

April 2021

LWV and Town Election Calendar

Thursday April 1	LWVA fiscal year begins. Please pay your dues! Thank you so much. See page 9 for the renewal form.
April 6 Tuesday 5 p.m.	Deadline to request an absentee ballot for the Town Election, but earlier is better! See page 3 for details.
April 6 Tuesday 7 p.m.	LWVA Board Meeting via Zoom teleconference. The meeting URL will be sent to attendees; email one of the Co-Presidents if you would like to attend.
4/10 Saturday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.	Annual Town Election.
4/26 Monday 8 p.m.	Town Meeting begins.

This sign is outside Patti Muldoon's house. The sign was purchased at a LWV-MA convention, and she modifies it as needed. The League posts other larger signs at key locations throughout the town before most elections.

Photo by Patti Muldoon



Co-President's Message


Happy spring! I hope you and your families are all doing well.

“Virtual” continues to be the word that we put in front of our events. We held a virtual Legislators “Brunch” last month. It was over Zoom, with no food. Many thanks to our legislators for attending. We know they missed our legendary potluck. We all hope for good health, weather, and food next year! As I write this, we are just about to hold our first-ever virtual Candidates Night. A debt of gratitude goes to ACMi who will be hosting it over Streamyard. The ACMi staff has been wonderful in helping us to coordinate this program. We could not have done it without them!

Looking forward, we will be planning our annual meeting. We will decide the format based on the Covid situation/restrictions in place as we get closer. We are hoping that perhaps we will be able to replace “virtual” with “outdoors.”

Please enjoy the good weather and stay safe!

Angela Olszewski



LWVA LEADERSHIP 2020–2021

Carolyn Parsons, Co-President	781-646-9309
Angela Olszewski, Co-President	781-648-8649
Meredith Zona, Organization VP	781-648-2753
Patricia Muldoon, Action VP	339-223-3300
Joan Martin, Treasurer	617-966-4521
Anne Linn, Secretary	781-643-0356
Ann FitzGerald, Membership Director	781-646-9711
Katharine Fennelly, Voters' Guide	781-648-1794
Kim Haase, Bulletin Editor/Ads	781-643-3429
Margaret Reiners, Bulletin Mailing	781-646-9611
Janice Bakey, Email Coordinator	781-643-4345
Phyllis Maddox, Co-Webmistress	781-646-4362

The BULLETIN is published monthly except during the summer and December by the League of Women Voters of Arlington, PO Box 461, Arlington, MA 02476.

Voting by Mail Expanded for Town Election

Editor's Note: The State Legislature came through for us after last month's Bulletin appeared. Here are the new instructions from the Town Clerk's office. See <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/town-governance/elections-voting> for more information. The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts supports the VOTES Act that would make the 2020 election changes permanent: expanded access to mail voting in the state, expanded in-person early voting hours, and easing the way for election officials to process mailed ballots early and recruit election workers from a broader pool of citizens, among other provisions.

Arlington voters can choose if they want to vote by mail and, if so, select Early Voting by Mail or Absentee. Taking precautions due to COVID has been added to the eligible Absentee criteria. You do not need to provide a reason on the form. Any Arlington voter who chooses to vote by mail is encouraged to submit a written request for a ballot as soon as possible.

The deadline to request that we mail you a ballot is 5 pm, Tuesday April 6th. However, residents are advised to take into account the time needed to mail the ballot. A request received on April 6 would be mailed on April 7 and would have to be completed by the voter and returned to a drop box on or before Election Day. The written and signed request must be received by 5 pm – a postmark is not sufficient.

Polling locations will adhere to COVID-19 safety protocols and voters will be asked to follow instructional signs regarding spacing, sanitizing stations and the use of separate entrances and exits. Masks will be offered to voters who don't have one, and their use is encouraged at the polling locations.

How to Request a Vote by Mail Ballot

Residents who wish to vote by mail can submit any application or written request. We have designed an Arlington-specific Vote by Mail Application, <https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument?id=55345>, that allows voters to choose their method for voting by mail. All requests (forms, letters or handwritten notes) should include the voter's full name and address and must be signed. A typed name or script font cannot be accepted.

