



Common ground. Common good.

The Latest from the League

FALL NEWSLETTER 2024



Voting in the time of exasperation

Feeling disillusioned this election cycle? You're not alone. Minnesota boasts one of the highest civic participation rates in the US, but we are not immune from the growing national exhaustion with our political systems, governance, and elections.

A 2024 [Braver Angels report](#) found that across partisan lines, United States voters agree on core principles for trustworthy elections – that voting should be easy, cheating should be hard, that we deserve an equal say in our governance through free and fair elections, and the critical nature of election results being honored.

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Welcome to our Fall Newsletter!

2024 has been a year of imagining, planning and big thinking for all of us at Citizens League – focusing on new projects, new events, and deepening community and civic engagement.

In partnership with the Association of Minnesota Counties and League of Minnesota Cities, we are proud to be leading policy research and community engagement to better understand the **unique challenges and barriers to public service**, and – even more importantly – **find pragmatic solutions and opportunities** to strengthen local government in Minnesota and support the dedicated people delivering public services statewide. Learn more about this work and ways to engage at citizensleague.org/publicservice.

We also recently launched a research project exploring **traffic stop policies across Minnesota**, with generous support from the Saint Paul & Minnesota Foundation. With more than 400 different law enforcement agencies in Minnesota and limited statewide requirements for collection of traffic stop data, it's difficult to find common ground and identify what reforms or changes could have the greatest impact on public safety. Our research aims to change that, with a final report anticipated in spring 2025.

At Citizens League, we see our role as accelerators: helping people **understand** the issues, **creating opportunities** to be active in the public policy making process, **empowering the**

next generation of young leaders, and **building relationships** and partnerships that **challenge the status quo** of political division and polarization.

In this newsletter, you'll learn more about how we're doing all of that – and how you can stay engaged and support our work.

Thank you for being a part of this one-of-a-kind Citizens League community.

Jake Loesch
Executive Director



Mind Opener

Mind Opener events are back!

Have you heard? Citizens League's long-running series of policy learning events - *Mind Openers* - is back!

At *Mind Opener* events, we bring together experts who go beyond the headlines, clickbait and sensationalistic social media posts to share diverse perspectives and help us all develop a deeper understanding of complex public policy issues.

We kicked off the fall series in September with a lively discussion about the implementation of Minnesota's new Paid Family Medical Leave policy.

We invite you to join us at one of these upcoming events:

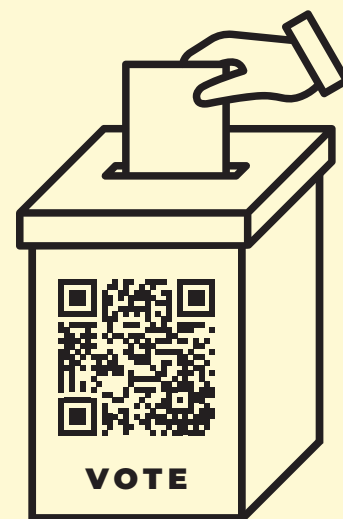
- **Tuesday, October 15, 8:00-9:30 am – Trustworthy Elections: Do conservatives and liberals agree?** – In the midst of another challenging and hyper-polarizing election season, join us to hear from Braver Angels and others about how to enhance trust in our elections.
- **Monday, November 25 – “From Conflict to Convergence”** – Authors Mariah Levison and Robert Fersh will share lessons from their recent book – a guide to de-escalating conflict and constructively engaging with others to find better solutions to problems.
- **Coming in November – Geographic Disparities in Healthcare** – Sponsored by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota, this session will bring together key legislators and health leaders to discuss ways to promote healthcare access for all Minnesotans.

