



BADASS GRANDMAS DEMOCRACY

for our grandchildren



In this Issue –

Page 2, 3 – Cold Courage by Joan Brickenr
 Page 3, 4 -Dearth of Women.in leadership by Michael Standaert
 Page 6 – News of the Virtual Book Club / of the Red River Valley
 Page 7 - Resources
 Page 8 – Some Final Words – Bill Knudson

What should we do now?

By Lyn Dockter – Pinnick

Inauguration day saw an unprecedented hailstorm of Executive Orders and directives by the new President, many based upon Project 2025. With the vengeance he promised he would wreck upon his enemies and the favors to his followers, the first day's actions included pardoning all of the criminals involved in the January 6 insurrection.

An unfortunate sidenote and testament to the wrongness of those actions is that one of those criminals pardoned has already been shot and killed while resisting arrest (in possession of a firearm) in Indiana.

Since that first chaotic day, he has attempted to halt all federal grants and funding and gut the entire civilian work force by issuing all two million federal employees, a “Fork in the Road” memorandum that basically said, mold yourself into our policies or resign.

If like me you have been exercising some self-care and limiting your time on social media or watching less news, some of the avalanche of bad news might have escaped your notice. Unfortunately, we can't crawl under the covers for too long. Like Joan's beautiful poem reminds us, we must persist. Through action, through art, through song, and through community, we must resist the urge to hide away for the next four years but instead, we must act.

So, exactly what do we do now? Like Buffalo Calf Road Woman, Harriet Tubman, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and Rose Parks, we have to keep moving forward. We must persist - for our grandchildren; for future generations. Some suggestions:

- Find your people, locally. League of Women Voters, Documenters, Indivisible, and countless other grass roots groups would be grateful for your involvement. If you have fellow BadAss Grandmas in your city, get together over coffee. Being in community with others who share our beliefs is essential for actions as well as our mental health. You are not alone!
- Call your Senators and members of the House of Representatives. Put **CONGRESS: 1-202-225-3121** in your phone contact list and commit to letting them know your concerns, regularly. Tell your story and that of your family.
- Letters to the Editor are a great tool. Although it can be scary to see your name in print about a controversial topic, it helps to make others feel not alone and can influence policy makers. If you need help writing one, contact us for assistance (lynpinnick@gmail.com).
- Go to their websites and sign up with your members of Congress to receive their updates and newsletters. Send them an email when you have concerns or appreciation; it helps to hold them accountable.
- Try not to panic. The administration's plan is to overwhelm us and force us to comply in advance; to flood the courts, the news media and Congress with a blizzard of confusing and harsh directives. The result can send us into a panic, which paralyzes us. Meditate. Pray. Breathe. Journal.
- Action IS the antidote to despair. Find a food shelter or non-profit. Do good.

As a North Dakota farm kid, I grew up watching my parents play pinocole and other card games. My dad always said, *you've got to play the hand you're dealt*. Join us in saving our democracy by working with the hand we've been dealt. Wear your pearls or BG4D so that others know they are not alone. Our next meeting on Feb. 19 will feature long-time activiist and organizer, Winona LaDuke. Join us!

COLD COURAGE

By Joan Brickner
Jan 26, 2025
Fargo Forum



Last Saturday, (Jan 18) Fargo was bitterly cold. Equipped with a wool turtleneck, down parka and an old pair of Kamik boots, I thought I was fine, but realized, too late, I left my handwarmers in the car. My thick gloves were no match for the roughly 17 below wind chill.

The Veteran's Memorial Bridge was the setting for the Red River United's Stand for Human Rights. Other groups included the ACLU and Planned Parenthood. The day's events included collecting food and clothing.

April Baumgarten of The Forum reported approximately 40 people gathered, carrying neon posters with messages like "Immigrants' rights are human rights" and "Equality for all always." Some cars rode by, beeping in solidarity.



FARGO

Fighting injustice and frigid cold, group takes a stand for human rights in Fargo

Red River United gathered Saturday at the Veteran's Memorial Bridge in support of human rights.

