
LWV of Denver VOTER - September

1 message

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Thu, Aug 26, 2021 at 5:00 PM

[View in your browser](#)A red rectangular banner with the text "Denver VOTER" in white. "Denver" is in a serif font, and "VOTER" is in a larger, bold, serif font.

The LWVD Newsletter
September 2021

League Year Kick-Off



Each September, we have a speaker event to energize us for the coming League year of education and advocacy. This year's event will feature Denver City Councilwoman At-Large Debbie Ortega on **Tuesday, September 21 at 5:30 p.m.** Due to the increasing concerns about the Delta variant, we will once again be meeting by Zoom. Look for the Zoom link in an upcoming email and be sure and forward it to friends and neighbors!

Deborah "Debbie" Ortega is an at-large member of Denver City Council representing the entire city. She was elected to an at-large position on Denver City Council in 2011 and was re-elected in 2015 and 2019.

We've asked her to address:

- How the pandemic has changed and impacted the direction of Denver
- How the state legislation of [HB21-1117](#) will change Denver's directive to developers and the future of the quantity of affordable housing stock
- Suncor and the environmental impact on Denver
- Her view on eliminating the at-large positions in City Council and the addition of new districts
- Important upcoming legislation to watch that would ensure a vibrant future for Denver
- How can the LWVD be involved in making a difference?

Born in Raton, New Mexico, Debbie is the daughter of a coal miner who was killed in a mine accident. Her mom raised Debbie, her four sisters and brother for a number of years before marrying her step dad. The family came to Denver when she was 13. She attended Kepner Middle School. Debbie still regularly walks Sloans Lake with her middle school friend Michelle. Following graduation from West High School, the councilwoman was called to a life of public service. She worked for former Lt. Governor George Brown and U.S. Senator Floyd Haskell before accepting a position with Denver City Councilman Sal Carpio in 1979. She was elected as Carpio's successor in 1987 and served until 2003 when term limits required she leave office. Councilwoman Ortega continued her public service after leaving office serving as the first executive director of Denver Commission on Homelessness. She serves as chair of Del Norte Neighborhood Development Corporation, a non-profit building affordable housing. She has also served on the board of directors and chair of the board of Latina Safe house.

We look forward to a vibrant talk and discussion!

Cindy Sestrich

2021 Bulb Sale—Another Success

Although we have given a few details about the bulb sale in the Thursday Updates, here is a full summary. Thank you again, Denver Leaguers. This bulb sale has been our major fundraiser for nearly 30 years, and after a few lean years here and there, Denver Leaguers have made sure that we have been able to continue its success.



We optimistically budgeted to sell \$22,000 worth of bulbs, thinking online sales might increase sales, and we came very close at \$21,168.00. We also want to thank the Jefferson County League and the Boulder County League for their participation because we keep a portion of their sales since we do the technical and physical work of the sale. This year, we had \$250 donated to buy bulbs for Beautify Denver, which is usually used for Denver Parks, but we had almost \$3000 donated directly to LWVD. Many of you donated to that total, some of you significantly, but also our customers who obviously support the League with their dollars as well as their purchases.

Although, every sale or donation is important, and I sincerely mean that, we have always recognized those Leaguers who donated, bought or sold \$200 or more. In that first category, we thank Mary Ann Casey, Patty Cordova, Paula Freese, Joan Friend, Barbara Ford, Pam Hovik, Alice Silver, and Nancy Ulrich. Those in the \$300 plus category were Lois Harvey, Jeanette Scotland, and Kay Shaw. In the \$500 plus category were Julia Brister, Twyla Boe, Fran Coleman, Anne Duncan and Peg Oldham. \$700 or more includes Sally Augden and Brenda Sanders. Andrea Mitchell totaled over \$900, Marge Fisch and Pearlanne Zelarney over \$1000, Bobbie Heisterkamp over \$2000, and Marty Sloven over \$3000. I sincerely hope I didn't miss anyone.

Thanks again to Andrea Mitchell who served as my co-chair and again did all the computer work, which is a huge undertaking. Thanks also to Office Manager Fran Coleman for taking her life in her hands to get the checks and orders from the office in the middle of major construction, and Treasurer Bobbie Heisterkamp who recorded every check and made all the deposits.

