

May 2026

Calendar

May 7	Thursday 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.
June 6	Saturday 10 a.m.	Save the date for the LWVMA Council on Zoom. Participate in LWVMA State Board Elections, hear a keynote speaker, and get statewide updates for the 2025-2026 year.



An attentive crowd (left) learns from our legislators (right) at the Legislators' Brunch April 26. Left to right are Rep. Dave Rogers, Sen. Cindy Friedman, and Rep. Sean Garballey. Story on pages 8-9.

Photos by Meredith Zona

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Co-President's Message

Recently, the town celebrated Patriots' Day weekend. While last year was our big "250" for Menotomy and Massachusetts, 2026 marks the 250th anniversary for the rest of the country. This is the time that we recognize the birth of our country and the importance of democracy.

We will see democracy in action as Town Meeting gets underway. As the League activities wind down for this season, we can also reflect upon the important work of our local, state, and national leagues in preserving the right to vote. We appreciated our state legislators who took time to be with us at Legislators' Brunch.

The board is currently planning our annual meeting to be held in June. Please watch your email for an announcement and details.

Angela Olszewski

We extend a warm welcome to our newest member, Janice Cagan-Teuber.

LWVA LEADERSHIP 2025–2026

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Meredith Zona, Organization VP	781-648-2753
Colleen Kirby, Action VP	339-222-3887
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Ann FitzGerald, Membership Director	781-646-9711
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Laura Ahner, Candidates Night	360-907-2056
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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 Rights Groups Challenge Executive Order on Mail-In Ballots as Illegal Interference in Elections

From the State League

A coalition of voting rights organizations filed a lawsuit on April 2 in the US District Court for the District of Massachusetts challenging President Trump's March 31 executive order concerning mail-in voting. The Constitution explicitly states that only Congress and the states can set the rules for elections. Nevertheless, the order attempts to displace states' mail-in voting laws by transforming the US Postal Service from a neutral mail carrier to an arbiter of who may cast a ballot by mail.



The order also requires the Department of Homeland Security to build and give to each state a list of citizens eligible to vote. Given that federal databases are out-of-date and unreliable, this risks mass disenfranchisement of eligible voters.

The suit was filed by the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, the League of Women Voters, Association of Americans Resident Overseas (AARO), US Vote Foundation, OCA – Asian Pacific American Advocates (OCA), and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

They are represented by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), ACLU of Massachusetts, Brennan Center for Justice, Legal Defense Fund (LDF), Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC), and LatinoJustice PRLDEF.

The plaintiffs and their counsel released the following statement:

“This executive order is an illegal and dangerous attempt by the Trump administration to eliminate accessible voting options and subvert our democracy by seizing control of election administration from the states and Congress. If implemented, it would disenfranchise eligible voters across the nation.

“Attempts to end voting by mail are part of the Trump administration’s larger strategy to undermine elections and subvert the will of the people. The US Constitution is clear: the states and Congress — not the president — set the rules for our elections. President Trump tried to make an end-run around the Constitution with another executive order last year and was promptly rebuffed by multiple courts. History will repeat itself.

“This executive order would upend countless state laws and procedures regarding mail-in voting. It could deny eligible voters, including voters with disabilities, US citizens living abroad, and military members and their family members, the right to vote by mail — and unknown numbers will be disenfranchised without that option. Far from improving elections, this executive order would create chaos for election officials, erode public confidence in our elections, and block Americans from exercising their most fundamental right and responsibility as citizens — voting. By taking the administration to court, we are standing up for the rule of law and the promise of our democracy.”

Editor’s Note: You can read the lawsuit at

<https://www.lwv.org/sites/default/files/2026-04/LWV-v-Trump.pdf>.



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A Year of Bearing Witness

By Elisabeth Carr-Jones

April 22 marked a year of peaceful standouts at the ICE regional office on District Avenue in Burlington, which is also serving as an immigration detention facility. Over those many weeks, what's become known as Bearing Witness Wednesdays has grown from two dedicated people to many hundreds.

