

# The Voter

April 2022

## CO-PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

### Dear members and friends,

We have lots of news and updates to share this month.

### A Ballot Initiative Question for You

Earlier this year we were approached by members of [St. Paul All Ready for Kindergarten](#) (SPARK), seeking support from LWVSP about a ballot initiative. It proposes a property tax increase to fully fund pre-K education for St. Paul three- and four-year-olds who live at or below 185% of the federal poverty line.

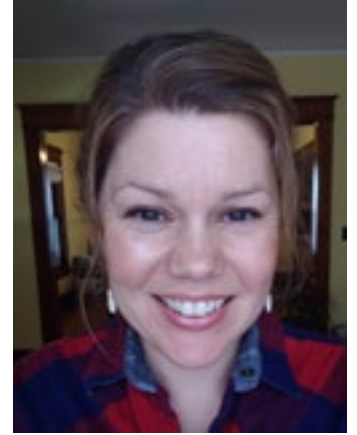
While many of us agree with SPARK's goals, some are concerned about the pitfalls of governing by referendum. Historically, LWVSP has not supported ballot initiatives no matter how well they align with our positions. Since the ballot initiative fits within existing LWV policy objectives, a vote of the membership is not required for the board to take action. But we want to know what our membership thinks. Please check out the [SPARK website](#), think about the proposal, then email [Amy](#) and [Heidi](#) to let us know what you think: Should LWVSP support the ballot initiative?

### Redistricting Update

Earlier this year the Minnesota Legislature failed to approve new legislative boundaries, which required a five-judge redistricting panel to take up the task. The new Congressional and Legislative [maps](#) were released on February 15. After that, the St. Paul Charter Commission redrew precinct boundaries. We sent an email to membership as soon as we learned about the process and how to weigh in. On March 23, the city council approved



Heidi Kloempken



Amy Perna

the commission's recommendation, adopting this [new district map](#), also shown on [page 3](#).

### Ramsey County is Recruiting Election Judges

The 2020 Census results showed a 40,000 population increase and a dramatic increase in BIPOC communities throughout St. Paul. A high response rate from people speaking primarily Hmong at home has triggered the federal Voting Rights Act – Section 203, which requires all voting information to be translated or interpreted into Hmong. Ramsey County is [hiring 200 election judges](#) this fall to work the polling stations. Please spread the word and encourage any Hmong-speakers you know to apply!

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## Minnesota Redistricting: An Update for St. Paul

*This Zoom event was supported by the Roseville and White Bear Lake Area Leagues. Suburban Community Channel (SCC) and Saint Paul Neighborhood Network (SPNN) broadcast the program, moderated by Pam Mercier, who serves on the LWVSP Program Committee.*

Our Saint Paul: Learn with the League offers programs 8 to 10 months a year. You can view any of them on our [LWVSP YouTube page](#). Join us March 29 at 7 p.m. for “Expanding End-of-Life Options,” a topic of pending legislation.

Fair redistricting is a core issue for the League, touching on longstanding goals: for every vote to count equally, for election results determined by the voters, and for protection of the vote with clear, impartial laws. The [League’s People Powered Fair Maps](#) program focuses on ensuring transparency in map-drawing and advocating for independent restricting commissions.

Our speaker was Paul Huffman, co-lead of Redistricting and Voter Service for the Minnesota League and chair of Voter Service for the Woodbury, Cottage Grove area League.

After explaining that the U.S. Constitution requires legislative maps to be redrawn every 10 years using the census results, he offered this timeline of recent events in Minnesota:

**Feb 2021:** Lawsuit argued that Minnesota’s legislative and congressional districts are unconstitutional (Peter Wattson et al v. Secretary of State Steve Simon. Suits like this are a typical way of ensuring redistricting goes before the courts, should the state legislature, as it has for 50 years, fail to agree on new maps.)