Now we look to the middle of October when over 13,000 bulbs arrive at the City Park Greenhouse. We will give members a heads up when we know more, including whether we will be limited in our number of workers as we were last year.

Marty Sloven
Bulb Sale Co-Chair

Recent Advocacy

This letter was sent to all City Council representatives with full Board approval on Monday, August 23, before the Council meeting that evening to decide on the fate of the charter amendment.

Dear Denver City Council Representative,

The League of Women Voters of Denver works to increase understanding of major public policy issues through education and advocacy and encourages informed and active participation in government.

The League of Women Voters of Denver is opposed to placing a charter amendment on the November ballot that would eliminate two City Council At-Large seats. Our opposition is based on our position on Citizen Participation in Government, which advocates for increased opportunities for citizen input into governmental process. We support Councilwoman Debbie Ortega's request for a public hearing before the proposed charter amendment is pursued further.

The League has a long history of supporting measures that ensure sound planning for Denver with increased citizen participation in the decision-making process. The process leading up to the August 23 public hearing at the

City Council meeting does not meet these criteria. Charter amendment consideration should be removed from Council proceedings until broad public discussion has taken place.

The League of Women Voters of Denver is not taking a position on the charter amendment at this time. Our opposition is to the current process because there has been insufficient discussion of a change with such far-reaching implications. Council has known for at least three years that there would be simultaneous turnover of both at-large City Council positions and a once-a-decade redistricting. Such a fundamental change to our charter and representation – a staple of Denver government since its installation in 1968 – must be widely discussed with wide-spread forums and speakers generating thoughtful consideration by the citizenry.

In the spirit of informed decision-making,

Elsie Haley, Director of Communication
Representing the League of Women Voters of Denver Board of Directors

Follow-Up After 8/23/2021 Meeting

We are pleased to report that Councilperson Kendra Black read our letter at the Council meeting. The measure was defeated 7-6 and will not move forward. We appreciated the responses we received from Council members to our letter, both in agreement and not.

Barbara Ford, who watched the discussion Monday night, said it was a testament to transparency and the value of dialogue and discussion about change and the benefits of engaging the community in the discussion. Some important points made in the meeting were that Council members-at-large are viewed by many community members as representatives of and advocates for renters who often move from one Council district to another. Some alternative suggestions were increasing council member's budgets and creating two new Council districts while keeping the two Councilpersons at-large.

There are conflicting opinions and research on whether Denver's hybrid charter with district and at-large seats cause or ameliorate access for underserved neighborhoods. In fact, Councilperson Ortega pointed out that the National League of Cities consider Denver 'hybrid' charter represents a model for other communities.

Board Member Highlight

Pam Hovik, Co-Director of Organization

Editor's Note: This is the first in a series of articles highlighting Board members. We thought you'd like to know a little more about their backgrounds and what League means for them. We've also asked them for recommendations on books, movies, or activities.



Pam Hovik joined League around ten years ago after being invited by her friend and Leaguer Barbara Allen Ford to attend a briefing. She says she, "had always relied on LWV information for election information that I used in making voting decisions. I soon learned that actually being a part of League would give me so much more information about a wide variety of issues and make me a much more informed citizen."

Pam has a Bachelors degree from Hunter College and an MBA from University of Washington in Finance and Human Resource Management. Her career spans 15 year in retailing management and 25 years in Finance, finishing her career as Operations Manager of the Internal Audit Department at US West/Qwest.

She has broad experience in the non-profit world as well, with stints on several boards including Mental Health Center of Denver (2004 - 2010), Emily Griffith Foundation (2010 - 2019), and Patriot Pairs (2017 - 2021). She is quite proud of her work with the Patriot Pairs Mentoring Program at George Washington High, which included working with one student from freshman year through her graduation this past May.

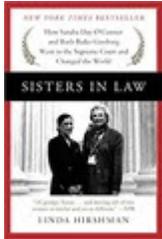
Outside of the work she is doing for League as the Co-Chair of Organization, Pam recently took up weaving and is running after a one-year-old puppy.

