



DenverVOTER

The LWVD Newsletter
February 2022

February Briefing Suncor, Air Quality, and Social Justice

Speakers:

Alex Valdez and Rebecca Curry

Tuesday, February 15

5:30 p.m. by [Zoom](#)

We have asked our two speakers to address the Suncor refinery, its effect on air quality in the Denver area, and its relevance to other threats to air quality in Colorado. They will review the history of the refinery, the changes that were able to be made to Colorado air quality through legislation and, lastly, what work still needs to be done. We hope that as members of the League of Women Voters, we will learn what we can do in the areas of air quality, climate change, and the social justice implications to both.

Located just west of I-270 on Brighton Boulevard in Commerce City, the Suncor refinery is Colorado's only major petroleum refinery. The refinery is divided into three plants: Plants 1 and 2 are a major supplier of gasoline and diesel fuel in Colorado, while Plant 3 is the state's main producer of asphalt. The refinery has been in operation since 1931. Although the refinery is located within the city, most regulatory oversight of the facility is conducted by the [Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment \(CDPHE\)](#) and the federal [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#).



[Alex Valdez](#), Chair of the Colorado House Energy and Environment Committee, was born and raised in the Denver Metro area and now resides in and represents House District 5, which encompasses downtown Denver, as well as one of the most polluted zip codes in the country. Prior to serving in the Colorado Legislature, Alex founded one of Colorado's largest solar companies. In the Colorado House of Representatives, Alex is the Chair of the Energy and Environment Committee and also serves on the State, Civic, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. As Chair of the Latino Caucus and member and former Chair of the LGBTQ Caucus, Alex is proud to bring representation to the State House and work among a diverse cohort of legislators.

Becca Curry is an attorney, policy expert, and the Colorado Policy Counsel with [Earthjustice](#)—a nationwide nonprofit environmental law organization. She focuses on advancing environmental justice, protecting community health, curbing toxic pollution, and addressing the impacts of climate change. She has a genuine passion for getting in the weeds of complex issues that impact people's lives. Prior to joining Earthjustice, she spent four years at the ACLU of Colorado and one at the ACLU of Mississippi, working to expose debtor's prisons, stop the use of money bail, and decarcerate jails. Becca graduated from the University of Colorado with a degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, and later received her law degree from Loyola University in New Orleans, where she earned the school's Public Service Award after spending time with a criminal defense team in rural Cambodia. Originally from the South, she is proud to call beautiful Colorado home and enjoys exploring the Rockies with her partner and daughter.



From Our January Briefing

Our January 18 briefing, “Preserving Access to Reproductive Healthcare,” came at a crucial time in both the national and state response to what we had come to believe was protected by constitutional law. Colorado’s history of allowing safe, legal abortions dates to 1967, six years before the Roe v. Wade decision. In 2021, about 660 bans or limitations on abortions were proposed by a number of states, and over 100 of these were signed into law. These restrictions particularly impact communities of color, people living in poverty and rural residents.

The panelists, Molly Williams from Planned Parenthood of the Rocky Mountains (PPRM) and Karen Middleton from Cobalt (formerly NARAL-CO), discussed the impact on abortion providers in Colorado of other states’ restrictions. Since SB 8 was enacted in Texas, PPRM health centers have served 572 patients from that state, their clinics reporting well over a 100% increase in serving those from out of state, some of whom drive 650 miles one way for reproductive health care. Both of these organizations have funds set aside to help with costs such as hotel stays, gas, childcare and food.

Access to medication abortions and telemedicine are offering another option for those in need of an abortion, and OB-GYNs are being educated about the safety of this choice when medical supervision of the treatment is also provided. Colorado abortion providers are not legally at risk of charges under the Texas law, according to PPRM lawyers.

Planned Parenthood, Cobalt and a sister organization, COLOR, have been instrumental in developing legislation to be proposed in Colorado in 2022 to better cement the unfettered right to legal abortion here. The Reproductive Health Equity Act is discussed below.

The [recording](#) of this briefing and Karen Middleton’s slides are available on LWVD’s [website](#).

Reproductive Health Equity Act (RHEA)

Sen. Julie Gonzales of Denver, Rep. Meg Froelich of Greenwood Village and House Majority Leader Daneya Esgar of Pueblo will sponsor the Reproductive Health Equity Act, also referred to as the RHEA, in the 2022 legislative session.

This bill asserts that reproductive rights are fundamental rights. The main points of the legislation include:

- Every person has the right to choose or refuse contraception.
- Every pregnant person has the right to give birth or to have an abortion.
- A fertilized egg, embryo or fetus does not have independent rights under state law.

