

**EMPOWERING VOTERS  
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE  
CAPITOL  
VOTER**

**FEBRUARY  
2023**

**IN THE FEBRUARY CAPITOL VOTER**

- **President: Stepping Up and Helping One Another**
- **Spartans Will: A Community Grounded in Love**
- **Help Wanted: Treasurer Position Opening**
- **PHS to Host Gun Violence Prevention Panel**
- **EAG: Will Renewable Energy Save Us?**
- **Focus on Gov. Whitmer's Education Proposals**
- **One Thing: Green Your Investments**
- **LWVLA: 245 Members Strong!**

**LWVLA CALENDAR**

**Monday, February 27.** LWVLA lunch with speaker Dr. Christian Houle, Department of Political Science, MSU. See "Thinking About Threats to Our Democracy" below for info.

**Wednesday, March 15, 7 pm.** The Public Health and Safety Committee is planning a panel discussion on gun violence prevention for League members. Watch your email for location and registration info.

**The Book Discussion Group** is in the process of choosing a book for March. Watch for the announcement and Zoom link.

**April 10.** Lunch presentation by Dana Watson, Health Equity Coordinator for Ingham Co. Watch for details and registration info.

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Donna Mullins



My heart broke a little when I heard that Jacinda Ardern was resigning because she no longer had “enough in the tank.” She was, to my mind, an ideal leader who led with kindness and strength. Critics said that she didn’t accomplish all that she hoped to. If that is the standard, then all of humanity could be called a failure. Hopes are, by definition, aspirational. She accomplished more than most. Can you name any other prime minister of New Zealand? I think she is the person we imagine when we say we want “more female leaders.” (We don’t imagine people who scream at the State of the Union Address, but they are also sometimes female.) Ardern is not burnt out but she was running low on fuel and thought this was the best decision for her family and her country. It got me to thinking about how easy it is to give until it hurts; better to give to your heart’s content.

What does this have to do with the League? I have said that we are at our best when we do things together. An example of that was the “Green Burials” event sponsored by the Environmental Advocacy Group. It was planned with the cooperation of their members, our interim VP for Programming, our Publicity Director, and me doing the tech. On the day before the forum, I tested positive for COVID (a result, no doubt, of helping recruit members to the Spartan LWV). On the day of the event, the master of ceremonies became ill. A minor crisis as they go, but a crisis none the less. What happened then was a great example of who we are.

Betty Seagull offered to replace Laura Rogers as the MC and did a spectacular job. Elaine Fischhoff, who helped plan the event, said she would take a stab at doing the remote Zoom from the event. Now, Elaine has helped me in the past with Zoom but streaming remotely is A LOT more complicated than that. Kathy Lovell said she would arrive early to help with any tech issues. (From what I heard, she was most certainly helpful.) And doggonit, Elaine got it done and people on Zoom heard everything, even if they did not see everything. Meridian Township’s HOMTV recorded the presentation so a proper video is online for posterity. No one suggested cancelling the event. Lots of people chipped in to help. We did it together, and we got it done. And the information was great!

This willingness to step up for one another is what saves those who serve the most hours from running out of fuel. When I say that *all* of our members are valuable to the League no matter how much time they contribute, I mean it, because our membership has more clout when there are many of us. (And there are more than ever!)

But we do need volunteers. We are still looking for someone to lead the Observer Corps. We are still trying to find someone to serve as treasurer when Barb Bidigare ends her term in April. We are looking at ways to minimize the time needed to fulfill those roles. It’s

possible that tasks could be divided. Barb originally took the treasurer position when she was working full-time. It's that kind of job. Contact [Jacqueline Stewart](#) for more information.

This year we will be looking for people to help educate the community on the National Popular Vote Compact that the Michigan Legislature will be voting on this year. Later we will be sharing information on new voting regulations as a result of the constitutional amendment that passed with our support in the last election. We will need help doing that! Contact [Joanne Winkelman](#) for more information.

