

**EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE
CAPITOL
VOTER**

**JANUARY
2026**

IN THE JANUARY CAPITOL VOTER

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LWVLA CALENDAR

Thursday, Feb. 12 – “History of Women’s Suffrage,” with MSU Prof. Emily Conroy-Krutz. Membership luncheon, 11:30 am - 1:00 pm at MSUFCU.

Thursday, Feb. 19, LWVLA Book Discussion Group, 10 am at Schuler Books Café, Meridian Mall, Okemos.

Saturday, April 18 – “Suffs,” musical at Fisher Theatre in Detroit; contact [Donna Mullins](#).

Thursday, May 7 – LWVLA Annual Meeting. Save the Date.

See articles below for more information.

From our partners' calendars:

Thursday, January 29 – “The Work of the UN and SDGs around the World,” GLUNA program, at East Lansing Public Library, Abbot Rd., 6:30 pm.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kathy Ruby Petroni



Given the events that have occurred since the beginning of the new year, especially in Minneapolis, I am grieving for our country, and I feel our democracy is slipping away. But as political commentator Robert B. Hubbell says, when referring to the assault on America by ICE along with other atrocities of the current administration, “This will stop when enough of us say, ‘No.’” We therefore need to get more Americans to speak out and say “No!” This includes saying “No” at the ballot box in the 2026 midterms and, for those of us that feel comfortable, through peaceful demonstrations. This is our challenge for the new year.

To meet the challenge, I plan to work with League leadership to engage more League members to help us 1) get out an informed vote; 2) increase the opportunities for pro-democracy Lansing area citizens to peacefully demonstrate; and 3) ensure that the elections are free and fair. To do this successfully, the board needs input from membership. If you are interested in helping us plan our activities for 2026, please reach out to me at kathypetronilwv@gmail.com. Working together to help preserve our democracy beats doom scrolling!



Democracy must win,
Kathy

SUPPORT FOR FOOD RESCUE US-LANSING COMMUNITIES

Bettie Landauer-Menchik

The board recently passed a resolution to support the efforts of Food Rescue US – Lansing Communities. This was requested by League member Val Lafferty as part of Food Rescue's effort to demonstrate broad support across the community. Food Rescue US -

Lansing Communities is working to reduce the amount of food going into landfills, at the same time helping to feed hundreds of Lansing area residents each week. Volunteers pick up surplus foods from grocery stores and restaurants throughout the Lansing area and deliver it to social service agencies who feed the hungry in our community. A copy of the resolution can be found [here](#).

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Bettie Landauer-Menchik, Chair

A recent *New York Times* article on stress in children and adolescents has sparked the interest of the Education Committee. There were many disturbing statistics in the article, among them: nearly one in four 17-year-old boys has received a diagnosis of ADHD. In the early 1980s, one in 2,500 children had an autism diagnosis. That figure is now one in 31. Nearly 32 percent of adolescents have been diagnosed at some point with anxiety; the median age of “onset” is 6 years old.

To learn more, the committee will be meeting with the director of Michigan’s Department of Education Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) in February. The goal of MTSS is to eliminate barriers to learning and support successful student outcomes. We are educating ourselves on the state’s programs to deal with the multiple social and emotional issues in schools. We are planning a program in the spring for all League members to share how we can help our children and grandchildren.

We meet on Zoom and are always glad to have new members.

IT'S TIME FOR A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Ellen Link, EAG Co-chair

We’re accustomed to hearing candidates for office and elected officials talk about “growing the economy,” as if it’s not just possible but beneficial to keep expanding production and consumption—forever. Really? Could that be why we have mountains of trash that continue to multiply? How many of you have heard of “[Earth Overshoot Day](#)?” That is the day, announced each year on World Environment Day (June 5) by the international research organization [Global Footprint Network](#), “...when humanity’s demand for ecological resources and services in a given year exceeds what Earth can regenerate in that year.” In 2025 that day fell on July 24! “We maintain this deficit by liquidating stocks of ecological resources and accumulating waste, primarily carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.”