This bill would define “abortion” for the first time in Colorado statute and uses non-gendered language throughout. More than 35 organization have signed on to support RHEA. Abortion access has been under attack in this country for decades; on the eve of the 49th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, this bill would ensure that our communities have access to abortion in Colorado.

LWVCO has not yet taken a position on RHEA as they wait for a printed copy of the bill to become available before making a decision.

Sue Stark

On the 49th Anniversary of Roe v. Wade

A Reflection on Sarah Weddington



After graduating from the University of Texas Law School in 1967, Sarah Weddington could not find a job with a law firm. Instead, she joined a group of graduate students at the University of Texas at Austin who were researching ways to challenge anti-abortion statutes. Weddington took on the case of Norma McCorvey who became the "Jane Roe" in Roe v. Wade (Henry Wade was the Dallas district attorney, responsible for enforcing the anti-abortion statutes). Weddington first presented the case before a three-judge district court in Dallas in 1970. Although the court ruled in her favor, the state appealed and Weddington found herself in front of the U.S. Supreme Court twice – in 1971 and in 1972. The U.S. Supreme Court's decision was handed down in 1973 and overturned the Texas abortion law.

Weddington subsequently served three terms in the Texas House of Representatives. She served in the U.S. Department of Agriculture and as President Jimmy Carter's assistant from 1978 to 1981. She was a lecturer at Texas Woman's University, as well as an adjunct professor and speaker at the University of Texas at Austin. Weddington was awarded a number of honorary degrees. She also authored a book detailing her experiences titled *A Question of Choice*. She was portrayed by Amy Madigan in the television movie *Roe vs. Wade*. Weddington died on December 26 in her home in Austin at the age of 76.

Sue Stark

Assistant Editor Marty Sloven's Note: *I was fortunate enough to be at a League convention (somewhere around 1990) at which Sarah Weddington spoke. She was unbelievably inspiring and entertaining. As the NY Times obit said, "She enjoyed the public stage."*

55th National Convention in Denver

SHERATON DOWNTOWN & ONLINE
JUNE 23-JUNE 26, 2022

LWVCO and LWVD will be hosting the biannual national convention in June in downtown Denver. It is planned to be a hybrid event with either in-person or virtual participation possible. We will need to provide volunteers for the in-person part of the event. Mark your calendars and think about being a volunteer. Marge Fisch and Nancy Ulrich are coordinating for Denver and working with Beth Hendrix at State League. More information to come!

Pam Hovik, Director of Organization

Denver Decides - Response To Our Advocacy

As we detailed in the [Dec/Jan VOTER](#), on December 1, LWVD sent a letter to all City Council members to bring attention to the fact that for the first time in 18 years, Denver 8 TV did not budget money for the production of forums on DPS candidates and ballot issues for Denver voters during this past November election. We believe it is important to continue to provide community education and dialogue. Especially as Denver grows in size and complexity, it should be important to be current and timely to all Denver voters.

Here are the three responses we received.

From **Robin Kniech**, Council at Large:

Thank you for this letter. I was aware. And though I'm aware that it was the first time it came to this, it isn't the first time it ***almost*** happened. As there were fights in prior years. As you may know, I've had the intention of looking at stronger oversight of decisions like these rather than the decisions being made unilaterally by the administration without oversight or input. Unfortunately, the pandemic delayed the intended start of the research on best practices needed to inspire ideas for that oversight, and the staff who was going to do it in 2021 fell through. It is on the work plan for 2022, although we haven't yet figured out the research point person. I've mentioned it before to my colleagues but it has been a while, so they

may not remember. If you received other replies from other council people please feel free to let them know to touch base with me.

I believe part of the challenge is that individuals like Michael Henry and Nancy Ulrich really carried this for many years, and we can't rely on individuals, we need systemic plans, policy criteria and a mechanism for consistent input even as individuals cycle in and out to ensure there is an "institutional" commitment and process to coverage like this and other decisions on how PEG channels support community and equity. It is my hope that best practice research and a stakeholder conversation will help illuminate ideas for better achieving this outcome in Denver in the future. Both INC and the League will be invited when we have the resources in place to have that conversation. Please stay tuned.

From **Kendra Black**, Council District 5:

I wasn't aware of this. The city's budgeting process starts in the spring. Have you asked Channel 8 if they are planning to ask for funds in next year's budget?

From **Candi CdeBaca's office**, Council District 9:

Thanks for reaching out and for bringing this to our attention. I passed your letter along to Councilwoman CdeBaca and she'd be happy to meet to discuss what next steps could be.

