

BAD ASS GRANDMAS DEMOCRACY ★ for our grandchildren ★



What a year we have had in the last week. President Joe Biden has done what few would even consider – stepped down from a position of power and left an existing campaign because he felt it was best for the nation.



The 2024 presidential campaign was already ugly and the arrows and nasty digs against likely - Democratic candidate Vice President Kamala Harris have been intense. The coming 98 days are important to our democracy and we here at the BadAss Grandmas are in the fight with you – to preserve our democracy for our grandchildren, and all future generations. We can't let our granddaughters (and grandsons) have fewer rights that we have had! BadAss Grandmas, do what you can, when you can, however you can. We are here to provide inspiration and resources.

Last month's newsletter featured interesting information from Dina Butcher about our history in the form of a letter written to the Secretary of State's office regarding why incorporating as the BadAss Grandmas (and allowing ASS to be in our name) was legally allowed. It was PRICELESS. This month, we are going to learn a bit more about these fabulous first four and our history.

First, though, let's take a step back in time from our archives. We are at a historic moment in our nation. Brave women like our founding BG4Ders and all of you reading this newsletter have always led the way forward in our democracy and exactly six years ago, on July 30, 2018, [Represent US](#) featured a story on Dina and Ellen. **It seems fitting to reprint this story from 2018 exactly six years later.**

Meet Two "Badass Grandmas" Leading the Anti-Corruption Movement in North Dakota

Dina Butcher (a Republican), and Ellen Chaffee, (a Democrat), are two self-identified "badass grandmas" who have joined forces to put country over party. Together, they're leading the anti-corruption movement in North Dakota. These two respected community leaders hold vastly different political views. They had long admired each other, but had never met—until coming together to start North Dakotans for Public Integrity.

It Started with a Group of Friends Having Coffee

Ellen Chaffee has worked in the North Dakota University system for over three decades. She served as academic Vice-Chancellor and President of two different universities. Her trailblazing career in higher education has changed the lives of countless students. Despite her expertise (and awards from people like the Governor and the North Dakota Women's Network to prove it), Ellen was uncertain about North Dakota's future. She found that the group of friends she saw regularly for coffee felt the same way.

North Dakota is (**was in 2018**) one of only seven states in the country without an ethics commission.

The Center for Public Integrity gave the state a failing grade twice for its lack of transparency and accountability. *"The last 10 or 20 years have been dictated by dark money and corporate power, to the point that the landscape of North Dakota is completely different, the dynamics of government and interactions among people are completely different – and too often not in admirable ways," says Ellen.*

Ellen and her friends watched while ethical standards for government officials continued to erode. When they saw South Dakota pass America's first statewide Anti-Corruption Act, they saw a constructive path to the significant change they were looking for in North Dakota. IM-22 was a citizen-led initiative to fix corruption in South Dakota by cracking

down on lobbyist gifts, creating an ethics commission, and revising campaign finance laws.

Suddenly, Ellen's coffee crew had an outline for their own anti-corruption reform. They contacted the South Dakota campaign to learn more about their experience. The next step was to reach across the aisle.

"The Gold Standard for People Who Care"

Enter Republican Dina Butcher. She served in multiple leadership positions under Governors John Hoeven and Ed Schafer, and knew the ins and outs of state government. She was also named 2015 Woman of the Year by the North Dakota Women's Network. She wasn't happy with the direction North Dakota was going, either.

"I feel strongly that our voices as citizens are not being heard as our democracy should dictate," Dina says. "It's not that we've lost our way – we're losing our soul."

It's clear why she was the first person Ellen reached out to build this nonpartisan anti-corruption initiative. "Dina is the absolute gold standard for people who care, and want to do the right thing in government," Ellen says. Together, they began to build the local political power necessary to put an Anti-Corruption Amendment on the ballot.

While their political ideologies stood in contrast to each other, the members of this coalition found common ground. They all agreed: the people of North Dakota deserve transparency and accountability from their elected officials.

