

BAD ASS GRANDMAS DEMOCRACY

★ for our grandchildren ★



WE ARE PRO-DEMOCRACY By Ellen Chaffee



“We are Pro-Democracy.”

What does that mean? Each of us is entitled to our own answer. Here is mine.

Democracy is a system of self-government – of, by, and for the people. Pro-democracy advocates identify and pursue improvements to the system that better bring the voice and best interests of the people to government policy and decisions.

Due to civic inattention and decades of changes driven by corporate and wealthy special interests, democracy’s policies and procedures have shifted away from the people. For instance, voting districts are skewed to favor the party in power, and so are the barriers to keep select people from voting.

The Supreme Court’s 2010 Citizens United decision made corporations “persons,” turning them loose to buy elections by spending whatever it takes to elect their favored candidates. Seldom do their interests align with the priorities of American citizens, but their spin messaging makes it seem otherwise.

Incredibly, North Dakota taxpayer funds go to the energy industry to spend on favorable ads directed at North Dakota citizens.

The democracy system is rigged.

My pro-democracy goal is to Unrig the System.

Here are some of the most important tools for that:

- Open primaries – cross-party voting, no-party candidates
- Campaign finance reform – few people now can afford to run for office

- Independent redistricting – create voting districts by neutral criteria (next chance in 2030)
- Rank choice voting – elects the candidate with the most and broadest voter appeal; no more winners with fewer than 50 percent of the votes
- Ballot initiatives – citizens propose law by statute or constitutional amendment, also known as “direct democracy”

I work for democracy by encouraging people to join the BG4D movement and by active membership in the League of Women Voters. I also encourage participation in organizations such as the Bismarck Documenters, where ordinary citizens attend public meetings and share the information with others.

What’s your definition, and what else are you doing for democracy?

Pearls for Democracy!

Oh! Wear pearls! I encourage pro-democracy activists to wear pearls every day. That way, we kindred souls, regardless of party, can recognize each other and see the movement grow. Why pearls? My dear friend saw me on a national stage wearing baggy campaign clothes and urged me to “up” my game.

Dina’s immediate solution: **“Pearls!”**



The effect is perfect.

WEAR PEARLS!

NEWS FROM THE RED RIVER VALLEY AND BEYOND – What’s on YOUR BALLOT???



NORTH DAKOTA

North Dakota has five initiatives on the ballot.

Read all about them on the Secretary of State’s website, using this link:

<https://www.sos.nd.gov/sites/www/files/documents/elections/measures/ballot-language-2024-general.pdf>

MEASURE TWO

Constitutional Measure No. 2 (Senate Concurrent Resolution 4013, 2023 Session Laws, Ch. 598)

This constitutional measure would amend and reenact sections 2, 3, 4, and 9 of article III of the Constitution of North Dakota, relating to initiated constitutional amendments. The proposed amendments would require both constitutional and non-constitutional initiated measures to be limited to **one subject** as determined by the Secretary of State, who may not approve the initiated petition if it comprises more than one subject; require that measure sponsors be qualified electors; require that only qualified electors may circulate a petition; require petition signers to provide a complete residential address; and **increase the number of signatures required to place a constitutional initiated measure on the ballot from four percent to five percent of the North Dakota resident population.** Additionally, the proposed amendments would require that constitutional initiated measures approved by the Secretary of State be **voted upon by the voters at the next primary election and, if approved by a majority of the voters, voted upon at the general election immediately following the primary election; if the measure fails at either the primary or general election, the measure is deemed failed.** The estimated fiscal impact of this measure is none.

Yes – Means you approve the measure as summarized above.

No – Means you reject the measure as summarized above

VOTE NO ON MEASURE TWO

Submitted by Amy Jacobson

Measure 2 is a direct assault on the freedoms North Dakotans have cherished for generations. Article III of the North Dakota Constitution, titled “Powers Reserved to the People,” ensures that we, the citizens, have the power to make decisions that directly impact our lives. However, politicians behind Measure 2 are attempting to erode that power by introducing changes that fundamentally undermine majority rule and weaken the value of your vote.

At its core, Measure 2 tramples on the principle of “one person, one vote,” a cornerstone of our democracy. By requiring citizens to vote twice for the same law before it can be enacted, Measure 2 dilutes the power of each vote. This isn’t just an inconvenience—it’s a dangerous precedent that weakens your voice in government.

