

**EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE
CAPITOL
VOTER**

JUNE 2020

LWVLA CALENDAR

Monday, June 22 -- Virtual Luncheon...choose your own menu! Webinar. 12 noon to 1 pm. Attorney Steve Sinas of Sinas Dramis Law Firm talking about the new "No Fault Insurance Law & Your Choices. (See *Notes from the Program Committee.*)

1st week in July -- Let's go to the Movies...bring your own popcorn! Webinar discussion of *Just Mercy*. .Details TBA. (See *Notes from the Program Committee.*)

Tuesday, July 14 -- Book Discussion Group. Zoom meeting 10:00 am – 11:30 am. *A Woman of No Importance: The Untold Story of the American Spy Who Helped Win World War II* by Sonia Purnell. (See *Notes from the Program Committee.*)

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

It's been three months of mandated social distancing. In March we wondered if we were up to it; turns out we were. With occasional stumbles and plenty of laughter, the Lansing Area League managed to have a board meeting every month; experimented with Zoom and webinars to the point we were considered path finders; awarded prizes to three local artists for the Centennial Poster Contest; discussed books; sent voting education materials to local schools; and planned for new ways to meet our mission with public and private health in mind. We publicly acknowledged our organization's flawed history. We also publicly reaffirmed our commitment to promoting voting rights for the purpose of social justice. We did it together from home.



Voting, as many have asserted these last several weeks, is the most important tool in the quest for social change. The League was born from suffrage and we continue to lead in efforts to protect and expand voting rights. You are the core of change!

To meet this challenge in these times we are likely to have some moments of uneasiness and discomfort. Many who are technophobes have learned to Zoom and FaceTime to connect with others. Many have paused to take a serious look at how their privilege benefits them at the cost of others. Many have given up always having something to say in order to listen. And some who are most comfortable listening have gathered the courage to speak up. I've listed these because we are in for more uneasiness if we are to meet the challenge of today. Taking the next step on an unknown path always takes a bit of courage.

The board will be taking one such step in July by working on a two-year strategic plan. We may be surveying you to help us represent your priorities in the planning process. If we are thoughtful about what we are doing, there will be varying views to consider. A strategic plan will give us a structure that is tight enough to keep us focused and loose enough to respond to emergent issues. Your thoughts are welcome.

We have reason to celebrate our successes of the past few months. If we are to meet the expected and unexpected challenges of the *next* several months we'll be successful by repeating what worked: trying new things, going out of our comfort zone, listening, speaking up, daring to be awkward, forgiving clumsiness, and having a sense of humor. I have never—*never*—been with a group of people better equipped to meet this challenge.

Together,
Donna

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Donna Mullins



In solidarity with the national and state LWV, as well as the Black Lives Matter movement, our local League came out with a [statement](#) that acknowledged our values, our blemished history and our intention to promote voting in order to promote social justice. Now the challenge is to ensure that the statement is reflected by action.

This is a nonpartisan but nevertheless political organization. We believe that well informed, active voting leads to good politics, which leads to good policy.

To promote a more just society we should be asking: How do we become more diverse? How do we act equitably? How do we become more inclusive?

We've asked those questions before. Today, spurred on by tragedy, we address them with a new urgency. What do you see as the necessary or helpful steps for our organization to take to become true to its values? Let me know at donnamullinslwvla@gmail.com. We will consider all your comments as we develop our strategic plan in July. Together, we are a force for justice.

OBSERVE THE 2020 LWVUS CONVENTION FOR FREE!

All current LWVLA members can register as an observer of the LWVUS national convention at no cost.

Go to [LWVUS Convention Registration website](#) and scroll down to Observer Registration. You will be asked for our local League ID number. It's MI302.



Observers will be able to view June 26 and 27 plenary sessions via a live stream from Zoom to YouTube. Observers are not permitted to submit motions, amendments to motions, participate in debates, or vote.

This is a great opportunity to observe the convention without any serious time commitment and for free! There's an upside to pandemics!

Hope you can come!

NOTES FROM THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Dorothy Engelman, Program VP

YOU'RE INVITED!

The Program committee has three opportunities for you to participate in virtual events this month...check them out!

The first two are **webinars** and the third is a **Zoom meeting**...so what's the difference, you ask???

Zoom Webinar: Larger group with a speaker or a panel. You see the speakers, but you are not visible. Some webinars offer the opportunity to ask questions of the speakers.

Zoom Meeting: Usually 2-14 participants. You have the option of being seen and heard, or just heard. This format enables discussion, such as the Book Club.

If you would like one-on-one help with using these programs, please contact [Donna Mullins](#) or [myself](#) and we'll get you started.



1. "Let's go to the Movies...bring your own popcorn!" Members are invited to watch "**Just Mercy**," the powerful, thought-provoking true story of young lawyer Bryan Stevenson and his history-making battle for justice. It is available for free online for the month of June; [click here](#) for the link. A webinar is being planned for the first week in July with local speakers to provide an opportunity for members to talk about the movie and its impact. An invitation to make a reservation will be sent out later in the month via Constant Contact...watch for it!

