



# The Anchorage VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ANCHORAGE  
PO Box 101345  
Anchorage, AK 99510-1345  
907-274-8477

September 2020

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Email:

[league@lwvanchorage.org](mailto:league@lwvanchorage.org)

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Hi League Members:

*October is upon us and the general election is less than one month away. We're sure all of you will be happy when there will be no more campaign ads on TV, fliers received in the mail and campaign workers knocking on your door. . . .*

**On a more positive note — VOTE!!!**  
Vote by Absentee Ballot, in-person at an Early Voting Center or in-person at your Polling Place on Election Day



### **ABSENTEE VOTING**

If you requested an absentee ballot, you should have received it this week. Additional Ballot Drop Boxes will be available for voters who are voting by mail but prefer to

save the price of a stamp or those who want to be certain that the mail slow-down does not affect their ballot. Ballot Drop Boxes will be located at the following locations:

- ◆ Region Elections Office - 2525 Gambell St, Anchorage
- ◆ Anchorage City Hall - 632 West 6th Avenue, Anchorage
- ◆ Begich Middle School - 7440 Creekside Center Drive, Anchorage
- ◆ O'Malley's on the Green - 3651 O'Malley Road, Anchorage
- ◆ Chugiak-Eagle River Library - 12001 Business Boulevard, Eagle River

### **EARLY IN-PERSON VOTING**

Begins Monday, October 19th. To check the Early Voting Center locations and hours of operation and other important election information go to: [elections.alaska.gov](http://elections.alaska.gov)



### **POINT OF INFORMATION**

As of Monday, October 5th, the Division of Elections sent out 81,681 absentee ballots. A total of 97,472 voters have requested an absentee ballot—, 65% of Alaskan eligible voters.

sometimes it takes a four letter word



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

[www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org) [www.vote411.org](http://www.vote411.org)

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Any person 16 years of age and older, male or female, may become a League member.

**Update**  
**LAWSUIT - CHALLENGING THE WITNESS SIGNATURE  
REQUIREMENT WHEN CASTING AN ABSENTEE BALLOT  
DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

The Alaska Supreme Court plans to hear arguments on Monday, October 15th. Attorneys for the State asked the court to review the matter after Superior Court Judge Dani Crosby ruled enforcement of the witness requirements during a pandemic “impermissibly burdens the right to vote.” Judge Crosby did not immediately put into effect an order eliminating the requirement and had asked the two sides to propose how the Division of Elections should implement the decision.

The two sides agreed to a stay while the Supreme Court considers the matter with the state agreeing to make preparations should the state lose the case. Attorneys for the plaintiffs (the League of Women Voters of Alaska is one of four plaintiffs) argued the witness requirement is a bar to voting for those who don’t live with someone who is at least 18 years old and can act as a witness. Attorneys for the State content a change in process now could create voter confusion and distrust in the Division of Elections.

To read the entire lawsuit, visit:

[https://www.acluak.org/sites/default/files/witness\\_signature\\_complaint.pdf](https://www.acluak.org/sites/default/files/witness_signature_complaint.pdf)

*NOTE: Minnesota and Rhode Island suspended their requirement for a witness signature for the November 2020 election following separate lawsuits. Anchorage does not require a witness signature for municipal elections. Juneau will not require a witness signature beginning with its*

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

*(submitted to the Anchorage Daily News on October 2, 2020)*

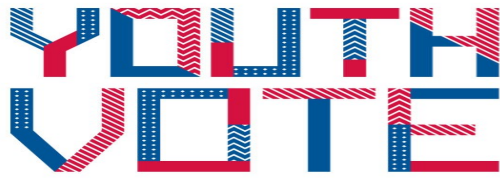
**Candidates Political Affiliation on the General Election Ballot**

The League of Women Voters of Anchorage, a non-partisan organization, is very concerned about the Division of Election’s decision to remove a candidate’s political affiliation from the general election ballot. If an independent or Libertarian candidate chose to run in this year’s Democratic party primary and subsequently won the nomination for that race, the new ballot layout only states “Democratic Nominee” and does not include the candidate’s party affiliation. Changes to the ballot format/layout, especially in the area of candidate information, should always go through a legal review to assure requirements mandated by state law are being met.

Our main concern is the impact the new ballot language will have on Alaskan voters. News articles have focused on the effect the change has had on candidates. Being an informed voter is a fundamental component to voting. Unfortunately, many voters rely on the information on the ballot to make their choice. By eliminating the political affiliation of the candidate, the voter is being deprived of critical information to make an informed choice. This is especially true of voters in the military who are overseas or stationed in another state, students attending an out-of-state college and other voters who are temporarily out of state during the election. Lack of critical candidate information may leave many voters feeling disenfranchised.

The League mission is to keep the voter at the center of the election process. In other words, the League must advocate for the voter. Therefore, the League of Women Voters of Anchorage strongly opposes the ballot language change due to the negative impact on the Alaskan electorate. We urge the Division of Elections to seek legal review for the 2022 elections.