The Vote By Mail application may be downloaded and returned via mail, email, or placed in a ballot drop box. To email a form it's fine to attach a picture or scan of the signed form and send to townclerk@town.arlington.ma.us. The ballot drop boxes are in their usual locations and can be used to submit voter registration forms, ballot applications and ballots after they are mailed.

- East Arlington - Outside the Fox Branch Library (175 Massachusetts Ave)
- Arlington Center - Town Hall (near the bus stop at Mass Ave and Academy St)
- Arlington Heights - Outside ACMI Studios (85 Park Avenue)

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Legislators' Brunch Goes Virtual

By Kim Haase

Arlington's state legislators provided updates on their work to a smaller than usual crowd at the League of Women Voters of Arlington's brunchless Legislators' Brunch on Sunday, March 7.

Instead of sharing a sumptuous potluck and convivial conversation, we met via Zoom to share information about what the past and current legislative sessions are accomplishing. Meredith Zona introduced our legislators, noting that we'd had to cancel last year's Brunch entirely after the pandemic hit, because we hadn't mastered Zoom yet.



The legislators began by summarizing their current work and plans, and then took questions from the attendees.

State Senator Cindy Friedman is Chair of the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing and Vice Chair of both the Senate and Joint Committees on Ways and Means. She's also Vice Chair of the oversight committee on the Covid-19 emergency response. Her main focuses now are on achieving parity between mental health care and medical/surgical care, and increasing resources to both behavioral health and primary care. Other concerns are decriminalizing mental illness and increasing accountability in the criminal justice system, taking a look at the emergency authority given to the Governor, dealing with the problem of paid family leave running out for people, and paying for unemployment insurance.

State Representative Sean Garballey is now Chair of the House Committee on Global Warming and Climate Change. He has refiled his 100% renewable energy bill and a bill to increase state support for public higher education, and has also filed a bill to allow emergency paid sick time. Another bill would require larger employers in fast food, hospitality, and other areas to give shift workers sufficient advance notice of their assigned shifts.

State Representative Dave Rogers is Chair of the Joint Committee on Higher Education. He is proud of last session's accomplishments: police reform, the ROE Act, the Student Opportunity Act reforming funding for public education in a way that is targeted to closing persistent disparities among student subgroups, the vote by mail changes that led to record turnout last fall, and finally the climate change bill, now back with the legislature, which must decide what to do with the Governor's amendments. Rep. Rogers expects that the bill will pass again with only minor changes.

Rep. Rogers noted that this is still a challenging time for the state as we deal with a deeply flawed vaccine rollout. The Education Commissioner plans to force schools to reopen, even though many teachers and staff won't be vaccinated. He commended Sen. Friedman's service on the oversight committee on the pandemic response.

Rep. Rogers' current legislative focus is on his bill providing the right to counsel for low-income people in civil courts, especially housing courts. He's been working on this bill for six years, alone at first but with increasing support, notably from landlords, who want the orderliness that would come from tenants and landlords both having representation.

An attendee raised concerns about vote by mail and precinct staffing in the town election April 10. As of March 7 the legislature hadn't extended any of the exceptions made for the 2020 elections to allow no-excuse absentee ballots and reduced staffing. It was already too late to send postcards to voters. The legislators agreed with these concerns; Rep. Garballey noted that the House had passed legislation, but the Senate had not yet. Sen. Friedman reported that Republicans were delaying the bill in the Senate. It extends vote by mail and no-excuse absentee balloting to the end of June. (It did pass soon after March 7.)

Continued on page 7



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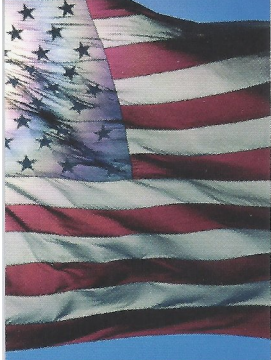
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Legislators' Brunch Goes Virtual (Continued)

Carolyn Parsons asked how the regulations governing the appointment of a tenant to each local Housing Authority had passed; the Select Board has the appointing power. Rep. Rogers replied that the regulations were in the last Economic Development bill in the previous session. Carolyn commented that Arlington Housing Authority meetings get much better attendance now that they are on Zoom, and that it is good to have tenant participation both in meetings and on the AHA Board.