**October 2021:** Public testimony

**November 2021:** The Minnesota Supreme Court Restricting Panel adopted redistricting principles

**December 2021:** Interested parties submitted their map proposals

**January 2022:** Oral arguments defending their maps by the Wattson Plaintiffs (a group including the League) and three other plaintiff groups: Sachs (DFL), Anderson (GOP), and Corrie (Bruce Corrie, Common Cause MN, One MN, and other groups supporting BIPOC communities).

**February 2022:** Minnesota Supreme Court issued the new maps. Some areas will be obliged to re-caucus due to the new boundaries.

Huffman presented the basic principles of redistricting:

- Equalize represented populations within 2%,
- Protect populations united by race, ethnicity, and language so they can elect candidates of their choice
- Preserve Native American reservation lands
- Aim for convenient and contiguous territory
- Keep together communities with shared (not political) interests
- Keep areas compact
- Not draw districts in order to defeat or promote a candidate or take into account past election results.

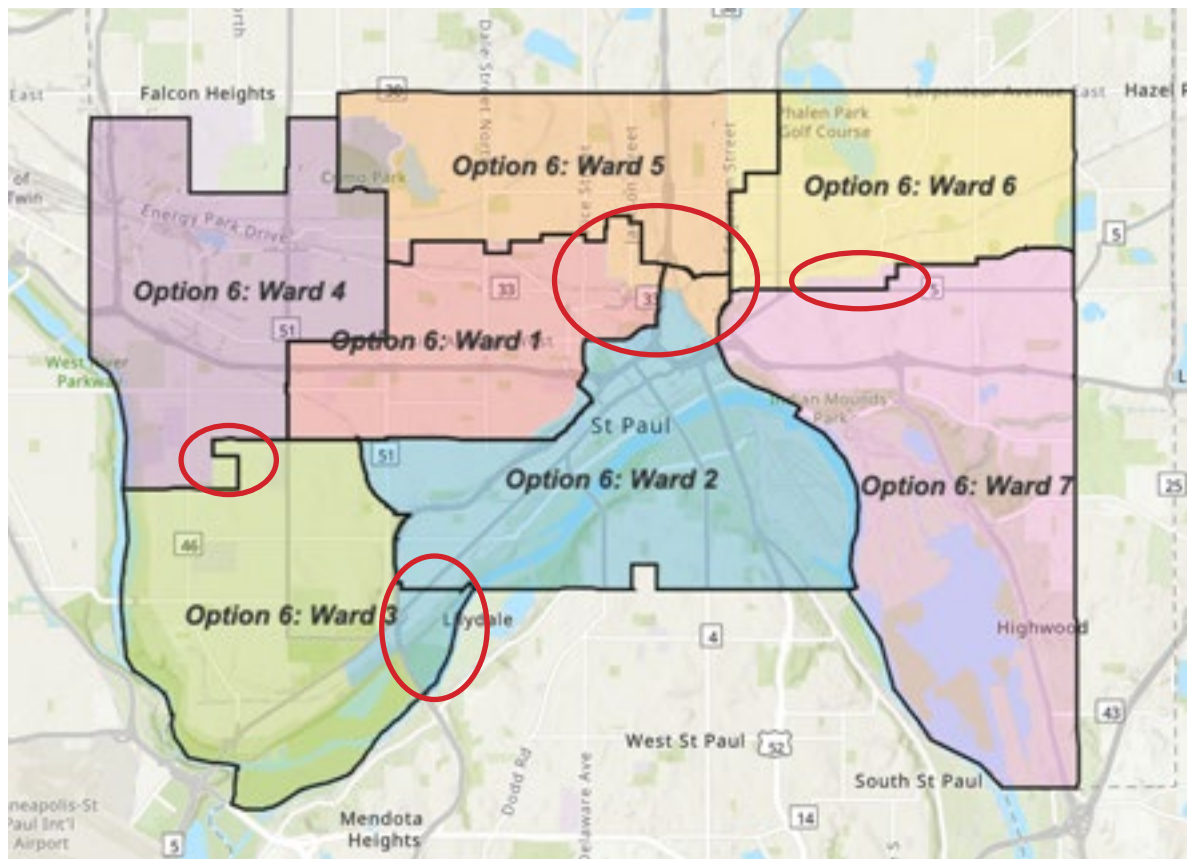
What are the key points of the final maps? Huffman said that northern Minnesota Native American Tribal areas are all now in one Senate and Congressional district. A shift in the Rochester area and other subtle changes suggest greater opportunity for minority representation. Northern Washington County Congressional District 8 now extends into the metro area. Overall, Huffman finds the maps slightly favorable to the GOP. He noted that the public will need to adjust to the new numbering system.

