

**EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE
CAPITOL
VOTER**

**AUGUST
2023**

IN THE AUGUST CAPITOL VOTER

- **President:** Preparing for a Busy Year Ahead
- **Meeting Candidates and Registering Voters**
- **Programs:** The High Cost of Poverty
- **Education:** Studying Ways to Help Low-Performing Schools
- **An Introduction to Microplastics**
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LWVLA CALENDAR

Thursday, Aug. 31, 11:30 am-1 pm. "The High Cost of Poverty," panel discussion with Ingham County Health Dept., MSUFCU (Farm Lane location); catered lunch program.

Thursday, Sept. 14, 6:30-8:30 pm. East Lansing City Council forum, at the Hannah Community Center.

Tuesday, Sept. 19, 7pm. Panel discussion by *Educational Policy Innovation Consortium (EPIC)*, at Allen Street Market.

Tuesday, Sept. 19, 10 am-6 pm. Voter registration at Grand Ledge Library; volunteers

needed.

See articles below for more information.

From our partners' calendars:

September: GLUNA (Greater Lansing United Nations Association) will hold PeaceQuest, a month-long, community-wide celebration in the Greater Lansing Area held every September to celebrate the United Nations International Day of Peace. Check out this [website](#) to see the numerous events on offer, including talks, a film, a play, peace vigils, yoga, even an inspiring community sing-along!

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Donna Mullins

Summer 2023 will be remembered for fire and smoke, the indictment of a former president, local government turmoil, artificial intelligence advances that may bring us a promising AND frightening future, *jumping* worms, and the list can go on. Some may feel helpless with the relentless pounding the world is taking (not an exaggeration). League members don't agree. The League believes that a robust democracy will lead us to solutions. Our local League is working on it in many ways.



Yesterday, I met with VP for Voter Services Joanne Winkleman and VP for Programs Jacqueline Stewart to discuss in general what activities we should be addressing in the coming year. The League's priority is to promote civic engagement, most importantly through voting. This November, several local jurisdictions will be voting on proposals and/or candidates. We still do not know what exactly will be on the ballots! (This is not due to anything nefarious, it's just the nature of things.) Once we learn what citizens will be voting on, we will do our best to inform voters. Pause to understand this. It's August. Candidate and issue forums need to be held in September because people begin voting in October. We can't organize those until we know what's on the ballot. There is little time to do much else than address the November election. But guess what: we do have luncheons planned in August and September that cover issues that are important to all.

After the November 2023 election is finished, we need to prepare for the 2024 election. (It's another most-important-election-in-the-history-of-our-country election.) That election will have new rules because of Proposal 2 passing. We will soon be presenting all those changes to you and hoping that many of you will help us educate the community on them. This will be a massive undertaking, and because the League is a trusted messenger, we have a duty to reach out to the community in person and through the media. We also need to prepare people practically for disinformation, and we need to inform them of how money in politics works to skew the information they see and hear.

Good heavens, we have a busy year ahead. We have tried to prepare for possible contingencies but know there will be surprises. I am really only sure about one thing: we

will get done what needs to be done, and probably a little bit more. And the way we'll accomplish that is by doing it

Together,
Donna

VOTER SERVICES NEWS

Joanne Winkelman, V.P. Voter Services



The "Meet and Greet" for **Lansing City Council** took place on June 29. Eight of the thirteen candidates showed up in person. The City of Lansing Media Center recorded all the presentations and they are on the City of Lansing's [YouTube channel](#). Many thanks to the following for helping to make the event a success: Donna Mullins (presenter), Merry Jo and Celestino Hernandez (set-up), Dorothy Engelman (moderator), Elaine Fischhoff (set-up), Judy Andre (greeter), Bob Miller (timekeeper) and Trudy Bower (greeter).

Eight candidates are running for **East Lansing City Council**. A forum will be held on September 14 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at the Hannah Community Center. East Lansing Information will be co-sponsoring the event and will actively solicit questions from the public in the weeks leading up to the event. They will also help to publicize the forum.

On July 11, the East Lansing City Council approved two amendments to the City Charter. These amendments address the number of city council members and a change to the commencement date of city council terms of office. These amendments will appear on the November ballot. You can read the ballot language at [Ballotpedia](#).

