

**EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE
CAPITOL
VOTER**

**MARCH
2023**

IN THE MARCH CAPITOL VOTER

- President: Focusing on Issues and the Future
- Upcoming Voter Service Activities
- Health Inequity's Impact on Democracy
- Our Annual Meeting in April
- Water as a Human Right
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- Amazing Ways to Use Wine Bottle Corks
- Another New Member

LWVLA CALENDAR

Thursday, March 23, 5:30–7 p.m. “Water As a Human Right”, sponsored by GLUNA on World Water Day. See below for more information.

Monday, April 10, noon. “Health Inequity,” with speaker Dana Watson, Ingham County Coordinator for Health Equity, MSUFCU Headquarters Building; catered lunch program.

Tuesday, April 11, 10-11:30 a.m. via Zoom, Book Discussion Group, *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison; see below.

Wednesday, April 19, 7 p.m. “Citizen Science”, hosted by Environmental Advocacy Group with naturalist Laura Rogers, at Fenner Nature Center.

Monday, April 24. LWVLA Annual Meeting and dinner. Speaker Stephanie Nawyn, Director, MSU’s Center for Gender (GenCen), will address “Gender Inequity in Politics,” Urban Beat on Turner St. in Old Town. More information to come.

April 29 - May 6. Schulers Book Days. LWVLA will receive 20% of all book sales for the week. Stay tuned for details.

May 19-21. LWVMI State Convention at the Kellogg Center, East Lansing.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Donna Mullins

There aren’t any statewide or national elections this year, so we are concentrating on issues and the future. This month we held a community forum on the gun legislation being considered by the Michigan House and Senate. There is a good chance that it will pass and a good chance that it fits into the acceptable gun restrictions outlined by the Supreme Court in the Heller decision of 2008. Still, there is no guarantee, so members who are interested should let their representatives know of their support. The League supports the laws as currently written and will likely send out an action alert. You can speak for yourself as well and you may have a reason that is more compelling than that you agree with the League’s position. The legislation is being fast tracked, so now is the time to be heard.



In addition to the pressing issue of gun regulation, there is that nagging problem of the Electoral College that has, especially in this century, elected candidates who didn’t win the national popular vote. The League supports the National Popular Vote (NPV), which would commit Michigan’s electoral votes to the candidate who wins the popular vote. If you miss the March 21 presentation on this, it will be posted on YouTube. I am aware that there are members who are not quite convinced that it’s the best solution to the problem. NPV was supported by a majority of League delegates at a national convention. You may want to learn more about why many have turned to this solution. The legislature will likely vote on this in the next several months. It’s time to let them know how you feel.

Our League’s annual meeting will be held on Monday, April 24, at Urban Beat. Be sure to save that date! And don’t forget about the LWVMI convention to be held May 19-21 at Kellogg Center. If you are interested in attending as a delegate or helping out as a volunteer, let us know.

There have already been meetings gearing up for new voting regulations coming from the passage of Proposal 2. No one is sure what that will look like but lots of people, like those at the ACLU, on college campuses and in the League, are beginning to meet in preparation. We will be calling on you to help educate the public on the new regulations.

And, of course, we are continuing our series of luncheons on inequality as a threat to democracy. There is a lot going on and a lot to do. The best way to do it is

Together,

Donna

VOTER SERVICE

Joanne Winkelman, V.P. Voter Service

It was nice having a lull from all the voter service activities for a few weeks to get refreshed for a new year. However, Voter Services is getting back into action again!

Proposal 2 - Voting Rights

Stay tuned for future information regarding the implementation of Proposal 2, which made changes to how we vote. Bills are being introduced now to assist in the implementation of Proposal 2, and as these bills are passed and the policies are clarified, the League will be presenting on the changes. There is **no** change required for how clerks administer the elections in 2023, but some clerks may opt to begin using the early voting option. All the changes will begin in 2024.

National Popular Vote (NPV)

In February 2023, the League of Women Voters of Michigan sent out an "Action Alert" to our members, urging us to contact our state legislators to join the National Popular Vote Compact which supports electing the President by the national popular vote. The NPV bills would guarantee the presidency to the candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. It has been enacted into law by 15 states and the District of Columbia, for a total of 195 electoral votes. The compact needs an additional 75 electoral votes to go into effect.

NPV bills have been introduced in the Michigan House and Senate. Those bills can be found at the following links: [House Bill 4156 \(2023\)](#) and [Senate Bill 0126 \(2023\)](#).

On March 21, Judy Andre will present a PowerPoint and facilitate a Zoom discussion on the National Popular Vote, which you can access [here](#) (or see the League invitation emailed on March 17). If you miss the presentation or know of any groups that would like to hear more about the NPV, please contact [me](#). If you wish to take action on the NPV issue, click on this [link](#).

