2021-2022

ANNUAL REPORT

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF MASSACHUSETTS

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Dear Members, Supporters and Friends,

I am pleased to share the 2021-2022 Annual Report of the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) and the League of Women Voters Lotte E. Scharfman Memorial Fund (LESF). We are proud to highlight our advocacy and education work between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022, which positively impacted individuals and communities in the Commonwealth.

We worked to ensure fair and safe elections, advocated for policies and laws that benefit Massachusetts residents, collaborated with community partners and deepened relationships with diverse communities with the goal of increasing and strengthening everyone's voice in the Commonwealth. We continued to educate and empower voters through candidate forums, informational forums and public service announcements, with a special focus on the roles of elected District Attorneys and Sheriffs.

The fall started with our first virtual lobby day, focusing on voting, climate, early education, and healthcare. Over 100 members zoomed in to hear remarks from House Speaker Ron Mariano and to lobby their legislators on our priority bills. With the hard work of our members, 11 of the 88 bills LWVMA supported were enacted into law in some form in FY22.

Civics education is a cornerstone of LWVMA's work so we were very proud to launch the School Civics Celebration Project. The LWVMA Civics Education Committee established a comprehensive program with a toolkit to encourage local Leagues to work with schools to celebrate the student-led civics projects now required in grades 8-12. Four local Leagues - Needham, Concord-Carlisle, Worcester and Cape Cod Area - participated/hosted showcases where students presented their projects. Additionally, the Sharon-Stoughton League partnered with their local school and cable station to produce an interview about civics education. I attended two of the student showcases and walked away very impressed by the students' knowledge and passion about their projects. It also left me feeling that we are in good hands with this next generation of civics leaders.

A massive advocacy effort led to the passage of the VOTES Act in June 2022, the most sweeping election reform in nearly a decade. A lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the VOTES Act was filed soon after it passed and LWVMA joined an amicus brief in support of the new law. The lawsuit was unsuccessful, with the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts ruling that the VOTES Act is constitutional.

At the heart of LWVMA are our 49 local Leagues and League Units and our members-at-large whose work to advocate for legislative and policy changes, educate voters, develop programs to increase participation in the democratic process, and study and evaluate community issues with a nonpartisan lens, defines our important mission of empowering voters and defending democracy for all in Massachusetts.

The work done by LWVMA and local Leagues would not be possible without the support from those who work "behind the scenes." A special thank you to Pattye Comfort, Executive Director; Susan Garvey, Development Director; Brynne Gorman, Membership and Community Engagement Manager; Taylor Grenga, Administrative and Program Associate; and Martha Maguire, Business Manager.

I am proud of what the League has done in FY22 and excited about the future. Thank you to everyone who has been a part of our success. We all know that Democracy is Not a Spectator Sport.

In League,

Elizabeth L. Foster-Nolan

Elizabeth Foster-Nolan
President

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ADVOCACY & ACTIVISM

Improving election laws in Massachusetts is always at the top of the League's advocacy agenda. As the temporary pandemic election reforms we won in 2020 were approaching their expiration date, we moved to make those reforms permanent. On June 22, 2022 Governor Baker signed **the VOTES Act,** the most sweeping election law reforms in nearly a decade. The law includes unrestricted voting by mail, expanded early voting, and reducing the cutoff for voter registration from 20 days to 10 days before an election. This law also helps election officials by allowing them to process mail ballots before Election Day and widens the pool of potential poll workers. It requires that eligible incarcerated citizens have access to voting. Massachusetts will also have to join the Election Registration Information Center (ERIC) to clean up its voter rolls. Same-day voter registration was dropped from the VOTES Act, but we will keep working to pass that reform.

We held our first virtual **Day on the Hill** with the theme *Facing the Challenge*: *Voting, Climate, Early Education, Healthcare*, facing our own challenge of a widespread power outage that forced us to move the event from October to early November! Speaker of the House of Representatives Ron Mariano was our keynote speaker. Our legislative specialists highlighted four bills for members to lobby on: the VOTES Act; the Offshore Wind Act to promote renewable energy; the Common Start bill to provide affordable early education and childcare; and the Medicare for All in Massachusetts bill for single-payer healthcare. Over 100 League members attended and subsequently lobbied their legislators by phone and email.

The legislature's **final climate bill** was based on the offshore wind bill, and incorporated provisions from several other bills that the League supported. This powerful law has garnered national recognition as one of the most ambitious and transformative laws in the nation, placing Massachusetts at the forefront of states working to achieve an equitable clean energy future.

Following the U.S. Supreme Court's overturn of *Roe v. Wade* in June 2021, the legislature and the Governor worked quickly to codify additional **reproductive rights** and protect abortion providers in the state.The final bill included provisions from other bills we supported to provide access to a full spectrum of pregnancy care and to make medication abortion available at public universities.

We backed the bill to provide **drivers' licenses for undocumented immigrants** in Massachusetts, which passed over the Governor's veto. A November 2022 ballot question effort to repeal that law failed.

The **Common Start bill**, to greatly increase funding and support for child care and early education, passed the Senate but stalled in the House. The budget, however, established a first year "down payment" on this bill by including more than $500 million in new early education funding.

