

**EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE
CAPITOL
VOTER**

**SEPTEMBER
2022**

IN THE SEPTEMBER CAPITOL VOTER

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LWVLA CALENDAR

Wednesday, October 5, 11 am. LWVMI hosts a livestream webinar on Facebook about the duties of the Board of Canvassers. See below for more info.

Tuesday, October 11, 10 am. The Book Group will discuss *The Black Church; This is Our Story, This is Our Song*, by Henry Louis Gates. See below for more info and Zoom link.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

You may want to sit down. In a [recent survey](#) from IPSOS, one-third of the respondents agreed that “strong, unelected leaders are better than weak elected ones,” and 38% agreed that “government should side with the majority over ethnic/religious minority rights” (Republicans and Democrats responded the same to this one). There appears to be no agreement on what it means to be an American. We do not agree even on the rule of law. A third of respondents is not a majority, but it’s one heck of a strong minority. Democracy is in peril.



Voting is the equivalent to prayer if you support democratic principles. And we have an election coming up. Amen! Be sure to read Joanne Winkelman’s article to learn about what the League is doing for this election cycle. In short, we are doing everything we can. And we are prioritizing *local* as much as possible.

And there is good news! We are visiting high schools again! The Spartan LWV is recruiting members and many are interested. The Lansing *City Pulse* is collaborating with us to print and distribute our Voter Guide with their newspaper at no cost to us. We received a grant for \$5,000 to promote the Voter Guide and voting in general. We need as many hands on board as have the time and ability. If you can help, please respond when we send out a request for volunteers. We will be busy until every vote is counted. (LWVMI would like every county’s Board of Canvassers observed this year.)

Our pilot project “Meet the Candidate” that posts five-minute responses from county commissioner candidates was successful, so candidate statements will be posted for this election. At least a half dozen local Leagues have picked up on the idea. The state League and the Spartan LWV will both be at a university voting summit at the end of the month. Spartans lead and so do we.

So, you may want to stand. Stand for democracy. Stand for your neighbors and family. Stand Together,

Donna

VOTER SERVICE UPDATES

Joanne Winkelman, Voter Service Director



It is definitely all-hands-on-deck this fall! Here is a snapshot of our activities and who will be needed to help make it all happen. Please read through the list and contact [Joanne Winkelman](#) if you can volunteer for any of the **starred activities.

**Registration Drives

- The Lansing City Clerk is still in need of people to [register voters at LCC Lansing](#). Many members have signed up but there are still slots to be filled.
- Haslett High School is having a registration drive October 4 from 10:45 to 12:30. Volunteers are needed.

Presentations

The League has been asked to give presentations on the ballot proposals to the following organizations: the AKA Sorority, Burcham Hills, and the Brain Injury Association.

On September 15, East Lansing City Clerk Jennifer Schuster, MSU League Co-President Hannah Richardson, LWVLA President Donna Mullins and Voter Service Director Joanne Winkelman delivered a presentation on voting and ballot proposals and conducted a registration drive for around 100 East Lansing High School students.

****Forum**

On September 29, the League will hold a forum for the Grand Ledge School Board. Howard and Nell Pizzo are working with Joanne on the forum to be held in the Grand Ledge School Board boardroom. This event will be recorded and posted on YouTube. There are six candidates. **Question screeners, runners, and greeters will be needed.** Contact [Joanne](#) if you can volunteer.

Voter Guide and VOTE411.org

The LWVLA is publishing a local voter's guide for the tri-county area in conjunction with *The City Pulse*. As part of the collaboration, the *Pulse* has been promoting the guide to their subscribers: "Work progresses on the first-ever complete League of Women Voters' Voter Guide to appear in *The City Pulse*, thanks to the nonprofit City Pulse Fund for Community Journalism. It's likely to exceed 60 pages. If you'd like to support this effort, please donate here."

The Pulse followed up a few weeks later: "Speaking of politics, three weeks from now, we will publish the League of Women Voters' Voter Guide, a nonpartisan look at the candidates and issues on the ballot in Greater Lansing. It's the first time the entire guide will be included in *City Pulse*. This is a particularly challenging year to know your candidates because of the massive redistricting. The Voter Guide will be a valuable resource just as your ballots start arriving in the mail. Year after year, the ladies at the League knock themselves out to produce it, and we are glad we can widen their distribution – indeed, it will quadruple because of *City Pulse*."

