

**LIGHTING THE FIRE
LEADING THE WAY
SINCE 1915**

OUR MISSION

to educate, empower, and engage the citizens of Greater Cincinnati to act together to promote the common good.

OUR VISION

is a just, inclusive, thriving, and sustainable community where all are informed and engaged in shaping our shared future.

OUR VALUES

Civic Literacy | Citizen Empowerment | Collaboration | Equity and Justice | Support for Children and Youth



JOIN US

RESERVE YOUR SEAT NOW!

STRONGER MAYOR, STRONGER CITY?

**A FORUM EXAMINING THE SHIFTING
STRUCTURE OF CINCINNATI CITY
GOVERNMENT**

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 | 6:00 PM

Downtown Public Library
800 Vine Street (3rd floor)

WCC's first two public forums this fall will examine the shifting structure of Cincinnati city government and how it has impacted the balance of power and accountability to the public.

For more than a century, Cincinnati's Charter has shaped how our city is governed. The Council-Manager Form of Government, enacted in 1926, was the pride of reformers, sweeping away the corruption of the Boss Cox regime. Over the past 25 years, a shift to a stronger-mayor system effective in 2001 has significantly changed the balance of leadership at City Hall. Historically, the mayor was a voting member of council and selected by council members. Then the mayor was selected by being council's highest vote-getter. That was followed by direct election of a mayor who was no longer on council but given the power to set the legislative agenda, veto council actions, appoint council committee chairs, and appoint and fire a City Manager with consent of council.

As new conversations about Charter reform emerge, WCC offers an opportunity to consider some fundamental questions: is Cincinnati's current system of government serving its citizens as effectively as it could? Has a stronger mayor made Cincinnati a stronger city? Has it made council a rubber stamp, exemplified by their approval of a Planned Development on Hyde Park

(Continued on page 6)



RESIST AGAINST AN EVER-DUMBER WORLD

President's Message

Writing a *President's Message* is always a challenge. What can I say of importance? How can I inspire you, the readers? How can this message sustain the club? As I faced the blank page once again, my eye caught an opinion piece in the *New York Times* by Bret Stephens, posted on LinkedIn by a friend, entitled "I'm Begging You: Never Write with A.I."

A.I. is becoming a commonplace element of communication—it takes notes for us, suggests slogans, and summarizes documents. It is a temptation for students to use it to write essays for school assignments, and for teachers to use as a tool to grade those essays. A.I. may be used to compose a business memo, respond to an email—or even to compose a speech.

As A.I. becomes ubiquitous and easy to employ, why not use it? As a one-time English major, I have so far resisted that temptation; I've been writing for a good part of my 70+ years with some facility, so why would I pick up a crutch at this point in my life? Bret Stephens gives good reasons why not to—for our individual as well as collective benefit.

"The link between broad-based literacy and the rise of democracy is well known. People who can read and write for themselves have, historically, also been good at choosing and advocating for themselves. What happens when the process goes into reverse? When people lack the patience to absorb arguments more than a few pages or sentences long? When they lack the ability to contradict those arguments because they've never

The link between broad-based literacy and the rise of democracy is well known.

honed, through daily practice, the most essential skill for clear thinking?"

Writing is thinking. As we write less, we lose the ability to think. If we can't think clearly, we lose the ability to participate effectively in governing ourselves, and this puts our democracy at risk. The opportunity to educate ourselves and think critically about civic issues is what Woman's City Club is all about. Our monthly forums provide opportunities to learn about and discuss topics that affect our lives where we live—like fairness of voting methods, accountability of city government, promotion of public health, advocacy for civil rights, and protection of our environment.

But WCC is not just about learning; we're also about engaging. It's critical that we analyze and articulate a position on what we've learned and communicate that to the public and the powers that be. We do this regularly in our weekly *Update* email, occasional opinion pieces in the local press, testimony before governing bodies, and letters to elected officials.

Join us in the work and resist, as Bret Stephens exhorts us, "against an ever-dumber world."