On March 23, the St. Paul City Council approved the ward map shown here.

*[continued on next page](#)*

## Redistricting continued from page 2

County redistricting decisions are due on April 26. Huffman noted that since charter commission members are independent and unelected, their work tends to be opaque and unpublicized. He suggested that, in the future, League members encourage the commission to hold virtual meetings, perhaps in the evening, to allow more public shareholders to participate.



Redistricting map of Saint Paul wards. Black lines show new boundaries; red ovals indicate areas of change.

Huffman showed the population changes from the census and talked viewers through the changes that will need to be made in the seven districts. Districts 1, 3, and 4 are slightly underpopulated and will need to draw from adjoining districts 2, 5, 6, and 7 for an ideal population of 78,907. Of the city's seven wards, 1, 3, 4 and 5 have slightly decreased in population, and will need to draw from Wards 2, 6, and 7 to achieve the ideal ward population of 44,504.

Huffman mentioned these recommendations from the Brennan Center for Justice on offering effective feedback to elected officials.

- First, think small and offer feasible, actionable instructions to those drawing maps.
- Unite with neighbors to form effective, persuasive coalitions.
- Define who your community is to make the best case for effective representation.

He encouraged viewers to tell neighbors and friends about this issue of redistricting and to contact our city and county governments on how to provide comments and propose map changes. Local redistricting, especially on county commissions, are an increasing focus nationally, he said.

Huffman ended his talk with the League's goal for the future: working for legislation and constitutional amendments to improve the redistricting process. Once a district or ward map is drawn, the citizens must live with the results for the next 10 years, even if unfairly drawn. He hopes to persuade the legislature to enact long-term change to reduce the potential for gerrymandering.

Related links:

[New state district maps](#)

[A closer look at the Saint Paul ward map](#)

—Cheryl Bailey

## Climate Change & Biodiversity: Witnessing and Taking Action

Sir David Attenborough, lifelong traveling naturalist, has witnessed and documented more 80 years of changes to our planet caused by human activities.

He sets forth his observations in *A Life on Our Planet: A Witness Statement and a Vision for Our Future*, which we discussed at our February 9 meeting.

The book moves chronologically from 1937 to 2020 as it describes loss of wilderness, extinction of animal and plant species, ocean overfishing, and over-consumption in general. “Our natural world is fading,” he laments, and points out the life-threatening consequences of our action.

The final section of the book presents ideas on how to save ourselves by “rewilding” the world.

- Limit economic growth (live sustainably)
- Switch to clean energy
- Rewild the seas (establish no-fishing zones)
- Take up less space (humans occupying half of the planet’s land has meant lost biodiversity)
- Rewild the land (re-establish forests, wetlands, rainforests, grasslands, and other habitats)
- Plan for peak human population (reduce our footprint, share finite resources, limit population growth)
- Achieve more balanced lives with the natural world (plant-based diets, clean energy, investments in sustainable businesses, smaller families, buy products wisely, minimize waste)

This book is a call for us to act now and to support individuals and organizations that have been leading the effort to save life on our planet.

Here are some resources more information and ways to take action for the environment:

### Books

*Buffalo for the Broken Heart*, by Dan O'Brien

*Nature's Best Hope*, by Douglas w. Tallamy

*The Book of Hope*, by Jane Goodall, Ph.D.

