



## League Hosts First Hybrid Candidate Forum

By Anne Chartier, Voter Services Committee Chair

The League of Women Voters of Ashland and Bayfield Counties (LWV/ABC) held its first hybrid candidate forum on June 29. The forum requested by a Red Cliff tribal member provided an opportunity for At-Large Candidates for Tribal Council to explain their reasons for running for office, and for the community to ask questions about important issues pertaining to the tribe. The forum lasted over two hours and took place in the Legendary Waters Event Center which was generously made available and set up. The candidates and moderator had individual microphones. The forum had in-person or Zoom audience participation, and was also live streamed. Those attending in person with proof of vaccination were not required to wear masks.

A team of LWV/ABC volunteers did the various tasks that make a forum proceed smoothly. Candidates are provided equal opportunity to answer questions. A timer faces the candidates and holds up signs to let them know when they have thirty seconds left, or their time is up. Candidates' opening and closing statements can last up to two minutes and one minute respectively; in between the moderator who reads the questions typically decides if the candidates have 60 or 90 seconds to respond. The order in which candidates speak is determined by drawing names out of a hat so the order in which they speak varies throughout the forum. A screener organizes submitted questions and checks for duplication, while related questions are sometimes combined. Participants attending in person write questions on cards that are collected by a League volunteer who hands them to the screener. Those participating virtually do so using the Zoom function which is also monitored by a volunteer and overseen by the League host.

During the many months when it would have been out of the question to gather in person, the LWV/ABC organized three virtual candidate forums: one for Bad River Tribal Council, the second for Bayfield Circuit Court Judge and the third for Ashland City Council. The Red Cliff candidate forum at the end of June was the first that combined in-person, virtual and streaming participation. About 80 people attended in one form or another.

It would appear that hybrid events will be the way of the future. This will limit our driving and dependence on fossil fuels, which will in turn help reduce global warming and protect our Gitche Gumee, which is NOT FOR SALE. Climate Change was one of the many topics addressed during the Red Cliff candidate forum, which included community needs such as culture, education, employment, health care, housing, natural resources, and allocation of funds.

Seven of the ten At-Large candidates for Tribal Government participated and offered their views and ideas to benefit the tribe, which resulted in a very interesting and informative event.

*The League of Women Voters of Ashland and Bayfield Counties is a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that encourages informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.*