BETH SULLEBARGER
PRESIDENT



WCC Members, Families and Friends

ANNUAL POT LUCK IN THE PARK SIP. SHARE. CONNECT. EVENT

LAURIE FRANK

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2026

12:00-4:00 PM

French Park Pavilion | Amberley Village
3012 Section Road

One of the greatest joys of Woman's City Club is the friendships we build, and there's no better place to celebrate those connections than our **annual Potluck in the Park!** Join us on Sunday, September 20, from 12:00-4:00 pm at the beautiful French Park Pavilion in Amberley Village for an afternoon of great food, conversation, laughter, and community. Bring your favorite dish to share, reconnect with fellow members, and enjoy a relaxed afternoon in one of Cincinnati's most scenic parks.

This event is also the perfect opportunity to introduce someone new to Woman's City Club. We encourage you to bring a friend, family member, neighbor, or colleague to experience the welcoming spirit of WCC firsthand. Whether they've been curious about WCC or simply enjoy good company and meaningful conversation, they'll discover why WCC has been bringing people together to make a difference in our community for more than a century. We hope you'll join us—and bring someone along to share in the fun!





WCC VP of Civic Engagement Shares Vision

A FOCUS ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: COLLABORATION

I am honored to serve a second (non-consecutive) term as WCC VP of Civic Engagement. For the next year, we have assembled a committee for WCC Civic Engagement, to include Melissa Currence (WCC Board of Trustees Member), Matt Koesters, and me. We invite any WCC member to join us, to further develop our sustainability and our ecosystem of civic engagement. If you are interested in joining the WCC Civic Engagement committee, please contact me: dbviders@gmail.com.

Our vision is **notably to collaborate** with WCC VP of Programs Cheri Rekow to offer overall support, suggest speakers, and to assist with program logistics, including follow-up surveys. In addition, the WCC Civic Engagement team is considering grassroots civic events during the upcoming term to cultivate experiences that bring people together to discuss current community issues, deliberate, listen and hear one another, and to learn from our diverse community members. We intend to explore community initiatives that support grassroots dialogue and community action, such as Matt Koester's bold, cross-partisan Fortify Democracy voting reform efforts.

Another consideration is to join the national Civic Season initiative, that runs from Juneteenth 2027 until the reading the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 2027. Civic Season offers innovative ideas to bring people together to celebrate civic engagement, re-think and learn from our histories, build civic skills, offer events and engagement with youth, and to connect with one another. We will participate in National Voter Registration Day on September 15, 2026. Watch for more details!

COMMUNITY CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SPOTLIGHT

Did you know the City of Cincinnati developed an **LGBTQIA+ Commission**? Founding member Storm Boyd says, "the full board will decide on priorities and policy positions, but he anticipates an emphasis on legal concerns, especially for transgender Cincinnatians." He'd also like to see more LGBTQ-friendly spaces in the city. "We have a great group of people that provide a lot of expertise and services, so I think the sky's the limit with this commission." I think the main point is us coming together as one body to convene and come up with bold initiatives and dream big for this city, because our community deserves it.



David Siders, WCC VP of Civic Engagement



SAVE THE DATE!

17TH ANNUAL FEIST TEA CELEBRATION

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2026

1:30 PM - REFRESHMENTS

2:00 PM - PROGRAM

Kennedy Heights Arts Center Annex
6620 Montgomery Road 45213

The application form for nominations will be emailed to WCC members on Tuesday, September 8. Members may submit their nomination online or send information to Feist Tea chair, Laurie Frank no later than October 8. Directions for submitting a nomination will be included in the

Hoorah! It's time to place the **17th Annual Feist Tea** on your calendar! Please join us as we gather for an elegant tea to honor several exceptionally feisty individuals. The goal for this year's annual event is:

- **To celebrate Woman's City Club** — its civic engagement and feisty and dedicated members
- **To recognize all past presidents and honorees** who have served and supported WCC across the many years
- **To honor Feisty individuals** who embody the mission, vision, and spirit of WCC and have contributed to WCC or the Greater Cincinnati Community

As has been the case for the last few years, WCC members are invited to nominate people to be honored at the Feist Tea, and one of the honorees may be a non-member of WCC whose significant contributions to WCC and/or Greater Cincinnati align with WCC's mission. A selection sub-committee, including Feist Tea Committee and WCC Board members, will meet at the end of October to select this year's Feist Tea honorees.

email. Should you have any questions, please contact Laurie at 513-600-2195 or lkfrank81@gmail.com.