An attendee asked Sen. Friedman to talk about the Health Care Parity bill. Sen. Friedman replied that federal and state laws mandate the same treatment for mental health and medical/surgical issues, but that these mandates have not been enforced. She said that the bill provides mechanisms for providing data to the state; requires insurers to list all their providers (they have been hiding how few there are for mental health); and increases funding for mental health. Insurers will have to shift funding from specialty care to primary and mental health care. Most countries spend 80% of their health care budgets on primary care; we spend much less. Asked about the opposition to the bill, Sen. Friedman said that powerful health care interests want to keep the money in specialty care and large medical providers, while community hospitals and primary care providers have been losing out in the pandemic.

An attendee noted that the Governor has hired a company to plan a new women's prison, instead of focusing on alternatives to incarceration. Many imprisoned women could benefit from release with an ankle bracelet. Sen. Friedman said that the Governor had gotten initial design funding, but that she hoped to defeat funding for the actual prison. Rep. Rogers added that with over half of prisoners having mental health issues, we need to lessen the criminal justice footprint, not expand it. Rep. Garballey added that the Corrections Department has been responsible for superspreader events, has overused solitary confinement, and has not implemented phone access for prisoners.

An attendee asked if the legislature could pressure the Governor to categorize funeral home workers, not currently on the vaccination priority list, the same as health care workers. Sen. Friedman replied that these workers have been moved up to phase 2, and that "vaccine creep," including the addition of teachers, has meant that the number of eligible people has often outstripped the supply of vaccine. Rep. Rogers noted that legislation moves too slowly to have an influence on vaccine priorities, but that the oversight hearings help apply pressure. He commented that for a state with our reputation in health care and technology, the vaccine rollout couldn't have gone worse.

An attendee asked Rep. Rogers if the cost of providing counsel in civil court would be an obstacle to passage. Rep. Rogers replied that cost was indeed a major factor -- legal services groups are already underfunded -- and that he had been talking with the House Ways and Means chair about finding money. He hopes for advocacy from bar associations in addition to the hundreds of groups who already support it. The House chair of the Judiciary Committee is his co-filer. Studies show that a dollar spent on counsel saves a couple dollars in costs of services. Both Sen. Friedman and Rep. Garballey expressed their support for the bill.

In response to a question, Sen. Friedman replied that state revenues are doing much better than expected, and that passage of the American Rescue Plan will take a lot of pressure off the state. Rep. Garballey said that Massachusetts is expected to get \$4-5 billion. In answer to another question, Sen. Friedman said that Mass Health would be a major priority for funding, along with the Student Opportunity Act, unemployment insurance, and community hospitals. Rep. Garballey added that the Department of Children and Families and people with disabilities would also receive funding.



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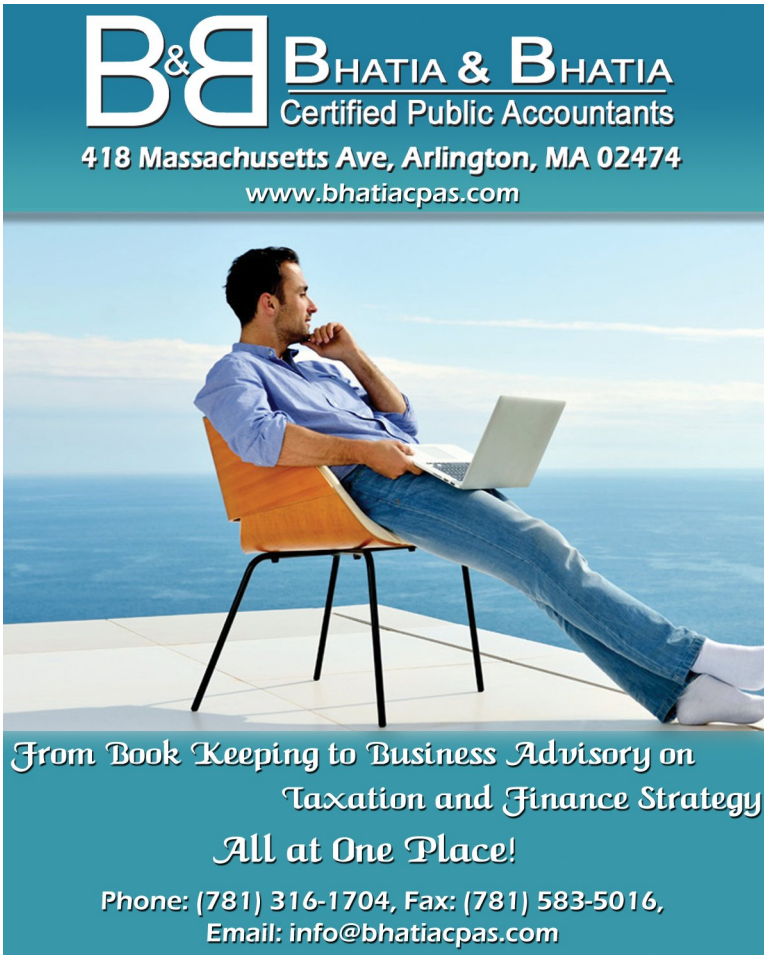
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Our fiscal year begins April 1, so now is the time to renew!
Thank you!