The LWVMI convention will be held at the Kellogg Center May 19-20 and we have more delegates who can attend because of our membership growth due to the Spartan LWV. (We'll be leading a workshop on how to start a campus unit, from the very campus that started it all.) The host unit is responsible for, well, hosting. Ushering, helping with directions, and bringing good cheer is definitely going to be a group effort. It's an opportunity to show up and show off. I hope many of you will serve as delegates and/or volunteers. Sign up [here](#) to let us know if you might be interested in being a volunteer or delegate to the convention. This would indicate an interest, not a commitment. We can get this all done with no danger of burnout if we do it

Together,  
*Donna*

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## SPARTANS WILL

Donna Mullins

"MSU, we love thy shadows, when twilight silence falls." (MSU alma mater) Just past twilight on February 13, a shadow fell hard and MSU was added to the list of mass murders in America. Victims and their families are reeling from the senseless carnage. Some of us are stunned that the violence came to our town; others were not surprised. There is no vaccine for a culture that regards made-up "rights" over life.



While some say that MSU will be remembered for this shadow, I see it differently. I believe they will be remembered for how they are responding to this tragedy. And I believe MSU faculty, staff and students are responding with tender love. There is something about a land grant school, a school founded on being of practical service to the world, that grounds it in love.

Renee Brown and Erin Kramer are the folks from MSU who I work most closely with on the Spartan LWV. Hannah Richardson is the student president of the League who I've worked with for more than two years. They are people of purpose. That purpose is to bring good to the world. (They may say it differently, but they would not disagree with me.) And they are part of a community that pretty much thinks that's what being alive is for: making things better.

The sadness we feel for the victims and their families is profound. The hope I feel when I see the tender openness that most students and staff are bringing to each other is profoundly moving. Healing will not come overnight, but it will come. And I know this: if it can be done, Spartans Will.

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## HELP WANTED



With our current treasurer, Barb Bidigare, stepping down after four years, the LWVLA is very much in need of another dedicated volunteer to fill that position for the term 2023-2025, starting in April 2023.

The person who fills this position should have a basic understanding of budgeting, the ability to use or learn Quickbooks and create reports, and a willingness to learn procedures that ensure the League's finances are handled in the most effective, orderly and accurate manner (internal control). Barb will be happy to assist the new treasurer in learning the ropes of the position, which generally requires about 2 hours a week; about 4 times a year, however, it may take up to 10 hours.

If you are interested and think you can do the job but are concerned about the time commitment involved, please let us know. This is a job that could be done by a person who is fully employed. If you would like more information on what it entails or if you know someone who might be a good candidate, please contact [Jacqueline Stewart](#).

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## PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT

Linda Melaragni, Chair

The Lansing Area League grieves with the rest of the community over the loss of life on MSU's campus. We remain committed to the passage of gun safety legislation. The committee met with State Representative Julie Brixie regarding the current legislative climate and what committee members are seeing in our communities. I will be participating with State Senator Sarah Anthony and a representative from [The Village](#) in a panel discussion on gun violence prevention. The panel will take place at the Allen Neighborhood Center on Saturday, March 18 at 10 a.m.

The Public Health and Safety Committee is also planning a panel discussion for League members on March 15 at 7 p.m.; the location will be named at a later date. We hope to include an MSU student and a gun violence prevention advocate, as well as one of our committee members. The recent shooting at MSU has increased the urgency we all feel to address this tragedy. We will include simple actions League members can take to address the issue of gun violence in our community.

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## WILL RENEWABLE ENERGY SAVE US?

Ellen Link, EAG Co-chair

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres pointed out at the 2022 [World Economic Forum](#) in Davos that global emissions from fossil fuels, which reached a record high in 2022, need to be cut by 45% this decade if we are to avoid a planetary meltdown. Yet they are on track to increase by 14% by 2030, "...defying reason and ignoring the impacts on people, economies and our planet." In other words, if emissions don't decline rapidly, we're toast.



The majority of Americans believe in climate change and, according to a 2022 report done by the [PEW Research Center](#), are in favor of the U.S. taking steps to become carbon neutral. This requires reducing consumption and developing clean alternative energy sources like wind and solar which now account for about 20% of U.S. power generation. But reversing the environmental harms wrought by fossil fuels will be a slow process. And if some people have their way, it will come to a complete stop.

In Michigan and across the country, zoning/siting regulations are being used to stop the development of renewable energy. The [Ohio Capital Journal](#) reported on the backlash spreading across the country. Ohio's legislature has empowered county governments to drastically restrict wind and solar power development, a process formerly overseen by the Ohio Power Siting Board, with the result that multiple wind projects now appear doomed.

