

# The Voter

June 2022

## CO-PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

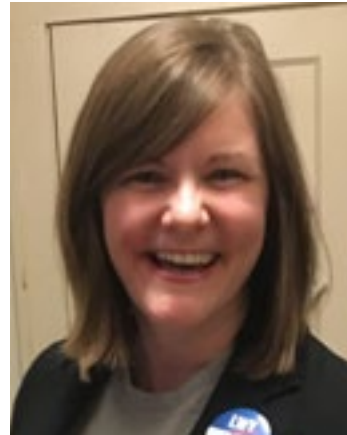
**Dear members,**

Like many of you, the League of Women Voters has been following the news about the leaked draft opinion on the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* Supreme Court case. To read more about LWV's positions on health care and related actions, visit the League [web page on health care reform](#), and scroll down for recent news and activity.

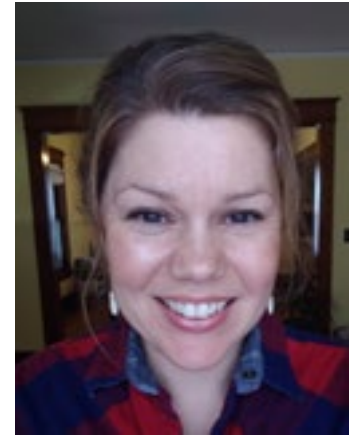
We were lucky to have a beautiful afternoon for our new member meet-up, May 14 at Summit Brewery. We chatted with new members and others we haven't seen in a while. We look forward to seeing more of you at the annual meeting June 6. (See photos from the event on page 3.)

With Ramsey County commissioners, Minnesota legislators, and many others up for election, our Voter Service and Youth Vote committees expect a busy summer and fall. Watch for opportunities for training, voter registration events, and voter education. This year we're transitioning to a fully online Voter Guide, which you'll find later in June at [Vote411.org](http://Vote411.org). We're excited to have a one-stop shop for all your voting needs, fully translatable into Spanish via web browser.

In April we asked for your input on whether LWVSP should support a special tax for St. Paul All Ready for Kindergarten (SPARK) if it becomes a ballot initiative this fall. Thanks to those who weighed in with thoughtful comments. We took your input, weighed past actions, and discussed this as a board. The result: We voted to not endorse the initiative. LWVSP historically has not



Heidi Kloempken



Amy Perna

supported initiatives like this even if they closely align with our positions. Doing so compromises our ability to effectively provide unbiased, non-partisan information to the public.

If the initiative is on the ballot, we will offer educational opportunities to the public. As always, we encourage our members to be civically engaged in the ways they find appropriate.

Thank you for your continued engagement and support!

—Amy Perna & Heidi Kloempken

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## Diane Power Remembers LWVSP's Role in Pre-Digital Elections

*Diane Power has been an active LWVSP member since 1977. She had long-term involvement with the Election Returns Project, and eventually ran the program until the advent of computer assistance with counting votes.*

*These are excerpts from a May 3, 2022, conversation with LWVSP board member Cheryl Bailey.*

**Cheryl Bailey:** *Diane, can you remind us about how important the St. Paul League used to be on Election Night?*



**Diane Power:** When I joined the St. Paul League in 1977, the first thing I joined was the Election Returns Project. Remember, we had no internet or cell phones, and the official results from elections could take a long time to be reported. The League set up an elaborate system, using about 200 volunteers for all of Ramsey County. We came up with results faster than the city could. The various press organizations like the AP and News Election Services, paid us big bucks—I think it was in the \$10- to-15,000 range—for our unofficial tallies.

**Cheryl:** *How did you do it?*

**Diane:** We had a huge group including the suburban Leagues, like Roseville, Maplewood, and Falcon Heights, with each volunteer going to a polling place before the doors closed at 8 p.m. The election judges expected them, and inspected the letter which confirmed their League identity. The judge gave us their voting results once the last vote was counted, for our member to call in to the central location we had set up. Then the election judge packed up their machines and papers, and drove to City Hall with their official documents. We had a couple League representatives at the

City Hall/Courthouse as well, to help fill in blanks and coordinate the process.