On top of that, Measure 2 sets a double standard, with one set of rules for politicians and another for citizens. It demands that North Dakotans jump through hoops, forcing two votes for any citizen-initiated ballot measure while exempting the measures that politicians introduce themselves. This constitutional amendment would make it much harder for everyday people to have their voices heard and easier for politicians to maintain control.

Opposition to Measure 2 spans across the political spectrum—Republicans, Independents, and Democrats alike recognize the threat it poses. They understand that the heart of our democracy lies in empowering citizens, and Measure 2 seeks to take that power away.

Don’t be fooled by the confusion. Vote no on Measure 2 to preserve your freedom and your right to decide what happens in North Dakota. Let’s keep the power where it belongs—with the people.

North Dakotans Protecting the Constitution, a local group, is leading the fight to defeat Measure 2. You can support their efforts by donating. Every dollar counts, from \$5 to \$500. Visit www.opposemeasure2.com to contribute.

BadAss Grandmas is part of the coalition working to defeat Measure 2. We believe the additional requirements it imposes would be a detriment to our Democracy and the will of the people.



MINNESOTA

In Minnesota, citizens do not have the power to initiate statewide initiatives or referendums. Voters of Minnesota have voted on ballot measures to authorize a statewide initiative and referendum process in 1914, 1916, and 1980. Voters rejected the ballot measures in those years and it has not come up since 1980.

The Minnesota State Legislature can refer statewide ballot measures, in the form of constitutional amendments, to general election ballots. Minnesota requires a simple majority vote (50%+1) in each legislative chamber during one legislative session to refer a constitutional amendment to the ballot. That amounts to a minimum of 68 votes in the Minnesota House of Representatives and 34 votes in the Minnesota State Senate, assuming no vacancies. Amendments do not require the governor's signature to be referred to the ballot.

As a result, when a Minnesota resident opens their ballot for the November 5 general election, they will see Constitutional Amendment #1 (below), in addition to possibly a county measure as there are 59 individual county issues in Minnesota this year.

To check out what's on your Minnesota ballot go to: <https://www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/whats-on-my-ballot/>

MINNESOTA CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT 1

Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Renewal

Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to protect drinking water sources and the water quality of lakes, rivers, and streams; conserve wildlife habitat and natural areas; improve air quality; and expand access to parks and trails by extending the transfer of proceeds from the state-operated lottery to the environment and natural resources trust fund, and to dedicate the proceeds for these purposes?

A Yes Vote means you approve of amending the constitution for this purpose.

A No Vote means you oppose it.

RESPECT VOTERS COALITION

We urge all BadAss Grandmas to be informed voters. Please do your research when you make your decisions about ballot initiatives. Much good has come from ballot initiatives (BG4D's own history includes the work which resulted in the North Dakota Ethics Commission) but be mindful that attempts to diminish precious freedoms of our Democracy may also be embedded in ballot measures. Please do

your homework and be an informed voter. Use your Secretary of State's website and Vote411.org.



The will of the people is central to Democracy. Be an informed voter, but VOTE.

Vote like Democracy depends upon it – because it DOES.

RESPECT VOTERS COALITION

Ballot Measures are such an important issue to our Democracy that BadAss Grandmas is part of a coalition called "Respect Voters Coalition." You can see us listed below as a partner on their website, which contains a wealth of information. <https://www.respectvoters.org/about/>



From the Respect Voters website:

Why is Respect Voters working to protect, strengthen, renovate, and expand the ballot initiative process? ▲

For a century, voters across the political spectrum have used ballot initiatives to reform fundamental issues—such as voting rights, gerrymandering, money in politics, open primaries, and modernizing elections—that enjoy broad public support, when politicians refuse to act.

But now politicians are trying to take away our freedom. Power-hungry legislatures in 12 states across America are gutting the citizen initiative petition process in a desperate power grab. They are making it harder for citizens to create a more representative, accountable, effective government.

Americans deserve a real voice in government, and leadership that finds common ground and actually solves problems—such as the economy, infrastructure, and education. It is time to stand up and stop these assaults on our freedom of self-government.



