

**EMPOWERING VOTERS  
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE  
CAPITOL  
VOTER**

**FEBRUARY  
2022**

**IN THE FEBRUARY CAPITOL VOTER**

- President: Reflections on Black History Month and the Promise of Equality
- Pro-Voter Ballot Initiative
- Voting Information Webinar
- Redistricting Update
- Next Book Discussion, *Ida B. the Queen*
- Observer Corps Features Michigan Counties 101
- Ways to Connect and Support LWVLA
- Tips for Teaching Children About Race
- Is Your Local Government Protecting the Environment?
- LWVLA Membership Reaches 200

**LWVLA CALENDAR**

**February 13-19.** Shop at Schuler Books and 20% goes to LWVLA. Read below for more information.

**Wednesday, February 23, noon.** Observer Corps Debrief featuring "Michigan Counties 101" with important updates about your city or township. More info below. Contact [Donna Mullins](#) to receive the Zoom link.

**Tuesday, March 8, 10 am.** Book Discussion Group on *Ida B. The Queen*, by Michelle Duster. More info below. Contact [Donna Mullins](#) to receive the Zoom link.

**March** group discussion of *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story* by Nikole Hannah-Jones. See Programs and Education for more info. To receive announcements and the Zoom link, contact [Bettie Menchik](#).

**Through March 30.** [Michigan History Center](#) exhibit, [I Voted: Michigan's Struggle for Suffrage](#) about the people, protests and policies that have transformed voting in Michigan from statehood in 1837 through today. Check museum for times and info.

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT Donna Mullins

February is Black History Month and it genuinely looks like the media is making it their business to teach the public about American Black History. Among the best is the class “Black History, Black Freedom and Black Love” offered for free by [Master Class](#) on their site or on Amazon Prime. If you watch it with an open heart, it will surely bring you closer to the Black Love it describes—the love that at its best does not place a boundary on forgiveness, the love you can hear in gospel music. I recommend it.



And being Black History Month, let's reflect on the League's somewhat stained history. A bit more than 100 years ago our foremothers were willing to bargain away the voting rights of Black women to gain voting rights for White women. I have said many times, I don't know what I would have done if I were around back then, but I know values were compromised. It's probably true that suffrage would have been delayed had a compromise not been made ... but values were compromised.

That was 100 years ago; what about 60 years ago? Eleanor Roosevelt, a loyal member of the League, said in her national opinion column, “Even the league and its courageous members have had to bow to local prejudice.” Local leagues “modified their standards out of fear of the feeling they encountered in the South.” And not just the South: there was plenty of exclusion in the North, too.

Things are better, but our local League does not look like America. Not even close. But we can speak for diversity, equity and inclusion. We can ask for guidance. We can walk and talk humbly. Look at our history, we have earned humility. If we recognize our compromised past and make an effort to be true to our principles, then today will be better than yesterday. And tomorrow will bring us closer to the promise of equality for all. That's something to be proud of.

There are many threats to democracy right now, and there are those who would disenfranchise Black voters (among others) to ensure power and wealth. I believe we have learned from our history (yet there's more to learn) and that we, as members of the League, will meet this challenge with uncompromising values. We have learned our

lesson. And we'll do it

Together,  
**Donna**

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## PRO-VOTER BALLOT INITIATIVE

### Donna Mullins

There is a new pro-voter ballot initiative that is being sponsored by Promote the Vote. Three board members of that organization are also on the LWVMI board. So, yes, the League supports this initiative. The proposal supports voting rights through several actions, among them:

- Funding for absentee ballot postage and ballot tracking.
- Ballot drop boxes for every 15,000 voters in a municipality.
- Allowing governmental units to accept funding from publicly disclosed sources.
- Nine days of early, in-person voting.

There will be more information soon, including how we can help with the initiative by spreading the word and getting petitions signed. Stay tuned!