A similar Witness Wednesdays, organized by the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts to support immigrant communities and focus on due process and immigration policies, is held at the Plymouth County Correctional Facility on Long Pond Road.

These and other events will continue until the federal government stops denying protections granted by the US Constitution to both immigrants and citizens. The League reminds us that when due process is denied to any group, it weakens the rule of law for all of us.



Elisabeth Carr-Jones and Alan Jones were among the estimated 720 participants at the Burlington Bearing Witness Wednesday on April 22.

Photo by Alan Jones



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Legislators Talk About Their Work at Potluck Brunch

By Kim Haase

Arlington's three state legislators spoke about their work and answered questions April 26 at the LWVA Legislators' Brunch, hosted this year by Meredith and Joe Zona. After attendees enjoyed a sumptuous potluck brunch, Meredith began by thanking Kathy and Paul Fennelly (in absentia) for their many years of hospitality for this annual event. All three legislators in turn thanked her and Joe for hosting the event.

Sen. Cindy Friedman represents Arlington, Burlington, Billerica, Woburn, and much of Lexington. She serves as Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing, as Chair of the Senate Steering and Policy Committee, and as Chair of the Special Joint Committee on Initiative Petitions -- the last of which is a particular challenge this year, with so many initiatives.

Rep. Sean Garballey joked that he was glad to be in his own district after so many years of brunches in Rep. Dave Rogers' district. He also wished LWVA member Phyllis Maddox a happy birthday. Sean is Chair of the Joint Committee on Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development. The House, he said, is debating its budget; the Senate will do so next month. 7,000 bills have been filed this session, with a deadline of July 31 to pass them. He is particularly proud of three bills he filed: one to remove Social Security numbers from death certificates; one to open past records of state institutions such as the Fernald State School to researchers, family members, and others; and one to get rid of the "r-word" in all Massachusetts General Laws, replacing it with a reference to intellectual or developmental disability. He is currently working on a dark skies bill and another to give homeless youth free IDs rather than charge them the usual \$25 fee.

Rep. Dave Rogers, who represents precincts 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12, is Chair of the Joint Committee on Higher Education. He began by congratulating Sean, who along with Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll threw out the first pitch at Fenway this year (in his capacity as Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development Chair). Dave noted that for all the legislators, their major role is providing services to constituents, which have a more immediate effect on people's lives than legislation. They also work hard to provide support for local organizations such as the Friends of the Robbins Town Gardens (in which Meredith Zona is deeply involved) and the Arlington Boys and Girls Club.

Dave has been involved with immigration issues for a long time, and managed to get \$5 million into last year's budget to hire lawyers to represent immigrants in court; it took some doing, as this was a new line item and required the House Speaker's approval. They are trying to increase these much-needed resources this year.

In his area of higher education, Dave is proud that community college tuition is now free, resulting in a major increase in student population. They have also doubled state scholarships for state universities.

(Continued on next page)

Legislators' Brunch (Continued)

The floor was then opened for questions. One major topic was primary care, which as Cindy noted, gets only 5% of health care expenditures. Asked if the unionization of primary care physicians would help, she said it would probably not make much difference, though doctors deserved it. The main need is for value-based care, transferring funds to primary care from areas of wasteful expenditure. Primary care is poorly paid, and only 3% of medical students are now choosing it. This has to change.

Asked if the state's high indebtedness level affected health care, Cindy said that MassHealth expenses, at a quarter to a third of the budget, are not sustainable; but they are funded through the budget, not through debt. Efforts at cost containment fail because of the high cost of drugs for Alzheimer's and other illnesses. Sean added that things will get worse next year, when Medicaid cuts take effect.

Asked why bills take so long to pass, Sean said that bills tend to stay in committee a long time, but the House is working to speed things along, so that bills will come to the floor after 60 days. They have also changed the rules to allow bills that have reached the conference stage to be resolved after July 31.