The **Grand Ledge Library** will be holding a voter registration day on September 19. League member John Hanieski is coordinating with the local clerks to register voters at the library during the day-evening. Library patrons come from all over the area and don't have to live in Grand Ledge. The times the local clerks will be available are to be posted on the library's Facebook page and website. Four clerks from different jurisdictions have already indicated that they will participate. In addition, the League is supplying materials regarding the new election laws and QR codes to directly register online, and the library will have a dedicated computer so people can register directly from there. If you can volunteer anytime from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. that day to pass out our materials and help with voter registration, please contact [Joanne Winkelman](#).

Correction

In the last Capitol Voter, it was noted that SB 126, regarding the National Popular Vote, was passed by the Senate. That information was incorrect; the bill has *not* passed the Senate.

On August 31, members of LWVLA will have an opportunity to hear from Ingham County Health workers about what poverty looks like and feels like, what it costs people who are in poverty and what it costs the whole community. Over the course of a lifetime more than half of American adults will fall into poverty; they may be there only briefly or may climb out of poverty only to fall back into poverty again. If Michigan is like the rest of the U.S., then children are the face of poverty, in particular children from female-headed households. These families live close by, but they struggle out of view.

The title of the program is intriguing. How can poverty have a cost? What is this cost? Who is paying it? How do families fall into poverty and how hard is it to climb out? What does this have to do with the rest of us? From my own reading I have many questions about the psychological, health and societal costs of poverty. Two books I read recently are *Poverty, By America* by Mathew Desmond, and *One Nation, Underprivileged* by Mark Robert Rank. What is the cost to those children raised in poverty in terms of hope for the future? What is the cost to the parent who raises a child and sees him or her give up hope? What is the cost to the health of a person who cannot afford a healthy diet, or has no transportation to get to a doctor visit? What is the cost to the infant born to a mother who has had no prenatal care? And what is the cost to the conscience of a society that is rich but has a high level of poverty?

Poverty costs all of us. But it costs those who have fallen into poverty in ways, physical and psychological, economical and emotional, that most of us never imagine. Yes, it costs the taxpayer; the budgets for Medicaid and SNAP keep rising. Right now, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services is reviewing the qualifications of the 3 million people in Michigan who are on Medicaid and other similar plans. Thousands of people stand to lose their coverage if they do not fill out their paperwork correctly. The federal government is enforcing stricter work requirements for families on SNAP. Those policies are focused on the economic cost to taxpayers of poverty. The other costs that have me concerned are those that threaten our democracy by dividing our nation into those who have hope and those who do not.

Please join us to put a human face on poverty and to better understand our own neighbors' struggles to deal with the high cost of poverty: August 31, 11:45 a.m., MSUFCU on Mount Hope, lunch by Panera. Watch for the email with the registration.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Bettie Landauer-Menchik, Chair

On Tuesday, September 19, the Education Committee will host a panel discussion by researchers from the ***Educational Policy Innovation Consortium (EPIC)*** at MSU. EPIC partners with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), the Michigan Legislature and school districts "to produce research that makes a difference for public schools and their students." Since 2017, EPIC has collaborated with MDE to evaluate the effectiveness of the state's Partnership Program, which is focused on turning around persistently low-performing schools.



This is particularly relevant to the mission of LWVLA. Not only are some of the “low-performing schools” in our own backyard, but we know that education is a key player in maintaining a healthy democracy. It is tempting to be complacent when the schools our own children and grandchildren attend serve them well. But inequity—whether of income, wealth, health or education—is a danger to the health of the wider community.

Beginning in 2017, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) identified Priority schools as those in the bottom five percent of schools on Michigan’s Top-to-Bottom school index for three consecutive years from 2013-14 through 2015-16. Partnership schools and districts tend to serve communities with higher rates of poverty and greater shares of Black students than the rest of the state. Three rounds of Partnership schools were included in the state’s school turnaround efforts.

Our speakers will address successful practices identified in the Partnership program both before and after the pandemic. Currently, all Lansing elementary schools are “identified for support” by the Michigan School Index System. Other EPIC research focuses on early literacy. Since the fall of 2019, EPIC has been evaluating the Read by Grade Three (RBG3) law. Although Governor Whitmer recently terminated the portion of the law requiring students to repeat 3rd grade if they didn’t pass the MISTep test, EPIC’s research can help us look at promising literacy practices.