2. "Virtual Luncheon...choose your own menu!" Join the League as it welcomes **Attorney Steve Sinas** of Sinas Dramis Law Firm on Monday, June 22 at noon via a webinar. He'll be talking about the new "No Fault Insurance Law & Your Choices." Please make your [reservation here](#) and you'll receive a Zoom Link to connect with us while enjoying your favorite "at home" lunch!

3. **Book Discussion Group.** Join the Zoom meeting at 10 am on Tuesday, July 14 to discuss *A Woman of No Importance: The Untold Story of the American Spy Who Helped Win World War II* by Sonia Purnell. This is the never-before-told story of Virginia Hall, the American spy who changed the course of World War II. Please email [Donna Mullins](#) to let her know if you plan to attend.

POSTER CONTEST UPDATE

The "**Celebrate 100 Years of Women's Suffrage...VOTE!**" poster contest is completed and the winners announced. You can read the artists' statements [here on the LWVLA website](#). Congratulations to all who participated and "Thank You" to the Centennial Suffrage Committee and the community judges.



1st place

Dorothy Engelman
V. P. of Program Planning
LWVLA100years@gmail.com
435.879.1558



2nd Place



3rd Place

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Donna Mullins

One of the first people you call if you are planning an LWVLA function is **Elaine Fischhoff**, our events coordinator. She knows every venue, restaurant manager, church office manager, and menu in town. She may be the only person in the League who saw the pandemic as a respite now that all meetings are Zoom meetings. Of course, she is now pretty proficient in Zoom technology because she just does what's needed.

Elaine has extraordinary knowledge in environmental issues, having worked in the Environmental Division as an Assistant Attorney General. She's used her knowledge as well as her passion to advocate for a Climate Emergency Resolution from the Lansing City Council. The resolution did not pass but its existence helped move another item Elaine and the LWVLA were advocating for—creating a Sustainability Manager for Lansing. Grassroots organizing consists of small steps and bites. Elaine and her partners in these efforts (like the LEAT, in which she has also been active) have been relentless about showing up and wearing down the opposition. And when she asked League members to show up at hearings, they came.

Elaine would be the first to say that she is just one of many who advocate for a cleaner, sustainable environment. That's true. The Environment Committee, the League, and other eco-advocates outside of the League work together to make progress. (Elaine always mentions League member Jacqueline Stewart as her model for advocacy.) It's also true that without the efforts of a few key individuals movements fall apart. Elaine certainly fits the description of a key individual.

The lesson Elaine teaches us is that if you just show up, one thing leads to another. She has been relentless in focus and follow-through. I'm sure many of you haven't heard her name; that's why I'm throwing the spotlight on her. I am equally sure that you have benefited from her work. She's a little uncomfortable being in the spotlight but her compassion, good humor, and reliability deserve a little light.

VOTER SERVICE

Joanne Winkelman, Voter Service Director



The Vote411.org Voter Guide will be available on June 20, 2020 for the August election. The League of Women Voters has been one of the most respected sources of non-partisan voter information for one hundred years.

The online voting guide is used by voters throughout the state and nationally. The tri-county edition compiled by LWVLA will be strictly digital at this time since most distribution places are still closed due to COVID-19. As libraries and other gathering spaces open, it is anticipated that the Vote 411 Voter Guide will be available in print for the November election, while the digital version is available on various platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and [VOTE411.org](https://www.vote411.org). Please encourage people to visit the Vote411 website.

The LWVLA is exploring alternatives to the usual voter registration drives and voter information sessions due to the pandemic. Once it is more clear how high schools and schools of higher education will be conducted and which organizations will be open (e.g., libraries), voter services activities will be organized to reach out to students and the general public. Stay tuned for opportunities to assist.

PUBLICITY DIRECTOR INTRODUCTION AND PLAN OF ACTION

Anna Scott

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and thank you all for the opportunity to serve as the LWVLA Publicity Director. I know that I have very big shoes to fill in stepping into the place of Carol Swinehart.



I joined the League in the spring of 2017. In each place that I have lived, I have always relied on the LWV Voter Guide to learn about candidates. However, I had very few direct interactions with League members until I attended the gerrymandering forum in East Lansing in February 2017. After attending a few other League events, I decided it was time for me to finally send in the membership form.

Since joining the League, I have enjoyed attending the candidate forums, lunchtime lectures and other events. I have also been happy to help coordinate the solicitation of responses from candidates for the Vote411.org Voter Guide. When I was contacted by the Nominating Committee regarding my interest in serving as Publicity Director, I thought that this could be a great opportunity to continue to help to serve the mission of LWV.

Now that I am in the role of Publicity Director, I am realizing that I have a lot to learn! I am grateful to my fellow board members who are so willing to help me through this process. I have already participated in LWVUS social media webinars. These have been very informative and have helped me realize that LWVLA will benefit from developing a Social Media Plan that identifies our target audiences, objectives, and preferred social media platforms. I will also create a content calendar so that we can reach out to our followers more regularly and with informative content. I anticipate that in the near future, I will be seeking volunteers to help with the completion of this plan.