Jan 18 • By April Baumgarten • 4

FARGO Fighting injustice and frigid cold, group takes a stand for human rights in Fargo Red River United gathered Saturday at the Veteran's Memorial Bridge in support of human rights.

Organizer Lyn Dockter-Pinnick had invited me to share a poem for the occasion. Initially, I thought I could make it, but my fingers quickly grew cold. I left early, scrambling to my car. So, I'll share my poem here:

Candles and Song - by Joan Brickner

*One morning, I dipped a new candle's wick into the flicker
Of an old, burning candle.
One flame swelled into two in the chill of a North Dakota
winter.*

*The well-worn metaphor of a candle bringing warmth and
humanity
is no less potent now than when it first bubbled up
In poetry to render hope and growth, blooming in the
dark.*

*Perhaps you shed tears in the shadow of the last election
Maybe the bones of your body recovered that self-cuddle
Of fetal curves
Its posture from the maternal belly, as confused analysts
diagnosed your pain.*

*We need to heal
With the balm of beauty – Vivaldi or Miles Davis or
Georgia O'Keefe
Billy Collins and Kingsolver
Perhaps breaking bread together before a bellowing fire
Perhaps walking beneath swaying branches under a
smiling sun.
It is a kind of prayer, these moments of healing,
Of company, of candles, of song. Brief escapes from
anger.*

*But we dare not linger in sorrow.
Dare not nurture the pain,
Spoiling it with coos and pablum.
Or else we twist into shrouds
Fit our fingers for blame,
An effigy of darkness.*

*Dr. King said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only
light can do that."*

*So, not for us, childish banter or bullets.
We wrestle with words, wise and bold.
Summoning Bob Dylan and Marvin Gaye
From street protests to legislatures and courtrooms
To this chain of candles gathered here on this bridge.*

*You see, we wear history
Imprinted by forbears
Self-sacrificing.
Pro – life.
For us
We persist, wrestling through art and press and law
Strengthened by the company we keep.
To sing despite sorrow, to join others in speech and
bubbling laughter
Faith and philosophy demand we voice the voiceless.*

*Candles dip into candles
Generation to generation feed flames –*

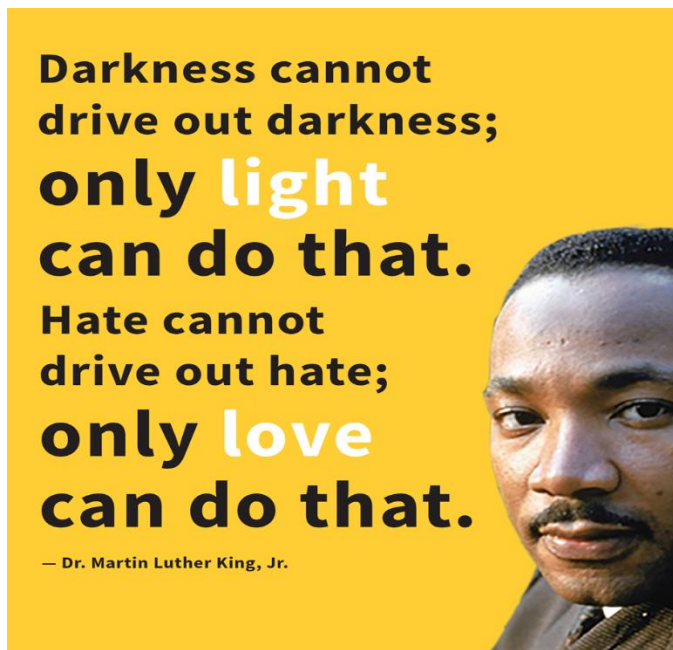
*Not those of Californian destruction, but of Promethean light.
Candles not hidden under bushels but budding on nightstands.
Gifts we received- truth, justice, compassion – we seek to give.
A transfer for transformation.*

And, in healing we are healed.

I wanted to acknowledge disappointment, while encouraging people to continue to promote justice and equality.