Finally, we supported several bills aimed at meeting basic human needs that became law:

- Schools cannot deny **hot lunches** or take action against students because of meal debt
- **Increased assistance** to the poorest families, though the families will still be below the poverty level
- A **secure common application portal** for individuals to simultaneously apply for state-administered, needs-based benefits and services
- Provisions **ending child marriage** in the state which passed as a budget amendment

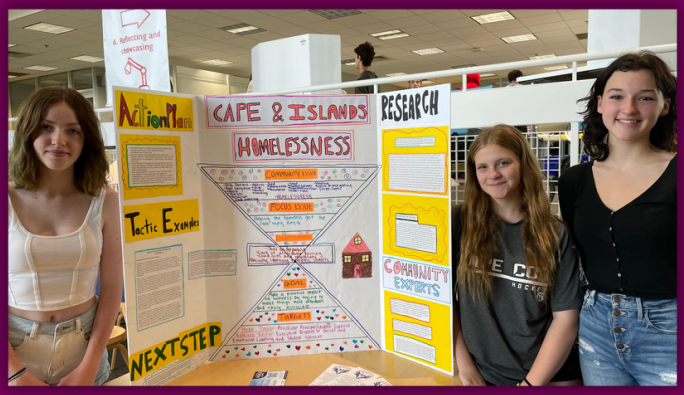
ELECTIONS & VOTING

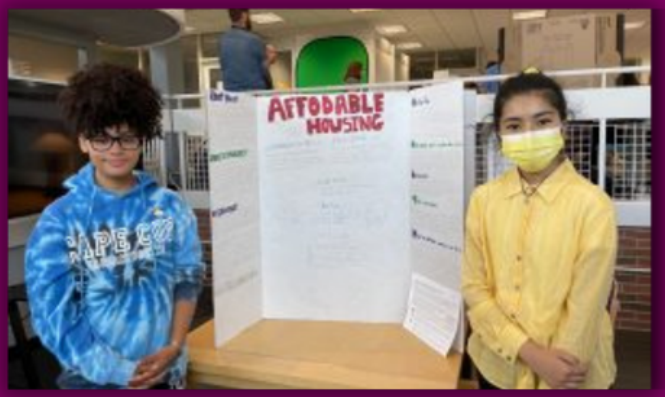
In preparation for the mid-term elections of 2022, we developed and maintained content for Massachusetts' candidates and the newly enacted voting reforms for our online voters' guide, **VOTE411.org.** This virtual platform is a personalized, "one-stop-shop" for Massachusetts voters. During the 2022 election season, the Massachusetts information on VOTE411.org was used by over **80,000** people, **11,300** of whom were residents of gateway cities.

LWVMA collaborated with our long-time partner the ACLU of Massachusetts in their **Know Your Sheriff and What a Difference a DA Makes** informational forums. In conjunction with LWV Cape Cod and LWV Salem, as well as other local Leagues in Barnstable and Essex counties and more than a dozen partner organizations, LWVMA co-sponsored the District Attorney and Sheriff information forums in both counties as well as the candidate forums for Essex County Sheriff and for Eastern District DA.

In collaboration with our partners MA Women of Color Coalition, Women's Pipeline for Change, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority and the Hingham and Plymouth Area Leagues, we worked hard to bring a candidate forum to the voters of Plymouth County for the contested District Attorney race. Ultimately, we were thwarted due to one candidate's unwillingness to participate.As an alternative, we produced a 14-minute public service announcement through Brockton Community Access TV which was broadcast ahead of the November election. The Know Your Sheriff & DA PSA focuses on the important roles the District Attorney and Sheriff play in our communities and why it matters to vote "down ballot" in all elections.

DEMOCRACY EDUCATION





Barnstable High School's first Civics Day featured LWV Cape Cod Area

- After a full year of planning, our Civic Education Committee launched the LWVMA School Civics Celebration Project which replaced the annual student video contest. The committee, led by Karen Mazza, was formed to encourage local Leagues to participate in celebrating student-led civics projects that are now required curriculum at the middle school and high school levels. Since LWVMA advocated for the new civics education law, it was a natural fit to partner with and support schools in their implementation of these required projects. Additionally, by potentially involving our 49 Leagues and Units across the state, we can recognize a wider range of students who represent diverse backgrounds and cultural perspectives, which enables the League to put into action its stated goals around Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI).

- The Civics Ed Committee created a toolkit to guide local Leagues in their efforts to support student-led civics projects. In this inaugural year, four local Leagues – Needham, Concord-Carlisle, Worcester and Cape Cod Area - participated in showcases of the students' work. The Sharon-Stoughton League partnered with the lead social studies teacher and the cable station to produce an interview about the newly created civics ed lesson plans.