****Once the guides are delivered at the end of September, they will be distributed throughout the tri-county area. If you can assist by calling places to make sure we deliver the correct number of guides or by delivering guides, please contact [Joanne](#) as soon as possible.**

****Trunk or Treat**

The League will once again participate in the City of Lansing's "Trunk or Treat, Souls to the Polls" event on October 29 from 1 to 4 pm. The LWVLA will have a booth to give out treats and encourage families to go in and vote. There will be a children's ballot, too, so they can vote alongside their parents. Volunteers are needed both inside and out. **We can use help at the LWVLA booth and the Lansing City Clerk will need help inside with the children's voting. A few folks are needed to direct traffic in and out of the event. If any of these appeal to you, please contact [Joanne](#) as soon as possible.**

LWVMI forum and webinar

LWVMI hosted a candidate forum for the Michigan Supreme Court Candidates on Wednesday, September 21. Click [here](#) to view the recording of this forum on the LWVMI Facebook page.

On October 5 at 11 am, LWVMI will host a webinar about the duties of the Board of Canvassers which will also be live-streamed on Facebook. Panelists include the BOC and election and legal experts. They are Chris Thomas, former Bureau of Elections Director; Julie Matuzak, former Democratic BOC director; Jeff Timmer, former Republican BOC director; and professor and attorney John Pirich.

OBSERVER CORPS UPDATE

Donna Mullins

Our shepherd, Val Lafferty, is now devoting her time to environmental issues. We all owe Val deep gratitude, as she took a good idea and made it into an integral part of our local League. Until we find a replacement for this irreplaceable woman, President Donna Mullins will be leading this group that really needs little leading.



In the last 5 weeks six meetings were reported on. Of particular note to our organization is Meridian Township, which continues to have issues with voting. All staff are being retrained, including a visit to see how Delhi Township administers their elections.

As we learn more about the work of local government, more than one observer has commented on the fact that much of the discussion of issues is done in committee, whose members then make a recommendation to the board, who most often accept it. Committees generally have one elected board member present and the rest are citizens appointed by the board. With that in mind and after this election cycle, our League will look for ways to promote citizen participation in local committees.

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

Donna Mullins

Our Book Discussion Group will meet on Zoom Tuesday, October 11, 10 - 11:30 am. October's book is *The Black Church: This is Our Story, This Is Our Song* by Henry Louis Gates. "A brisk and insightful look at how the Black church has succored generations of African Americans against white supremacy....Punctuated by trenchant observations from Black historians and theologians, Gates's crisp account places religious life at the center of the African American experience" ([Publishers Weekly](#)). Contact [Donna Mullins](#) for the link to participate. Here's a [song](#) to get you in the mood.

EDUCATION REPORT

Bettie Landauer-Menchik, Education Committee Chair

I hope all LWV members read the recent news of the severe decline in state test results since before the



pandemic. Student scores on Michigan's standardized test are sharply down from before the pandemic, underlining the severe academic toll of virtual learning and other COVID-related disruptions and traumas.

Last spring, 41.5% of third-graders statewide scored at least proficient in math on the exam, known as the M-STEP. That's a decline of 5.2 percentage points from 2019, the last time the test was given before COVID-19 shuttered classrooms. In English language arts, 41.6% of third-graders scored proficient or higher, a decline of 3.5 points from 2019. With participation in the test returning to normal this spring, the results are among the strongest evidence available of the academic fallout from the pandemic. "This year's results indicate that Michigan students are still performing below pre-pandemic levels — with persistent and troubling opportunity gaps for our most underserved students," said Amber Arellano, executive director of the Education Trust-Midwest.

The results also underscore research showing Michigan students learned less in virtual settings during the pandemic. Though many districts that rarely or never resorted to remote classes saw declines, districts that offered the most remote instruction saw some of the biggest drops in scores.

In districts with at least 50 third-graders, 127 districts saw the percentage of students scoring proficient or above in English language arts fall by 10 percentage points or more compared with 2018-19. Of those, 22% — or 28 districts — were fully remote for four months or more during the 2020-21 school year, while 54% were fully remote for just one month or none. Of the 37 districts to record gains of 10 percentage points or more, just two were remote for four months, or 5%. Far more — 70%, or 26 districts — were remote just one month or not at all.

Scores are down in most grades and subject areas across the state. For example:

- 30% of high schoolers who took the SAT surpassed the benchmark college-readiness score in math, down from 36.3% in 2019.
- 28.4% of sixth-graders scored proficient or better on the math M-STEP exam, down from 35.1% in 2019.
- 43.4% of fourth-graders scored at least proficient on the English language arts test, down from 45.8% in 2019.

This is but one of many issues in education we have witnessed since the pandemic. The Education Committee will meet virtually Wednesday, October 19. Please contact [Bettie Menchik](#) to join us as we decide what issues to tackle this year. We would love to see new members.