As reported in The Forum, one organizer said, “We think it is more critical than ever that we show up for human rights at a time when hate and divisiveness has been the word of the day as opposed to love and helping,” she said. “This weekend is all about helping, not hating.”

Amen.



Dearth of women in top higher ed leadership in North Dakota causes concern – by Michael Standaert

Jan 21, 2025 / North Dakota Monitor
Jan 28, 2025 / Also printed in Fargo Forum

Currently only one woman in a position of leadership among 11 institutions

Former university leaders are raising concern about the lack of women in top leadership positions at North

Dakota’s 11 public higher education institutions. Currently only one has a woman president or CEO.

This comes at a time when the State Board of Higher Education is beginning the process of filling president vacancies at campuses in Bismarck, Dickinson and Devils Lake. In addition, North Dakota University System Chancellor Mark Hagerott will leave his position toward the end of the year.

Those raising the profile of the issue point out that nationally and within the state, women account for between 50-60% of enrollment and graduation rates in higher education.

They believe leadership at those institutions should better reflect those figures.

“The SBHE’s record for hiring women in CEO positions for the last 25 years shows a pattern and practice of discrimination on the basis of gender,” said Ellen Chaffee, who served 15 years as president at Valley City State University (1993-2008) and nine of those concurrently as president of Mayville State University through 2001.



Chaffee notes that five institutions had female presidents during the 1990s. That dropped to zero after 2008, until Valley City had two between 2014-2018, and Dakota College at Bottineau hired a woman leader in 2020.

Nationally, rates of women in president or CEO positions at colleges and universities rose by 10% from 2006 to 2022 and currently women comprise around 33% of those top leadership spots across the country.

“When it comes right down to it, in my opinion, there needs to be a concerted effort to hire more diversity,” said Debora Dragseth, Baker Boy Professor of Leadership at Dickinson State University who served as vice-president there from 2020-2022.

“It’s the right thing to do,” Dragseth said. “It’s ethical. But also the fact that the majority of college students are female. Who’s representing them? Who’s walked in their shoes?”

Dragseth calculated that women have served as the top leaders at higher education institutions throughout the state just under 6% of the time over the course of their history.

Five of North Dakota's higher education institutions have never had a formal woman leader, including the University of North Dakota, Minot State University, Dickinson State University, Williston State College, and North Dakota State University (NDSU). NDSU did have an interim woman president for a brief period in 1969. With Bismarck State College, Dickinson State University and Lake Region State College all in the process of searching for presidents, SBHE chair Tim Mihalick said there's an opportunity to add female leaders at one or more of those schools.

"From my perspective, and I think of the board in general, I agree, we need more female representation," Mihalick said. "When we get the qualifications that match the institution's needs, I would absolutely see us hiring a female leader."

A big aspect of finding the best candidates is being intentional during the search process, said Kim Lee, director of community strategy and engagement at the American Council on Education in Washington, D.C. ACE has been active for two decades in promoting an initiative to try to reach parity in hiring top leadership in higher ed called Moving the Needle: Advancing Women in Higher Education Leadership.

"We still have more work to do if we want to look at gender parity," Lee said. She said it would be beneficial for search committees to tap into leadership development programs ACE has developed, and to consider using search firms that strongly consider diversity in their processes.

The process of filling a vacancy starts with the chancellor appointing a search committee. A presidential search typically takes 4 to 6 months, according to NDUS staff, with the SBHE providing direction on the use of a search consultant. Procedural rules require the committee to submit at least three candidates for consideration by the SBHE.

"It's probably not out of the reach of the discussion around this to ask the search firms to look for strong female candidates," Mihalick said.

Chaffee said that the best pools of candidates include the best men and best women and are diverse in other key dimensions as well.

"You can't be sure you're selecting the best if you discount or fail to attract women applicants," Chaffee said.

She also believes the SBHE and the chancellor's cabinet at the NDUS both need more female representation, and that this could attract more qualified female candidates to president positions. The SBHE currently has just one female voting member.

On Jan. 14, State School Superintendent Kirsten Baesler announced six finalists – five men and one woman - for two open seats for the SBHE. Those names have now been forwarded to Gov. Kelly Armstrong for his first SBHE appointments of his new governorship, with terms beginning July 1.