The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has also made Democracy and ballot measures; and their impact, a focus of their work, and their funding. Information from their website also offers some insight into what is happening in North Dakota, and elsewhere.

<https://www.rwjf.org/en/insights/blog/2024/09/how-the-ballot-measure-process-strengthens-democracy-and-health-equity.html>

Directly quoting from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation website:

*Everyone, no matter who they are or where they come from, should have a fair chance to be as happy and healthy as possible. We all have a role in making this vision a reality and one way to do that is by improving public policy. **Ballot measures can provide a direct way for citizens to shape state and local laws and policies that affect our health and wellbeing.** For example, last year Ohioans set a record turnout for a special election to support a ballot measure that secured abortion rights through the state's constitution and set a new course for the country's fight for reproductive rights. However, in several states it is becoming harder for people to use the ballot measure process. Some lawmakers are using various tactics to prevent critical measures from being placed on ballots. **These tactics include increasing signature requirements, raising the thresholds needed to pass initiatives and mandating multiple votes for enactment.***

*Given our goal of dismantling structural racism and creating equitable systems for all, RWJF is investing in protecting the ballot measure process and partnering with organizations like the **Ballot Initiative Strategy Center Foundation (BISC Foundation)**. The BISC Foundation leverages ballot measures to strengthen democracy and center communities that have been pushed to the margins by systemic racism.*

How are ballot measures foundational to democracy and health equity?

At the BISC Foundation, we focus on shifting power to the communities most impacted by policy change. We believe a thriving democracy empowers people to determine the outcome of their own lives. The ballot measure process is a tool that can help them do that, even in spaces where power often feels limited. The ballot measure process sits at the center of our democracy by defining who has a say in policymaking, what equity looks like and if people have access to the resources for healthy lives.

Can you explain how and why this process is becoming more difficult and why voters should be concerned?

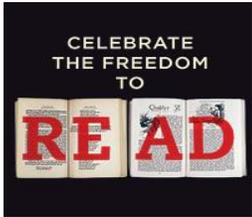
For the last decade, we've witnessed a rise in ballot measures driven by the lack of progress on important issues in state legislatures and communities wanting to take power into their own hands. They use the ballot measure process to make the changes they want to see. Research at BISC revealed that voters have more confidence in the ballot measure process than other types of lawmaking. This is in part due to the trust they have in themselves and their communities to shape laws. We are watching communities push back on power, and now that power is responding by attempting to complicate the ballot measure process.

Some of the changes being made to the ballot measure process seem quite technical. Can you explain the reason for these changes and how they will affect the issues that families care about?

*When we asked voters about adding more parameters to the process, initially they viewed it positively, because isn't more participation in democracy a good thing? However, the perspective shifted when we explained the reasons behind these changes or their impacts. **Raising signature requirements, for example, makes it costlier and harder for communities to propose measures that are vital to them.** When we explain that this could block efforts to pass initiatives like minimum wage increases or other important policies, people start to connect the dots and understand the real implications.*



Freedom to Read



The last full week of September is an important week for Democracy as it reminds us of the precious freedom that reading books and having access to information provides us.

According to the American Library Association (ALA), books that are banned or challenged are on the rise. Per their definition: *“A challenge is an attempt to remove or restrict materials, based upon the objections of a person or group. A banning is the removal of those materials. Challenges do not simply involve a person expressing a point of view; rather, they are an attempt to remove material from the curriculum or library, thereby restricting the access of others. Due to the commitment of librarians, teachers, parents, students and other concerned citizens, most challenges are unsuccessful and most materials are retained in the school curriculum or library collection.”*

According to the ALA, the most challenged books in 2024 include:

- **Gender Queer: A Memoir:** By Maia Kobabe
- **All Boys Aren't Blue:** By George M. Johnson
- **This Book is Gay:** By Juno Dawson
- **The Perks of Being a Wallflower:** By Stephen Chbosky
- **Flamer:** By Mike Curato
- **The Bluest Eye:** By Toni Morrison
- **Me and Earl and the Dying Girl:** By Jesse Andrews
- **Tricks:** By Ellen Hopkins
- **Let's Talk About It:** By Erika Moen and Matthew Nolan
- **Sold:** By Patricia McCormick