The program will be held at the Allen Street Market at 7 pm. We’ll start with dessert; details will follow. Join us to understand better why some schools fail and how we might remedy these failures. A follow-up program is planned for October, at which administrators of Lansing Schools will address the same issues.

AN INTRODUCTION TO MICROPLASTICS

Laura Rogers, EAG Member



You’ve probably heard the term “microplastics” quite often lately, but what exactly are they, and why should we care about them here in the Lansing area?

Sarah Lowe of NOAA’s Marine Debris Program highlights the basics of microplastics in her interesting article, [“Breaking down the problem of microplastics in the Great Lakes”](#), from the

State of the Great Lakes report (April 04, 2023):

- Microplastics are pieces of plastic that are less than 5 mm in size.
- Their many forms include beads, fragments, pellets, film, foam and fibers.
- Microplastics can be created when larger plastic items break up, or they can be manufactured, as in microbeads and pellets.
- They are found throughout the oceans and Great Lakes and even in tap and bottled water, sea salt, and other products we eat and drink.
- Why are they a problem? Lab studies show that microplastics may impact the health and development of animals that ingest them.

Back in 2016, the Rochester Institute of Technology reported that **more than 22 million pounds of plastic pollution was ending up in the Great Lakes every year**; in Lake

Michigan alone, that's the equivalent of dumping approximately 100 Olympic-sized pools full of plastic bottles into the lake! Even those of us who don't live directly on the shore of a Great Lake need to understand the impact we have on the entire Great Lakes watershed. Studies have shown that concentrations of microplastics tend to be higher in urban areas, particularly near locations where rivers, stormwater and wastewater discharge.

And microplastics aren't just a threat to Great Lakes wildlife. In an article published in 2021 by the Spartan News Room, author Lillian Young states that when people eat fish and other animals in the Great Lakes coastal area, the toxins in the microplastics these animals ingest then move up the food chain into humans.

So, what can we do here in the Lansing area to keep microplastics out of our local rivers that are a vital component of the Great Lakes system? Lowe suggests starting with our personal lifestyle choices and actions: cut back on single-use and disposable items; pick up trash in our rivers, streams and beaches; and simply reduce the number of plastic products we purchase. Most importantly, find out more about this crucial health issue, including the legislation and mitigation actions we can all take.

ONE THING

Modify your lifestyle to avoid using and spreading microplastics: Don't microwave food in plastic. Install a fiber-catching filter on your washing machine and avoid using a dryer when possible. Buy and wear clothing made of natural materials like cotton and wool. Check out websites like [Ecowatch](#) and [Scientific American](#) for more information.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Camilla Davis, Membership Chair

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Sheryl Mase, Lansing
Kathy Matteo, Williamston

THANKS FOR SHARING TALENTS AND INTERESTS

Thanks to the members who shared their talents and interests by completing and returning an online survey. The survey was designed to give insight into what types of activities individuals enjoy and what their areas of interest are, plus how much time they can give to the League, so when help is needed we can call those who can fill the need.

As an incentive to participate in the survey, we offered a \$25 gift card for Schuler's Books, to be drawn randomly from those who completed the on-line survey. Andrea Yokich won the gift card and plans to use it to purchase books for her grandsons. Congratulations to Andrea.

IT'S ALMOST MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME

There's an incentive to pay ASAP.

It's almost time for members who joined LWVLA **before** February 1, 2023, to renew their membership. LWVLA's bylaws state that dues should be paid by October 31. (We continue to encourage members to renew through January 31 of the following calendar year, after which we drop them from the active member list.)

Here's the incentive: For the 2023 dues renewal campaign, those who pay their dues by October 31, 2023, will be entered in a drawing for a refund of \$65, the cost of one Primary membership.

Watch your email for detailed information about how to pay dues. (Those without email will receive information by USPS.) Your membership is important to the success of LWVLA, whether you are an active volunteer or just want to support the League paying dues. You are appreciated!

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](#)

League of Women Voters Lansing Area | PO Box 971, East Lansing, MI 48826

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