High School Registration Drives

Three high schools have contacted us regarding registration drives this spring. As soon as I have dates and times, I will be contacting volunteers.

Volunteer List

I maintain a volunteer list for voter service activities. If you want to be on the list and haven't heard from me in the past, please send [me](#) an email and I will gladly add you. Also, if you no longer wish to be on the list, email me and I will remove your name from future mailings.

THINKING ABOUT THE IMPACT OF HEALTH INEQUITY

Jacqueline Stewart, Interim V.P. Programs

In February, Dr. Christian Houle helped us to think about the connection between income/wealth inequality and democracy. One chilling piece of data shared was that 80 percent of democracies that begin to backslide into autocracies never make it back to being healthy democracies, and for a brief moment in our recent history we were categorized as a backsliding democracy.

I think that *equitable* access to healthcare, clean air and water are essentials for a democracy. No one wants to be sick; punishing people who are sick by making health care unaffordable only punishes the larger community by creating a less-than-competent workforce. The same argument works for access to clean air and water. This may sound like socialism to some. To me it sounds like common sense.

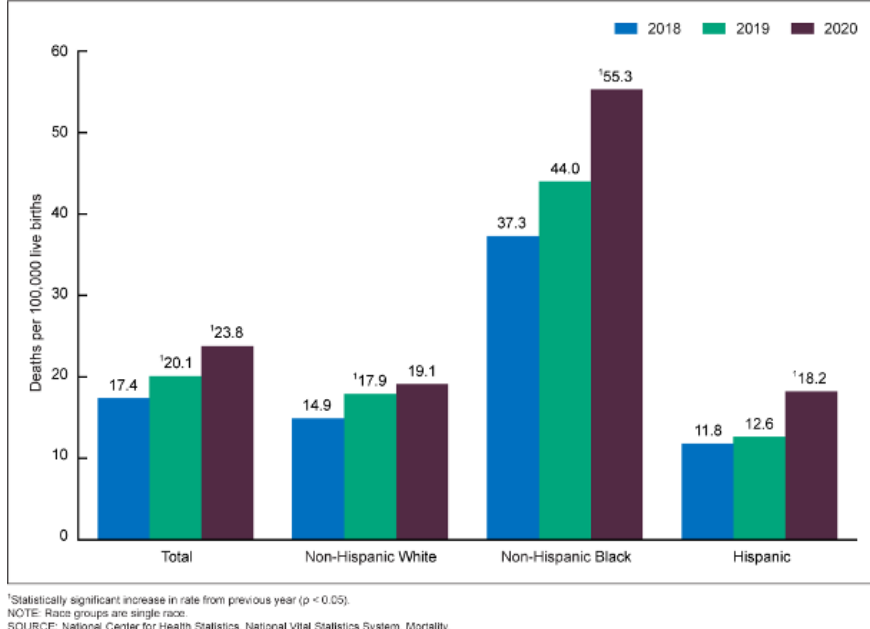
Health *equity* means everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. There are obvious obstacles to this: poverty and lack of insurance, environmental problems and the diseases associated with this, lack of access to preventive care and/or nutritious food, doctors who don't take patients seriously, and stress caused by all the above or by other external circumstances.

Some examples of disparity would be:

- [Fewer doctors](#) per 100,000 people in one state, say, Mississippi, compared to another, e.g., Minnesota; or
- Higher [rates of breast cancer](#) in some communities.

Some disparities may be inevitable, but if they are built into the structure of our society then our democracy suffers. For example, if medical research systematically excludes certain groups, then diagnoses for those groups will be inaccurate and their health suffers. If a child is sick because her parents lack medical insurance or live where the drinking water is unsafe, then, in the U.S., that child is also less likely to have access to quality education, the gatekeeper for escaping poverty. Perpetuating health inequities, whether for the rural poor or inner-city people of color, does not increase the resiliency of a democracy. The ultimate victim for this kind of inequity is our democracy.

Some disparities are shocking. The graph below shows how [the maternal mortality rate](#) varies by race in the U.S. This kind of disparity by group is not inevitable. [Some disparities are related to geography](#). For example, maternal mortality rates are worst in Georgia, with 46 deaths per 100,000 live births overall, and 66 deaths per 100,000 live births for African American women. Just to be clear, this puts Georgia on a par with Turkmenistan!



My point is that inequitable access to healthcare and a clean environment are related to and perpetuate wealth and income inequality, and inequality by group creates a permanent underclass, one of the signs of an unhealthy democracy. You may disagree with the way I am connecting the dots here. I would be glad to hear a more sanguine take on the data.

So, how bad is health inequity in the US? In Ingham County? What can be done about health inequity? To learn more, attend the April 10 lunchtime presentation by Dana Watson, Health Equity and Social Justice Coordinator for Ingham County, at the MSUFCU Headquarters building off Coolidge Road. Watch for an email with more details about how to register and choose a lunch option.