In keeping with our previous annual celebrations, the Woman's City Club hopes ALL past Feist Tea honorees will attend and be recognized.

Watch for your virtual invitation and event details coming soon.





STRONGER MAYOR, STRONGER CITY?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Square despite huge community opposition? Has it affected the City Manager's ability to keep operations professional vs. political, such as when hiring and firing police and fire chiefs? Has it increased civic engagement or increased the power of money over City Hall, as seen in corruption of three council members?

The first forum, on **Tuesday, September 22**, at the Downtown Public Library, beginning at 6 pm (doors open at 5:30 pm), will explain and discuss the pros and cons of a Stronger Mayor-City Manager (hybrid) form of government, as well as potential reforms. Talking points will include hiring and firing the city manager, electing council members by district, returning to four-year staggered terms, and restoring the balance of power between the mayor, council and city manager. Moderated by **Anne Delano Steinert** of the University of Cincinnati Department of History, the panel will include **Tim Burke**, of Counsel, Manley Burke; **Mike Morgan**, Attorney, J. Thomas Hodges & Associates; and **Lesley Jones**, pastor and former Mt. Airy Community Council President.

The second forum in October (date TBD) will focus on ways to make the city administration more accountable. Talking points will include fiscal sustainability and operational efficiency, reinstituting a safety director to supervise the police and fire chiefs, professional qualifications for boards and commissions, use of independent audits, insulating city staff from political pressure, and more. Whether you have followed City Hall for decades or simply want to better understand how decisions are made, these forums are an opportunity to become more informed and engaged.

A strong leader would fix broken city government
By Andrew White
Issue 1 is the only issue on the ballot in a special election on Wednesday. That is appropriate because Issue 1 is the most important city government issue to face Cincinnati voters in 70 years.

Is a STRONG MAYOR right for Cincinnati?
The Cincinnati Post, Saturday, August 1, 1998, 11A

Boss politics would replace professionalism
By Tim Burke
On Wednesday, the voters of Cincinnati will decide whether or not a whole lot of bad times will become a part of our city charter.

The pros:
Arguments for Issue 1
■ If elected, mayor would provide leadership for city operations by being clearly "in charge" of City Hall.
■ A directly elected mayor would be more accountable to voters.
■ A mayor as chief executive, with power to hire and fire city managers, would set up a clear line of administrative authority.
■ Division of powers would create well-defined responsibilities; the mayor would be in charge of the executive functions of government, the council of legislation.
■ Separate mayor and council elections would reduce the problem of city council members' grandstanding in an effort to win the mayor's job.
■ It would save time for the mayor and council to work together to take a more long-range look at addressing Cincinnati's challenges and opportunities.

The cons:
Arguments against Issue 1
■ Putting the mayor in charge of city operations would politicize the delivery of city services.
■ The mayor would be elected with less than a majority of votes cast.
■ The strong mayor system would undermine the city manager's professional independence by making him or her beholden to a mayor with exclusive power over the budget.
■ The proposal heightens the chances of government gridlock; the mayor's only tool to influence legislation is a veto, which can be overridden by two-thirds vote of council.
■ The plan increases the size and expense of government by adding a new elected office (the mayor) and a new council member (the mayor's replacement) to the current two elected offices, one of which serves at mayors.
■ Four-year terms would delay voters' opportunity to get rid of poor performing elected officials.