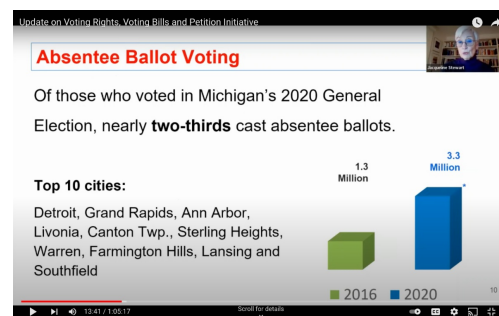
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## REMINDER

### PLEASE SHARE THE FACTS ON VOTING RIGHTS!

#### Joanne Winkelman, Voter Service Director

On December 14, 2021, the “[Update on Voting Rights, Voting Bills, and Voting Initiatives](#)” webinar was presented by the LWVLA as part of the Make Democracy Work Grant to spread the word regarding Michigan’s current voting laws. It was also designed to inform the public about voting bills and the Secure MI Vote initiative which would change how Michigan votes.



Please feel free to share this factual webinar with your Michigan family members, neighbors, friends and organizations. Members of the LWVLA can also provide this information to groups in person or via Zoom using a PowerPoint and a script. If you are interested in presenting to a group, email [Joanne Winkelman](#) or call 248-804-7433.

When you share the webinar with others, please email or text Joanne Winkelman with the number of people you sent it to or spoke with if it was a group setting. The grant requires reporting on the number of people we were able to reach.

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## REDISTRICTING UPDATE

### Donna Mullins

The MICRC approved redistricting maps on December 28 and now they are being tested in the courts from the right, from the left and even from LWVMI. The commission continues to meet to reflect on the past year and determine what went well and what can

be improved. You can leave your comments, critical or supportive, on this process at their [website portal](#).

Information on the suit that LWVMI joined can be found on their [website](#). A webinar, "[Michigan Redistricting: A Model for the Nation?](#)" which was co-sponsored by the League, included guest speakers David Daley (author of *Ratf\*\*ked: Why Your Vote Doesn't Count*), Jon X. Eguia and Matt Grossmann from MSU, Nancy Wang from Voters Not Politicians, and Edward Woods III, who was the Communications and Outreach Director for the commission. The webinar helps explain all the numbers and terms you hear by the mapping experts.

Throughout last year a core group of our members worked hard to share redistricting information with you and the community. As a result of their hard work, our League was invited to a number of townhalls and developed new community relations that will benefit us in the future. The committee members were Joanne Winkelman, Beth Moore, Andrea Yokich, Cele Friestrater, Bettie Menchik, Marilyn Wilson, Jaqueline Stewart, Hannah Richardson and Nolan Rachocki. I am grateful to all, but I am sure that the committee would insist that I acknowledge the extraordinary work of Jacqueline Stewart, who observed all (or nearly all) of the commission meetings and reported on them. Her fair minded summaries made me look very knowledgeable and kept us up to date on the process. On top of it all, Jacqueline is a mathematician and an excellent teacher. This was a committee of shining stars that shone more brightly because of Jacqueline's work.

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### Book Discussion Group Donna Mullins



Hello!

**February 13-19, LWVLA will receive 20% of all Schuler online or store purchases. Just mention the League when checking out at the store. For online shopping, enter the code LWVLansing at checkout.**

In March we will be discussing *Ida B. the Queen* (176 pp.) by Michelle Duster. Journalist. Suffragist. Anti-lynching crusader. In 1862, Ida B. Wells was born enslaved in Holly Springs, Mississippi. In 2020, she won a Pulitzer Prize. Ida B. Wells committed herself to the needs of those who did not have power. In the eyes of the FBI, this made her a "dangerous negro agitator." In the annals of history, it makes her an icon. To participate in the discussion on March 8, 10-11:30 am, contact [Donna](#) for the Zoom link.

The February discussion on *Jesus and John Wayne* was terrific. You may be interested in a few other books that touch on the same subject recommended by Kathy Esselman. Beth Allison Barr's *The Making of Biblical Womanhood: How the Subjugation of Women Became Gospel Truth* was published in 2021 by Brazos Press, a division of Baker Books in Grand Rapids. Barr has a very solid grasp on biblical study and feminist thought. To get a full sense of the theological grounding of restrictions on women's roles in biblical study (Mary Magdalene, e.g.), worship and family life, people can check out works by Sherry L. Reames and Karen Armstrong. They have done excellent work on Martin Luther's role in this process.

Happy reading!

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## OBSERVER CORPS Valerie Lafferty, Chair

The remaining COVID-related emergency exemptions to the Open Meetings Act dropped off at the end of the 2021 calendar year and many municipalities were scrambling to figure out how to proceed in January given the overwhelming presence of the Omicron variant still lurking about. As a result, many meetings were canceled. However, the hearty souls among us did provide their reports. The LWVLA Observer Corps Debrief virtual gathering at the end of January was enlightening...and just fun, as we shared our observations and discussed how best to make use of so much timely and important information. Certainly, one very simple method is to share these firsthand accounts with you [here](#).