"College students need to see and interact with diverse people as part of preparing for success after graduation," Chaffee said. "If the SBHE does not seek, recruit and hire women, there is virtually no chance they will have strong women applicants and have the best possible new presidents."

Carmen Simone, campus dean and Dakota College at Bottineau, said that while she appreciates the sentiment regarding the need to hire more women leaders, her own experience has been "extremely positive" and she is "grateful for the support we receive as leaders."

Of the SBHE, she said: "I have full confidence that they will carefully consider the qualifications of each candidate and ultimately, they will choose the leaders who they believe will best serve our respective institutions."



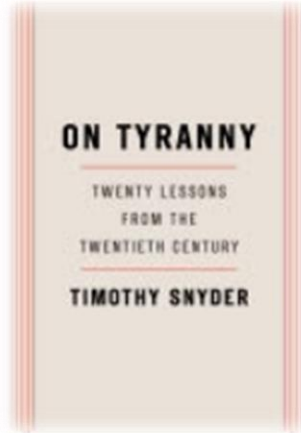
*"I Was Taught That The
Way Of Progress Is
Neither Swift Nor Easy.*

Maria Curie
(Physicist)

NEWS OF THE VIRTUAL BOOK CLUB

Our virtual book club met on Thursday, January 30, at 6:30 pm Central, where Lynnell Simonson Popowski gave an excellent presentation on white Christian Nationalism, and we finished our discussion of The Founding Myth.

Our next book club meetings will be spent discussing a couple of books. We originally planned to read On Freedom by Timothy Snyder, a compelling follow up to his book, On Tyranny, but we feel we should first start with On Tyranny. There is an updated version, found via this link which we highly recommend;



<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/on-tyranny-timothy-snyder/1141248805?ean=2940175759809>

JOIN US FOR A THOUGHT PROVOKING DISCUSSION

NEWS FROM AROUND THE RED RIVER VALLEY and BEYOND

In every state, members of your League of Women Voters or other citizen groups track the bills they consider important to democracy, voting rights, or other rule of law issues. You can find that information on your state League's website or sign up for legislative updates. In this newsletter, we feature some bills we are paying attention to nationally, as well as in North Dakota and Minnesota. If you have an urgent action item to share, please send it to us and we can share it on our website, via an email or post it on Facebook or BlueSky.

Minnesota:

The Minnesota League of Women Voters regularly sends out a Capitol Letter. Subscribe to those updates at <https://www.lwvmn.org/subscribe>. To find the bill tracker, save this website: <https://www.lwvmn.org/legislative-session-2025>.

Priorities for the MN League this year:

- Elections administration
- Redistricting reform
- Equal Rights Amendment – promote the adoption of a ballot issue in 2026 to add the ERA to the

Minnesota constitution – **SF473** – Constitutional amendment to provide equal rights under the law.

- Climate Change – continue to support the Minnesota Environmental Partnership to climate change with our volunteer-led Climate Change Task Force.

Other statewide priorities:

- Ranked choice voting
- Money in politics – SF9 -Public Contribution Refund Modernization Act to establish an online system to claim the PCR refund
- End of Live Options – support laws ensuring end of life options

You can also find out more about bills in Minnesota by going to the House of Representatives and Senate research website, one of which is seen below: <https://www.senate.mn/summaries/bill/2025>

North Dakota

The following was submitted by a member, Vicki Voldal Rosenau, who has expressed concerns about one of the issues that we of BG4D consider a high priority – supporting public education

Hello, fellow concerned North Dakotans:

We just lost the ND House vote on HB 1244:
HB 1244 Passed 65-27-2

Additional bills in the 2025 crusade to privatize K-12 schooling in North Dakota include:

Education Savings Account HB 1540
Education Savings Account SB 2303
Education Savings Account HB 1590
Education Savings Account HB 1607
State Aid for Non-Public Schools SB 2295

Here is why I am dedicated to opposing the very-vocal minority that is forcing this on North Dakota:

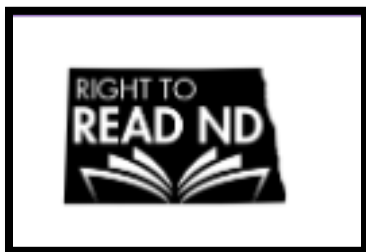
NO amount of Public tax dollars can rightly be used for non-public educational facilities. Likewise, neither can Public tax dollars rightly be used for (e.g.) private parks, private museums, private golf courses, etc.

