

LWV ABC President's Remarks – Annual Meeting April 12, 2021

Gretchen Sabel, President

Thank you for attending the LWV ABC Annual Meeting. We appreciate Commissioner Schulte taking time to talk with us this evening. Now we will roll into our **business meeting**.

First, I'm pleased to **introduce our new Vice President, Julie Trude**. As you know, LWV ABC has not had a Vice President for three years now. Thankfully, Kathy Aanerud has stepped up to fill many of the duties on an acting basis, helping us keep the wheels on. Many thanks to Kathy for her help here!

Since this is an open seat, and Julie accepted our recruitment call to fill it, the LWV ABC Board was able to affirm unanimously Julie's appointment as our new VP at our March 22 Board meeting. **Julie will fill the remaining year of the open term, and be up for election next year at our 2022 Annual Meeting.**

Julie brings so much to LWV ABC. She is an attorney who is a member of both the Minnesota and Anoka County Bar Associations. She is a graduate of the University of Minnesota Law School and St. Olaf College. For the past 20 years, she has served on Andover's City Council, the last 6 years as Mayor. She's a long-time member of LWV and we appreciate all she's done for us.

Julie's understanding of local government processes and issues is extensive; she's served on many multi-city groups as well. And she knows the election process both as a candidate AND an election judge, which will help us at LWV ABC in our voter service work. Julie, would you tell us something about the areas you'll be leading as our VP?

Julie's 2-minute statement

Thank you, Julie. Despite all the pivots and paradigm shifts resulting from the pandemic, this has been a banner year for LWV ABC. We have learned a lot about linking with people virtually and have new skills that will help us be more effective in the future.

LWV ABC's areas of success include:

- **Our monthly programs** and the community outreach we get through QCTV and other cable channels
- **Our excellent website and communications**, including social media (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube)
- **Our Observer Corps** (small but mighty) and their work with the County Board
- Growth - we are **adding members monthly** - 13 this year
- **Book Club and Film Club** were added to our monthly offerings to have a place to talk about race and equity
- **Administration of our League works smoothly**, everyone does their bit
- LWV ABC is **financially stable** with adequate funds for our work

Now I'd like to **acknowledge our committee chairs and the work they've led this year**. The full reports from our working committees are provided on the blog post for today's meeting, at the bottom of the page. We will maintain these records on the LWV ABC website as well, on the Board Agendas page of the Members Only section. Please refer to these reports for full details. I'm going to provide a **'high points' overview** of their accomplishments now.

LWV ABC President's Remarks – Annual Meeting April 12, 2021

Gretchen Sabel, President

First, I would like to ask **Linda Rodgers** to give a wave. Linda is taking over as **Voter Service chair** from Geri Nelson, and led our work on candidate forums. I'd also like to recognize the work of **Bruce Pomerantz** in coordinating forums for our southern cities, and all the folks who were our city chairs and helped with the forums. **Arlene Gillett** is the co-chair for Voter Registration.

Highlights from Voter Services:

- Adopted a **new forum format** to spread information, not virus
- **Conducted recorded forums for 53 races** across our service area
- **Promoted forum recordings** through cable outlets, websites and social media – our videos were viewed more than 17,000 times!
- **Seven community non-profits co-sponsored** the forums with LWV ABC
- Did **postcard mailings to 750 non-registered voters** in Anoka County, sharing voter registration and voting information
 - Held educational meetings with Anoka County Elections Manager Paul Linnell to share information on the **January 2020 Presidential Primary**, discussed the **security of mail-in ballots with Secretary of State Steve Simon**, and aired a discussion with **Senators Carolyn Layne and Michelle Benson on voting in a pandemic**. The latter two meetings were recorded and posted for later viewing.

Membership Chair Pat Kennedy's strong leadership has meant that our membership grew during Covid. Pat brought us new tools for outreach and connection, as well as our Book and Film Clubs that focus on diversity, equity and inclusion.