Cari Zawodny, Vice President LWV of Anchorage, on behalf of the Board of Directors



## Youth Vote 2020!

The Youth Vote Planning Team has been hard at work creating a new way forward during the pandemic. Our usual in-person events with high attendance are no longer possible, but we feel confident that our solution maintains our values of “by youth for youth” and meets the following objectives:

- ◆ provides valuable information to ASD students,
- ◆ does all we can to ensure bi-partisan participation from candidates, and
- ◆ does not simply translate all live events into virtual ones.



With that in mind, Youth Vote will produce an informative video with recorded messages from candidates for US House and Senate speaking directly to the ASD student body. We will work with Alaska Teen Media Institute and KTUU to create the video and a plan for streaming/sharing to ASD students and the community at large.

As usual, we have been assured full support from the ASD, who will share our content with teachers and students. This will include making our mock-election available on distance learning platforms.

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### It's Bullying Prevention Month

#### For Youth by Youth!

**October 14, 4:00 p.m. Eastern Time**

In another partnership, Facebook and International Bullying Prevention Association join youth from Alaska and Tennessee and hear what challenges they're facing during the pandemic, how they are coping, and what they need from other youth and adults in their communities to feel connected, engaged, and empowered to move forward.

**LWV Youth Vote is co-hosting the presentation and also giving the presentation.**

To register go to: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZl0cuqgqjluE9JB9wq8bWlVzYmmjrJSSyAY>

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*Finally, we continue to receive financial support from the Division of Behavioral Health in the form of a pass-through grant from Spirit of Youth. This funding, while vital to our programming, does not meet all of our financial needs.*

*Please consider a financial donation to Youth Vote.*

***Make check payable to LWVAK designated to “Anchorage Youth Vote.”  
P.O. Box 101345, Anchorage, AK 99510.***

## **UAA Democracy & Civic Action Week - September 2020**

*The grand prize winner, the High School winner and the College Division winner essays are reprinted in this newsletter. Please read what our youth have to say about "Democracy." Judges included Cari Zawodny, Vice President LWVAnch, and Peg Tileston representing Alaska Common Ground and also a LWVAnch member.*

### **Grand Prize Winner**

Moriah Parker

### **Protesting for Democracy**

The world is changing. You only need to turn on the news for a few minutes to see this undeniable fact. To understand what has been happening we need to look back to May 25, 2020. It was on this date that George Floyd, an African American man, was killed by a Minneapolis police officer. During Floyd's arrest, the officer pinned Floyd's neck to the ground for eight minutes and 46 seconds (Carrega and Lloyd). Videos of the arrest showed Floyd calling out, "I can't breathe," and he was eventually murdered by way of asphyxiation. Police brutality against Black people and other minorities has plagued America for years. After Floyd's death on May 25<sup>th</sup>, protests against police brutality and in support of the Black Lives Matter movement started anew. Since then there have been protests in every state in America and in more than 60 countries (Burch et al.). This movement has been decades in the making and George Floyd's murder was the final straw.

The First Amendment of the United States Constitutions says it is "-the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances." The protests that have shaken the country are proof of the fact that the people of America are what make America function. Every single person who has gone out to protest for Black Lives Matter has exercised their right to peacefully assemble and to petition the government for change. The Black Lives Matter protests have made one thing abundantly clear. These protests are a vital sign that if want a healthy democracy, we will have to fight for it. And in order to have a healthy democracy and a system that will support its people we can no longer support a corrupt system that allows bigoted people to abuse their power.

It was on June 19, 2019, that Antwon Rose, an unarmed 17-year-old Black boy was fatally shot in the back by Pittsburgh police Officer Michael H. Rosfeld. Rosfeld was found not guilty and cleared of all charges ("White Police Officer"). The democratic system in America is not one that allows its people to shape their own future. In Rose's case, he never even got to see his future. This can no longer be allowed to happen. This is why the Black Lives Matter protests are so important. It has taken almost another year, and George Floyd's death, along with many others, to finally give this movement momentum enough to sweep through our nation, and even the world.

George Floyd was not the first Black man to be murdered by police. And time has only proven that he was not the last. But throughout everything the strongest in this country have continued to come together to fight for change, to transform the system to one that will one day fight for us as hard as we have fought for it. The world is changing. Only by continuing to protest against the injustices of police brutality by fighting for reform and democracy can we change the world for the better.

*(The sponsor of the Grand Prize was The Alaska Landmine.)*

## High School Division Winner - Maria Stoyanovska

### *Society's Treasure*

As a nation we know what democracy is, but do we *appreciate* it enough? Do we really know what a *vigorous* and *wholesome democracy* is? A diverse amount of historical figures throughout world's history have helped shape the true purpose of democracy. Humans have been designed to survive physically, emotionally, financially, and intellectually. We each have unique contributions, talents, and goals. We all strive for success, unfortunately even though not everyone reaches their full potential, but continue to work and provide for themselves and others around them. Democracy is what brings out the best and most qualified aspects in each and everyone of us; it brings us all together in unity *while* presenting our own differences in society.