### Presentations

Katharine Hayhoe, chief scientists for The Nature Conservancy, [The Case for Climate Hope](#), Westminster Town Hall Forum

[Climate Change Challenge: Just Do Something!](#), a January LWVMN event on YouTube.

### Organizations

[Minnesota Environmental Partnership](#) (LWV Minnesota is a member)

[Sustainable Investment Forum North America](#)

[Minnesota Divestment Coalition](#), a citizen movement for divestment from fossil fuels and ethical investment of state pension funds

[Solar Kits for Change](#), which unites industry professionals into a collective effort to provide solar education and equipment across the world.

[Clean Energy Economy Minnesota](#)

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) [information on climate change](#)

[Living Green 365](#), personal action suggestions from the MPCA

[Electric car Information](#) from MPCA, with a link to its expanding network of charging stations

[Belwin Conservancy and Nature Center](#)

[YMCA Teen Wilderness Adventures](#)

[Deep Portage Learning Center](#)

[more resources on page 7](#)

## Valuing Our Government

On March 9, our AM Book Club met at the Highland Park Library to discuss *The Fifth Risk*, by Michael Lewis. The New York Times describes the premise: “What are the consequences if the people given control over our government have no idea how it works?”

Lewis tells us what was at risk when this did happen, listed here by priority: 1) Nuclear accidents 2) North Korea developing nuclear weapons, 3) Iran nuclear deal withdrawal, 4) the U.S. electric and water infrastructure failing or falling to cyber terrorists, 5) Federal programs going into disarray.

To explore examples, Lewis focused on three departments: Agriculture, Commerce and Energy. He highlighted the important work they do and the challenges they face, especially when leadership doesn't understand their work.

In Hanford, Washington, for example, high-level radioactive waste is stored in tanks, one third of which had leaked into the soil and groundwater near the Columbia River. The Department of Energy monitors the site as it tries to contain the waste.

The Department of Commerce is home to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and, within that, the National Weather Service (NWS). Each day, NWS collects about 6.3 billion observations and provides the data online free of charge. The weather service annually issues approximately 1.5 million forecasts and 50,000 warnings, which are presented on local and national news and on our phone apps.

Lewis offers many stories like this, including anecdotes from individuals who took government jobs so they could help save lives, rather than make more money in private industry.

Every year, a little-known awards program called the Sammies highlights excellence in federal gov-

ernment work. Learn more about [Sammie Award winners](#) and subscribe to notifications.

For more information:

*The Premonition: A Pandemic Story*, by Michael Lewis. Could be described as a sequel to *The Fifth Risk*, as it describes the program management risk he warned us about.

[50 Ways Government Works for Us](#), from Public Service Recognition Week

[The 10 Best Things Government Has Done for Us](#), a web article on MarketWatch.

[The White House: Our Government](#), with information about the current administration, recent speeches, and press releases.

Send a letter to local, state and federal officials you support to let them know they are doing a good job and ask them to highlight the work of government and its employees.

—Mary Palmer

## Evening Book Club

The Evening Book Club continues to meet on Zoom. Please contact [Karen Williams](#) (kare-14will@gmail.com) if you would like to be added to the e-mail list.

In March we discussed our first fiction novel, *The Seed Keeper* by Diane Wilson. We enjoyed it and were glad to read a second book by Wilson. (We'd read her memoir, *Spirit Car*, earlier this year.)

Upcoming books:

**Monday April 4:** *A Knock at Midnight*, by Brittany Barnett

**Monday, May 2:** *Where the Water Goes*, by David Owen

**Monday, June 6:** *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson

# NEWS AND RESOURCES

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## Welcome, New Members!

The following individuals have joined LWVSP in recent months. We're glad they're with us!

Donna Addkison  
Cynthia Anderson  
Patrick Finnegan  
Karen Frei  
Elisabeth Hansen  
Tracy Harris  
Kristin Johnson  
Theresa McPartlin  
Ann Mulfort  
Desiree Taylor  
Jane Ullmann-Bester  
Lois Yellowthunder



See Upcoming Events, below, for a special new member meeting.