All Mind Opener events are free and open to everyone
Registration information here: citizensleague.org/events



Voter Information

Check your voter registration, know your rights, download a sample ballot to prepare, and learn more about election judge service at: mnvotes.org



Capitol Pathways reaches 10-year mark

Now entering its tenth year, this one-of-a-kind program is changing the face of policymaking in Minnesota. Our Capitol Pathways program empowers and engages Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) college students to learn and gain experience in policy careers through paid internships with government offices, nonprofits, corporations, and law firms. To date, 300 students have participated and over 110 organizations have partnered with Citizens League to host interns.

NOW is the time to apply to host or to participate in the 2025 cohort!
More information at: citizensleague.org/capitolpathways

Voting in the time of exasperation *(continued)*

As we move through the division this election season, I encourage you to consider these individual and collective civic values as nonpartisan groundings to motivate and energize you:

- **Representation:** At a minimum, our representative democracy depends on precisely that – our votes matter as a representation of our voices, our values, and our districts. Even as we navigate frustrations with how our institutions function, we can be part of the most accurate representation of viewpoints.
- **Participation:** Voting and civil rights leader Vernon Dahmer said, “If you don’t vote, you don’t count.” Casting a ballot honors those who have fought and died and continue to fight for our right to vote and be active in our own governance.
- **Neighborhood:** The feeling of being in a local polling place could be exhilarating, nerve wracking, welcoming. Whether it’s election day at a community center or early voting at a local government office, a robust part of civic life is being out of our bubble and among neighbors, children, and those volunteering time to help us cast our ballot.
- **Access:** Voting is one of the most direct lines between us and our democracy. We can be energized with gratitude for this access and keep working to make voting as accessible as possible. Clear and easy to understand voting information and processes are a key part of building the democratic futures we value.

Citizens League has been doing our part to collaborate on voter education and engagement for the 2024 elections. As a National Voter Registration Day partner, we joined more than 5000 organizations nationwide in collective learning and nonpartisan resource sharing to prepare for this election. We are especially grateful to the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota for their support, which has bolstered our efforts as we move toward election day. We look forward to encouraging Minnesotans to participate in civic life all year round. Join us!

Wishing you energized civic engagement.

Luna Allen-Bakerian
Policy Director



Election FAQ's

I'm a college student living on campus.

Do I vote at school or at home? **Either, just not both!** If you previously voted at your home address, your registration may be up to date there, but you can register at your new school address online by 10/15 or in person on election day.

I just moved and don't have a bill in my name to register same-day, what can I do? **You're in luck! A registered voter can vouch for you** – this can be your neighbor or someone else in your household registered in the same district who can affirm your residence.

I have served time for a prior felony conviction. Can I vote? **Yes. As long as all time has been served,** you can cast a ballot even if fulfilling parole or supervised release.



Your donations fuel our work!

As a nonpartisan, grassroots nonprofit, Citizens League relies on the support of donors just like you.

The League is breaking ground with new policy projects that advance topics important to Minnesotans, including conducting state-wide research and community engagement on public service work and on traffic stops. We are offering more public policy learning events that represent diverse points of view on timely topics. Our flagship Capitol Pathways program is entering its 10th year of supporting BIPOC college students to be engaged civic

leaders. And, during this election season, the League is collaborating to promote voter education and engagement.

Especially in an election year, you may feel that too few organizations work to bridge divides, create spaces for constructive dialogue, and find pragmatic solutions in similar way as the League does. That spirit of **working together to find solutions**, being civically engaged, and creating space for honest dialogue on important topics has always been the driving force behind the Citizens League’s work.

Will you join me in supporting the League by **making a contribution** today?

Donate at citizensleague.org/donate

Thank you for being a part of the Citizens League community. Together, we’ll keep building a more hopeful, positive and collaborative approach to public policy and civic life in Minnesota.

Breanna Schafer
Board Chair



2025 Civic Celebration

Each year at our signature Civic Celebration event, Minnesotans from diverse backgrounds, political parties, and ideologies get together for an evening to appreciate what makes us unique: an enduring civic culture, innovative leadership, and a commitment to public service.

Save the date – **April 10, 2025** – and plan to be part of the celebration!