Our Local League Position on Justice

Almost a year ago, the Program Committee recommended we summarize our local Denver positions in future *VOTERs*. Barbara Ford began in April with the first part of our position on Justice concerning policing. Barbara was heading up a task force on policing after the demonstrations around the country asking to defund the police or improve policing methods. That task force is still working on this issue, and we are hopeful to strengthen that part of our position when the task force is ready. However, the position also deals with the courts and corrections.

The position reads in full: **Support for measures which will improve the selection and preparation of law enforcement officers and which will improve police-community relations; more efficient methods for handling caseload in the Denver county court system; programs which lead to better rehabilitation of offenders; ways which ameliorate the drug problems in Denver. (1971)**

The section on courts calls for the decriminalization of some charges, satellite courts, speedy trials, more effective rehabilitation methods, and "sentencing to fit the offender—not the offense," an issue in the news lately.

The section on corrections calls for increased efforts to deal with drug and alcohol problems in our correctional facilities as well as our entire society. It also calls for selective use of small community-based correctional facilities.

This completes our five major positions under Government, most of which have several parts. I hope to cover our four positions under Social Policy in one article in next month's *VOTER*.

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

LWV Colorado's Legislative Action Committee

Led by Dr. Toni Larson, the Colorado League's Director of Action & Advocacy, and Legislative Liaison Andrea Wilkins, the trained volunteer lobbyists of the Legislative Action Committee (LAC) work to influence the Colorado General Assembly on selected bills, based on League positions and values. Membership in the LAC is open to any LWVCO member, regardless of physical location.

Advocacy includes:

- testifying in legislative committee hearings
- meeting with and /or writing letters and emails to Representatives, Senators, the Governor, and the media
- encouraging League members to contact their legislators and local media

- participating in commissions and coalitions
- participating in the League's annual Legislative Conference to receive training on methods of advocacy and legislative priorities

The LAC also produces the Legislative Action Report, which is published on the LWVCO [website](#). It details all the bills the LAC is following and is a great way to follow the actions in the legislature.

The LAC meets bi-weekly on Fridays by Zoom from 9:00-11:00 a.m. The next meeting is February 4. Contact [Beth Hendrix](#) or [Toni Larson](#) if you're interested in joining the committee or attending one of their meetings.

LWVCO Healthcare Task Force

Last month, we let you know about a League of Women Voters of Colorado Task Force on Climate Emergency. At the state-wide Legislative Conference on January 15, Executive Director Beth Hendrix informed us that there is now a task force on healthcare. This statewide Healthcare Task Force will liaise with the Legislative Action Committee (LAC). Reproductive rights will be a subcommittee. All are welcome! The first meeting is February 8 at 2:00 p.m. Register [here](#).

Here is some more general information about the LWVCO task forces:

LWVCO ISSUE AREA TASK FORCES

Purpose: to promote the collective actions necessary to advance equity and justice in Colorado's systems and policies in issue areas aligned with League positions.

Task Forces are created and maintained to inform and engage members across the state to promote collective actions around an issue area strongly aligned with a stated League position(s). By increasing the understanding and importance of various issue areas through education, Task Forces influence public policy and legislation at all levels through advocacy, while speaking with one League voice.

Task Forces coordinate with local Leagues and other organizations advocating for policies in the associated issue area. Task Forces organize webinars, workshops and presentations on major topics of interest and promote justice and equity in the issue area through advocacy at all levels of government. Task Forces are closely aligned with the efforts of the LWVCO Legislative Action Committee and the LWVUS to ensure cohesion.

A Tribute

Long time Denver League member Mary Hess passed away in December at the age of 93. She made many contributions to both the LWV Denver and LWV Colorado over the 49 years that she was a member. Most recently she was a member of the Observatory Unit.

Mary joined the League in 1972 when she moved to Denver from Bellevue, Washington with her husband and four children. She served on the Education Committee during the years of court ordered desegregation and mandated bilingual education. As Chair of the Education Committee, she helped put together a pamphlet on desegregation entitled 'Composite View of Denver's School Desegregation' for LWV members as well as the Denver community. She was a member of PLUS (People Let's Unite for Schools) whose goal was peaceful integration of the schools, and she gave many talks on the issue.



Mary served on the LWV Denver Board as a Vice-President and was President from 1981-83. During this time, she was appointed by Mayor McNichols to serve on a Commission to study Denver's election methods. This committee studied election procedures in several cities, which ultimately resulted in major changes to Denver's election process.

