

**EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE
CAPITOL
VOTER**

**FEBRUARY
2024**

IN THE FEBRUARY CAPITOL VOTER

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LWVLA CALENDAR

Tuesday, February 27, Presidential primary.

Tuesday, February 27, 2:10 pm, "Pave the Way: They Even Took the Dirt", historical documentary about I-496, at LCC's Dart Auditorium, 500 N. Capitol Avenue in downtown Lansing. Free.

Thursday, March 21, 10 am via Zoom, Book Discussion Group, *Poverty by America* by Matthew Desmond.

See articles below for more information.

From our partners' calendars:

Thursday, March 7, 7 pm via Zoom, “An Overview of the ERA,” program hosted by GLUNA with LWVUS speaker Rebecca Goldman.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Donna Mullins



It's an election year and, boy, are we busy. If you are wondering what you can do with the League, be sure to read Joanne Winkelman's column. We are still getting requests to explain the changes in voting. And we would be happy to do more! One option is to view [A Conversation about New Voting Rights Under Proposal 2 or 2022](#). (OK, it's not a catchy name...I can change it if you come up with a better one.) The video is 29 minutes long, but it feels more like 20. It's a conversation between Jacqueline Stewart and Joanne and it's worth watching. It's a great way for all of you to be up to date on voting changes in case someone asks if you know about early voting or the changes in absentee voting. Share it with everyone you can.

We're very excited that Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson will be the featured speaker at our Annual Meeting and Banquet. We're back at Eagle Eye this year. Secretary Benson is an outstanding speaker and the reason Michigan has an international reputation for holding fair and safe elections. (You all helped, too.)

You and/or your friends may want to be active in elections beyond the League. You can be a poll worker if you are over 16. Clerks need people to work during early voting and on election day. There are elections in February, May, August and November this year. Clerks need your help. You don't have to work where you vote. Contact the [state](#) or your local clerk to sign up.

Later in the year we will share information on how to become a nonpartisan election challenger or canvass monitor. We have been the election people for more than a hundred years, and our work isn't done. Some of my work *will* be done after the annual meeting, which will be the last day I serve as president. I will still be doing most of the things I do except for being president. It will give me a little time back, but my enthusiasm for working toward a more perfect democracy will not waiver one bit. We have a job to do, and we do it

Together,
Donna

VOTER SERVICES UPDATES

Joanne Winkelman, V.P. Voter Service

2024 is starting off quickly!

Town halls

Since the beginning of the year, we have presented at seven town halls on the new voter laws. We have six more scheduled. Thanks go to Kathy Petroni, Camilla Davis and Donna Mullins, who have presented so far. More members are scheduled to speak at the last six sessions.

Wayfinders

Marie Wicks held a meeting with the LWVLA and Voters Not Politicians to explain her plans for assisting with early voting and election day activities on the MSU campus for the presidential primary and general election. Those who attended should reply to Ms. Wicks' email as to days they are able to volunteer. There will be more opportunities for helping on campus for the November election. Watch this space for further information later this year.

Voter Registration

On February 7, Marilyn Wilson, Kathy Matteo, Kathy Lovell, Laska Creagh and Trudy Bower registered 37 students at Haslett High School. The deputy clerk from Meridian Township was there to check photo IDs and verify the registration forms, so the students are now eligible for primary absentee ballots. The advanced placement social studies class assisted in encouraging fellow students to register. It was so much fun to see the students' enthusiasm. It was also heartening to see the disappointment in those who were too young but wanted to register and vote. One young man said, "I just can't wait to vote."

Lansing City Charter Commission – Vote411

Thirty-six candidates are running for nine seats on the City Charter Commission to review the Lansing City Charter. Voters in Lansing approved the charter review in November 2023. There are too many candidates to hold a forum, but all candidates will be invited to respond to Vote411 questions. Any proposed changes to the city charter must go to the public for a vote.

T-Shirts

The new LWVLA T-Shirts are in my basement! For \$25 you can own your very own! Just [let me know](#) if you want one or many and we can make arrangements for pickup.

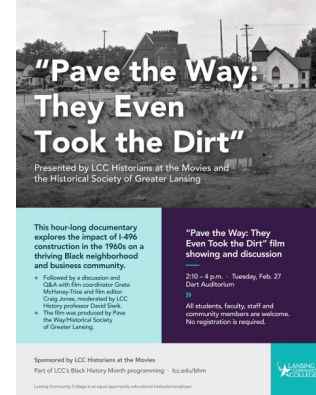
THE I-496 HISTORY OF RACIAL INJUSTICE

LWVLA has been following up on the theme of inequity in lunch meetings, thanks to the vision and efforts of Jacqueline Stewart. So when she learned from WLNS that LCC would be showing the documentary "Pave the Way: They Even Took the Dirt," about racial injustice that took place in Lansing in the 1960s, she felt the need to bring it to the League's attention.

The film, produced last year by the Historical Society of Greater

Lansing, details how the construction of I-496 plowed right through once-thriving Black neighborhoods. According to [WLNS reporter Kate Holloway](#),

The documentary uses original interviews and historical footage to show how the cross-town expressway's construction changed the community... Construction on I-496 started in 1963. As HSGL has chronicled, [the expressway would eventually turn 35 streets into dead-ends, acquire and destroy hundreds of homes and businesses to make way, and lead to Black residents being forced into apartments and small homes on Lansing's Southside or near Westside.](#)



The hour-long screening will take place next Tuesday, Feb. 27, at 2:10 pm at LCC's Dart Auditorium, 500 N. Capitol Avenue in downtown Lansing. A discussion will follow, moderated by LCC History Professor David Siwik.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT



GLUNA (Greater Lansing United Nations Assn.) and Zonta International District 15 will host an International Women's Day Program: "An Overview of the Equal Rights Amendment" on Thursday, March 7 at 7 pm via [Zoom](#). LWVLA is a co-sponsor.