A Nonpartisan, Common Sense Movement

The North Dakota Anti-Corruption Amendment creates an ethics commission and institutes six common sense reforms:

- Creating a nonpartisan ethics commission
- Restricting gifts from lobbyists
- Ending foreign money in elections
- Preventing personal use of campaign money
- Shutting the revolving door on officials becoming lobbyists
- Rooting out conflicts of interest

And out of that grew the BadAss Grandmas Movement with the same core values.

Let's learn a bit more about each of these amazing and inspiring women.

Our Founding Four

Quickly joining **Dina** and **Ellen** were BadAss Grandmas #3, **Kathy Tweeten**; and #4, **Sarah Vogel**.

Dina Butcher: Dina's professional career is fascinating and extensive, as stated in the article. One thing not mentioned is the use of her shrewd analytical skills as a private investigator and business owner. Another thing you might not know about Dina and has contributed to her passionate defense of democracy is that Dina's paternal grandmother, three aunts, two teenaged cousins and an uncle were all murdered in Auschwitz around September of 1943. Although we look in horror at the goals of Project 2025, Dina's family has firsthand, tragic experience with what happens when a power-driven madman takes complete control over a government and a nation.

Dina has been an activist for a long time with her first political involvement tending a *Goldwater for President* trailer in the summer of 1964. Proof of her ability to be skillfully non-partisan was that she was dating (but quickly points out, did not marry 😊) a progressive Naval Officer at the same time.

Ellen Chaffee: As president of two public North Dakota universities from 1993 to 2002, Ellen spent alternate weeks at each. With 75 miles between, and her husband in Bismarck, she had three homes, a commute with no cell phone service in the middle, and only floppy disks to take work from one to the other. She had two sets of work clothing, and moved files, equipment and other items every weekend which resulted in a great title for a memoir (*Bag Lady of the Great Plains*).

An added complication was that the two institutions are fierce athletic rivals, a tricky road for diplomatic Ellen. When attending games, she started by sitting with the home team and then switched as needed so she was always able to provide support to the losing team. A supporter of the underdog, even then!

Three weeks before the ND nominating convention of 2012, Ellen's first foray into political action happened (besides switching sides at basketball games!!!). She was drafted to be the running mate of the Democratic gubernatorial nominee.

It appears she learned from both experiences that she is not cut out for partisan politics, preferring to stick to the issues, which is what BadAss Grandmas is all about – helping us all to learn about issues and organizations that are working to protect our democracy.

Kathy Tweeten – Kathy, BG4D #3, and president of the League of Women Voters Bismarck – Mandan chapter, has had an illustrious, award – filled career (to include the Rural Leadership North Dakota Award) as an NDSU faculty and the NDSU Extension Service. Kathy was a distinguished faculty member and is an active volunteer.

One thing you might not know about Kathy is that she is a **TalentSmart** certified trainer in Emotional Intelligence.

Kathy only became active in political action after she retired; that’s when she became involved with the Article 14 team and became a BadAss Grandma. We are so glad you did, Kathy!

Sarah Vogel – author, successful attorney as well as BadAss Grandma #4, Sarah’s calm presence and kind demeanor often made her underestimated in the courtroom. You can google Sarah and find her doing book talks on YouTube for her exceptional book, The Farmer’s Lawyer, the story of the North Dakota Nine and the Fight to Save the Family Farm, published in 2021.

You might also know Sarah through her distinguished career as the North Dakota Agricultural Commissioner from 1989 to 1997. A graduate of UND and the New York University School of Law, Sarah was the recipient of the AALA Distinguished Service Award in 2006 and a finalist for the Public Justice Trial Lawyer of the Year Award in 2011. What you might not know about Sarah, and I learned through attending one of her wonderful book talks at the now-defunct wonderful Zandbros, was that she is the granddaughter of Frank A. Vogel, who was chief advisor to William Langer, ND’s governor from the Nonpartisan League and U.S. Senator. My father loved “Wild Bill” Langer and I loved hearing Sarah talk about those stories from her childhood.