On February 23, Donna Mullins will be hosting the virtual Observer Corps Debrief Meeting featuring "Michigan Counties 101," along with important updates about your city or township. If you think you might be interested in being an Observer, email [Donna](#) to receive the Zoom link.



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## PROGRAM NOTES Susan R. Chalgian, VP-Programs

Winter in Michigan often has us looking for ways to connect with others as well as catch up on reading. So, watch for news and a link on our new **LWVLA Conversation Board**, soon to be announced in an upcoming Constant Contact bulletin!

For now, enjoy a sociable reading activity by checking out our Book Discussion Group, which will next meet on March 8 at 10 am via Zoom to discuss *Ida B. the Queen* by Michelle Duster. Discussion will be led by the Education Committee. Please contact President [Donna Mullins](#) for more information and to receive the Zoom link.

The Education Committee is also studying *Project 1619: A New Origin Story* by Nikole Hannah-Jones, a collection of essays exploring the Black experience in America. Each month a member of the study group will select an essay and lead the discussion. Judy Andre got it started at the Feb. 9 meeting, covering the Preface and Chapter 1. All LWVLA members are invited to join the discussion. To receive the Zoom link, email [Bettie Menchik](#).

Looking towards March, we hope to have a panelist webinar to recognize **Sunshine Week** (March 13-19), an initiative to promote open government.

Last but not least is the **LWVLA Fundraiser**, February 13-19, through the Okemos Schuler Books store. **LWVLA will receive 20% of all purchases!** If you're shopping in person,



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## REPORT FROM THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

### Bettie Landauer-Menchik, Education Committee Chair



At the January presentation by Dr. Dorinda Carter, she shared thoughts on how to teach our children, grandchildren, nephews and nieces about race. I thought it was important enough to share it.

### Tips for Teaching Children, Grandchildren, Nieces and Nephews About Race

**Start early:** By 6 months of age babies are noticing racial differences; by age 4, children have begun to show signs of racial bias.

- Let your child know that it's perfectly okay to notice skin color and talk about race.
- Start talking about what racial differences mean and don't mean.

**Encourage your child** to ask questions, share observations and experiences, and be respectfully curious about race.

- Expose your child to different cultural opportunities – photographs, films, books, or cultural events, for example – and discuss the experience afterwards. You don't have to be an expert on race to talk with your child.
- Be honest about what you don't know and work with your child to find accurate information.

**Be mindful:** What kids hear from us is less important than what they see us do. You are a role model to your child. What you say is important, but what you do—the diversity of your friendship circle, for example—is likely to have a bigger impact.

- If your child doesn't attend a diverse school, consider enrolling her in afterschool or weekend activities such as sports leagues that are diverse, if you're able.
- Choose books and toys that include persons of different races and ethnicities. Visit museums with exhibits about a range of cultures and religions.

**Face your own bias:** Let your child see you acknowledge and face your own biases. We're less likely to pass on the biases we identify and work to overcome.

- Give your child an example of a bias, racial or otherwise, that you hold or have held.
- Share with your child things you do to confront and overcome that bias.

**Know and love who you are:** Talk about the histories and experiences of the racial, ethnic, and cultural groups you and your family identify with.

- Talk about their contributions and acknowledge the less flattering parts of those histories as well.
- Tell stories about the challenges your family (your child's parents, aunts and uncles, grandparents and great grandparents, others) has faced and overcome.

**Racial cultural literacy:** Develop racial cultural literacy by learning about and respecting others.

- Study and talk about the histories and experiences of people we call African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Native Americans, whites, among others.
- Be sure your child understands that every racial and ethnic group includes people who believe different things or behave in different ways. There is as much diversity within groups as across them.

**For more tips, click [here](#).**

*New Origin Story* by Nikole Hannah-Jones. This collection of essays summarizes the Black experience in America, exploring every aspect of slavery and its continuing legacy, in which being White or Black affects everything from how you fare in courts, hospitals and schools to the odds that your neighborhood will be bulldozed for a freeway.

