

# Mass. Civic Learning Week set for next week

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With a presidential election year under way, the effort is on to promote civic education and involvement among current and future voters.

To that end, the Massachusetts Civic Learning Coalition — described on its website as a nonpartisan coalition

of more than 60 nonprofits, educators, research institutions, universities, and others — is planning its fourth annual Massachusetts Civic Learning Week.

The exclusively online event takes place March 11-15 and involves students, educators, policymakers and community leaders. Its aim is “to strengthen constitutional democracy” by supporting the movement for civic education and educating about how local, state and

federal government works, and the role of individuals.

“This free event is open to the public, and the theme this year is ‘2024 and Beyond: Civic Learning as a Unifying Force,’” said Karen Mazza of the League of Women Voters Cape Cod Area.

Registration has just opened for Massachusetts Civic Learning Week, which

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coincides with the National Civic Learning Week, and is co-organized by The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University and Massachusetts Women of Color Coalition.

Plans include virtual workshops and events throughout the week, with sessions like “Zoom with a Judge” and “From Civics to Career Readiness.” Other sessions focus on the legislative process, AI regulation, presidential elections and the youth vote. Sessions supporting educators include such topics as “Building Media Literacy Skills & Fostering Civil Discourse” and “Assessing Student Civic Learning.”

“It is important to provide programs and resources that raise the visibility of the importance of civic learning and engagement and that provide ways for students and community members to interact around civic learning,” said Mazza, who chairs the Youth Service Committee for the league and is also the state League of Women Voters representative to the Massachusetts Civic Learning Coalition.

Some of the sessions, she said, allow students to interact with judges and learn more about the court system,

while others involve interaction with legislators.

“In our case, civic organizations interact with students and support them in understanding the importance of voting and how to promote it at schools and college campuses,” Mazza said.

Since the Legislature approved the “Act to Promote and Enhance Civic Engagement” in 2018, Massachusetts “has made great strides to improve civic education,” she said. “But it takes continued state support through funding of the Civic Project Trust Fund to maintain the resources for curriculum and professional development that allow schools to offer strong civic education programs.”

Civic Learning Week, Mazza said, creates more learning opportunities for students, “and it also keeps the importance of civic learning and engagement visible, reminding us to continue to support it.”

Mazza is organizing a session titled “The Power of the Youth Vote,” which is scheduled for March 15. The session emphasizes the importance of young people being engaged.

“Data shows that while the youth vote increased in the last presidential election, the voter participation of young adults between the ages of 18 and 34 is still a significantly smaller percentage of their numbers, as compared to older voters,” she said.

The session will include a presenta-

tion by Kelly Siegel-Stechler, a senior researcher from the Center for Information and Research About Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University, who will provide data about the difference in the youth vote.

“It is important that young people understand that when they vote for elected positions, they are hiring the people who will pass legislation and implement policies that will affect their future,” Mazza said. “Issues like the affordability of college and housing, the environment, women’s health care, and a range of other issues matter to their future. In a democracy we need the participation of all people so that our government is representative of the needs of all people.”

The event is not just for students and educators. Community members are welcome to attend sessions of interest, she said.

“The schedule for the week lists the session and the intended audience. For people in the community there are some sessions that say they are for all, some that say they are for families and some that say they are for policy makers,” Mazza noted.

She said the opening session in particular — Get Involved! Youth & Adult Civic Leaders Share Their Experiences — may be of interest to community members “who often think that students don’t learn about civics anymore.” This session, set for 10 to 11 a.m. on Mon-

day, features a panel of youth leaders “sharing their experiences in bringing about change on a whole range of issues from mental health to youth voting and climate change.”

The efforts of organizers to promote civic understanding and involvement are lauded by legislators such as state Sen. Becca Rausch, D-Needham, who last year pressed the Senate to increase civics education funding for state and local education officials.

“I am so proud to see that the policy and financial investments we’re making in civics education here in Massachusetts are yielding real results. I see it in our classrooms, in our school visits, in the emails I get from students across the state, and in conversations with my own children and their classmates,” she said in a statement.

A full schedule of Massachusetts events and a registration link can be found at Civic Learning Week — Massachusetts Civic Learning Coalition ([mccivicsforall.org/clw2024](http://mccivicsforall.org/clw2024)) and national events can be found at [civiclearning-week.org](http://civiclearning-week.org)

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