of Midway United Fund, Asian Economic Development Association, and African Economic Development Solutions. Two other nonprofits, Rebuilding Together Twin Cities and Construction Connection to Community, that have helped link community members to volunteer help and construction materials.

Gloria Wong, co-owner of Century Plaza, has been an entrepreneur and business leader for 30 years. Her building at 995 University Avenue is nearly 100 years old. When the unrest began, Wong felt her building and tenants would be of no interest to looters. However, a video presented showed broken windows, stolen and destroyed office items, attempts to start a fire, and graffiti everywhere. Wong said she feared for her safety.

Wong said that despite damage of nearly \$100,000, her insurance company has refused to pay (not all insurance policies cover damage due to civil unrest). She said she has not yet received any of the loans or grants she applied for. Despite repainting, the graffiti has continued. Nearby buildings have not had the same problem, leading Wong to feel she’s being targeted because she’s Asian American.

She urged us to take systemic racism and excessive police force seriously and vote for leaders who fight anti-Asian hate and bias.

Finally, Nicolle Goodman, from the city’s Planning and Economic Development Department, explained what the city is trying to do to help. Recognizing the beauty of the diverse and vibrant

Midway area, Goodman wants to ensure that this cultural treasure is not destroyed by rebuilding. She pointed out that while most people own their businesses, they rarely own the buildings, and thus face a “perennial fear of displacement.”

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## **Since Midway entrepreneurs rarely own the buildings they occupy, they face a ‘perennial fear of displacement.’**

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The 2021 budget set aside \$1 million for business assistance related to the civil unrest. Goodman discussed redevelopment appropriation bonds, affordable housing investment, and business incubator concepts. The city hopes to enable more business owners to develop financial security by buying their properties.

When asked for actions they would appreciate from the audience, the panelists offered this list:

- Donate to [We Love Midway](http://www.midway-chamber.com/we-love-midway) ([www.midway-chamber.com/we-love-midway](http://www.midway-chamber.com/we-love-midway))
- Volunteer. (Find opportunities at [Hands on Twin Cities](http://www.handsontwincities.org)—[www.handsontwincities.org](http://www.handsontwincities.org).)
- Contact Kulas directly at [chad@midwaychamber.com](mailto:chad@midwaychamber.com).
- Visit Century Plaza at 995 University and tell people you heard their story.
- Visit the vendors, restaurants, and shops on University Avenue. Lloyd’s Pharmacy is open at 694 Snelling Ave. N, two doors down from the original site, now under reconstruction. Bole Ethiopian moved to 1341 Pascal St. Peking Garden moved to the old Mai Village site, 394 University Ave. W.

—Cheryl Bailey