Our founding mothers are talented and intelligent, with illustrious careers. We are fortunate to be in the fight to save democracy with them **and ALL of you!**



NEWS FROM AROUND NORTH DAKOTA, THE RED RIVER VALLEY AND ELSEWHERE



An offshoot of the BadAss Grandmas has – **much to our delight** – been blossoming in east central North Dakota. The meeting of Voters for Democracy will be held on Sept 7 in Devils Lake. They will be organizing the group for future work and prioritizing goals, and themes for that work. The

meeting will be held at the Lake Region Heritage Center in Devils Lake, likely from 9:30 am to 2:00 pm. Final details for this meeting will be out later in August.

Anyone interested in attending should contact Julie Schuler at jschuler6@gmail.com.

FROM THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

The League of Women Voters of the Red River Valley has a new resource. The Citizen’s Guide to Lobbying in North Dakota can be found here: www.lwvnd.org/citizen-guide. The League’s wonder woman Whitney Oxendahl says it’s a great place to start for those who want to get involved in the 2025 legislative session.

Specifically to North Dakota, if people are interested in being on LWVND’s advocacy team, which is all about tracking bills or watching committee hearings, they can email nodakLWV@gmail.com.

NEW RESOURCE

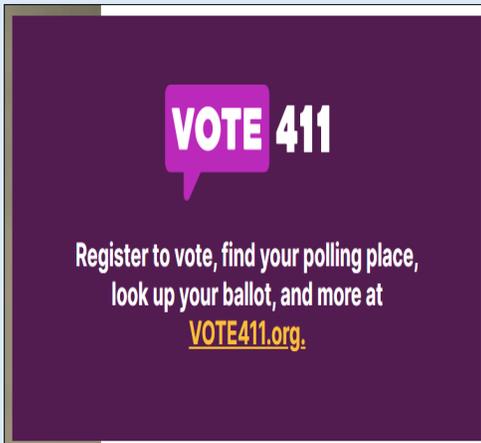
Guide to Voting in Cass County

Are you ready to vote in Cass County?

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|--|---|
| <p>Diyaar Ma u Tahay Inaad ka Codayso Degmada Cass ee Gobolka North Dakota?</p> | <p>هل أنتم مستعدون للتصويت في مقاطعة كاس، شمال داكوتا؟</p> |
| <p>¿Estás preparado para votar en Cass County ND?</p> | <p>के तपाईं कास काउन्टी, एन-डीमा मतदान गर्न तयार छिनुहुन्छ?</p> |

MINNESOTA PRIMARY on AUGUST 13

The 2024 Primary Election in Minnesota is Tuesday, August 13 and as most of you probably know, on the Primary ballot, you can only vote for



candidates from one political party. If you vote for candidates from both political parties, your votes will not count. You decide which one of the two parties you will vote for— Minnesota does not have political party registration.

NONPARTISAN OFFICES

Nonpartisan offices will not list a political party next to a candidate's name on the MN primary ballot. For example, county, city, township and school board offices are nonpartisan. Nonpartisan offices will be listed on the back side of the primary ballot. You can vote for any candidate. The candidates who get the most votes will be on the November general election ballot.

Want to learn more about the Primary on August 13? The Minnesota League of Women Voters and the Minnesota Secretary of State's office has plenty of resources for you to consult:

<https://www.sos.state.mn.us/media/5573/august-primary-election.pdf>

North Dakota media featured in September Mtg

BG4D's **September** speakers will be from **Buffalo's Fire** and the **Bismarck Documenters**.

The Indigenous Media Freedom Alliance, a 501c3 nonprofit founded in 2016, according to their website, in response to the need for independent media in Indian Country. **Buffalo's Fire** is working to report local news in the Bismarck – Mandan area and rural communities across North Dakota. The IMFA publishes independent news online at buffalofire.com.