[M-Live](#) reported in Nov. 2022 on several Michigan communities that not only defeated attempts to allow such developments but even recalled elected officials that had approved them. "Rural voters delivered a crushing blow to plans for a 375 megawatt wind farm in mid-Michigan, where several local renewable energy ordinances were defeated across three townships and multiple officials were thrown from office for supporting the project."

[Bridge](#) reported that the backlash against wind turbines has resulted in a greater focus on solar energy, which has become cheaper than wind power and requires less land. "Solar will be the primary source of new power generation for Consumers Energy because it's more affordable than before, provides economic benefits to communities and will help us provide 90 percent of our energy from carbon-free sources by 2040."

But nothing is for sure. The fate of a solar project planned for Greenbush Township in Clinton County will be decided at a Feb. 28 meeting of the county commissioners, where both supporters and opponents are expected to weigh in. Apparently, some of those opposed to the project take issue with planting solar panels on farmland, even though this farmer says the targeted piece of his land is marginal for farming.

Interestingly, [NPR](#) did a story on Citizens for Responsible Solar, an activist group fighting solar projects in at least 10 states including Ohio, Kentucky and Pennsylvania. "Analysts who follow the industry say Citizens for Responsible Solar stokes opposition to solar projects by spreading misinformation online about health and environmental risks. The [group's website](#) says solar requires too much land for 'unreliable energy,' ignoring data showing power grids can run dependably on lots of renewables. And it claims large solar projects in rural areas wreck the land and contribute to climate change, despite evidence to the contrary."

As climate change, like so much else, becomes senselessly politicized, the clamor for

individual rights may subsume all sense of civic and social responsibilities. We can only hope that the common good and the necessity to protect the health and future of the environment will prevail.

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## REPORT FROM THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Bettie Menchik, Chair

The Education Committee began the 2022-23 school year looking at education vouchers. At that time, Betsy DeVos was backing a ballot referendum which would have given parents up to about \$8,000 per child per year for tuition, tutoring, or expenses like school supplies. The [Let MI Kids Learn](#) campaign also earmarked funds to help students studying cosmetology or carpentry buy supplies or help children with special needs get therapies they missed when schools were closed due to the pandemic. However, after the fall election, DeVos withdrew the petition and the issue of private school vouchers in Michigan became a non issue.

The committee compared policies and their effectiveness in different states. To voucher proponents, that student performance at private schools is ultimately on par with that at public schools shows vouchers are working as intended, giving families an equal but different choice. To opponents, however, studies show vouchers are a failed endeavor, causing backslides academically and not leading to any sustained improvements. (We don't know what the long-term effects of vouchers are, though a [study of D.C.](#) found voucher students graduated at higher rates.) If you are interested in excellent discussions of the topic, watch/listen to [“Making Sense of New Evidence on Private School Vouchers”](#) on Youtube or read [“So, do private school vouchers work?”](#), both from the Urban Institute.

We will now focus on the numerous education programs outlined in Governor Whitmer's State of the State and budget, including preschool for all four-year-olds, training new teachers and childcare workers, a boost in per-pupil funding for public schools, and a new tutoring program. We will begin discussion of these proposals at our next meeting on March 8 at 5 pm on Zoom. Interim V.P. for Programming Jacqueline Stewart is planning a members' meeting for the fall with faculty from the Education Policy Innovation Collaborative at MSU and practitioners from local school districts. The focus will be on funding inequalities in Michigan's schools, the pandemic, and what remedies might close the gaps between students and schools.

We welcome new members – just send an email to [Bettie](#).

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## ONE THING

From [The Carbon Almanac](#): “Research by [Make My Money Matter](#), a U.K. campaign asking people to green their investments, suggests that greening your investments can be one of the most powerful actions a person can take to help with climate change.” Check out possibilities from [Green America](#).

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## MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Camilla Davis, Membership Chair

### Welcome New Members

- Ramona Kime – Charlotte
- Elizabeth Taggart – East Lansing
- Plus 20 new student members

### Membership News

As of January 31, 2023, LWVLA has 245 members. We have 155 individual members, 28 household members, 57 student members, and 5 lifetime members. This is an increase of 49 members over the January 31, 2022 membership!

## 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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