In 1985, she was hired as the staff lobbyist for LWV Colorado and held that position for 10 years. After retiring as lobbyist, she served on the Legislative Action Committee for a few years, focusing on welfare and civil rights issues. In 1987 she was a member of a committee for Legislative Reform which resulted in the passage of GAVEL: Give Every Legislator a Vote. She spent many hours petitioning to get this issue, as well as others that the League supported, on the ballot.

Her passion for the League and the issues that League supported never waned.

A celebration of Mary's life will be hosted on a Zoom call on February 20 at 3:00 p.m. Please RSVP with your e-mail address to Jenny Hess (jenny.c.hess@outlook.com) to be sent a link to join. Her obituary can be found [here](#).

Diane Young

Board Member Highlight

Joan Friend, Membership Chair

Editor's Note: This is the fifth 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 to them. We've also asked them for recommendations on books, movies, or activities.



I joined the LWV Denver in 1996, at the urging of my friend and colleague, Helen Grosskopf. I had been familiar with the League and the 19th Amendment for a long while. Our maternal grandmother used to get very irritated with the "pole tax" in Texas! In 1993, I was involved with my mother, Patsy Friend, during the celebration of the Colorado Centennial honoring when men elected to grant women the right to vote here in 1893! Our involvement was with many other organizations. We were in the Soroptimist Club of Denver, an organization that encourages women's empowerment through education.

Outside of League, my default is always to read. However, I do get out into my neighborhood in West Highlands as much as I can. I also have been fortunate enough to travel a bit. I was in Moscow and surrounding countryside in 2018 for the marriage of one of my nephews.

I am a Denver native. I have lived in Iowa and Illinois as well. I spent many summers in West Texas with family and friends. I have been through every state. I know we are lucky to have good Denver water. In many places I couldn't drink the water because "it didn't taste good," and I could taste the sulfur in the air from the coal plants. As a registered dietitian, children taught me about resilience and bravery. Whenever I hear the National Anthem of the United States, I think of those men, women and families who have served our nation on our behalf, and I think of the bravery of the children who have taught me well.

I would recommend reading young adult literature. I started reading the same books as my grand nieces and nephews so I can keep up with them. I also reread literature I read when I was young because they are reading it now. Including "Romeo and Juliet"!

In Memoriam

We were saddened to hear of the death in December of long-time League member **Jackie Humphrey** from complications from heart surgery. Jackie was a member of Observatory Unit and more recently Cheesman Unit.

Our hearts go out to League Leader **Nancy Ulrich** who sadly lost her son Fred, a resident of New York State, in October, and then in December, faced the death of her husband of 55 years, Ted. Our sincere sympathy to Nancy and her family.

Grocery Rewards

Grocery card revenue continues to be an important fundraiser for the League. Consider these two options to contribute - or both.

Safeway Community Giving Cards

These cards can be reloaded for any amount and make shopping easier and are the perfect gift for every occasion!

The cards are \$10.00 and can be purchased by sending a check to LWV Denver at 1980 Dahlia Street, Denver, CO 80220.



Please contact Nancy Ulrich, 303-359-1484, with questions.

King Soopers Rewards Program

Instead of a gift card program, the King Soopers Rewards program uses their SooperCard to send rewards to participating not-for-profit organizations. If you designate LWV Denver as your preferred organization, we will get a quarterly check for 5% of all the groceries, gas, and pharmacy purchases when you use your member SooperCard (or phone number as "alt id"). To enroll, go to <https://www.kingsoopers.com/communityrewards>. You will be able to continue to either use your SooperCard or your phone number as the "alt id" in this program. No need for a separate gift card.

Welcome New and Renewing Members!

Frances Dukehart, Dee@DeeDukehart.com
Lisa Haddox, lisa.m.haddox@gmail.com
Sharon Hicks, sharon.hicks1908@gmail.com
Abbey Hruby, moffitt.abbey@gmail.com
Sheila McAuliffe, mtnbcb@comcast.net
Sharron Pettiford, no email
Nancy Reid, nanr@att.net
Susan Smith, Suemadillo@me.com

Please Renew Your Membership or Become a Member

If you received this email and are not a member, please consider joining us. If it's time to renew your membership, consider doing it on-line. Follow this [link](#) to join or renew at one of our membership levels. Membership dues are tax deductible.

Regular Individual Membership	\$60
Sustaining membership (includes an additional donation)	\$125
Two regular members at the same address	\$90
Two sustaining members at the same address (includes an additional donation)	\$150
Member needing assistance with paying dues	\$5
Part or full-time student	\$10

Members: Forward this *VOTER* and encourage your friends and neighbors to join!

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Done