

The Voter

August 2022

CO-PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

Hi, members and friends.

We hope you've been having a great summer! Thanks so much to those of you who attended our 102nd annual meeting at the Hallie Q. Brown Center. It was so nice to see you, hear from Mindy Greiling, and eat delicious food from Union Hmong Kitchen.

This year, we are exclusively using Vote411.org for all our voter and candidate information. The site displays in either English or Spanish. If you haven't checked it out yet, please do. Under Personalized Voting Information, enter your address, submit, then click Go to My Races. Choose a race and you'll see who's on the August 9 Primary ballot along with the League-powered candidate guide. You can also look up your poll location.

If you notice candidates who haven't answered our questions, please contact them and request that they do so. Our goal is to build the site over the next few years, so that by the time the 2024 election rolls around it is a powerful, well-recognized source of nonpartisan voter information.

As summer starts to wind down, we turn our attention to the Minnesota State Fair. As in pre-COVID years, the office of the Secretary of State is looking for help staffing its booth in the Grandstand. If you're able to help, register at [Secretary of State at the State Fair](#). Volunteers will receive training and free admission to the fair.



Amy and Heidi at June's annual meeting (more on page 2)

Finally, welcome to the following members who've joined since April 30. We're glad you're with us!

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Erika A. Ronnow | Sara Marie Hesseltine |
| Janet Humphrey | Kate Meyers |
| Susan Schmidt | Leslie Trone |

—Amy Perna & Heidi Kloempken

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Year-End Business, a Sparkling Speaker, Food, and Fellowship

Friends and fellow League members, if you missed the fabulous annual meeting in June, we missed you, too. As we eased into more in-person events, almost 50 of us enjoyed each other's company, Mindy Greiling's talk, and a delicious dinner from Union Hmong Kitchen. We even managed to get reports from all the committees and complete the business part of the evening in record time, thanks to our capable and efficient Co-Presidents Amy Perna and Heidi Kloempken.

From them, we learned that the St. Paul League is 138 active members strong and our finances are sound. (With annual dues coming up soon, consider giving a gift League membership to family members or friends.) The bylaw refresh is nearly complete. Once the Board approves the new bylaws, they'll come to the membership for a vote sometime in August. We will transition from writing voter guides to using the League's Vote411.org for all things voting and candidates. Amy Perna and Heidi Kloempken will serve through fiscal year 2023, so we'll need to elect a new president (or presidents) next year. Think about who'd be a good candidate for this role. Maybe you?

Committee Summaries for 2021-22

Voter Service registered 250 voters this past year. The committee will be pivoting to education as its main thrust—how to vote, find candidates, precincts, and other helpful information.

Youth Vote paid seven students for projects in four high schools, and hopes to get a college intern to drum up big interest this fall with the midterms.

The Council of Metropolitan Area Leagues (CMAL), which includes representatives from Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington Counties, published three newsletters, held three virtual programs, and worked on both climate issues and county governance.



Mindy Greiling, Amy, and Heidi at the Hallie Q. Brown Center

Membership reminded us of the goody bag, which included a copy of *Turnout* by Joan Grove (subsidized by the book clubs), that was hand-delivered to last year's new members. The annual December luncheon at the Minnesota History Center was a hit, as was a new member event in May at the Summit Brewing Rathskeller. We were blessed with a sunny spring day to meet new friends and discuss civics.

The Program Committee produced monthly virtual webinars on barriers to the polls, youth vote, the ERA, redistricting, and abortion. Two of the topics—an end-of-life bill and firearms—were being studied and voted on by the League.

Awards

We roundly applauded and cheered for this year's award winners:

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Annual meeting from page 2

- Beatrice Owen received the Sunrise Award (for energetic involvement within three years of joining).
- Co-President Heidi Kloempken was awarded the Faye Lyksett award (for being a overall fabulous League member).
- The editor of *The Voter*, Diane Hellekson, received special recognition for getting this newsletter out with style and accuracy. (*Editor's note: Thank you so much!*)

Keynote Speaker

Former Rep. Mindy Greiling spoke about her son's journey with schizophrenia, which she recounted in her memoir *Fix What You Can*. Her career from 1993 to 2013 in the Minnesota House, she said, was the product of her education as a Leaguer, and she recounted ways that League members are different from politicians, which elicited both chuckles and nods. She admired the League, and reminded us of the good that can come from our efforts. She now works to advocate for better mental health resources.

Many thanks to the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center for hosting our event, the fabulous local chef Yia Vang and his Union Hmong Kitchen for catering, the membership committee for arranging a lovely evening, and you, our LWVSP members.

Watch for more dates to engage with your colleagues (see page 4). Please renew your membership and, if you can, give one as a gift. Then consider running for office with the St. Paul League!

