

The Voter

February 2023

CO-PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE

Dear members,

A big thank you to all who joined us for our annual December Luncheon! Gathered at the beautiful Holman's Table restaurant, we heard from Minnesota Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm on her experience during the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges ahead. (It was her last official event before she retired!) Commissioner Malcolm is a woman we admire deeply and we were honored she took the time to speak with us. It was wonderful to see so many familiar faces and meet new members. (See story and photos on page 2.)

Our next official get-together will be the annual meeting, scheduled for Monday, June 5. Details coming soon, here in the newsletter and online.

Part of what makes the League of Women Voters unique is our grassroots process of reaching consensus positions on issues. We conduct a study and draft a report, then vote on specific aspects of the report. If the study is for a state-wide issue (vs. a local one like trash hauling), LWVSP reports vote tally to the Minnesota League. Members then vote on the consensus questions during LWVMN's annual meeting. That outcome determines our position and influences our advocacy.

On Saturday, February 4 (or before then via email ballot), you can influence the Minnesota League's position on firearms. Visit the [Firearms in Minnesota Consensus Meeting web page](#), where you'll find links to the study, information on the consensus meeting and a link to register. It will be held at 11 a.m. on the fourth via Zoom. If you can't attend, you can use the ballot link to vote in advance.

Are you interested in connecting with your elected officials at the Capitol? We could use your help doing [legislative interviews](#). This is a fun, low key (no advocating just a conversation) way for League members to interview their representatives to find out where they



Heidi



Amy

stand on the state's policy priorities. LWVSP hasn't typically participated in this process, but we'd like to start, so if you're interested, [email co-president Amy Perna](mailto:pernalwvstp@gmail.com) (pernalwvstp@gmail.com).

Our board is turning attention to planning for the future with a retreat in March and transition planning. We have a few open board seats for the 23/24 year which starts on July 1 and runs through June 30, 2024. If you'd like more information or to discuss whether a board position might be right for you, [reach out to Amy](#).

—Amy Perna & Heidi Kloempken

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St. Paul League Hosts Jan Malcolm, 'Minnesota's Dr. Fauci'

"We all feel we know Jan Malcolm, don't we?" said Cheryl Bailey in her introduction to the departing Minnesota Commissioner of Health, who spoke at the annual December Luncheon. "She's been in our living rooms on television and in our cars on the radio. Through a once-in-a-hundred-years global pandemic, she soldiered on and did her best.

"Aren't we lucky, here in Minnesota, that our best is Commissioner Jan Malcolm?"

Malcolm addressed a receptive group of LWVSP members December 3 at [Holman's Table](#), in the historic terminal of the Saint Paul Downtown Airport.

Malcolm, who served under governors Jesse Ventura, Mark Dayton, and Tim Walz, has been called "Minnesota's Dr. Fauci" for her expert handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. She spoke on the challenges and triumphs of the past few years: providing vaccinations and defending state policies, and the struggles of her staff and healthcare providers to keep up.

What the pandemic taught us, she said, is that healthcare doesn't exist in a vacuum. It requires a "systems thinking" approach and an interconnected network of facilities, a workforce, technology, and more.

The audience followed up with many questions, along with expressions of gratitude for Malcolm's leadership. To underscore our appreciation, Cheryl Bailey presented Jan with the Golden Mask Award handmade by Mary Kruser and adorned with a St. Paul LWV pin. As the photos here show, Malcolm was delighted; no contentious objectors to this mask!

Jan Malcolm served as state health commissioner from 1999 to 2003, and again beginning in 2018. She retired in January, at the beginning of Walz's second term. The annual December Luncheon is hosted by the LWVSP board of directors.

—Nona Beining & Beatrice Owen



Jan Malcolm receiving the Golden Mask from Cheryl Bailey



Holman's Table, Saint Paul Downtown Airport terminal

DECEMBER LUNCHEON 2022



A. Molly Flowers, Pam Mercier, Paula Leahy, Gretchen Shanight. B. Beatrice Owen, Nichole Fairbanks, Sig Johnson, Hayden Kilkenny. C. Sally Patterson, Barb Burleigh, Sue Yeager. D. Helen Losleben, Caryn Lindsay, Judy Pearl. E. Mary Vik and daughter Teri Pardo. F. Nona Beining & Amy Perna.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Firearms Policy and Restorative Justice on Deck for February

February 4, Firearms in Minnesota Consensus Meeting. Read more in the Presidents' Letter, or visit [our website](#). 11 a.m. -12:30 p.m. on Zoom

February 21, Restorative Justice: What is It and How Does It Work? Hear a panel of experts explore whether restorative justice can help break the cycle of repeat offenders, for adults and juveniles. Here are panelists scheduled at 7 p.m. on Zoom:

- John Choi, Ramsey County Attorney.
- Roslyn Harmon, Executive Director of the Dispute Resolution Center

- Tina Sigel, Program Manager, Restorative Justice Community Action (Hennepin County)

Q and A will follow the panel discussion, which is co-sponsored by LWVSP and the Roseville Area Leagues of Women Voters, in cooperation with Ramsey County Library.