Asked about the issue of transparency, Cindy said that the state's bad reputation in this area is not really deserved; the state legislature puts all records of hearings and committee votes online for public tracking. Floor debates are also public. The deliberations of conference committees, however, are sensitive and are not made public; they're not hiding things, they are just trying to have safe conversations. Also, all spending is online.

Dave noted that members of the public can now testify online; they no longer have to come to Boston. Sean noted that the low percentage of bills passed in our state compared to others reflects that fact that there's no limit on the number of bills that can be filed; some states allow no more than 500, while we currently have over 7,000.

Asked about the situation with combined sewer overflows (CSOs) going into Alewife Brook from Cambridge and Somerville, Dave said that all three legislators are working hard on this violation of the Clean Water Act. He noted the turnout of 150-200 people for the spring cleanup of the Brook. Fixing the problem will be expensive (in the hundreds of millions of dollars) and disruptive. A small sign of progress is that the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) finally agreed to incorporate predicted rainfall increases into their projections. Sean commented that the MWRA does have money; it's a question of political will. Dave said that the Conservation Law Foundation has sued to mandate that CSOs be closed by a certain date.

Asked why the ballot initiative to audit the legislature was so popular, Cindy replied that an apparently appealing, simply worded ballot initiative is not a good way to pass legislation. Dave noted that the state constitution requires separation between the executive and legislative branches. Cindy added that this year's initiative to require all communications with the legislature to be made public would create serious privacy problems.

League of Women Voters Unveils New “Unite and Rise” Artwork, Inspiring Civic Engagement Nationwide

From the National League

On the heels of the one-year anniversary of the League of Women Voters’ Unite and Rise 8.5 initiative, the League announced the rollout of a new centerpiece artwork—imagery designed to showcase the power and impact of everyday people uniting and standing for democracy.

The League of Women Voters partnered with acclaimed artist Andrea Pippins (<https://www.andreapippins.com/>), whose work beautifully centers women, civic engagement, and collective power. The refreshed visual identity reflects the initiative’s core mission: to bring people together across differences and inspire collective action in support of free, fair, and accessible elections.

“The stakes for our democracy have never been higher. This new artwork is a reflection of a growing, unstoppable movement of people who believe in the promise of a democracy that is truly representative of all people,” said Marcia Johnson, Chief of Activation and Justice for the League of Women Voters. “Andrea captured the energy, diversity, and determination of the communities we serve, and this piece symbolizes the power of individuals taking action to shape their future.”

“Telling stories and creating art that explore identity, self-worth, well-being, and community is central to my creative practice,” said Andrea Pippins, visual storyteller. “The message of Unite & Rise aligns with the work I strive to make, so being invited to collaborate on this project felt like a natural fit. This piece reflects the power we hold as women when we come together, both to create and inspire change for our communities and ultimately our world.”

Unite & Rise 8.5 aims to build a movement of 8.5 million individuals to unite and rise up against the anti-democratic actions of this administration. Launched in May 2025 and running until the 2026 midterm elections, this initiative is part of our Women Defend Democracy campaign.



Membership Dues Information

By Ann FitzGerald

LWVA members no longer receive written reminders of dues renewals on April 1. The League of Women Voters of the US (<https://www.lwv.org/>) should now send out a reminder to you. Dues are divided between the national, state, and local leagues.

You should have received a notice to register at the LWVUS portal. if you didn't receive it, you can go to the portal and register yourself. Go to <https://www.lwv.org/> and click Member Log In. Your name was sent to LWVUS for renewal purposes and is listed on the membership roster. The site is secure and has a verification process.

The LWVUS portal requests dues of \$75, but you can contribute any amount over \$20.

If you prefer to renew by check, you will be a member of the LWVA only, not the state or national League. Make out a check for \$60 to "League of Women Voters of Arlington" and send it to me:

Ann FitzGerald
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Call me at 781-646-9711 or email annfitz@rcn.com if you have questions.

May 2026

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