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The Latest from the League

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2024



Capitol Pathways Alumni Connections

Citizens League's Capitol Pathways program is a unique program that opens access to policymaking and public service to the next generation of leaders who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Now in its ninth year, our program has served 300 young civic leaders.

Capitol Pathways is a paid internship and professional training program, but we don't stop there! Citizens League's commitment to partner with program alumni remains strong even after they graduate. We continue to engage our alumni network, connect them with one another, and promote opportunities for continued professional development and support.

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Welcome to our 2024 Spring Newsletter!

Engage. Activate. Impact. Build.

During my first seven months as Executive Director of Citizens League, I've often found myself going back to those four words and how they ground our work.

In this newsletter, you'll find updates on how we're **engaging** diverse voices and perspectives, **activating** deeper participation in public policy, **impacting** critical policy issues, and **building** for the future. I hope it leaves you feeling inspired, energized and optimistic!

A few additional exciting updates:

- Our team was thrilled to welcome **Luna Allen-Bakerian** as our new **Director of Public Policy** this spring! Luna brings deep experience in policymaking and inclusive civic engagement, and she'll help guide our policy work and community events.
- In March, we joined Braver Angels and 20+ organizations – including the state party chairs of the Minnesota GOP and the Minnesota DFL – to kick off a new campaign called **"Reduce the Rancor,"** which aims to reduce hostile political polarization and encourage civil, respectful discourse.
- We continued our **Interconnected partnership with the Center for Rural Policy and Development**, working to bridge divides between rural and urban communities. (See page 2 for more information!)

Thank you for your trust and investment in Citizens League.

Since 1952, we've been fostering nonpartisan, civil, fact-based dialogue; creating impactful policy solutions; and empowering people to engage directly with their government.

This work remains urgent and important, and Citizens League will continue leading the way.

Jake Loesch,
Executive Director





Capitol Pathways Celebration

Join us to celebrate and be inspired by the students of our Capitol Pathways Program! Supporters, internship hosts, and alumni will gather on **Thursday, June 6** to recognize the achievements of this year's cohort.

Capitol Pathways Celebration
Mount Zion Temple
1300 Summit Ave, St. Paul, MN
Thursday, June 6; 3:00-5:00 pm

Find details and register online here: citizensleague.org/CapitolPathwaysCelebration



Civic Celebration!

Hundreds gathered at our annual **Civic Celebration** to catch up with old friends, meet new people, and celebrate our honorees, Cyndi Leshner and Laysha Ward, for their community engagement, emphasis on inclusivity, and civic leadership.

New this year, we recognized an emerging leader with the **Civic Changemaker Award**. Congratulations to **Sina War**, Director of Engagement and Inclusion with the Minnesota Farmers' Market Association for being the inaugural recipient! Sina's commitment to improving local food systems is making a real difference in Minnesota.

See more photos and videos: www.citizensleague.org/civiccelebration

Save the date - **April 10, 2025** - and plan to join us next year!

Interconnected: Rural-Urban Conversations

Since 2020, this online series – hosted in partnership with the Center for Rural Policy and Development – has been helping bridge the divide between urban and rural communities in Minnesota by discussing shared challenges and opportunities, and exploring how to design a future and systems that incorporate the unique needs

of communities across the state. Hundreds of Minnesotans have joined us in recent months for conversations about workforce participation, child care, and mental health.

Save the date for Wednesday, May 22 for the next Interconnected conversation about housing!

Capitol Pathways Alumni Connections

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One way we engage alumni is through a joint partnership that Citizens League has established with **Wilder Foundation** and **Nexus Community Partners**. All three organizations run complementary programs that share the common goal of building power in BIPOC communities and engaging them in public policymaking. Since 2018, with funding support from the **McKnight Foundation**, we have collaborated to offer ongoing professional development opportunities, resources for self-care, networking events and micro-grant funds to support community work to our collective alumni network of over 600 BIPOC leaders. Types of projects include:

- Community Microgrants: Advance intentional work on an issue of concern in their own community such as building financial literacy among African American youth or promoting healing practices in the Hmong American community.
- Alumni Skill-Shares: Create and lead trainings to share their knowledge and skills with other alumni.
- Healing Microgrants: Center self-care and healing by investing in their personal well-being.
- Professional Development: Build skills and expand capacity through conferences, workshops, coaching, and certifications.

Additionally, new this year, Citizens League is partnering with the **Minnesota Governmental Relations Council** (MGRC) to pilot a professional mentorship program for Capitol Pathways alumni to learn from their members and further explore careers in government affairs and policy.

Through our sustained commitment to building the capacity of BIPOC leaders in our alumni network over the long-term, Citizens League continues to advance more equitable policymaking that is representative of our diverse communities and, with you, to build a better Minnesota.



As a certified financial advisor with Thrivent Financial, 2019 Capitol Pathways alum Peneal Tiruneh understands that knowing how to manage money wisely is key to feeling empowered. With a microgrant from our alumni skills-share initiative, Peneal developed and led a financial literacy workshop for young professionals in our alumni network. Participants walked away with a better understanding of how to set their own financial goals and make plans to achieve them.



Capitol Pathways program alumni are changing the face of policymaking systems in Minnesota. Two alumnae were recently elected to serve on the Minneapolis and St. Paul City Councils. Other alumni have gone on to launch their careers in roles such as government relations

positions at local organizations and Legislative Assistants in the Minnesota House & Senate. Alumni are also impacting policy at the federal level including in the office of Senator Tina Smith and in the U.S. House of Representatives. One alum even currently works in government affairs for TikTok!



Become a Sustaining Supporter!

Check out our new online donation form at citizensleague.org/support or use the QR code and set up your recurring donation today!

In today's deeply polarized and divisive political environment, the space to unite across differences and rebuild trust is more important than ever, and Citizens League is committed to continuing our legacy of nonpartisan civic engagement and civil, fact-based dialogue. We can't do this work without the support of donors like you!

Your recurring donations help provide a reliable source of funding, allowing us to continue our work with confidence and maximizing your impact.



Mind Opener

Mind Openers are a unique opportunity to show your organization's commitment to inclusive civic engagement that aims to make Minnesota the best place to live and work for everyone.

In a world of information overload, **Citizens League Mind Openers** aim to go beyond the headlines, the clickbait, and the sensationalistic social media posts to help attendees develop a deeper understanding of the nuances of complex policy issues and explore potential solutions.

Have a great topic in mind? Citizens League will manage all logistics and we'll collaborate with you to refine your preferred topic, schedule a date for your online session, and invite a diverse panel. **Reach out for more details: info@citizensleague.org**