The Documenters in Bismarck are part of a nationwide movement. Regardless of where you live, there are documenters who attend public

meetings and provide and share information. Find out more here: <https://www.documenters.org>

A yellow flyer for Bismarck Documenters. At the top, it says "Bismarck Documenters" and "POWERED BY BUFFALO'S FIRE" with a logo. Below that, it says "Building a community-owned public record together." and shows a group of diverse people. The text continues: "Get trained and PAID \$20 hourly to take notes at Bismarck/Mandan & Burleigh/Morton County government meetings." It lists "NEXT TRAINING: August 7 @6:30 p.m." and "Scan QR code below to register at Bismarck Documenters for Zoom access" with a QR code and "Bismarck Documenters Website" logo. A "HOW TO APPLY:" section lists three steps: 1. Make an account on bismarck-nd.documenters.org, 2. Attend a training a free orientation will help you know your rights, 3. Start reporting on your schedule with weekly assignments that pay. At the bottom, it says "For more information, email alicia@imfreedomalliance.org".

OTHER DEMOCRACY ACTIONS / and RESOURCES

Each month's newsletter highlights some of the many resources that are available to help you navigate today's uncomfortable landscape. This month, we are highlighting **Red, Wine and Blue**, We Choose US MN, and the National Women's Health Network.

RED, WINE AND BLUE

Red, Wine and Blue is a 501c3 organization founded by Kate Paris after the 2018 midterm election. Operating out of suburban swing districts in the United States, RWB engages women at the grassroots level, seeking to address issues of importance to women..

Want to learn more about PROJECT 2025?

Red, Wine and Blue is a great resource to read up on what Project 2025 is. As many of us have already discovered, knowing about Project 2025 is vital as you prepare to have those tough conversations with beloved friends, family members, neighbors and community members who may not understand the

true risk to our freedoms that we are facing in our upcoming election.

What is Project 2025?

Project 2025 is a plan crafted by Trump's allies and supporters aimed at taking over America's government if Trump wins in 2024. By eliminating checks and balances, they plan to push a far-right agenda without oversight, embedding extremist policies for generations.



PROJECT 2025'S

FOUR PILLARS:

- 1 A "playbook" designed to dismantle key federal agencies like the Department of Education, Homeland Security, the EPA, and the Department of Justice.
- 2 A private database of 20,000+ far-right loyalists ready to fill federal appointments, akin to an "extremist LinkedIn."
- 3 A "Presidential Administration Academy" to train future appointees how to use the government to advance their agenda.
- 4 A 900+ page "Mandate for Leadership" outlining a complete overhaul of government operations for a new Trump administration.



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TRUMP v. UNITED STATES

SOTOMAYOR, J., dissenting

Never in the history of our Republic has a President had reason to believe that he would be immune from criminal prosecution if he used the trappings of his office to violate the criminal law. Moving forward, however, all former Presidents will be cloaked in such immunity. If the occupant of that office misuses official power for personal gain, the criminal law that the rest of us must abide will not provide a backstop.

With fear for our democracy, I dissent.

To learn more, go to their website:
<https://redwine.blue/project2025/>

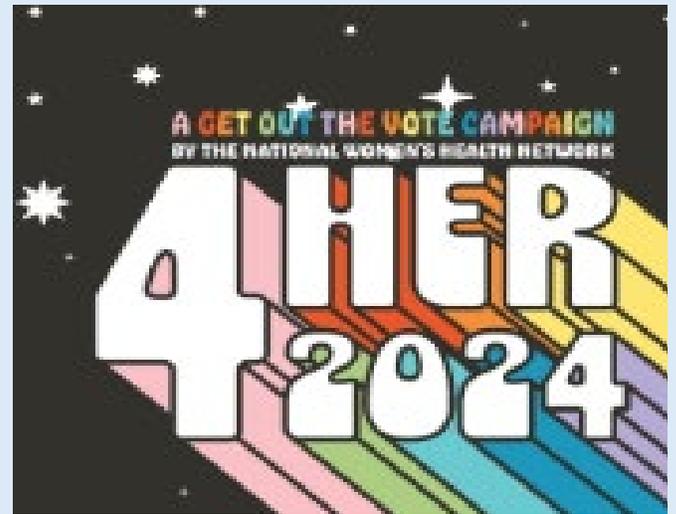
NATIONAL WOMENS HEALTH NETWORK

The National Women's Health Network is a 501c3 *not for profit* health network that seeks to represent the health intersections of women across the life

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continuum. They are working to improve health outcomes for women through state and federal advocacy, consumer health education, and grassroots technical assistance initiatives. They launched a *get out the vote* campaign on July 4. Some of you had asked me about more resources about health initiatives and although **Planned Parenthood** is a great resource for those issues, here is another good one.