This virtual event will feature Rebecca Goldman, the Justice Reform Legislative and Policy Specialist at the League of Women Voters of the United States.

A member of the Advocacy and Litigation department, Rebecca oversees the majority of LWVUS's federal advocacy efforts on the League's portfolio of social justice issues that impact people's ability to participate equitably in our democracy, including the Equal Rights Amendment. As part of her role, she develops strategies, tracks legislation, conducts policy analysis, and collaborates with stakeholders to advance the cause of gender equality.

LWVLA'S SHIRT WILL FIT YOU TO A 'T'!

What better way to show your pride in being a League member than by sporting our newly designed T-shirt! Made of 4.2 oz. 100 percent combed, ringspun, preshrunk cotton from the U.S. and assembled in Honduras, with graphics added using sustainable manufacturing processes, the relaxed jersey V-neck shirts come in sizes S, M, L, XL and (a few) XXL. Cost is \$25. You can get one (or more—for family or friends!) by contacting [Joanne Winkelman](#), who is modeling one. They will also be available at the annual meeting—but why wait?



BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

Donna Mullins



We'll be discussing Matthew Desmond's *Poverty by America* on March 21, 10 a.m. via Zoom. For the past year, we've made an effort to bring in speakers to highlight inequality in America because that inequality threatens democracy. This book talks about the ways we keep people poor, on purpose or by accident. We're looking forward to learning a ton!

In April, we will have an in-person meeting to discuss *Raisin Bran and Other Cereal Wars: 30 Years of Lobbying for the Most Famous Tiger in the World* by George Franklin. The author will join us to talk about what it was like to be a corporate lobbyist. Mr. Franklin has become very interested in homelessness since he [discovered that his sister was homeless](#). He will likely want to talk about that pressing issue too. (The link provided is to an article in the *Wall Street Journal*, which is behind a fire wall. If you have Apple News, the article is available there.) Mr. Franklin is flying in as a favor to Book Group member Linda Burnham. If you are not a "regular" to the group, you may want to spend some time with this very good man in April. More information to come!

FYI: We meet on the 3rd Thursday of the month from 10-11:30 am. If you would like to be added to the group or just attend one of the discussions, contact [Donna Mullins](#).

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Camilla Davis, Membership Director

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Amy Blair, Okemos
Marilyn & Dale Fritschen, East Lansing
Emma Helmich, Student
Ranjani Krishnan, East Lansing
Kate LaMore, Williamston
Laurie Thorp, Williamston

INVITE GUESTS TO LWVLA'S ANNUAL MEETING

LWVLA's Annual Meeting is April 23, and it is a wonderful opportunity to invite friends and family to join you for an interesting evening. We will have Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson as our featured speaker. Plus, this is a chance for everyone, both members and guests, to learn more about how the League works and to hear about its mission to empower voters and defend democracy. We're hoping that guests will be interested in joining the League to help with its mission. Watch your email for information about how to make reservations.

Questions about membership? Contact Camilla at cdavis.lwvmi@gmail.com.

BE IN LEAGUE WITH OUR NATURAL WORLD

Ellen Link, EAG Co-chair

While the League of Women Voters is generally known for championing fair elections and supporting voting rights, you no doubt know the League also takes positions on other non-partisan issues of importance, one of them being the [environment](#). The LWVLA's Environmental Advocacy Group (EAG) is presently one of three issue committees. Like the other two, its members strive to educate themselves and others on issues they deem critical, of which there are many. Besides climate change, EAG looks at solid waste and recycling, threats to our water quality, the need to protect native plants and the bees, butterflies and other creatures that rely on them for their existence, and many others: the list is a long one.

Besides putting articles in the Voter, we put on programs, open to all, that bring in speakers and other resources that deepen our understanding of ongoing problems and thereby help us decide where best to invest our efforts. Forums we've held in the past—on climate change, green burials, and water issues, e.g.—have proven popular. Some might argue that there are too few of us to make a difference, but if everyone thought that way the wrongs would remain. As Donna likes to remind us all, we work *together* for the greater good. We're hoping some of you would like to work with us.

This month EAG presented a motion to the board, based on our hopes of preserving the native plants of this area we call home, allowing us...

to reach out to local government units requesting that, in the interest of responsible stewardship of the land, they make or continue plans to use native plants in their landscaping and that they provide a list of such plants on their website for the use and education of their residents.

The motion was approved, so we now have a worthy project to pursue that may interest you too or might make you want to learn more. We want to take our message to local nurseries, gardens, and other sites that could help. We also want to hold another program on the status of climate change and ways of reversing the damage done by fossil fuel use. The whole solid waste ("materials management") issue, including plastics, is now undergoing a real transformation and we'd like to help people understand what's going on. Then there's Line 5's threat to our Great Lakes, ongoing environmental injustice, chemicals polluting our land and water, and...

What do you care about? What keeps you up at night? How can you protect your family? What should you be asking of candidates for office? It's easier to confront these questions when you can discuss them with others who are equally concerned, and most satisfying when you have the opportunity to take action. Please consider joining us as we tackle environmental concerns and find a way forward. You won't be sorry.

ONE THING

Let's be honest: plastic bags do come in handy, especially for storing food. But they're also a plague on the Earth. So, next time you finish a box of cereal or other food packaged

in one of those HDPE #2 bags, save and use the bag until it's kaput and can then be recycled: reuse (saving money), reduce (waste), recycle. Easy peasy.

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](#)

PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE: Contact [Linda Melaragni](#)

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

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