Book Recommendation: *Empire Of The Summer Moon*

Told from the late 19th century Comanche perspective, it gives a look at a people with a very different culture and world view from white Europeans.

LWV Fundraiser: Colorado Premier of “Sisters in Law”

Attend the Colorado premier of the play “Sisters in Law” and support the Denver League of Women Voters



On **Saturday October 2 at 2:00 p.m.**, League hopes to fill the John Hand Theater ([7653 E. 1st Place](#)) in Lowry for a performance of this play based on the bestselling book by Linda Hirshman. “Sisters in Law” recounts the intertwined professional and personal lives of Sandra Day O’Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsberg, the first and second women to serve on the US Supreme Court where they were instrumental in interpreting the constitution to expand equal treatment under the law for all, especially for women.

O’Connor and Ginsberg overlapped on the high court for twelve years, from 1993 until 2005. Johnathan Shapiro, the playwright, captures in a series of conversations between these two women of raw talent and exceptional intellect, the close collegial, but sometimes conflictual, friendship that evolved when they weren’t perched behind high benches in black robes. Both justices worked toward gender equality, but their styles were quite different. Beginning in 1981 when she became a Justice, O’Connor had spent a decade committed to slow and steady incremental change, non-threatening to the (male) establishment. However, when Ginsberg arrived believing that achieving fast, aggressive change in the social order was needed, animated conversations ensued. Later, asked when there would be enough women on the Supreme Court, Ginsberg replied “When there are nine!”

At our LWV matinee, we will be joined by the playwright for a “talk-back” after the performance. Shapiro is a former prosecutor with the US Department of Justice, an Assistant US Attorney and law professor as well as a Peabody Award-winning writer for television. He has updated “Sisters in Law” since RBG’s passing a year ago.



Seating is General Admission and there are 80 seats available at \$45 each. To purchase tickets for you and friends, please send a check, your name and email address and the name of each attendee to LWVD, [1980 Dahlia St., Denver 80220](#). Alternatively, ask people to send their individual checks and purchasers’ email addresses with each ticket holder’s name to the office. The tickets will be available at will call at the theater in the ticket holder’s name. **Tickets must be purchased by September 30.** For public safety, masks will be required at the theater and you must show proof of vaccination to enter the theater.

Sue Stark, Director of Finance/Fundraising

Organization

An Exciting New League Year

Welcome to a NEW LEAGUE YEAR as we continue to deal with the major construction at Montview Church and the pandemic.

Currently, access to our office is not possible but all work should be completed by the end of the year. We are anxious and excited to see the completed project and to return to in-person meetings. Right now all our committee meetings and interactions with membership are through Zoom. In the future, we might see a hybrid model for meetings.

Please watch your Weekly Updates and monthly *VOTERS* for information on our full schedule of activities.

From our Local Position Book: Juvenile Justice

Continuing our summaries of local Denver LWV positions, this month we will look at our position on Juvenile Justice. It is a lengthy position compared to some others, so some of the standards and important points are in the position itself. Here is the position:

Support for a municipal juvenile justice system which emphasizes meeting the needs of juveniles, while recognizing the community's need for protection; includes a separate municipal court; is fair and impartial; is staffed by personnel trained to deal with juveniles; is adequately funded; is accountable and efficient; and provides programs appropriate to the offense, which stress counseling, restitution, and diversion over detention (2000).

Since I was active on the board in 2000, I remember the hard work, research and interviews, that the committee did to come to this position, present it to the board and membership, and gain acceptance. It is our most recent local study. Several of this committee's members went on to work on a similar position that was accepted at the State level in 2001, now a part of LWVCO's program book, which summarizes the bills they have supported over the years using that position.

As indicated, the position has a lot of points. Some other items mentioned in the page of Standards which follow the position also include assessment as soon as possible; a variety of appropriate services and programs; programs sufficiently varied so that all offenders can receive what they need; a judge who is knowledgeable about those programs; and the involvement of parents, schools, neighborhood organizations and businesses.

Twenty-one years later, I commend the members who worked on this position. It has had an impact.