HOLDING CANDIDATES ACCOUNTABLE FOR PROTECTING PLANET EARTH

Marion Gorton, EAG Member

This past year we have seen how difficult it is for Congress to pass laws to protect our planet from catastrophic climate change.

Our Michigan Legislature is likewise slow to deal with environmental issues of solid waste, drinking water quality and so many other vital issues that affect our lives and our natural world. This November presents another opportunity to put people in office who will not shrink from the challenges of protecting our planet and future generations from threats of pollution in our air, water, and soils and from dangerous chemicals introduced by companies with no testing to ensure their safety. Here are steps you can take to not only participate in this important election but also help you decide which candidates will have the courage to protect our environment.



Step 1

Visit the [League of Women Voters of the Lansing Area](#) website. There you will find information and links on registering to vote; resources to answer your questions about how and where to vote, including how to obtain an absentee ballot; a link to [VOTE 411](#) where you can view your ballot; announcements of candidate and informational forums that you can attend; and access to the LWVLA Voter Guide. *City Pulse* will be publishing the Voter Guide this year. It will also be available in local libraries and other locations.

Step 2

Before you attend a candidate forum or meet with/contact a candidate, prepare some questions about environmental protection that you want answered. Here are some sample questions to consider:

- In your opinion, are our country and our world in the midst of a climate emergency? If so, what steps do you favor to slow or reverse the detrimental effects? If not, please explain your position.
- Scientists tell us that burning fossil fuels has long-term negative impacts on our environment—floods, fires, air pollution. Do you favor the continued use of fossil fuels, or do you support renewable energy options? If elected, what immediate steps would you take to reduce the negative impacts of fossil fuels?
- Are you aware of (describe a local contamination problem)? What is the status of assessment and cleanup? Who should pay for assessment and cleanup?
- Safe drinking water has become a problem for millions of people in the past decade. What steps would you take to assess and deal with this issue for communities in our city/county/state/nation?
- Lower income Black and Hispanic communities have been extraordinarily affected by the pandemic. One of the reasons reported for the disparity is the environmental conditions to which those communities have been exposed. Do you have a plan to correct environmental injustice and mitigate the damage of the past?
- Solid waste management has become a major challenge for local communities. What is your position on recycling? Do you have plans to implement other effective methods of dealing with the proliferation of indestructible plastics, food wastes, and hazardous wastes generated by our society?
- A rewrite of Michigan's Solid Waste laws was introduced in the legislature early in 2021. Even though there is bipartisan support for this legislation and it has passed the Michigan House, it still sits in committee in the Senate. What is your position on this legislation?

These are just a few suggestions. Write a few of your own to place before candidates this

election season. This is your guide. Now...

Step 3: VOTE!!

ONE THING

Visit The Carbon Almanac [website](#) and sign up for The Daily Difference, a free email that, as Jane Goodall says, "...helps us all find a way to take positive actions for the health of our planet and its inhabitants."

PLAN AHEAD! PAY YOUR DUES NOW

Camilla Davis, Membership Chair

If you joined LWVLA before January 31, 2022, it will be time for you to renew your membership in October. If you'd like to keep something off your To Do list, you can renew in advance.

LWV needs your support to carry out its mission to defend democracy by promoting voter registration and educating voters about candidates and ballot proposals. Volunteers are genuinely appreciated, but if you can only support the League by paying your dues, you are equally appreciated.

The total annual dues for 2022 - 2023 are \$65. \$32 of that goes to LWV-US, \$23 to LWV-MI, and \$10 stays with LWVLA. If another member lives in the same household, the dues for the household are \$97.50. There is no cost for a student to join our local League.

If you choose to pay by credit card, please be aware that they charge a fee that comes out of the \$10 that goes to our local League. If you can afford it, please consider adding a convenience "tip." We suggest adding \$2.50 to a single membership (for a total of \$67.50) and \$3 to a family membership (for a total of \$100.50). Thank you!

There are two ways to pay your dues.

#1 Join online at [LWVLansing.org](https://www.lwvlansing.org) using your credit card or PayPal account:

Scroll down to "How Do I Join?" Choose the type of membership from the drop-down menu; supply a second name if you choose household. Click the "Pay Now" button.

There are fees we must pay when online payment is used. Please consider leaving a "tip."

#2 [Download this form](#), fill it out and send a check for the correct amount to: League of Women Voters of the Lansing Area, PO Box 971, East Lansing, 48826.

If you have questions about paying your dues, contact [Camilla](#).

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Kevin Cavanaugh, East Lansing

Jeffrey Lambert, MSU Student

Christine Root, East Lansing

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 COMMITTEE: Contact [Martha Couretas](#) or [Melinda Frame](#).

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

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