- Membership Total March 2020: 78
- **Membership Total March 2021: 83**
 - **Renewing Members: 70 (2 are Lifetime Members)**
 - **New Members: 13**
- The Membership Committee's goals include:
 - Raising public awareness and general visibility of LWV ABC
 - Removing barriers to participation
 - Increasing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Communications Chair Kathy Aanerud has been instrumental in our outreach through print media, including our own LWV newsletter. We've had to make many changes in our communication due to the pandemic and to adapt to the new ways people communicate in general. Some highlights:

- **LWV ABC now has presence on Instagram and Facebook**, help needed with Twitter
- **Our new blog** provides quick updates on key items and links to our full newsletter
- We've made extensive use of our **YouTube channel**, with more than 11,500 views of programs, events and forums
- **Our website** has grown in depth and utility, thanks to Pat Kennedy and Paul Sitz for their work on this. Especially helpful is the transfer of our **Member Handbook to a handy, virtual format on our website** – be sure to check this out.

The **Program Meetings Report** documents the work of our program committee, chaired by **Sue Butler**. Thanks to Pat Kennedy for compiling the report and for posting our meeting videos on YouTube and our website. We held **three in-person meetings before the shutdown** in March of 2020 and **thirteen**

LWV ABC President's Remarks – Annual Meeting April 12, 2021

Gretchen Sabel, President

virtual programs beginning in May of 2020 and extending through to now. Details are included in the Program Report, and all recorded programs are available for viewing on the LWV ABC YouTube channel.

Thanks to our committee chairs, Board members and all who worked to make this weird pandemic year successful for LWV ABC. Looking ahead to 2021-22, we have a lot of work to do. This includes:

- **Building our community presence** by participating in community events and with other organizations at their events – the LWV ABC Membership Committee will be seeking these opportunities and asking members in our communities to work on the events
- **Finding new ways to reach out with voter registration material and information** – our Voter Service committee will be leading this work.
- **Building more effective youth engagement programs**, reaching into the many high schools in our area with civic education materials relating to voting and elections – maybe we can start a Youth Engagement committee for this purpose?
- This is **redistricting** year, and we have members working with Paul Huffman at LWV MN on state-level redistricting. Our counties and cities will also be redistricting, and we will be following these processes. This is an area where volunteers can make a difference.
- There will be **school board races** in four districts in our service area this fall, and we will look into holding forums for these candidates. Volunteers will be needed in these districts -
- We are planning to hold **Legislative Interviews** in the winter before the next session starts. The goal would be to hold these for as many legislative districts as possible, and to do them virtually so weather isn't an issue.
- The **Council of Metropolitan Area Leagues** is looking for volunteers to help in Anoka County, these people will conduct research and provide input to the CMAL Study on Metropolitan Area Governance.
- At some point, it will be safe to **begin meeting in-person again**, although we've learned that virtual meetings are more accessible to some and we should strive to offer virtual links whenever possible. We are looking for volunteers to help on our Program Committee to help us plan effective and safe meetings for the coming year. We will follow state guidance as we make our decisions here.

Now, please click the link for the Volunteer Survey that's in the blog post and we'll go through that together.

Additional info from Karen Schaffer for CMAL:

As for the CMAL Study on County Government: We have a committee from across the metro area examining county government in the 7 metro counties, from the perspective of visibility, transparency, accountability and citizen engagement. It is chaired by former state legislator and long time LWV member (Roseville Area) Mindy Greiling. We need one or two LWV members to help us look into Anoka County. The research questions will be provided, and the timeline is generous (no rush!).

Return to in-person meetings: Governor's guidance

http://dli.mn.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/COVID_19_preparedness_plan_requirements_indoor_venues.pdf

LWV MN Board to discuss in April, more specific guidance may be coming from state. Goal would be to return to in-person meetings when safe. I would like to always offer virtual link for every meeting when possible.