The League volunteer's job was to call the tally in to a group of us waiting at the old Montgomery Ward building on University Avenue. Sometimes they called from the precinct, if there was a phone they could use, and other times they'd go home and call from there. Our volunteers were on a non-public floor complete with desks, phones, and the comptometers [key-driven,

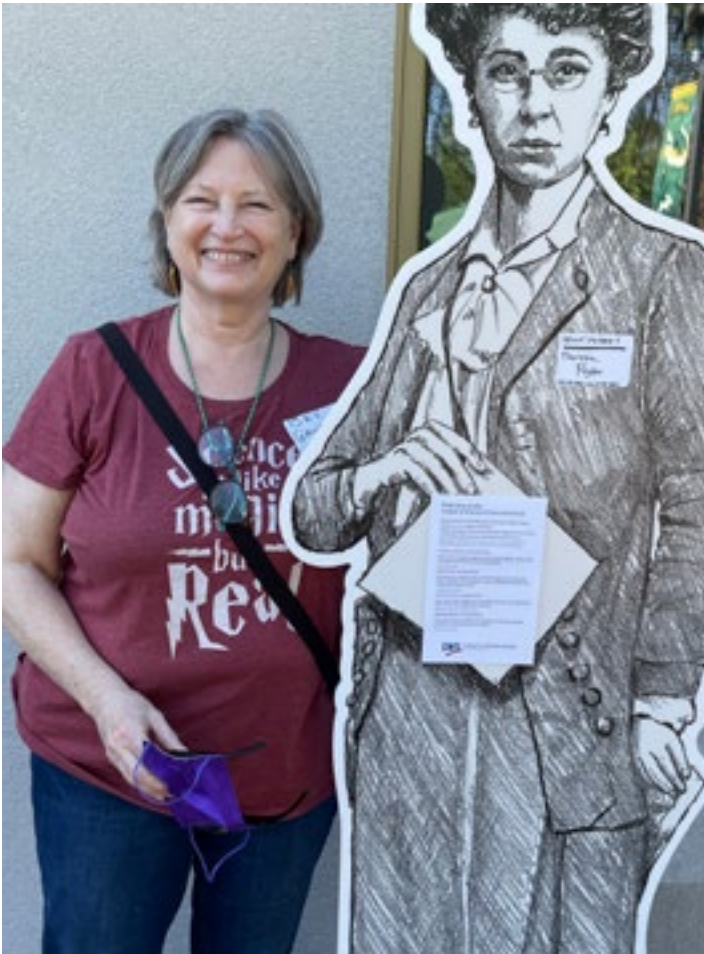
mechanical calculators], which the Ward's employees used. When we received a call with a precinct's numbers, we'd fill out a form and hand it to the Ward's comptometer [mechanical calculator] operator. The totals were given to the media who were on site with us. It was a valuable service for the public to know results as early as possible, and it was an important fundraiser for us. We kept up this work until the 1998 election. By then, the state had enough computer power to tally votes quickly, and the press had no need to pay us for our data.

**Cheryl:** *Where did the group move when Montgomery Ward closed?*

**Diane:** We used space in the First National Bank on 5th and Minnesota, downtown St. Paul. That was in the early 1980s, and I was at home with a baby by then. When we bought a computer for our home, I transferred the names of the Election Returns group of workers, probably around a hundred of us, from handwritten scribbles in a notebook to a data file. This was our first step into the computer age, and at first it just helped me send letters to members more easily. This led to us setting up a program for the vote tallies. I

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Ten members, longtime and new, came out for the new member meet-up May 14. It was a perfect spring day for a little beer and a lot of conversation on the patio at Summit Brewing.

Photos, clockwise from upper left: New member Bev Gause (with Theresa Peyton), board member Jacquelyn Kelly, new member Holly Windingstad, new member Cynthia Anderson, Board Co-Chair Heidi Kloempken and board member Nona Beining.