—Cheryl Bailey

Top: Beatrice Owen received the Sunrise Award from Cheryl Bailey. **Middle:** Members Margie Anderson, Joan Newmark, Sally Patterson.

Bottom: Board members! Standing: Beatrice, Amy, Heidi, Hayden Kilkenny, Nona Beining, Joann Ellis, Nichole Fairbanks, Cheryl, Pam Mercier. Seated: Donna Addkinson, Gail Lundeen Brand, and Helen Losleben.



MEMBER EVENT

Pop In to Upcoming Pop-Up!

The membership committee is planning a pop-up member meetup. All are welcome to join us on Sunday, August 14, 11 a.m. to 3. p.m., at Saint Paul Brewing, 688 Minnehaha Ave E., St. Paul.

Our event coincides with the brewery's Second Sunday Maker Market. Join us for some togetherness and support local craftspeople.

Parking is available in the lot directly in front of Saint Paul Brewing, with additional parking in the East parking lot, behind the neighboring distillery.

Please share your ideas on future pop-up meet-up events (email [Nona Beining](mailto:nbeining@gmail.com), nbeining@gmail.com). So far, we've come up with the following location and event possibilities:

- Keg and Case
- Bad Weather Brewing
- St. Paul Arts Council events
- Landmark Center
- Crash an open mic night somewhere and read Abigail Adams letters

—Nona Beining



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Follow us: [@LWVStPaul](#)

BOOK CLUB NEWS

P.M. Book Club Planning

As this newsletter is getting ready to post, evening book club members are choosing what they'll read for the coming year, focusing on the theme "Supreme Court."

Curious about the books they'll choose? Contact [Karen Williams](mailto:kare14will@gmail.com) (kare14will@gmail.com) to be added to the email list. *The Voter* will publish the complete list in the October issue.



On June 18, six LWVSP members attended the St. Paul Roy Wilkins NAACP Freedom Fund Gala. Their aim: to register voters and support the theme of the event, Our Voice is Our Vote. Above, Joann Ellis and Donna Addikson. Also present were Nona Beining, Hayden Kilkenny, Heidi Kloempken, and Amy Perna.

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).

Minnesota's Racist History in Plain View

The morning book club met June 8 to discuss *Whiteness in Plain View: A History of Racial Exclusion in Minnesota*, by Chad Montrie, a history professor at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell. The book was published by the Minnesota Historical Society Press. While most of us didn't care for the writing and felt there wasn't enough verifying information, we did learn about historical racism we hadn't known about in Duluth, southern Minnesota, and the Twin Cities metro area.

Montrie notes that military officers in this area enslaved Black people when Minnesota was still a territory. After the Civil War, when African Americans moved here to start a new life, they were met with resistance and excluded from the local communities. They faced threats, acts of vandalism and violence, in which public officials were complicit.

Well into the 20th century, it was common for Black families to be prevented from buying homes in "white" neighborhoods throughout Minnesota. Real estate agents steered Black people away from the homes they wanted (sometimes by lying about housing availability in a particular neighborhood) and racial covenants were included in deeds.

Montrie provides detail on the destruction of the thriving Rondo neighborhood, which was razed between 1956 and 1968 to make way for the I-94 corridor.

More than 700 homes and 300 businesses were lost, including homes that had been in families for generations. We had not realized that not only did the government destroy the neighborhood; officials did nothing to help displaced families find new housing. The author claims that it is not by chance that Minnesota is a very homogenous state; what began prior to statehood continues today in economic and educational disparities.

The bright spots in this book include a piece on Josie Johnson, the first Black woman appointed to the national board of the League of Women Voters. Johnson worked with the Minnesota League and collaborated with Black and Jewish neighborhood associations to set up Fair Employment Practice Commissions in Minneapolis and St. Paul. In 1961, she worked with the Minnesota Legislature and Governor Elmer Andersen to pass the first fair housing bill in the U.S.

More Information

Revisit these previous book club reads:

- *A Good Time for the Truth: Race in Minnesota* by Sherri Quan Lee, et al.
- *The Grace of Silence* by Michele Norris
- *Diesel Heart* by Melvin Carter Jr.

Read or watch online:

[Truth-Telling About Racism in Minnesota](#), Minnesota Council of Churches (article on a multi-year effort)

[Jim Crow of the North](#), Twin Cities PBS (hourlong documentary in the Minnesota Experience series)

[A Century of Racism in Minnesota](#), Minnesota State University Mankato (13-minute video by Nicole Jecha)

Upcoming Meeting

Our next meeting will be August 10, when we'll choose books for the coming season. Bring your suggestions!

Our summer book is *Lessons from the Edge: A Memoir*, by Marie Yovanovitch. We'll discuss it at our September 14 meeting.

—Mary Palmer