That's because, **when the public as a whole has covenanted (by collectively paying taxes for that purpose) to provide a service for everyone, then no**

citizen has the right to demand that we all help to pay for any private "alternative facility," just because that individual prefers such a facility (for any reason). If a person does not "like" the public picnic park (or school system) that is available to him, he does not have to use it, but he has no right to demand that everyone else contribute to his purchasing the privilege of using a "private park" (or school) that he has identified (and may even be the owner of). If that individual decides to utilize some private version of a service that is already being publicly provided, he must do so at his own expense.

Furthermore, in the event that an individual deems a public service to be of unacceptably low quality, **it is his civic duty to roll-up-his-sleeves and help the community as a whole to upgrade that service** in accordance with the will of the majority. Instead of undermining the whole covenant, that individual is obligated to help fix whatever is wrong with the public service (Schools)! That's both "community" and local democracy in action, and that's what our wonderful nation was founded upon.

Thank you for any input you wish to provide, Vicki



RIGHT TO READ

The right to read freely and access diverse information is under threat in North Dakota. As book bans and censorship efforts

increase, it's more important than ever to stand up for our libraries, schools, and the communities they serve.

At **Right to Read ND**, we believe in protecting intellectual freedom and ensuring that everyone—especially our students—has access to books, materials, and ideas that represent the full spectrum of human experiences. Our core principles guide us in this fight:

- **Freedom to Read:** Every North Dakotan deserves access to a wide range of ideas and information without censorship.
- **Diverse Representation:** Library collections should reflect the diversity of our state, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued.
- **Trust in Librarians and Educators:** We trust the professionals in our libraries and schools to provide equitable services and

materials that fulfill the interests and needs of their library users.

- **Parental Responsibility:** We believe parents—not the government—should guide their children's reading choices.
- **Opposition to Harmful Legislation:** We oppose any legislation that limits access to information or undermines First Amendment rights.
- **Support for Public Funding:** We reject efforts to defund our public libraries and schools, which provide equitable access to information for all.

If you agree with these principles, please take the next step. Pledge to support North Dakota's libraries and schools in the 2025 ND Legislative Session.

By signing this pledge, you're joining a growing community of North Dakotans who believe in the freedom to read and want to make a difference. You'll be kept informed about opportunities to get involved and speak out when our rights are at risk.



West Fargo Public Schools

Educating all learners for tomorrow's world.

West Fargo School District is holding a bond referendum on February 17. Below is some info from their website:

The 2025 ballot will have three questions.

Question 1 will include \$99.7 million in projects needed within the next 1-5 years. The projects included in Question 1 are the completion of Heritage MS, completion of Horace HS, adding multipurpose rooms at West Fargo HS and Horace HS, building an inclusive playground at the Early Childhood Center, special education improvements, adding classroom space for early childhood special education programming, the renovation and expansion of South Elementary School, safety and security upgrades, and restroom renovations.

Question 2 includes an additional \$58 million in projects that are anticipated to be needed in 6-10 years. The projects included in Question 2 are the elementary renovations, a new elementary school, acquisition of land, and a second expansion of space for early childhood special education programming.

Question 3 would authorize the district to be a collaborative partner with the West Fargo Park District and the West Fargo Youth Hockey Association to expand the Veterans Memorial Arena. Question 3 is an additional \$5 million.

It is important to note that the passage of each question is contingent on passage of the question(s) before it. For example, if Question 2 is the only question that receives majority approval to pass, nothing will move forward since Question 1 failed. For each \$100,000 of a home's value, a taxpayer would pay an additional \$7.29 per month if all three questions passed.

