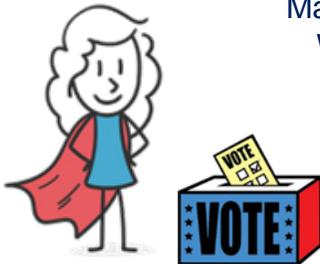


April 2025 E-Mail Bulletin



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Voting is my super power!

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2025 LWVUS Federal Judiciary Study

Nyoka Baker Chapman

Thank you so much to those who attended and participated in our local LWV of the Huntington Area's Federal Judiciary Study Survey meeting on April 5th. We are particularly grateful to our official recorder Co-President Martha Woodward, who did an excellent job of summarizing our comments for submission which we are reporting in this newsletter. Our chapter's responses will be added to other completed surveys which will create a Federal Judiciary Position to be announced at the LWVUS Council, June 26-28, 2025.

The scope of the Study per LWVUS: To develop a LWV position on the Federal Judiciary as an essential component of US democracy. The study's purpose includes, but is not limited to, addressing concerns and clarifying judicial accountability, transparency, independence, and ethics. The scope addresses the Supreme Court as well as the other Article III federal courts.

1. Transparency is essential to an effective Federal Judiciary.

Strong consensus FOR

Please add any information you wish to share about your League's answer on this question (up to 100 words).

Only downside to total transparency might be the need to protect whistleblowers, etc. Hidden material leads to dangerous speculation. Proceedings should be open and available to those appropriate.

2. Accountability is essential to an effective Federal Judiciary.

Strong consensus FOR

Please add any information you wish to share about your League's answer on this question (up to 100 words).

Is accountability ever wrong? We still do not have--and we still want--accountability on the Supreme Court.

3. Independence is essential to an effective Federal Judiciary.

Strong consensus FOR

Please add any information you wish to share about your League's answer on this question (up to 100 words).

Federal judiciary must be free of partisanship and kowtowing to individuals/groups seeking to influence them.

4. Ethics is essential to an effective Federal Judiciary.

Strong consensus FOR

Please add any information you wish to share about your League's answer on this question (up to 100 words).

No brainer!

5. There should be binding universal standards of conduct for judges and Justices at all levels of the Federal courts.

Strong consensus FOR

Please add any information you wish to share about your League's answer on this question (up to 100 words).

We actually thought there were. Expectation, once real, of self-regulation now needs a foundation. This goes with accountability, which we strongly support.

6. Court hearings, documents filed in the court, and rulings for all federal cases should be open and available to the public.

Moderate consensus FOR

Please add any information you wish to share about your League's answer on this question (up to 100 words).

To what degree is this already in place? Some seem to have access. It's a good idea except when safety and security is at issue. Protections must be in place for trial participants.

7. There should be an effective enforcement mechanism for the Federal Judiciary code of ethics at all levels.

Strong consensus FOR

Please add any information you wish to share about your League's answer on this question (up to 100 words).

It's certainly not in place. We see NO enforcement for ethics violations. C'mon! This is just common sense since we no longer believe that we can depend on self-policing from our judges.

8. An enforcement mechanism should include a process to require a judge or Justice to recuse him or herself when a reasonable litigant would believe that the judge or Justice has a bias against any party or an issue raised in the case.

Strong consensus FOR

Please add any information you wish to share about your League's answer on this question (up to 100 words).

Recusal happens now if a judge honorably self-regulates, but it is not evenly practiced. It certainly shouldn't have to be managed through the appeals process which requires time and money. Why allow this when a mechanism can be developed?

9. A judge or Justice's decision and rationale to recuse or not recuse should be publicly disclosed in writing.

NO consensus

Please add any information you wish to share about your League's answer on this question (up to 100 words).

Is there a need to reveal why? More concern over the need to recuse than a written declaration. Need to tell us why but not necessarily in print. Can speak in general terms.

Strike "publicly". The reason can be part of the court record for the court's consumption.

10. Federal judges and Justices should be subject to rigorous financial disclosure requirements, enforcement, and penalties for all financial benefits, including but not limited to income, gifts, paid speaking engagements, and book deals.

Strong consensus FOR

Please add any information you wish to share about your League's answer on this question (up to 100 words).

Yes! We don't want to stop them going out to speak and write, but ALL income must be revealed and subject to review.

Perhaps a cap/limit might be considered?

11. Stability of law (stare decisis) is a value that contributes to a strong democracy.

Strong consensus FOR

Please add any information you wish to share about your League's answer on this question (up to 100 words).

We have the Constitution to guide us. It's already decided; we are a democracy. We cannot have lawbreakers tearing at the foundation of our democracy, ripping our freedom apart.

12. Public perception of the Supreme Court's legitimacy contributes to a strong democracy.

Strong consensus FOR

Please add any information you wish to share about your League's answer on this question (up to 100 words).

Absolutely! More important now in the age of social media, "fake news", and such. Courts have self-damaged as well.

If you have further comments to share on your League's consensus meeting, either on content or process, please share it here.

We offer congratulations and gratitude to LWVUS study committee members.

Constitutional Rights, Footnote, Thoughts....

Nyoka Baker Chapman



We are a nation of laws that were created to protect the life, liberty and pursuit of happiness of our citizens. We are a nation founded in defiance of tyranny and we the people, who are guaranteed free speech, must not fail to utilize and defend our constitutional rights lest we lose them. Now is the time for the rise of our Courts, girdled with the truth of our laws, to find means to maintain order, that those in contempt shall be deprived of the audacity to oppress the lives of the American people in defiance of the US Constitution, to which an oath has been taken to preserve, protect and defend.