LWVLA ANNUAL MEETING COMING IN APRIL

DON'T MISS LWVLA's Annual Meeting (and dinner) on Monday, April 24 at UrbanBeat in Old Town! In keeping with our year-long focus on systemic inequality in the U.S., our guest speaker will be Stephanie Nawyn, Interim Co-Director of Global Research at the Center for Gender in Global Context (GenCen), MSU, where she oversees research initiatives, supports the scholarship of affiliated faculty, and facilitates outreach and engagement across campus and with the off-campus community. Her talk will focus on "Gender Inequality in Politics."

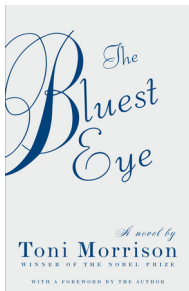
The social hour (with cash bar) will begin at 5:30 p.m., followed by a buffet dinner (\$35/person, registration required) at 6 p.m., business meeting to address the 2023-24 budget and slate of officers at 6:30 p.m., and the keynote presentation at approximately 7:15 p.m.; dinner is not required to attend the meeting.

We hope you'll join us to connect with other League members old and new, cast your votes, and enjoy our speaker. A reminder and registration form will soon be forthcoming.

Without access to clean water we cannot survive, let alone thrive. Yet challenges to this right exist everywhere, even in the U.S. The United Nations has agreed that *Water is a basic Human Right* and in 2015 enshrined it as Goal #6 of the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).

On March 23, celebrate World Water Day with the Greater Lansing United Nations Association (GLUNA). Join Professors Jeremy Orr and Stephen Gasteyer as they look at the status of water as a human right both near and far with those working to close the gap between the right to clean water and sanitation and the reality. This hybrid event will take place both via [Zoom](#) and at the UUMC, 1120 S. Harrison in East Lansing, at 5:30 p.m.

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP



Inspired by the documentary “Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am,” the Book Discussion Group decided to read Morrison’s first book, *The Bluest Eye*. It’s the story of an 11-year-old Black girl who prays for her eyes to be blue so that she will be beautiful. The group meets on the second Tuesday of the month, which next falls on April 11, from 10 to 11:30 a.m. via Zoom. [Join us!](#)

COULD EAST PALESTINE'S CATASTROPHE HAPPEN HERE?

Marion Gorton, EAG Member

You might ask why state leaders expressed shock and dismay on learning that toxic waste from East Palestine, Ohio, was being transported to Michigan facilities after the derailment of the Norfolk Southern train hauling many tank cars of vinyl chloride and other toxic chemicals. It appears that the only part of the process that disturbed our leaders was that they were not told that the trucks were heading to Michigan. As *Bridge Michigan* pointed out in a March 3, 2023 article, bringing waste, including toxic waste, into Michigan is not unusual.

As [Bridge Michigan](#) states in the article “Michigan stopped Ohio toxic waste last week, but we import waste every day”¹, “The shipments ... were not an anomaly. Toxic transports arrive quietly in Michigan on a daily basis and will continue to do so long after the East Palestine derailment fades from the headlines.”

The facts belie the outrage when you learn how much waste, including hazardous waste from other states and from Canada, is transported into Michigan every day. According to the [Michigan Department of Great Lakes and Energy](#) (EGLE), in 2021, more than 11 million cubic yards of waste were imported from other states and Canada for disposal. According to data collected in 2017 by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), “70 percent of all hazardous waste being processed in commercial facilities in Michigan came from out of state.”

If you take a trip across the Blue Water Bridge between Port Huron and Sarnia, Ontario, take notice of the number of trucks in line waiting to come into Michigan filled with waste of all kinds. Most are headed for the Detroit area where you will find most of the landfills, the hazardous waste facilities, and a deep injection well for liquid waste located in Romulus. Under state laws the facilities are monitored by EGLE, with the EPA under federal laws having co-regulatory authority over hazardous waste facilities. This oversight is important, but it is limited by the laws and regulations that spell out the authority of those agencies.

The recent train derailment is a tragic event for those living near the site. The same kind of incident could happen right here in Michigan. We need to use this as an opportunity to get the attention of policy makers and lawmakers. We must help them understand that long hauls of waste into our state pose health and environmental risks to residents. What is touted as an economic benefit may pose more risks than benefits. Let lawmakers know that strict limits must be placed on what is transported into our state and what is disposed of in Michigan landfills and injection wells.

ONE THING

Enjoy your wine, but don't throw that natural cork in the trash! You can [reuse](#) it in all kinds of fun and useful ways, [compost](#) it, and depending on your solid waste provider, recycle it. Drink up!



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Camilla Davis, Membership Chair

WELCOME NEW MEMBER

Kathy Petroni, Haslett

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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