RESOURCES - Looking for information or other resources? Here are some other groups that BadAss Grandmas for Democracy partners with or consider reliable sources:

Our speakers in January, and our partners: **The Respect Voters Coalition**; <https://www.respectvoters.org/> Partners with group to specifically address issues impacting democracy and voting rights at the ballot initiative level.



Another past speaker and a group we are also partnering with, **We Choose Us**. Their website is: <https://www.wechooseusmn.com/>



We Choose Us has Monthly Grassroots Strategy Calls - These calls will take place the second Thursday of every month from 6:00 – 7:30 pm. Sign up with **WE CHOOSE US** to join their monthly grassroots strategy calls to connect community leaders to build a multiracial democracy in Minnesota.

On these calls, they give and get updates, provide tools, solicit feedback, and strategize together about our approach to protect and expand our democracy statewide.

Red Wine & Blue (RWB) is a 501(c)(4) organization founded by Katie Paris after the 2018 midterm election. Operating out of suburban swing districts in the United States, RWB engages women at a grassroots level and drives media narratives to better reflect issues faced by women. The organization



manages a weekly podcast "The Suburban Women Problem", a 215,000 member Facebook group, *SWEEP*

(*Suburban Women Engaged, Empowered, and Pissed*), and publishes a weekly newsletter, *The Sip*. Find out more at <https://redwine.blue/>

Another group of which I was previously unaware which has many partners and multiple resources – **More Perfect**. (thanks, Lynnell!)

https://www.joinmoreperfect.us/?mc_cid=3396b7f30e



OTHERS WE RECOMMEND:

- Common Cause: <https://www.commoncause.org/>
- Protect Democracy: <https://protectdemocracy.org/>
- Fair Elections Center: <https://fairelectionscenter.org/>
- ACLU: <https://www.aclu.org/>
- Southern Poverty Law Center: <https://www.splcenter.org/>

There are many more pro-democracy groups and organizations in your local community that deserve and need your help. Groups like **United Womxn of Fargo**, **LWV of Plum Valley** in the Minot area, Planned Parenthood, and so many more – all need and want your involvement and support. Please find one that best meets your needs and helps you to get engaged. This is an 'all hands-on deck' moment and we hope that you will do whatever you can, wherever you can, however you can.

Remember what founder Dina Butcher says: there are two kinds of people in the world – tight asses who complain about everything; and BadAsses who get things done. Be a BadAss!

SOME FINAL WORDS

WE LOVE HEARING FROM MEMBERS! We now have over 350 BG4D members on our email distribution list, who are scattered across the country in addition to the majority of our members who are in North Dakota and Minnesota. By email, we have heard from **member Bill Knudson in Florida**, who is a researcher and keeper of a wealth of important data on the last election. His trends can help identify areas of possibilities for making sure the next election goes differently. If you are interested in the data about the last election, he's your guy. Let me know if you would like to contact Bill in Florida and I will connect you. He has sent us a wealth of examples of how he keeps his members engaged (and even aware of the BadAss Grandmas for Democracy meetings!). Thanks, Bill, for contributing the information below. Apologies in advance for it being hard to read in this format, so if you want better copies, email me!

You, too, can make a difference in your community. For every act of kindness and communication with others, we strengthen our democracy. GO, BILL!

Had Blue		Trump		Harris		Harris Won by	
11	Arizona	1,575,300	1,389,988	(185,312)			-6.25%
10	Wisconsin	1,697,298	1,667,881	(29,417)			-0.87%
16	Georgia	2,661,056	2,544,281	(116,775)			-2.24%
19	Pennsylvania	3,511,865	3,366,829	(145,036)			-2.11%
6	Nevada	728,298	682,263	(46,035)			-3.26%
15	Michigan	2,804,647	2,724,029	(80,618)			-1.46%
77							
44	TOTAL BLUE WALL	8,013,810	7,758,739	(255,071)			-1.62%
226	Actually Received						
270	Harris would have won if above 3 went for Harris 2024						