To register, visit
womancityclub.org

CHERI REKOW, WCC VP OF PROGRAMS



LORISSA RINEHART ON JEANNETTE RANKIN

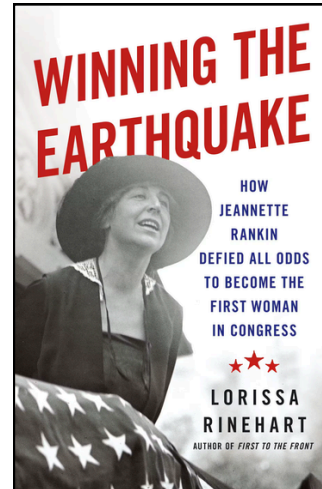
BETH SULLEBARGER

More than a dozen WCC members enjoyed a highly animated, 90-minute conversation with Lorissa Rinehart, author of a biography of Jeannette Rankin entitled *Winning the Earthquake* at the Mercantile Library on the evening of August 5. The evening was presented by the Jeannette Rankin Foundation and co-sponsored by the Women's Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation and Woman's City Club. We were amazed to hear that Rinehart obtained a contract to write her inspiring and entertaining book based on a one-paragraph proposal prompted by a Wikipedia entry and wrote it in less than a year!

Rinehart touched on the highlights of Rankin's life, including her serving as the first woman elected to Congress in 1913 (and again in 1942), her largely unrecognized but substantial role in the suffrage movement, and her advocacy for laws to protect worker health and safety, particularly in the Montana mining industry. Rankin's stand against US participation in WWI cost her re-election. Born 20 years after Custer's Last Stand in South Dakota, Rankin advocated for fair treatment of native tribes and other minorities.

Rankin also supported the education of women, using her estate to establish her eponymous foundation in 1976. Over the last fifty years, the Jeannette Rankin Foundation has provided over \$5 million in unrestricted, annually renewable cash scholarships nationally to over 2,500 low-income women over the age of thirty-five to enable them to complete their college undergraduate degree. This program has a very high success rate due to the maturity of the scholars and the foundation's unique support system.

RINEHART'S BOOK WINNING THE EARTHQUAKE



How Jeannette Rankin defied all odds to become the first woman in Congress. The first major biography of Rankin, a groundbreaking suffragist, peace activist, champion of democratic reform and the first American woman to hold federal office.



Lorissa Rhinehart, photo by Beth Sullebarger



Annual Public Reading of the Declaration of Independence

WCC CELEBRATES 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR NATION

WCC members were among the 800+ people gathered at Cincinnati's annual "Public Reading of the Declaration of Independence" at the Seisongood Pavilion in Eden Park on the morning of July 4, 2026, for a 50-minute celebration of the United States' semiquincentennial.

The observance was emceed by Paula Brehm-Heeger, director of the Cincinnati and Hamilton County Public Library, and attendees were welcomed by Cincinnati Parks director Jason Barron. Twenty community notables, including Vice Mayor Jan-Michele Lemon Kearney, Woody Keown, director of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, and Judge Leslie Ghiz, each read part of the Declaration, recreating the spirit of 1776 and illustrating its relevance to the present day.

The program included a moving essay on "What Is an American?" written by Price Hill resident Winifred Wuennemann Bruening for the Bicentennial in 1976. No Promises Vocal Bank, a male a cappella group, provided patriotic music. The ceremony concluded with a rousing performance by the Walnut Hills HS Marching Band Drumline that brought us to our feet, brimming with pride for 250 years of American democracy.

The event was produced by Edward Schoelwer and the July Fourth Project in collaboration with Cincinnati Parks, Cincinnati and Hamilton County Public Library, League of Women Voters Cincinnati Area and WCC, with financial support from private donors, Cincinnati Bar Foundation, Churchill's Fine Teas and the Mt. Adams Civic Association.



WCC member, Vice Mayor Kearney holds the mic for Allen Bernard, photo by Beth Sullebarger.



GREEN TIP: STOP WISH-CYCLING!

SARAH MUNCY

Have you ever tossed something into the recycling bin because you hoped it could be recycled? You're not alone! This practice, known as "wish-cycling," happens when we put items in the recycling bin simply because they seem recyclable—or because they have that familiar recycling symbol.

Unfortunately, wish-cycling can do more harm than good. Items that don't belong in the recycling stream can contaminate otherwise recyclable materials, damage sorting equipment, and create safety hazards for workers.