Learn more here about their many resources as well as now to get involved. <https://nwhn.org/our-initiatives/policy-advocacy/>



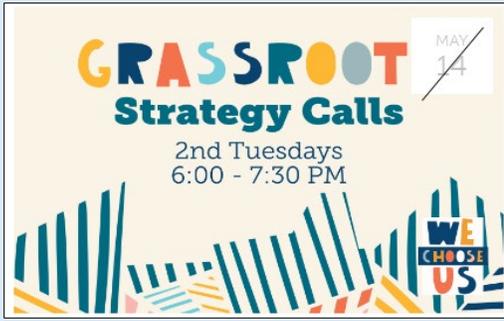
WE CHOOSE US MN

One of our past speakers and partners in pro-democracy efforts in Minnesota is **We Choose US MN**. They have a lot of upcoming events that can help us also navigate tough conversations:

Their next big convening is on Saturday, September 14th, from 10:30 to 2:00 PM, and they are hoping to

TRIPLE attendance! Their planned conversation is about how to instill trust in our elections—both the process and the people who run them—and inspire engagement in and outside of the ballot box.





You can also join their monthly strategy calls and learn about what they

do, here: <https://www.wechooseusmn.com/>

OUR MISSION TO SAVE OUR DEMOCRACY

Our goal in BadAss Grandmas is to help all members **learn and** find a way to get engaged in protecting our democracy. As we know, gratefully, there are MANY pro-democracy groups out there – but all of us in these groups are deeply concerned. Concerned not only as to what is happening here but worldwide in the rise of the far right.

An organization that is worried, not only about what is happening in the US, but **worldwide** is **Protect Democracy**. Their website contains resources and a vast array of information about their research.

From the **Protect Democracy** website: <https://protectdemocracy.org/>

Since the mid-2000s, global democracy — seemingly on the rise for decades — has entered a prolonged recession. Since then, democracy's decline and authoritarianism's rise have affected every region of the world, with erosion in both new and established democracies. The speed and scope of this wave surprised many experts, especially its inclusion of some of the world's oldest and most stable democracies like the United States.

A compelling video is posted on **Protect Democracy's** website as pictured below.



The mission of the BadAss Grandmas* is to engage citizens in restoring trustworthy government for generations to come. What we are doing is of vital importance. ***Vital to us, to our children and grandchildren, and likely to our planet.***

If you identify with our mission, declare yourself and get to work. We are a non-partisan issue-based **movement**, not an organization.

We encourage local action and participation in existing organizations.

We meet virtually on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:30 pm, Central. Our link for the virtual meeting is emailed to all on our contact list and can be found on our website – <https://badassgrandmasfordemocracy.com>

SAVE THE DATE – AUGUST 21st BG4D Meeting



On Wednesday, August 21, our speaker will be from the **Minnesota Christians Against Christian Nationalism**.

The Minnesota Reformer, which can be found free online, indicates that nearly 3 in 10 Minnesotans, including a majority of Republicans, hold Christian nationalist views, according to a new survey of all 50 states conducted by the **Public Religion Research Institute**. Democracy is under assault from the far right, from big money, and from Christian Nationalists who wish to eliminate the separation of church and state. **Join us for this important discussion.**

Get involved, however you can, wherever you can, whenever you can. We need and appreciate you!

- **"BadAss Grandma" is a state of mind, not biological.**

In solidarity, Lyn Dockter - Pinnick