Something needs to change, but that something is complicated and challenging. Could a Circular Economy be the answer? According to the [Ellen MacArthur Foundation](#), with such a system,

“...materials never become waste and nature is regenerated... products and materials are kept in circulation through processes like maintenance, reuse, refurbishment, remanufacture, recycling, and composting. The circular economy tackles climate change and other global challenges, like biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution, by decoupling economic activity from the consumption of finite resources.”

A Circular Economy is one based on the realization that we can't just keep making-using-throwing away. How many times a week do you ask yourself what to do with this kind of packaging, that number of plastic, a kaput short-lived appliance? We have recycling systems in place to deal with so much of our waste but it's never enough, is it? The waste continues to pile up, and the toxins it leaves in the environment can be found in every part of our planet, from the peaks of sky-high mountains to the middle (and bottom!) of the ocean to our *brains*. Somebody *do something!*

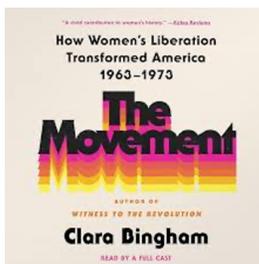
As you can probably tell, this will require the cooperation of every consumer, business owner, legislator and elected official. On the bright side, we've already made a start. The state of Michigan now has legislation requiring every county to have a recycling system in place. But that's just a small beginning. Those with money and power must be convinced that what's good for the planet is good for *everyone* (even them).

There are lots of moving parts here to understand and tackle. That's why the Environmental Advocacy Committee hopes to offer two programs on a Circular Economy (stay tuned) that will explore the enormity of the challenge, solutions being tried and promoted, and how we can adapt and contribute to the effort. The League has long been a proponent of [protecting the environment](#). Think of it as another way of voting.

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

Donna Mullins

In January the book group discussed *Winning the Earthquake: How Jeannette Rankin Defied All Odds to Become the First Woman in Congress* by Lorissa Rinehart. And then we hosted the author the following week! (Unfortunately, the weather forced us to hold the program via Zoom.) We were all inspired by this historic woman who fought for the issues that we value. Alas, we are still fighting those fights today.



February's book is *The Movement: How Women's Liberation Transformed America 1963-1973* by Clara Bingham. It's an oral history of the women's rights movement that many of our members remember vividly. A [NYTimes review](#) called the book "rollicking good fun." Many of us are choosing to "read" the audio version, which has been lauded for using a full cast to turn this oral history into a "vibrant" and "emotional" listen. The book was

recommended by Lorissa Rinehart, our January luncheon speaker.

The Book Discussion Group meets at Schuler Books in Okemos on the third Thursday morning of most months. All League members are welcome. If you would like to be placed on the mailing list to receive information about the books we are reading, including curated links, contact [Donna Mullins](#).

**CELEBRATE LWV'S 106TH BIRTHDAY
AT OUR FEBRUARY 12 LUNCHEON**
Camilla Davis, Program Committee member

On February 14, 1920, the League of Women Voters was officially founded in Chicago, just six months before the 19th amendment to the Constitution was ratified. LWVLA will celebrate the League's 106th birthday with a luncheon on Thursday, February 12 from 11:30 am to 1 pm at the MSUFCU Community Room, Headquarters Building 1, located at 3777 West Road, East Lansing.



LWVLA member Emily Conroy-Krutz will be our featured speaker. Emily is a professor of history at MSU. She teaches courses on American foreign relations, women's history, revolutionary America, religion and legal history. She also serves as undergraduate honors advisor and mentors the History Scholars. More information about Emily can be found on her [website](#).

A brief description of the program: In 1920, the United States ratified the Nineteenth Amendment, declaring that sex could no longer be a barrier to the right to vote. But how, in the century and a half before this landmark was achieved, did American women think about the vote, democracy, and their ability to take part in the political life of the country? In this presentation, Emily Conroy-Krutz will explore the long history of American women's political engagement, talking about the importance of women's multifaceted democratic participation beyond the ballot box.

You'll receive registration details through Constant Contact, so check your inbox. As always, guests are welcome. This would be a wonderful time for a prospective member to learn more about the importance of LWV's mission.