You can find all our local [Positions in Brief](#) on our website under [Advocacy](#). We also have the entire [Denver Local Program 2015](#), listing many of the briefings and subjects we have studied since the 1930s, available as a link at the bottom of the Advocacy page.

Marty Sloven, Past Director of Program

Summer Briefing Recap: “Bringing Your Pronouns to Life”

On Tuesday, August 24, our first summer briefing featured Marvyn Allen, the Health, Equity and Training Director of the LGBTQ advocacy group [One Colorado](#), assisted by his intern, Sharon Taylor. Allen's well-received briefing reviewed the gender spectrum, featuring helpful definitions and a list of things that we shouldn't do or say, but the major part of the briefing focused on the use of pronouns, which for many of us is the most anxiety-producing aspect of this topic.

If you are anxious about what to do about pronouns—your own and others'—Marv Allen has a lot of helpful and positive suggestions. Fortunately, the briefing was recorded and will soon be available on our website, so whether you were unable to participate the first time around or would like to review the information, you will be able to access it. It will also be available if units or groups of Leaguers want to use it in a group setting. The Non-binary Work Group also has some discussion questions, which we will make available to anyone who wants to use them.

The next task for the Non-binary group is to prepare a spring briefing. This one, for which we plan to have a panel, will focus on areas of possible advocacy that we might want to consider for the League or as individuals. Marv gave us a good list to consider, including health, food insecurity, homelessness, aging, and adoption, all of which affect the LGBTQ community in complex ways. One Colorado has done impressive work with legislation and advocacy and will be an important resource for us.

The Non-binary Work Group encourages all units to follow up this briefing with a unit meeting focused on this and our Non-binary Toolkit. If you are not a unit member, you are welcome to attend any unit meeting; if unit times don't work for you, check with Elsie Haley (haleyerg@gmail.com) and we can discuss other options.

Finally, thanks to Andrea Mitchell, who is most responsible for finding our speaker; to Pearlanne Zelarney, who did her usual great job working with the chat; and to all of you who gave us feedback about your experience with the briefing.

Elsie Haley

On behalf of the Non-binary Work Group

What Ballot Proposals Should the League Consider For Advocacy?

We are expecting many proposals affecting the citizens of Denver to be on the ballot in November. At the present time, at least six proposals have been approved. Barbara Ford details the ones we currently know about below. You can also track them online on denvergov.org. As you know, the League works hard to present the pros and cons on each initiative to the public through our publication and presentations.

We have also traditionally supported or opposed ballot initiatives under our advocacy mandate. The LWVD Board must come to consensus on whether to support, oppose, or stay neutral on the ballot initiatives. This year we are bringing members more directly into this process by asking you to suggest the initiatives you want us to consider.

League of Women Voters of Denver members should take the following actions to request Board action on a particular ballot initiative or referendum:

1. Submit a written request to info@lwvdenver.org by September 3 with "Denver Issues" in the subject line.
2. State the ballot proposal you wish the Board to consider.
3. State the action you wish the Board to take: Support, Oppose, or Remain Neutral.
4. Identify one or more local, state, or national League of Women Voter positions that provide a basis for action on this ballot issue.

Frank Bennet

November 2, 2021 Coordinated Election

Initiatives

These are the initiatives that we expect will be on the ballot; six have been officially approved.

Pandemic Research Fund

Creates a fund of 1.5% of Denver marijuana sales for research to protect the public from the spread of pandemic pathogens and preparedness including urban, economic and school planning.

Status: Petitions returned 6/24/2021, sufficient on 7/15/2021

Parks and Open Space Preservation

Requires voter approval for any commercial or residential development on land designated as a city park or land protected by a City-owned conservation easement except where consistent with park purposes or for cultural facilities. It also requires voter approval for any partial or complete cancellation of a City-owned conservation easement unless for the purpose of creating a new park.

Status: Petitions returned 6/2/2021, sufficient on 6/21/2021

Waste No More

Requires food waste producers, multi-family residential and non-residential premises to offer recycling and/or organic material diversion, education, information, and planning.

Status: Petitions returned 8/16/2021, pending

Safe and Sound Denver

Allows residential care facilities to locate in commercial and mixed-use zoning districts, removing the buffer from residential zones and schools, and increases the number from two to five unrelated adults (including their autos) who can live together in a household.