In the meantime, I would be pleased to hear from any of you with suggestions or requests regarding the LWVLA social media and publicity efforts in general (contact me at anna.m.scott@gmail.com) and look forward to seeing you all virtually or otherwise in the near future.

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE UPDATE:

GUNS AT THE CAPITOL

Melinda Frame & Marty Couretas

On April 30, armed protesters upset by Governor Whitmer's stay-at-home orders due to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated at the Michigan Capitol and inside of the Senate chamber. In doing so they provoked local outrage and national attention. Michigan is one of four Midwestern states that permit weapons on Capitol grounds (including Minnesota, Wisconsin and Kansas). On May 14, armed protesters again demonstrated, and the Legislature adjourned their sessions and closed the Capitol building.



The Michigan Capitol Commission, which is responsible for its upkeep and which banned signs from Capitol buildings in 2012 to protect the infrastructure, was asked to consider the prohibition of weapons on Capitol property. On May 11, the Commission voted to

study their jurisdiction in this matter, resulting in the creation of a study committee that will discuss this issue with legislative leaders, legal counsel, and the governor.

Concurrently, several House bills and one Senate resolution have been introduced addressing the open carry of firearms within Michigan government buildings. These bills/resolutions have been assigned to the Committee on Government Operations for review.

House Bill 5783: Would expand Gun Free Zones to include all buildings owned or leased by the state; introduced on May 12 by Tyrone Carter (district 6) with 19 co-sponsors.

House Bill 5784: Would expand Gun Free Zones with concealed carry to include all buildings owned or leased by the state; introduced on May 19 by Julie Brixie (district 69) with 19 co-sponsors.

Senate Resolution 0118 (2020): A resolution to urge the Michigan State Capitol Commission to prohibit firearms in public areas of the Capitol building and grounds and to install security checkpoints.

Although interest in legislation banning firearms on Capitol grounds has currently captured the public's attention, passage in the 2019-2020 legislative session is unlikely. To learn more about the positions of candidates at every level of government, visit VOTE411.org.

SEAL OF APPROVAL GOES TO ASPHALT DRIVEWAY SEALANTS

Choose the Healthier, More Earth-Friendly Driveway Sealer

Elaine Fischhoff, Environment Committee



With summer comes the chore of spreading a sealant coating on asphalt/blacktop driveways to maintain and beautify them. Homeowners have a choice between asphalt-based and coal tar-based sealers. That choice is also between the healthier and more Earth-friendly low-PAH asphalt sealer and a high-PAH coal tar sealer.

PAHs are Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons, suspected human carcinogens that are toxic to fish and other aquatic life. Coal tar sealants typically contain about 1,000 times higher PAHs than the asphalt-based. PAHs have been the subject of studies by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), academic institutions, and state and local agencies.

Fresh sealants volatilize into the air we breathe and as they age break down into small particles. The particle dust from coal tar sealers with the much higher levels of PAHs can become airborne or tracked into homes and ingested, [causing a higher risk of cancer](#), especially for children. The PAH dust will also become part of runoff contaminating ground and surface waters, killing or damaging the DNA of minnows, water fleas and other aquatic life.

Because of these dangers, several countries, states and cities have banned the sale and use of coal tar-based sealers. In July 2016, [Ann Arbor banned coal tar sealers](#) and instituted up to a \$10,000 fine for violators. Michigan Representative Kristy Pagan (D-Canton), joined by other legislators, has repeatedly introduced [legislation to ban coal-tar sealants](#) in Michigan, without success.

You can make a difference by making sure you or your contractor are not using a coal tar sealer and by supporting a ban in your community and state. [The Huron Watershed Council](#) website includes a list of contractors who will use less damaging sealants and information on how to identify coal tar sealants that should be avoided, as well as links to additional information about sealants and scientific studies.

GARDENING FOR POLLINATORS WEBINAR CANCELED

The Environment Committee regrets to announce that its plans to offer a webinar on Gardening for Pollinators have been canceled. However, we encourage those interested in this subject to view the video from MSU Extension, "[Smart Gardening for Pollinators](#)." MSU Extension also launched a new "[Wild About Backyard Conservation webinar series](#)." Explore ways your backyard can protect and promote wildlife and clean water with MSU Extension experts."



ONE THING

Who doesn't need toilet paper, right? Try to buy the stuff that has a substantial amount of post-consumer content (maybe even 100%!) and isn't processed with chlorine.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Virginia Sterling - East Lansing
Renee Swanson - Lansing
Krystle Valdovinos - East Lansing
Susan & Stephen Wood - Lansing
Elaine Yakura & B. Pentland - Okemos

LWV - Lansing Area now has over 200 members!

OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP MAKE DEMOCRACY WORK!

All committees are meeting virtually using Zoom. Contact the chair for more information.

VOTER SERVICE: Contact Joanne Winkelman at jwinkelmanlwvla@gmail.com

K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE: Contact Judy Andre judith.arlene59@gmail.com or Bettie Menchik menchikb@msu.edu.

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE: Contact: Marty Couretas couretam@comcast.net or Melinda Frame framem@msu.edu.

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE: Contact Ellen Link elink767@gmail.com.