The good news? Recycling correctly is easy: When in doubt, check it out!

If you live in the Cincinnati area, Rumpke provides a handy guide to exactly what belongs in your recycling bin. Check [Rumpke's "Recycling Tips" guide](#) or get your very own [Acceptable Recycling Items List](#) for a quick, printable reference for your household.

A few common wish-cycling culprits:

❌ **Plastic bags and plastic wrap** – These can tangle in sorting machinery and should never go in your curbside recycling bin. Many grocery stores offer bins to recycle these!

❌ **Styrofoam and foam egg cartons** – These aren't accepted in Cincinnati's curbside program.

❌ **Plastic takeout containers, utensils and straws** – Even if they carry a recycling symbol, they aren't necessarily recyclable through our local program.

❌ **Plastic clamshell containers** – Those clear containers that hold berries, salads and other foods may look recyclable, but they aren't currently accepted in Cincinnati's curbside program.

And here's a helpful reminder: **the number inside the recycling symbol isn't a guarantee that an item is recyclable.** Rumpke recommends looking at the item's shape—for plastics, Cincinnati's program generally accepts bottles, jugs, tubs and cups.

♻️ **Recycle more thoughtfully, not just more hopefully!** A few seconds of checking can help keep our recycling stream cleaner, safer and more effective.

The **Cincinnati Recycling and Reuse Hub** takes many items that Rumpke curbside does not accept.



**Cincinnati
Recycling &
Reuse Hub**

cincinnati recycling and reuse hub.org



A REGULAR VIRTUAL SIP. SHARE. CONNECT. EVENT

SARAH GIDEONSE

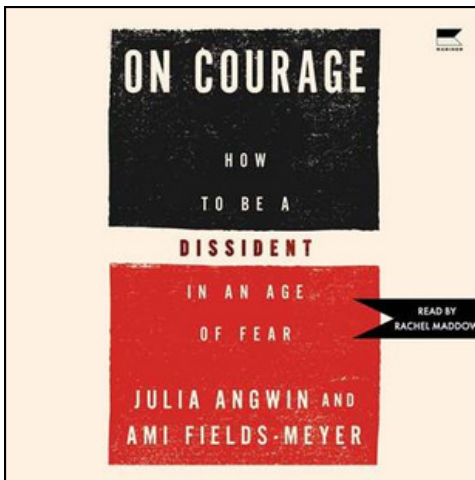
SEPTEMBER BOOK CLUB

On Courage: How to be a Dissident in the Age of Fear

by Julia Angwin and Ami Fields-Meyer

Saturday, September 19

10-11:30 am via Zoom



The book club is open to all members and warmly invites them to join monthly discussions according to their interest and availability. To receive the monthly zoom link, email sarah.gideonse@fuse.net.

Deeply reported and drawing on interviews with over 100 dissidents, activists, and theorists across five continents, the authors outline how ordinary people can build the bravery to resist authoritarianism and protect and restore democratic freedoms.

Other countries have (now or had) a leader who wields fear as a weapon, punishes political enemies, disappears people off the street, and undermines free and fair elections. Today nearly

three out of four people on earth live under authoritarianism, the highest rate since the late 1970s.

Authoritarianism uses fear as a primary weapon. Acknowledging that fear is rational, the authors argue that learning how to calculate risks rather than acting blindly is vital to surviving and continuing the effective protest work. *On Courage* provides a roadmap to political courage and a powerful case for how taking personal risks can help save the free world.

Julia Angwin is an award-winning investigative journalist, a *New York Times* Opinion writer, and the founding director of the Independent Media + Audience Project at the Harvard Kennedy School's Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics, and Public Policy. Two non-profit newsrooms she founded investigate the impacts of technology. She is the author of best sellers *Dragnet Nation* and *Stealing MySpace*.



Ami Fields-Meyer is a senior fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School's Allen Lab for Democracy Renovation and a former senior White House advisor. He has served as a political strategist to national civil rights organizations, political candidates, and public officials. His writing on issues of democracy and public policy have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *Foreign Policy*, and other outlets.