Status: Petitions returned 5/13/2021, sufficient on 6/7/2021

No Eviction Without Representation

Requires landlords to pay \$75 per year with revenues to pay administrative cost of program, legal representation to tenants facing eviction, tenant legal services and assistance coordinator and a seven-member tenant committee.

Status: Petitions not yet returned

Let's Do Better

Requires the City to enforce unauthorized camping restrictions and allows the City to establish up to four authorized camping locations on public property providing running water, restrooms, lighting to support the city's homeless population.

Status: Petitions returned 7/26/2021, sufficient on 7/28/2021

Enough Taxes Already

Reduces the total sales and use tax levied in the City and County of Denver from 4.81 to 4.5%. Requires the city to reduce the aggregate total sales and use tax to 4.5% if an election passes a tax exceeding the aggregate 4.5%.

Status: Petitions returned 7/6/2021, sufficient on 8/2/2021

Conservation Easement

Amends the City Charter definition of a conservation easement to be in accordance with Colorado Revised Statute 12-15-105 and 106, requires voter approval before construction on City park land or property with a conservation easement, and requires voter approval to extinguish a City-owned conservation easement.

Status: Petitions returned 7/2/2021, sufficient on 7/27/2021

Referendums

At its August 23 City Council meeting, Council considered two bills to change the City charter on first reading:

21-0907. Moves the general election from the first Tuesday in May to the first Tuesday in April of odd numbered years to resolve timing conflicts with federal and state deadlines for mailing ballots to military and other overseas voters

Unanimously approved.

21-0908. Changes the composition of the council by eliminating the two members at-large and by creating two additional council member districts.

Defeated

On second reading, the City Council authorized these five general obligation bills and they will appear on the November ballot. The total amount of the obligation is \$450,000,000.

21-0864. The cost of repairs and/or improvements to the Denver Facilities System

21-0865. The cost of repairs and improvements to the Denver Housing and Sheltering system

21-0866. The cost of repairs and improvements to the Denver transportation and mobility system

21-0867. The cost of repairs and improvements the Denver parks and recreation system

21-0924. The cost of repairs and improvements the National Western Campus Facilities System

Also on the August 23 agenda for Second Reading were two Charter amendments regarding the Office of the Independent Monitor. If approved, the Monitor will no longer report to the Mayor of Denver, but be appointed by the Citizen's Oversight Board with approval of Denver City Council.

21-0843. Amends the charter pertaining to the structure of the Office of the Independent Monitor.

21-0882. Amends the process for screening candidates for the position of director of the Office of Independent Monitor in conjunction with above amendment.

Barbara Allen Ford, Co-Director of Program

Welcome New and Renewing Members!

Carol Bedin, Carol_bedin@hotmail.com, 303-521-1682, 1121 S Williams, Denver, CO 80210
Jean Burke, bj.burke@comcast.net, 303-905-9518, 12 Blue Heron Dr, Greenwood Village, CO 80121
Otavaia Davis, Odavis3@msudenver.edu, 4451 S Ammons #1-307, Denver, CO 80123
Darcie O'Conner, doconn19@hotmail.com, 319-550-4242, 810 E 12th Ave, Unit 21, Denver, CO 80218
Martha Stone, doconn19@hotmail.com, 630-386-1101, 1620 Fillmore St, Apt 222, Denver, CO 80206

In Remembrance

Helen Groskopf, valued friend and colleague passed away in June, a few days shy of her 90th birthday. It is with fondness that we remember Helen. The League in Denver and Colorado benefited from her tenacity, dedication, and sense of humor. She served in several capacities in Denver including treasurer, a member of the education committee, and as a member of the Buffalo Unit. Helen also recruited members for Denver, including me. Her husband, John, was an active supporter of Helen and of League. Born and raised in New York state, Helen came west with John from New Jersey. She had more recently relocated to Texas with her companion LabraDoodle, Scout, to be near her family as she battled with dementia. John was a proud Marine Veteran. *Semper Fie*, Helen!

Joan Friend, Buffalo Unit

Please Renew Your Membership - We Need You More Than Ever

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