So *what* is it that makes us, as citizens, value democracy? This system of government is known to be one of the most popular forms of government there is. In order for democracy to be beneficial for everyone, the nation must provide sovereignty for all citizens. The voice of the people in a nation matters significantly. Social activist, Mahatma Gandhi once stated, "*Democracy necessarily means a conflict of will and ideas, involving sometimes a war of the knife between different ideas.*" Everyone of different color, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexuality, and disability, has a both a valued and respected voice. Speeches, movements, and protests are all aspects of a democratic society for everyone's viewpoint to be heard, valued, and taken in consideration.

The future of every citizen in a democratic government is predominantly built on high quality education. A successful career is paramount to improving society's both social and economical needs, not just in our own nation, but the whole world. Education is imperative, and offers innumerable benefits to everyone and everything. Former American senator, Edward Everett, mentioned, "*Education is a better safeguard of liberty than a standing army.*" A powerful education is one of democracy's biggest weapons. In addition to a prosperous society and economy, ethical education can also provide us with a cleaner and safer environment.

The state of independence is one the meanings of democracy. Liberty is what provides us this freedom. In the Declaration of Independence written by one of our Founding Fathers, Thomas Jefferson, he clearly stated that "*We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness ...*" This statement focuses on the fact that all men and women have a right to freedom, and equal rights.

All things considered, in the United States, we are gifted with the ability to bring out our perspectives, without being penalized. We as citizens have been given the opportunity to express our beliefs and stances. Although we have this potential, our opinions should not aggravate other citizens. In democracy, there is a balance between agreeing and disagreeing. Everyone should respect each other's beliefs, but you do not necessarily have to accept them. You have the full right to be incredulous. Our bright future is built on democracy, and we should all engage in the process of sustaining a flourishing society filled with intelligent and persevering people.

*(\$250 prize donated by the League.)*

## College Division Winner - Jasmine Alleva

### *The Anatomy of a Healthy Democracy*

*“The biggest threat to democracy is indifference.” Barack Obama* “With liberty and justice for all...” so rang in unison from every voice of every student raised in the United States at the genesis of the school day. Most kids trail off on those last words, eager to sit down and re-engage with whatever activity had their attention before being interrupted by the morning announcements. Except one class. The year was 2001. That fateful day in September had passed a week prior and when the Pledge of Allegiance echoed through the halls of Inlet View Elementary School, Ellyn Derman’s 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class took a deep inhale before the last five words, reserving breath for shouting, “WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL” and they meant it.

I was one of those students. My teacher, and the events that took place on September 11, 2001, introduced me to the idea of democracy. In that school year, the memorization of the Gettysburg Address was assigned, further instilling the idea of democracy, eloquently stated by President Abraham Lincoln that the ideal we hold to be the foundation on which this country was built is a government “of the people, by the people, and for the people” and it “... shall not perish from the earth.” I knew then, as I know now, that “the people” meant me, my classmates, and all of the other citizens who call the United States of America their home, and as part of that “people”, it is partly my responsibility to ensure democracy will not only resist perishing, but survive and prosper.

A government of the people, by the people, and for the people relies on free and open elections to assert representation and power. The act of voting within said elections is the backbone of democracy, entrusting the people to elect and entrusting the elected representatives to serve. And if this is the backbone, then the truest and most accurate vital sign of a healthy democracy is a government’s engaged citizens, which serve as the core of that very democracy, keeping a country vigorous and productive.

An engaged citizen is one who not only votes but is literate to the power voting holds. In an ever-changing atmosphere, one that is riddled with inequalities and threats to the democracy we hold dear, the value and significance of engaged citizens has become increasingly critical. This surpasses the scope of documentation status, but rather means every person who lives within the border of that democracy. As time presses on, the values, mores, norms and ethics of that democracy may change, thus representation, laws, as well as society as a whole, will change. To procure these changes, however, engaged citizens need to act, voice their opinions and beliefs, and participate in public rhetoric and discourse.

This necessitates an educated and informed population that possesses and expresses tools of diplomacy and empathy. It also calls for a sense of hope; optimism in the face of the nihilism and cynicism that creeps in when people feel dejected. When a democracy fails to maintain its health, its citizens will become polarized and lost within the hopelessness of it all, provoking inaction, as well as disappointment in a system that supposedly grants power to the people. It is this indifference that will see democracy to its grave.

Engaged citizens beget engaged citizens, kindling a chain of power that illuminates the depths of democracy. The manifestation of both diplomacy and empathy asks the engaged citizen to consider all sides of a situation and then act in an effective and understanding way. While things change, it is crucial for citizens to support a system that grants people the power to shape their own futures by being active participants in that system – not only through voting, but by staying informed, informing others, and maintaining a will for improvement. To create active participants, a sense of belonging is necessary; us, together, against a problem rather than us, against each other fighting a problem.

Vitality is defined as “the state of being strong and active”, but also as “the power giving continuance of life”. To create engaged citizens, then, the vitality of democracy – its heart that generates the continuance of its existence – is education. It is the cultivation of critical thinking, processing thought, and exercising it in discourse. It is a classroom of third graders led by a teacher who informs them that “LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL” means for everyone; a government of the people, by the people, for the people.

*(\$250 prize donated by the League.)*