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ARLINGTON
Membership Application/Renewal Form

Fiscal Year runs from April 1 to March 31

Name _____ Precinct _____ Date _____
Address _____ Zip _____ Occupation _____
Telephone _____ Email _____

_____ Please indicate if you do NOT want your contact information sent to Arlington League members

_____ Basic Membership Dues..... \$60
_____ 2nd member in household \$23
_____ Student (full-time) \$20
_____ Contribution to help the LWV in Arlington, add \$ _____
TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

If \$60 is a hardship, please pay what you can and let us know that this is your dues payment.

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: League of Women Voters of Arlington
MAIL TO: Ann FitzGerald, 162 Summer St., Unit 1, Arlington, MA 02474

Please check areas of interest and activity even if you can't be actively involved THIS year.

SPECIAL LEAGUE ACTIVITIES

- Join the Board. Position: _____
- Action: phone calls _____ letters _____
- Bulletin: mailing _____ soliciting ads _____
- Membership
- Nominating Committee
- Publicity Writer
- Voter Service: Rides to the polls _____
- Candidates Night
- Voters' Guide
- Attend State League's Phonathon
- Be a discussion leader at local meetings
- Fundraising activities
- Offer meeting refreshments
- Post fliers and deliver brochures
- Host a meeting in my home
- Monitor elections for nonprofit organizations

FOLLOW ISSUES, KEEP LEAGUE AND COMMUNITY INFORMED

- Congress/Presidency/Election Process
- Discrimination/Equal Employment/Civil Rights
- Education/Child Care
- Environment/Recycling
- Health Care
- Justice/Courts/Prisons
- Land Use
- Taxation/Budgets/Deficits
- Transportation/Urban Policy
- Voting Rights
- Warrant Articles Review
- Welfare Policies/Basic Human Needs
- Women's Issues
- Zoning/Community Development/Land Use

OBSERVE AT

TOWN BOARD MEETINGS*

- Selectmen (Mondays)
- Redevelopment Board (Mondays)
- School Committee (2nd & 4th Thursdays)
- Conservation Commission (1st & 3rd Thurs.)
- Housing Authority

SKILLS LEAGUE COULD DRAW ON

- Computer database
- Graphic design
- Desktop publishing
- Web site maintenance
- Membership development
- Moderating meetings
- Fundraising
- Writing articles
- Other

BEST TIME TO CALL YOU:

(for phone tree reminders) Call before _____ o'clock

*Some of these can be seen on cable TV

Candidates' Night Thanks

The League of Women Voters of Arlington thanks Arlington Cable Media, Inc. (ACMi) for their presentation of Candidates' Night March 31, in conjunction with our co-sponsor Envision Arlington. Patti Muldoon introduced our moderator, Margaret Coppe of the League of Women Voters of Lexington. We are grateful to the candidates for townwide office who appeared:

- Eric Helmuth, John Hurd (incumbent), and Jennifer Susse for Select Board
- Jane Morgan and Jeffrey Thielman (both incumbents) for School Committee
- Kevin Feeley (incumbent), Guillermo Hamlin, and Philip Lohnes for Assessor

We are sorry that the candidates for Housing Authority, Kelda Fontenot and Nicholas Mitropoulos (incumbent), were unable to appear.

The forum will be shown several more times on Arlington's government cable channels and will be available on acmi.tv.

April 2021

League of Women Voters of Arlington
Post Office Box 461
Arlington, MA 02476