## Ramsey Election Report Available

Ramsey County has published its [2021 County Elections Annual Report](#), which presents data, compares voting to previous years, and looks at voting trends by age, registration status, absentee ballots, and more. The county saw the second highest turnout in local election history, slightly less than for the 2017 election. St. Paul had its second-highest municipal election turnout.

### Making Your Voice Heard in 2022

The nonprofit, nonpartisan [Clean Elections Minnesota](#) has offered great info in its recent emails, including [How to Make Your Voice Heard 2022](#).

[Visit this archive site](#) for links to previous emails or to sign up to receive them.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

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### 2022 Spring New Member Meeting

Whether you're a new or established member who'd like to connect with other LWV folks, you're invited.

When: Saturday, May 14, 3 p.m.

Where: To be determined. (We're hoping for a fun in-person location near downtown St. Paul. Look for details soon via email. If need be, we'll move to a virtual gathering.)



### More For Your Calendar

**Tuesday, March 29:** *Expanding End of Life Options*, Zoom and Facebook Live, 7 p.m. This topic will be voted on at the LWV Minnesota League's Annual Council, so grab this chance to learn about pending legislation on medical aid in dying.

**Saturday, April 30:** 2022 [Minnesota League Annual Council](#)

**Monday, June 6:** **LWVSP Annual Meeting.** Details forthcoming.

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).

## MORE BOOK CLUB NEWS

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### *Resources for Taking Action from page 4*

#### Food and Climate Change

[John Hopkins Center for a Livable Future](#)

#### Plant-Based Local Restaurants

[J. Selby's](#), 169 Victoria St., St. Paul

[Advellum Vegetable Eatery](#), 501 30th Ave. SE, Minneapolis

[The Herbivorous Butcher](#), 507 1st Ave NE, Minneapolis

[Reverie](#), 1517 E. 35th St., Minneapolis

[Trio](#), 610 W. Lake St. Minneapolis

#### Contact Elected Officials

Email or call your elected officials to urge logical, timely legislation to reduce Minnesota's carbon footprint, make critical changes in agriculture policy to help keep carbon in the land reduce water pollution, and support sustainable energy.

—Mary Palmer

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## April Morning Book Club

Our next meeting will be on April 13, 10 a.m., in the first-floor meeting room at the Highland Park Library, 1974 Ford Parkway. We'll also be online over Zoom for those who would like to connect that way. (Contact [Mary Palmer](#) (mgp33@msn.com), who'll send you a Zoom invitation.)

We'll discuss Jon Meacham's *The Soul of America: The Battle for our Better Angels*, which seeks to understand current American life and politics by looking back at critical times in our nation's history.

We'll also be choosing books for May and June. Contact [Mary](#) if you haven't seen the list of possibilities in your email.

## Call for Committee Members!

We're starting a Voter Services Committee and looking for several volunteers to help serve.

This will be the primary group organizing and providing voter registration events and candidate forums to the St. Paul community. We seek to help inform voters about candidates and elections.

If you're interested in or have any questions, contact [Joann Ellis](#) (eastsidemom16@hotmail.com).

## Presidents' Letter from page 1

### Voter Service Opportunities

Candidate forums are exciting to be part of and provide a much-needed nonpartisan space for St. Paul candidates and citizens. This fall we expect to host several forums and we're always in need of qualified moderators. If you'd like to moderate or help in another way, check out training events hosted by LWV Minnesota in April and May. See [online schedule and registration information](#).

We're hiring a [Voter Guide Editor](#) to work part time from June through early September. We'll offer a stipend, and are open to working with a credit-seeking college student on an internship. Responsibilities include updating St. Paul's [Vote411.org](#) web page and drafting a hard copy version of the guide for distribution and possible translation. See [position description and application information](#).

### Save the Date

Monday, June 6, is our annual meeting and we're planning an in-person evening event. Details to follow!

—Amy Perna & Heidi Kloempken