Each month a member of the study group will select an essay and lead the discussion. All LWVLA members are invited to join us. To be included in the announcements and to receive the Zoom link, email [Bettie Menchik](mailto:Bettie.Menchik).

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## IS YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT? Elaine Fischhoff, EAG Co-chair

*Many local governments have passed policies or taken actions relating to climate/sustainability planning; some are adopting coordinated plans and actions overseen by designated individuals. How about yours? Adding your voice in support could make a difference.*



**Ingham County:** On July 28, 2020, Ingham County's Board of Commissioners passed a Resolution to Declare a Climate Emergency ([20-301](#)), as urged by the LWVLA. In 2021, the board took its next steps by passing [Resolution 21-195](#), To Re-Establish And Change the Composition of the Environmental Affairs Commission (EAC). The seven members of the commission are tasked with developing recommendations for 1) programs to reduce energy usage; 2) other countywide initiatives promoting sustainability and reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG); 3) initiatives guided by climate justice, racial justice and equity, and just economic transitions; and 4) reviewing and reducing the impact of carbon neutrality on infrastructure and workers. The EAC is currently commissioning an energy audit of its major buildings to establish a baseline from which future progress can be measured.

**Clinton County:** In 2008, the county conducted a greenhouse gas/energy audit and adjusted some lighting and HVAC controls as sustainability measures. Since then, they have applied energy efficient mechanisms and practices such as LED lighting, motion detector light switches and water valves that cut water consumption where possible. It isn't clear whether energy is continuing to be monitored.

The LWVLA is urging the Clinton County Board of Commissioners to pass a climate emergency resolution and/or create an environmental/sustainability commission to oversee developing and implementing countywide sustainability measures. Clinton County members of the LWVLA are encouraged to support these requests by contacting their commissioner or speaking to the [board](#).

**City of Lansing:** In 2019, the LWVLA urged the Lansing City Council to pass a climate emergency resolution and establish a sustainability manager. No resolution was passed, but Mayor Andy Schor appointed Lori Welch, formerly the Environmental Specialist for Capital Area Recycling and Trash, as Sustainability Manager; she drafted a [Climate Action Plan](#) for city operations, published in 2020. The mayor also issued an executive order in 2020 creating the Mayor's Advisory Commission on Sustainability, staffed with 13

Lansing residents who would draft recommended sustainability actions.

**City of East Lansing:** In 2011, East Lansing created its 9-member Commission on the Environment which drafted and published a [Climate Sustainability Plan](#) in 2012 “to identify and encourage community-based actions to improve the environment by reducing global warming pollution... The CSP provides recommendations to the City Council for programs, policies and practices to reduce our community’s impact on the environment.” The commission works with Environmental Specialist Cliff Walls.

**Meridian Township:** In 2017, Meridian Township adopted a [Climate Sustainability Plan](#) that was incorporated into the Master Plan. A 9-member Environment Commission advises the township on environmental protection, pollution prevention and natural area preservation. It also oversees the Wetland Protection Ordinance and the [Greenspace Plan](#). LeRoy Harvey is the Environmental Programs Coordinator. A 2019 report detailed the progress made on implementation. The Green Team assists Meridian residents, businesses and others with recycling and waste reduction. A solar array was erected three years ago near the township offices that supplies 8% of the energy used in that building; its goal is to supply 25% of the township’s energy needs by 2025. And a [Citizen’s Climate Commitment](#) campaign urges residents to consider replacing gas-fueled cars, appliances and equipment with electric versions when the need arises.

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## ONE THING

Don’t throw away that broken appliance, shoe, chair, *whatever*—repair it! Look in [ifixit.com](#) or [myplasticfreelife.com](#) for possible how-to’s.

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## MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

### Camilla Davis, Membership Director

Thank you for renewing your membership in the League of Women Voters! Your dedication to Making Democracy Work is appreciated at the local, state and national levels.

Leagues are required to report total membership on January 31. We reported a total of 196 members, an increase of 25 over last year. And since then, we have received two more renewals and two new memberships, which brings us to a total of 200!

### WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Carolyn Brokob-Partkowiak, Eagle

Elise Darragh, Laingsburg

Candace Miller, Lansing

Connie Powe-Watts, Williamston

Monica Schafer, Williamston

Bethany and Douglas Starkweather, Lansing

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## 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 Menchik](#).

**PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY/GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE:** Contact [Marty Couretas](#) or [Melinda Frame](#).

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