### Special Guest Suffragist Theresa Peyton

Theresa Peyton (1880-1929) was a lawyer and suffragist who taught art in the St. Paul public schools while taking night classes at the St Paul School of Law (predecessor to Mitchell Hamline). (Her likeness in these photos was a gift from the Minnesota Historical Society following its “Extraordinary Women” exhibition.)

Peyton was active in several voting rights organizations and was the first and only president of the Minnesota Equal Franchise League.

“Since I have grown up,” she once wrote, “I have listened to anti-suffrage arguments and they have impressed me as about as logical as those I heard when I was a child.”

## Fiona Hill's Memoir Is Also a Spotlight on Inequality

We met on May 11 to discuss Fiona Hill's book, *There is Nothing for You Here: Finding Opportunity in the 21st Century*. The book is a memoir, a history of Great Britain, and a spotlight on the inequalities in some of the wealthiest countries in the world. She sets forth her ideas on how to change this.

Hill grew up in northern England, daughter to a coalminer and a midwife, who struggled to make ends meet. Hill missed out on educational opportunities because the family couldn't afford them and faced discrimination because of her background and gender.

Hard work, perseverance, grant money, and the right people entering her life when she needed them helped her meet her educational goals. She became an expert in Russia and Eastern Europe and was appointed the Senior Director for Europe and Russia at the National Security Council under President Trump.

She uses her life story to demonstrate the importance of education and offering job opportunities for disadvantaged young. The book ends with many ideas of how government, CEOs, philanthropists, and regular folks can help young and disadvantaged people get ahead in this world.

Our group talked about how we might apply Hill's ideas to our own community and how we must speak up for others and demand that our government work toward a more equitable society. We agree with Fiona Hill, who says there should be no forgotten people and no forgotten places.

### Two Videos of Note

[Interview with Fiona Hill](#) (9 minutes). The Late Show with Stephen Colbert, March 3, 2022

[A Conversation with Fiona Hill](#) (1 hour 23 minutes). Claremont McKenna College, March 11, 2022

### Ideas for Volunteering and Donating

- [Tutor at a local library.](#)
- [Donate to libraries.](#)
- Volunteer for a youth group, such as [Boys and Girls Club of St. Paul](#) or [St Paul Youth Services.](#)
- Work with a youth group at a church, synagogue, mosque, or temple.
- Mentor students through a college alumni association.
- Sponsor young students to attend school camps and donate to fund their extracurricular activities.

### Upcoming Meetings

We meet June 8, 10 a.m., at the Highland Park Library, 1974 Ford Parkway. We'll discuss *Whiteness in Plain View: A History of Racial Exclusion in Minnesota*, by Chad Montrie.

We take the month of July off, then meet on August 10 to choose books for next season. Start making your list of recommended books!

Over the summer, we'll be reading *Lessons From the Edge: A Memoir* by Marie Yovanovitch, which we'll discuss in September.

—Mary Palmer



## *Diane Power continued from page 2*

remember Richard Newmark, Roger Anderson, and Owen Nelson, all husbands of experienced Leaguers at that time, working on this.

**Cheryl:** *There was some real turmoil in the 1990 gubernatorial election. Could you recall some of that night?*

**Diane:** That was an exciting election. The Independent-Republican candidate John Grunseth was taken off the ballot just a week or two before Election Day. [This occurred after a news story about his swimming nude in his pool with his daughter and her 12- and 13-year-old friends in 1981. When the story broke in October 1990, along with an account of more recent adultery, Grunseth withdrew from the race.] The late date forced the state to use paper ballots—for all of Minnesota—so they could add Arne Carlson’s name. I knew it would take much, much longer to count these votes, so I had to recruit volunteers willing to stay up all night. We didn’t leave the City Hall until about 6 a.m., and the official count wasn’t complete until Thursday. [Arne Carlson defeated DFLer Rudy Perpich in that election, 50.1% to 46.8%.]