The Franklin Grand Isle Bookmobile in Vermont has an amazing website, where this “surprising” list of banned books can be found (having read all to my

sons or grandchildren). All credit for the following list to Franklin Bookmobile: <https://fgibookmobile.org/>

10 Surprising Banned Books

(that you should read by the time you're 10)

When most people hear the term ‘banned book’ they’ll think of 1984 by George Orwell, or the Harry Potter series (both high on the list of most challenged books). However, there are lots of seemingly innocent children’s books that have also been banned. Here’s a list of 10 banned childhood classics that might surprise you:



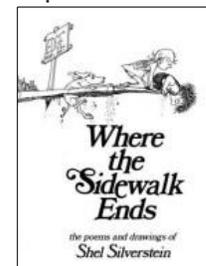
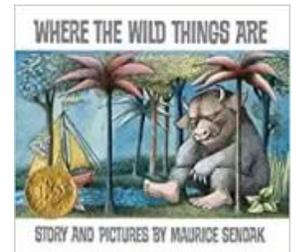
1. Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?

by Bill Martin Jr.
Reason: In 2010, the book was banned by the State Board of Education in Texas. Why? The author- Bill Martin- has the same name as another author who wrote a book about Marxism. No, they’re not

at all related.

2. Where the Wild Things Are

by Maurice Sendak
Reason: This book was banned largely in the south, and psychologists called it “too dark”. Due to Max being sent to bed without dinner, it was seen as promoting child abuse, as well as witchcraft and supernatural events.

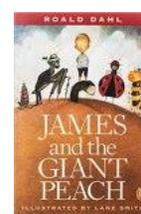
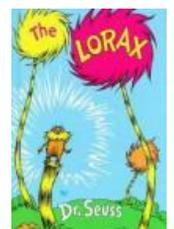


3. Where the Sidewalk Ends

by Shel Silverstein
Reason: In 1986, Wisconsin school libraries banned the book because it “promotes drug use, the occult, suicide, death, violence, disrespect for truth, disrespect for authority, and rebellion against parents.”

4. The Lorax by Dr. Seuss

Reason: Originally banned in California schools for the negative portrayal of logging. The worry is that this portrayal would turn children against the logging industry, which is a huge part of California’s economy.



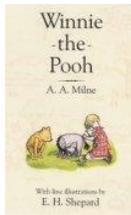
5. James and the Giant Peach

by Roald Dahl
Reason: In 1986, a Wisconsin town banned this book because religious groups thought the part where a spider licking her lips could be taken in a sexual

way. More recently, the book has been challenged for mysticism.

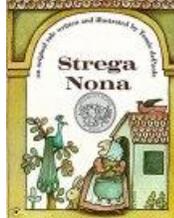
6. Winnie the Pooh by A.A. Milne

Reason: Challenged by religious groups because talking animals are seen as an insult to God. In the UK, Winnie the Pooh was banned in schools because Piglet, the talking pig character, might offend Jewish or Muslim students who abstain from eating pork.

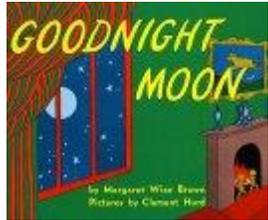


7. Strega Nona by Tomie dePaola

Reason: Banned by a number of libraries in the U.S. for depicting witchcraft and magic in a positive light.



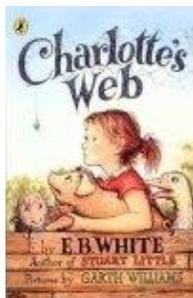
8. Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown



Reason: A librarian in New York didn't like it. Seriously. Anne Carroll Moore, head of the children's department at the New York Public Library, wasn't a fan of *Goodnight Moon's* realism. She also called it "overly sentimental," and decided that it would not be in the library.

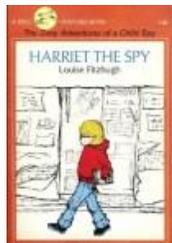
9. Charlotte's Web by E.B. White

Reason: In 2006, the book was challenged by parents in a Kansas school district who believed it was unnatural for animals to talk. Quote: "Showing lower life forms with human abilities is sacrilegious and disrespectful to God."



10. Harriet the Spy by Louise Fitzhugh

Reason: Challenged in 1983 at a school board meeting in Ohio, where some argued the book encouraged children to disrespect their parents, as well as lying and spying.



The ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) compiles lists of challenged books to inform the public about censorship efforts in schools and libraries. The OIF receives reports from the media, schools, and libraries about attempts to ban books across the country.

The theme for Banned Books Week 2024 was "Freed Between the Lines". **The theme was**

designed to encourage people to support policies and policymakers who uphold the freedom to read and to vote for it.

Do you know how your School Board candidates feel ? about banning books? Do you know ? how they feel about who should choose what goes on school library shelves? Should it be librarians or are your candidates encouraging "parental rights"? Find out – our democracy and the education of future generations depends upon it.

From the ALA website:

The ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom (OIF) receives reports from libraries, schools, and the media on attempts to ban books and compiles this information into lists in order to inform the public about censorship in libraries and schools.

The ALA condemns censorship and works to ensure free access to information. For more information on ALA's efforts to condemn censorship, please explore **Banned Books Week: Celebrating Your Freedom to Read.**

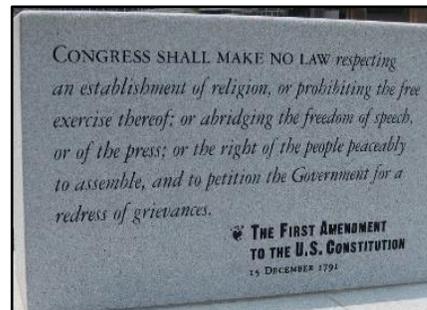
<https://www.ala.org/bbooks/banned>



There are a number of organizations working to protect our First Amendment Rights. One of them is the First Amendment Coalition, which lists as one of their main



issues, government accountability and transparency. Find out more more their work here: <https://firstamendmentcoalition.org/>



The Free Speech Center at Middle Tennessee University provides seven handy things to know about the First Amendment:

1. The five freedoms the first amendment protects: speech, religion, press, assembly, and the right to petition the government. Together, these five guaranteed freedoms make the people of the United States of America the freest in the world.
2. Before agreeing to accept the Constitution, the Founders of our democratic republic demanded that these freedoms be protected by an amendment to the original document – the First Amendment.
3. There's no "legal age" you have to reach to exercise your First Amendment freedoms. They are guaranteed to you the day you're born. There's also no citizenship requirement for First Amendment protection. If you're in the U.S., you have freedom of speech, religion, press, assembly and petition.
4. The First Amendment is neither "left-wing" or "right-wing." It can be used to push for social and political change, or to oppose change. The First Amendment is for everyone.
5. The First Amendment protects us against government limits on our freedom of expression, but it doesn't prevent a private employer from setting its own rules.
6. The First Amendment prevents government from requiring you to say something you don't want to, or keeping you from hearing or reading the words of others (even if you never speak out yourself, you have the right to receive information).
7. **Students have the right to pray in America's public schools, as long as there's no disruption to school operations and no government employees (teachers, coaches) are involved.**

Written by Ken Paulson, Director of the Free Speech Center

Virtual Book Club:

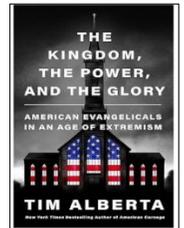
As a result of a suggestion made during Jerry Gale's presentation on white



Christian Nationalism, we have formed a BG4D virtual book club. We met for the first time on Thursday, September 26, and had a stimulating discussion, verifying the concern and fears many of us have about its rise. We were 8 in number, and

were ably led by Forum columnist and former teacher, Joan Brickner. Many who joined us are unable to attend our Wednesday night meetings, so we are happy to provide another option for our members to participate in discussions on protecting Democracy. The Zoom link is sent out to all on our email list, and will be posted on our (private) Facebook page, and website.

Our next meetings will be **Thursday, October 24;** and **Thursday, November 21 at 6:30 pm Central.** The first book we are discussing is The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory, by Tim Alberta.



Please note - BadAss Grandmas is not studying white Christian Nationalism because we are a religious group; *quite the contrary*. Our focus is DEMOCRACY. Religion seldom enters our discussions and we support the separation of church and state. We believe that our study of white Christian Nationalism, due to how severely it has already so impacted our Democracy, is critical. The more we learn, the more we can impact the conversations around us.