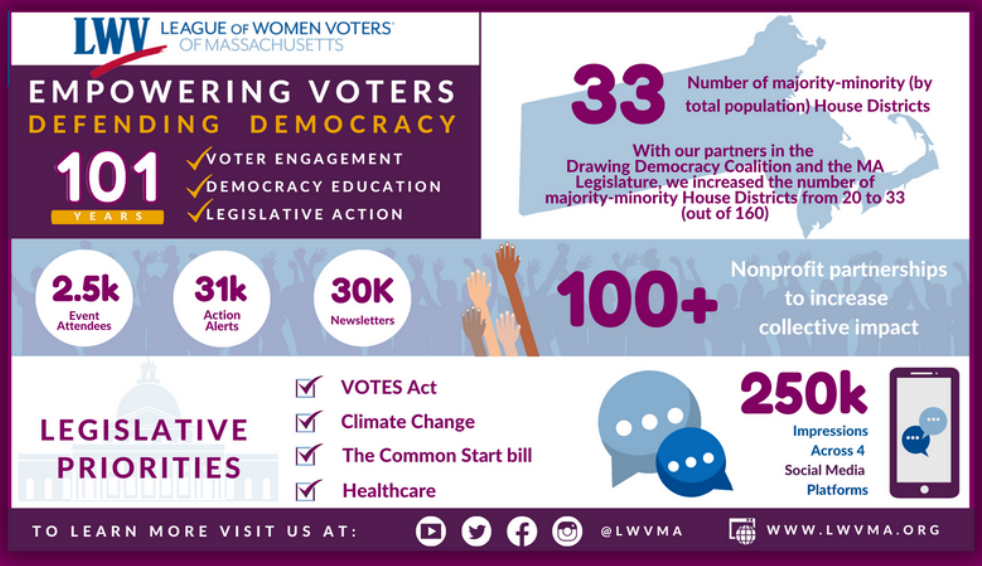
- The LWVMA Council addressed the crisis in local news with Dan Kennedy and Ellen Clegg, whose forthcoming book is entitled *What Works? The Future of Local News*. Their presentation centered on the collapse of community journalism, its causes and the alternative paths that entrepreneurial journalists are creating to keep providing news and information citizens need to govern themselves in a democracy. In case you missed it, HERE is a recording of their excellent presentation. The LWVMA Council also produced a mid-year report by Data Collection Committee Chair Karen Price on our inaugural year of systematically collecting data on all local League and LWVMA activities.

LOCAL LEAGUES

Acton Area
Amherst
Andover/North Andover
Arlington
Bedford
Belmont
Boston
Brookline
Cambridge Unit of Boston
Cape Ann
Cape Cod Area
Central Berkshire County
Chelmsford
Concord-Carlisle
Falmouth
Framingham
Franklin County
Grafton/Shrewsbury
Greater Haverhill
Greater Lowell Area
Hamilton-Wenham
Harvard
Hingham
Lexington
Marblehead
Martha's Vineyard
Melrose
Natick
Needham
Newton
Northampton Area
North Shore
Norwood
Plymouth Area
Salem
Sharon/Stoughton
South Coast
Springfield Unit of Northampton
Sudbury
Waltham
Watertown
Wayland
Wellesley
Westford
Weston
Westwood/Walpole/Dedham
Williamstown
Winchester
Worcester Area

SUPPORTING OUR LOCAL LEAGUES

In Massachusetts, our **49 local Leagues and Units form our grassroots network**. Through their public education and voter engagement efforts, they make democracy work every day. To support their collective efforts, LWVMA provides training, technology and administrative support as well as funding through our Lotte E. Scharfman Citizen Education Grant program. Local Leagues in Massachusetts develop programs to increase participation in the democratic process, study key community issues in an unbiased manner, and enable people to seek positive solutions to public policy issues through education and engagement. In FY22, LWVMA distributed $3,150 in grants to eleven local Leagues to support these efforts.



BOTTOM LINE: OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MASSACHUSETTS
AND LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS, LOTTE E. SCHARFMAN MEMORIAL FUND
COMBINED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2022

SUPPORT, REVENUES, RECLASSIFICATIONS:	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	TOTAL ACTIVITIES
Gifts, Grants and Contributions	$327,374	$4,710	$332,084
Membership Dues and Assessments	57,582	--	57,582
Program Fees	133	--	133
Change in Value of Beneficial Interest in Perpetual Trust	--	(182,226)	(182,226)
Investment Return	41,500	(14,954)	26,546
Other Income	4,901	--	4,901
Net Assets Released from Restriction	219	(219)	--
TOTAL SUPPORT, REVENUES AND RECLASSIFICATIONS	431,490	(192,470)	239,020
FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES:	--	--	--
Program Services	233,353	--	233,353
Administrative	85,216	--	85,216
Fund Raising	39,744	--	39,744
TOTAL FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES	358,313	--	358,313
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	73,396	(192,689)	(119,293)
NET ASSETS - BEGINNING OF YEAR	423,696	1,348,773	1,772,469
NET ASSETS – END OF YEAR	497,092	1,156,084	1,653,176

We are grateful for the generosity of our many supporters and our volunteers.

We wish to particularly acknowledge Nancy and Reinier Beeuwkes, the Nathalie and Theodore Jones Trust, the Donald and Nehamah Quimby Charitable Foundation, Transportation for Massachusetts (T4MA) and Goulston & Storrs PC.