Register in advance on [our website](#):

EVENING BOOK CLUB

Hunker Down with American Labor, Vowell, & Vindman

We meet the first Monday of the month at 6:30 p.m. on Zoom. All are welcome, even if you haven't read the book.

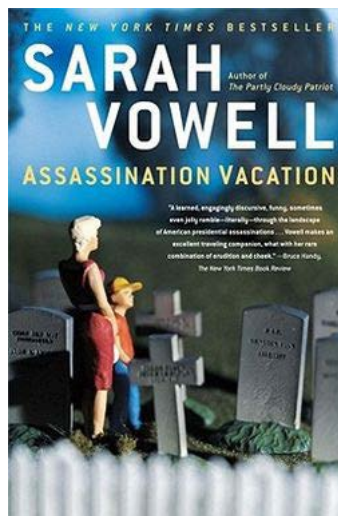
Here's our schedule for this month through April:

February 6: *Fight Like Hell: The Untold History of American Labor* by Kim Kelly

March 6: *Assassination Vacation* by Sarah Vowell

April 3, *Here, Right Matters: An American Story* by Alexander Vindman

Contact [Karen Williams](mailto:kare14will@gmail.com) (kare14will@gmail.com) to get email reminders and Zoom links.



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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). Deadline for submissions is two weeks before the first of the month of publication, with exceptions for time-sensitive information.

The Ongoing Process of Reconstruction

Our January discussion centered on *The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution*, by Eric Foner.

The title of his book refers to the passage of the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments after the Civil War, which transformed the original Constitution so much that it was essentially a new beginning for our nation. These amendments granted citizenship to everyone born on American soil, set forth “equal protection under the law,” and expanded voting rights (among other provisions). Unfortunately, the amendments have been selectively followed by states.

While 15th Amendment gave African American males the right to vote and provided for Congress enforcement, some states allowed racial violence and other means of suppressing the Black vote to go unprosecuted. Reconstruction goals were thwarted by the South’s economic depression and Democrats gaining control of the House in 1874 (defeating a coalition of Black and white Republicans).

In following decades, the Supreme Court continued to support states’ rights, thus allowing continued discrimination. While the 1965 passage of the Voting Rights Act held promise, in 2013 the Supreme Court struck down the provision enabling federal oversight of voting in nine states. As we know, there’s a continuing struggle to ensure voting rights are realized.

Our group talked about the Supreme Court history and decisions, and how our country has changed because of them. Some examples include the Slaughter-House Cases (1873), where the Court decided the 14th Amendment only protected the legal rights associated with federal U.S. citizenship, not state citizenship.

We recalled a previous reading, *The Fire Is Upon Us*, by Nicholas Buccola, and William F. Buckley Jr.’s claims that white people’s economic and cultural “advancement” justified racial segregation and inequality. Buckley eventually recanted this belief, but racism remains rampant. We see it in gerrymandering to dilute minority votes, and continued discrimination in housing and employment.

Discussing the worst of our history was tempered by remembering the heroes of the Reconstruction, including Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner, congressmen who took a public stand against slavery and for equal rights.

As Foner states, the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments, each with a clause empowering Congress to enforce their provisions, guaranteed “that Reconstruction would be an ongoing process, not a single moment in time.”

For More Information and to Take Action

- NPR interview with Eric Foner: [The unresolved legacy of reconstruction](#)
- Rutgers University [Center for American Women and Politics](#)
- History Channel [Supreme Court web pages](#)
- National Endowment for the Humanities: [1860s Radical Republican Thaddeus Stevens](#)

Consider supporting the [NAACP Legal Defense Fund](#) and, of course, the League of Women Voters!

Our Next Meeting

Join us February 8, 10 a.m., at the Highland Park Library, 1974 Ford Parkway. We’ll be discussing *Fight Like Hell: The Untold Story of American Labor*, by Kim Kelly, but even if you haven’t read the book, you’re

welcome.

In March, we’ll discuss *Generation Dread: Finding Purpose in an Age of Climate Crisis*, by Britt Wray.

[Email Mary](mailto:mgp33@msn.com) (m33@msn.com) to receive updates.

—Mary Palmer