You can find, embedded here, the questions we are using for our discussion. **If you have read similar books on this topic, even if you have not read the Tim Alberta book, please join us.** We will always meet the fourth – or last Thursday – of the month.



Discussion Questions Part 1



Discussion Questions Part 2

OTHER DEMOCRACY ACTIONS / RESOURCES

Each month's BG4D newsletter highlights some of the many resources available to help navigate the many challenges to our democracy and we have tried to do this throughout our document. Every day there is news of some assault on our democracy and our voting rights. That's why we BG4Ds highly recommend getting involved in your local community with your state or local **League of Women Voters** or some other organization working to protect voting rights. We also recommend that you check out last month's speakers – **Buffalo's Fire and the Bismarck Documenters**. The Documenters are a nationwide organization that pay citizens to attend public meetings and report on the results. Check them out at <https://www.documenters.org/>.

We also want to highlight the work of **Red, Wine, and Blue** on Project 2025. They are an excellent source of



reliable information. According to **Red, Wine and Blue**, 70% of voters remain unaware of Project 2025 and the potential negative consequences of its intentions. Check out **Red, Wine and Blue's** website, for more information and many videos on Project 2025:

<https://social.redwine.blue/toolkit/bbb2cadf-0d16-4fef-a4b6-037facbba64c>



UPCOMING SPEAKERS

Join us and invite your friends!

OCTOBER 16 - American Future



NOVEMBER 20 - Project Optimist



Last year, in December, I hosted an in-person holiday get-together at my home in Moorhead, MN. Asking for feedback but we would love to have an in-person meeting again this year. We could hold it on the same day that we would normally meet – **Wednesday, December 18 or on a weekend**. I would be happy to host again or if we would have a better turnout in another location. **Let me know what you think of the idea; if you would like to host the December meeting, or if you would prefer a regular virtual meeting. FEEDBACK PLS!!!**



JANUARY 15 – Respect the Voters Coalition
Join us to hear an idea they have for North Dakota.

PROTECT DIRECT DEMOCRACY.
REPAIR OUR NATION.

We are a national coalition of pro-democracy organizations.

JOIN US IN OUR MISSION TO SAVE OUR DEMOCRACY

Our goal in BadAss Grandmas is to inform and help you engage. At our monthly meetings, we learn about pro-democracy organizations and learn about actions that we can take to protect



our Democracy. As Dina says, there are tight asses who sit around and complain and BadAsses who get things done. We are BadAsses. We roll up our sleeves and DO. That means doing what we can, when we can, however we can. ONE person CAN make a difference ~ BadAss Grandmas did, and you can, **AND ARE**, too!

Final Thoughts – please attend your local Candidate Forums, sponsored by the League of Women Voters in your community – here are the ones for the Fargo – Moorhead area. Share yours on our Facebook page!

<h3>Candidate Forums</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>ND District 10 & ND District 46</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Oct. 2 at 6pm @ Fargo City Hall • <u>ND District 22 & Cass County Commission D5</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Oct. 3 at 6pm @ Fargo City Hall • <u>ND District 16 & Judicial District 8</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Oct. 9 at 6pm @ West Fargo City Hall • <u>Moorhead City Council Wards 1&2 and Wards 3&4</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Oct 16 at 6pm @ Moorhead Public Library • <u>MN Districts 4A & 4B</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Oct. 22 at 6pm @ Moorhead Public Library • <u>Moorhead School Board & Clay County Commission</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Oct 23 at 6pm @ Moorhead Public Library 	<h3>Education</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>First Fridays: Civil Conversations</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Oct 4, at noon @ Sons of Norway • <u>Voting 101</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Oct. 19 at 1pm @ Fargo Public Library • <u>Voting 101</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Oct. 15 at 6:30pm @ West Fargo Public Library • <u>First Fridays at Sons of Norway</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Nov. 1 at noon
<h3>Upcoming Events</h3> <p>League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley</p>	<h3>ELECTION DAY</h3> <p>Nov. 5, 2024</p> <p>Election info at VOTE411.org</p>

Do you have an interesting story or idea for our next newsletter? Feel free to send it to us for review and publication! Have an upcoming event? Send it to us for the newsletter or send me an email – we would love to hear from you. lynpinnick@gmail.com

THANK YOU for being a **BADASS**
and remember to wear those PEARLS!