



Carrie Chapman Catt Award 2021

League of Women Voters of Dane County

Gail Bliss

Gail Bliss is a singularly dedicated LWV Dane County member, devoted to making democracy resources accessible as possible. She is a stalwart presence during the summer Dane County Farmer's Market on the Capitol Square through the heat and humidity. Gail is a frequent, friendly, and trusted presence for the League at the Beacon, YWCA, Salvation Army, St Vinny's, and numerous other food pantry providers. What the pandemic hit, she preserved and worked around the clock ensuring people who were the most severely affected still had opportunities to vote- ensuring their voices were heard.

Her fight against the discriminatory Voter ID legislation prompted her to write the 2011 grant for the Evjue Foundation, which led to the LWV Dane County receiving \$5,000 to help those affected by the law. She untangles the bureaucratic mess for those who have lost their paperwork petition for their Voter ID and chaperones and provides transportation to the DMV rain or shine. In a particularly poignant example of Gail's dedication, she spent more than five hours with one Madison resident over the course of two days, driving to five locations in order to help them get a photo ID and a social security card. Gail's service to this one person went far beyond voter assistance; it helped them access education, housing, and employment that had previously been unattainable because of their lack of ID.

Gail tirelessly worked and walked with the Dane County and City of Madison social service providers to their rehoming locations as well as encampments when the pandemic impacted the homeless community hard. She went out into the community, under bridges, across frozen ponds, in hidden spots where those who have the least need the most, all with the goal of leveling the playing field.

Since 2012, Gail has worked with social workers at local hospitals ensuring staff understand hospitalized voter rules. In 2016, she worked with medical students to publicize the opportunity to vote for patients at UW hospitals which was covered by the local news station.

In addition to her determined boots-on-the-ground voter services work, Gail has held a number of leadership positions with LWV Dane County since becoming a member in 2008. She served as International Relations/Great Decisions Chair from 2009–2010, Fundraising Chair from 2010–2012, Voter Service Chair from 2011–2017, Board Secretary from 2017–2018, and as a member of the Voter Service Steering Committee from 2018 to the present.

There is no greater representation of making a difference and understanding the issue with democracy is not only who is and is not allowed to vote but who cannot. Her perspective of making democracy more accessible is one all LWV Dane County members should take to heart.



**The Carrie Chapman Catt Award is presented
as a tribute to years of excellence
in contributing to the community,
in making a sustained commitment to the League
and to its governing principles,
and in fulfilling the words of Carrie Chapman Catt:**

**"What should be done can be done:
what can be done let us do."
[1920]**