OBSERVER CORPS

Sharon Feldman, VP Observer Corps

"I believe that provincial [local] institutions are useful to all nations, but nowhere do they appear to me to be more indispensable than amongst a democratic people." (Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*)

Happy New Year to all observers. Now that it's 2026, with elections looming, we need to pay extra close attention to what's going on in our local units of government. The Observer Corps could use more help. Are you worried that some local communities do not support early voting or vote-by-mail? Do you wonder where and when the next data center will be coming? Would you like to know when local leaders are standing up for transparency and good government? How do voters know what's going on if the League of Women Voters does not know? If you can make time to help by observing a local unit of government in person or cozily from home, please email me, [Sharon Feldman](#), or look for me at a LWVLA event. We need you!

NOTES FROM THE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Dorothy Engelman

One of the enjoyable tasks of the Development Director is to write Thank You notes to the individuals who donate to the LWVLA. Your board decided in December to honor those

who do so by acknowledging them in the Capitol Voter and at the Annual Meeting; only names, not amounts, will be published. Donors also have the opportunity to opt out of being listed.

The League is grateful to the following people for their support.

November:

Andrea Yokich
Elaine Fischhoff

December:

Bob & Shelagh Miller
Debra Gordon
Ranjani Krishnan

What's Your Name?

Many members of the LWVLA have a permanent name badge with a magnetic fastener and you may have wondered how to get one. *Here's the answer!*



The badges are produced by a company in Dexter and an order will be placed at the end of February, if you'd like to purchase one. It's a great way to share your name with others at all LWV events. The cost is \$12, which includes tax and shipping. Please contact [Susan Chaljian](#) at or [Dorothy Engelman](#) and they'll let you know how to make arrangements.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

Ann Marston, Membership Co-chair

A warm welcome to our newest members who joined in December:

Laura DeGuire, East Lansing
Olivia Weinberger, Haslett

And a big thank you to all our renewing members! If it's time to renew your own membership, the easiest way is online. Just [click on this link](#). There is also a link on the League of Women Voters Lansing Area [website](#).

A gift membership is a thoughtful way to celebrate a birthday, anniversary, or recognition of a special person in your life. When you give a gift membership, the recipient will be a member at all levels – local, state and national. You can easily purchase a gift membership by logging into your LWV Portal and selecting Gift under the Grow Our Community heading. You can also send an invitation to join right from your portal if you know someone who might be interested.

LWVLA NOMINATING COMMITTEE UPDATE

Camilla Davis, Chair

The LWVLA Nominating Committee is hard at work preparing the 2026 slate of officers and directors that will be voted on by the membership at the Annual Meeting, which is held

each spring. Members may also submit nominations to be included in the voting. Please consider your talents and interests, then contact a member of the Nominating Committee to find out more about open board positions. The committee is especially interested in talking with those who might like to share voter service and publicity responsibilities. LWVLA's bylaws require staggered terms for board members, so not all positions are open at the same time. Position descriptions are available—you will find a list of board positions on [LWVLA's website](#). Once elected, officers and directors take office on July 1 for a two-year term.

Current members of the Nominating Committee are Chair [Camilla Davis](#) and [Kathy Crooks](#), both elected at the 2025 Annual Meeting, and [Donna Mullins](#), appointed by the current board. We're hoping to hear from you.

ONE THING

Ask your state senator to support SB 761, 762 and 763, which would limit water withdrawals by data centers, require the MPSC to report on energy and water usage by data centers, and bar water utilities from passing on the infrastructure costs to accommodate data centers to residential customers.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

Many of our luncheons and forums are posted on [YouTube](#). You can follow our page to be sure you are aware of new videos posting. There are a number of videos in the area of issues important to us, including education, the environment, health, safety and gun control. All candidate forums are posted but removed from public view after a number of months.

For easy access, a link to LWVLA's YouTube and a link to the LWVLA Facebook page have been added to contacts at the bottom of the Capitol Voter.

OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP MAKE DEMOCRACY WORK

All committees would welcome new members. Contact the chairs for more information.

VOTER SERVICE: Contact [Joanne Winkelman](#)

K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE: Contact [Bettie Landauer-Menchik](#)

ENVIRONMENT ADVOCACY GROUP: Contact [Ellen Link](#) or [Elaine Dierwa Fischhoff](#)

OBSERVER CORPS: Contact [Sharon Feldman](#)

[LWVLA Facebook](#)

[LWVLA YouTube](#)



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