WELCOMING NEW LEADERSHIP IN 2026-2027

Woman's City Club is pleased to welcome five new members to our Board of Directors: Elizabeth Buening, Melissa Currence, Angela Klinedinst, Barbara Myers, and Ellen Pierce. Each brings a unique combination of professional experience, community involvement, and commitment to civic engagement that will strengthen WCC's work in the year ahead.

We are grateful to these women for saying "yes" to leadership and for sharing their time and talents with Woman's City Club. They join a dedicated group of continuing Board members whose ongoing service, institutional knowledge, and commitment help move our mission forward. Together, our Board reflects the spirit of WCC—women with varied experiences and perspectives coming together to educate, engage, and advocate for a stronger community.

Elizabeth Buening brings an extensive background in communications, storytelling, and creative strategy. A Cincinnati native, Elizabeth spent much of her career in New York, including many years with MTV Networks and Viacom, where she rose to Senior Creative Director of Creative Content Solutions. Her work on pro bono nonprofit projects sparked a deeper interest in using her creative skills in service to mission-driven organizations. Now Director of Branding and Marketing at The Actors Theatre Workshop, Elizabeth returned to Cincinnati in 2024. She joined WCC in 2025 and has already become involved through the Communications Committee.

Melissa Currence is an executive communications leader at Procter & Gamble and a longtime civic leader with a particular commitment to strengthening democratic institutions and community

Elizabeth Buening



Melissa Currence



Angela Klinedinst



Barbara Myers



Ellen Pierce





WELCOMING NEW LEADERSHIP IN 2026-2027

engagement. Her extensive volunteer leadership includes service with the League of Women Voters at the local, state, and national levels. Melissa is also a past president of The Cincinnati Association and currently chairs both its Excellence in Government Panel and Governance Committee. Her experience in communications, governance, and civic engagement will be a tremendous asset to WCC.

Angela Klinedinst brings more than two decades of experience in education and a strong commitment to innovation, equity, and excellence. Her work across diverse school districts has centered on building collaborative partnerships, securing funding, and developing training models that support meaningful change. Angela has already shared her time with WCC through the Seasongood Luncheon and looks forward to helping strengthen the organization and empower its members. She is also a member of The Cincinnati Association.

For **Barbara Myers**, joining the Board is a return to WCC leadership. Barbara retired from International Paper Company after a 30-year career in finance and has devoted considerable time and energy to organizations supporting women and women's issues. In addition to her previous service on the WCC Board, Barbara currently serves on the National Speaker Forum Committee. Her extensive community leadership includes the Cincinnati Women's Political Caucus, Friends of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at UC, Friends of the Harriet Beecher Stowe House, and the Decorative Arts Society of Cincinnati. We are delighted to welcome her back to the Board.

Ellen Pierce, a Cincinnati native, brings a passion for community, collaboration, and creating meaningful connections among people. Her work has focused on bringing people together, strengthening

systems, and supporting efforts that create lasting impact. Ellen believes strongly in inclusive dialogue and thoughtful leadership that leads to progressive action—values that align closely with the work and traditions of Woman's City Club. At the heart of her service is a desire to create spaces where people feel seen, heard, and supported.

Please join us in welcoming Elizabeth, Melissa, Angela, Barbara, and Ellen and in thanking all of our Board members—both new and continuing—for their willingness to serve. Volunteer leadership is essential to Woman's City Club, and we are fortunate to have a Board willing to contribute its experience, ideas, energy, and time to advancing WCC's mission and building upon more than a century of civic engagement in Greater Cincinnati.

We look forward to all that we will accomplish together.

WCC has something for everyone – from advocacy, and activism, to event planning, to the teams that help keep the club running strong. No matter your interests or level of expertise, there's a place for you at the table. Committees are open to all members! Find your spot, share your talents, and help make a difference with WCC!

- Civic Engagement
- Communications
- Environmental
- Feist Tea
- Finance and Development
- Membership
- National Speaker Forum
- Program
- Seasongood Luncheon

Reach out to wcc@womanscityclub.org for more information