**Cheryl:** *I’ve heard you have a story about election night when Jesse Ventura was running—can you fill us in?*

**Diane:** Yes! I have such vivid memories of that night. Jesse Ventura ran for governor in 1998 with the Reform Party, against GOP Mayor Norm Coleman and DFL AG Skip Humphrey. He spent far less on his campaign than the other candidates, had a very flamboyant personality, and had virtually no experience in Minnesota politics. Needless to say, he was not expected to make much of a showing.

On Election night, we were once again in a bank building, awaiting the calls from our League volunteers with their precinct vote totals. We were lucky to have several teenagers running the sheets back and forth for us to tally. Shortly after 8 p.m., one of the teens looked down at his pre-

cinct tally sheet, and said, “Jesse’s winning this one.” Moments later, a different teen told us, “He’s winning this one, too.” The group realized something was happening on the East Side. We scrounged up a portable TV set, got terrible re-

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**In 1990, a late change in candidate forced the state to use paper ballots. “I had to recruit volunteers willing to stay up all night. We didn’t leave City Hall until about 6 a.m.”**

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ception with all the thick brick walls in the bank, and gathered around the best we could to see the local news coverage while we continued our counts. It really was a fascinating night, and we felt special to have been the first to realize that Jesse Ventura was pulling off a huge upset and would win the race. (Ventura won 37%, Coleman 34.3%, and Humphrey 28.1%.)

**Cheryl:** *Would you care to share a little of your background?*

**Diane:** Sure. I grew up in Tower, Minnesota, a town famous for its frigid winter temps. My dad’s family were Cornish miners who moved to Minnesota to establish and work the Soudan mine. My mom had a big French-Canadian family in Wabasha. I attended Vermilion State Junior College and the University of Minnesota for my BA in mathematics and a minor in poly sci. Later I got my master’s in library science. I worked at the public library (1974–80), the Legislative Library in the State Office Building (’84–2001), and at Hamline University. I did a special project with Elmer Andersen’s artifacts and donations to the University of Minnesota.

When I worked at the St. Paul Public Library in cataloging, a co-worker, Roz Jacob, got me interested in the League, brought me to her house for a meeting, and convinced me to join. The Election Returns Project was right up my alley—I see my-

*continued on page 6*

### Evening Book Club

Everyone is welcome to the evening book club, which continues to meet on Zoom. For June and July our regular dates have shifted due to the LWVSP Annual Meeting and Independence Day.

**Monday, June 13, 6:30 p.m.** *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson

**Monday, July 11, 6:30 p.m.** *A Year in the Wilderness* by Amy Freeman and David Freeman

Contact [Karen Williams](mailto:kare14will@gmail.com) (kare14will@gmail.com) if you'd like to be added to the e-mail list.

### *Diane Power from page 5*

self as a numbers and analysis person more than an inspirational “what’s the next issue to tackle” volunteer.

My hobbies include genealogy, walking my neighborhood, baking (I make a mean cashew blondie), and reading. I’m making my umpteenth attempt to finish *The Love Songs of W.E.B. Du Bois* by Honorée Fanonne Jeffers, all 800 pages. I like sci-fi, romance, and some nonfiction. Next on my list is Madeline Albright’s memoir.

**Cheryl:** *Diane, thanks for talking with me and sharing your memories with The Voter. What challenges do you see for us volunteering in the League?*

**Diane:** Oh, 100% protecting the voting process. It is in grave danger.

—Cheryl Bailey

## Use Your Skills and Develop New Ones on a LWVSP Committee

Here’s a list of our five existing committees and typical activities. We’d love to have you join.

**Program:** Attend two meetings and assist with programs between November and June.

**Membership:** Attend monthly meetings, two new member meet-ups, annual meeting, and December luncheon.

**Voter Service.** Participate in voter registration events, candidate forums; communicate with volunteers and event planners.

**Youth Vote:** Attend quarterly meetings, work with students, and conduct training sessions twice a year

**Communications:** Assist with bimonthly newsletter, weekly Twitter posts and publicizing programs and candidate forums (November through June).

Contact [Amy and Heidi](mailto:info@lwwsp.com) (info@lwwsp.com) with questions or if you’re ready to sign up!

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).