Statement from the National LWV

Celina Stewart, CEO of the League of Women Voters, and Dianna Wynn, president of the League of Women Voters, have released the following statement:

"It has now been 87 days since the start of the Trump administration. From the flagrant disregard for congressional authority and governmental checks and balances to defying Supreme Court orders to bring Kilmar Abrego Garcia back home, one thing is abundantly clear: ***our country is in a constitutional crisis.***

"We the people must fight back. That is why the League of Women Voters is launching a powerful new initiative, **Unite and Rise 8.5.**

"Unite and Rise 8.5 will engage and mobilize 8.5 million voters between now and November 2026 to protect and preserve our democratic institutions.

"The foundational principles that have sustained our democracy — checks and balances, the rule of law, free and fair elections — are under direct and sustained threat. In this extraordinary moment, we cannot proceed with business as usual. All Americans — no matter who you voted for in 2024 — need to come together, stand united, and fight back to save our democracy. We cannot afford to fail the generations to come."

Starting May 1, the League will launch the Unite and Rise 8.5 initiative, which aims to mobilize 8.5 million voters using the power of voter engagement as a cornerstone of our democracy. Unite and Rise 8.5 will showcase the many ways voters can drive change, including through advocacy, mobilization, civic education, and engagement. The initiative is part of LWV's [Women Defend Democracy campaign](#).

Our democracy has been tested, coming to a head in the 2024 elections, and will likely continue to be tested in the months and years ahead. As an organization dedicated to empowering voters and defending democracy, the League of Women Voters will continue our work to protect and expand voting rights and challenge those who seek to undermine democratic principles and processes.

"Women Defend Democracy" is the new programmatic focus for the League in 2025, centering people power and moving our country towards a stronger, multi-racial democracy.

For 105 years, the League of Women Voters has worked to provide voters with election information, safeguard voter access, uphold election integrity, and defend against efforts to undermine democratic principles. Today, the organization is stronger than ever, with a growing, vibrant membership of activists tackling the challenges to our democracy in every corner of our country. As the League continues to build a membership that reflects America, we recognize the continued challenges our democracy will face.

Through the “Women Defend Democracy” campaign, the League will work to:

- -Provide Democracy Education & Election Administration Support
- -Restore and Defend Voting Rights Protections
- -Abolish the Electoral College
- -Protect Democracy Organizations & Institutions
- -Fight for Reproductive Freedoms
- The League of Women Voters is well positioned to defend attacks on democracy in the coming months and years. Together, we believe in the power of women to create a more perfect democracy.

Quotas for Privatized Prisons Reveal Their Need for Detainees



Nyoka Baker Chapman

The increase in detentions without clear due process under the current administration continues to terrify and perplex. Yet, some answers are right in front of us and they have nothing to do with legal violations or errors that warrant arrest until a hearing.

Although an early executive order under the Biden administration blocked the renewal of U.S. contracts with private for-profit prisons, one of the first executive orders under the current administration reversed that order to allow the Department of Justice to again contract private prison corporations for federal use.

<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/trump-reverses-biden-order-eliminated-doj-contracts-private-prisons>

Privatized for-profit prisons do not have the same responsibilities as government-run facilities to allow access to information about their operations. They are not subject to the Freedom of Information Act that government agencies must honor that would protect transparency and accountability.

[https://brooklynworks.brooklaw.edu/bjcfcl/vol12/iss1/19/Private-Prisons-Lock-Up-Thousands-Of-Americans-With-Almost-No-Oversight | Brennan Center for Justice](https://brooklynworks.brooklaw.edu/bjcfcl/vol12/iss1/19/Private-Prisons-Lock-Up-Thousands-Of-Americans-With-Almost-No-Oversight-Brennan-Center-for-Justice)

With quotas to meet for private prison firms like GEO Group and CoreCivic, human bodies are needed to fill ‘bed guarantees’ to insure minimum occupancy rates of around 90%.

Private for-profit prison contracts often contain clauses that the contracted party (the U.S. or respective state government) keep a number of prison beds filled, otherwise the government may be required to pay a penalty.

<https://sites.tufts.edu/prisondivestment/prison-contracts/#:~:text=If%20the%20state%20fails%20to,minimum%20occupancy%20requirements%2C%20governments%20are>

In light of the recent executive order to begin renewing contracts with private prisons, new economic opportunities are being touted for investors who will profit from our federal tax dollars to fill their facilities. Both GEO Group and CoreCivic are publicly traded companies. With fewer responsibilities to transparency with use of private detention centers, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE, under the auspices of the Dept. of Homeland Security and the supervision of the executive branch) appears to be a shadow instrument of human rights violations that has taken the form of an unprecedented human trafficking for profit scheme. The Senate's Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs appears to be the only oversight there is at this time.

<https://nevadacurrent.com/2025/02/27/repub/private-prison-giant-sees-1b-ice-contract-as-start-of-unprecedented-opportunities-under-trump/>



NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

The League of Women Voters of the Huntington Area will conduct its
Annual Meeting

Saturday, May 10, 2025

The Woodlands, 1 Bradley Foster Drive,
Huntington, WV

Private Dining Room

10:30 A.M.



Annual Meeting Agenda

- I. Call To Order
- II. Roll Call/Minutes of the April 20, 2024 Annual Meeting – Maudie Karickhoff
- III. Treasurer’s Report/Adoption of Proposed Budget – Carolyn Bagby
- IV. Local Year in Review
- V. 2025-2026 Legislative Priorities
- VI. Nominating Report/Election of Officers
- VII. Announcements
- VIII. Adjournment

Please plan to join us for lunch at 12:00 Noon immediately following the Annual Meeting – Dutch Treat.

If you will be attending the luncheon, RSVP to Wendy Thomas at wxtomas@frontier.com, no later than Monday, May 5th, 2025.