

**EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE
CAPITOL
VOTER**

**MAY
2024**

IN THE MAY CAPITOL VOTER

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LWVLA CALENDAR

Thursday, June 8, Book Discussion Group. 10 am on Zoom. *Pastoral Song: A Farmer's Journey* by James Rebanks.

Friday, June 21—Fundraiser for LWVLA's Voter Education Fund. 7 to 10 p.m. Time2Play band performing classic rock, pop, blues & country music at Reno's East, 1310 Abbot Rd, East Lansing.

See articles below for more information.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kathy Ruby Petroni

It is my pleasure and honor to be the new president of the Lansing Area League of Women Voters. A year ago, upon my retirement from MSU, I was looking for opportunities to do meaningful volunteer work. Since I was an accounting professor and the League was looking for a treasurer, I quickly joined and signed on as treasurer. I was especially excited to serve the League because my paternal grandmother was an active League member.



During the past year, I became enamored with both the people and the mission of the organization. And after a long career working primarily with men, I found it very refreshing to work with so many enthusiastic and capable women. Working as the treasurer, I gained a deep understanding of our finances. I still have much to learn about the many other facets of the organization.

Donna Mullins, who passionately served the League as our president for the past four years, has been incredibly supportive during the transition. Fortunately, she is planning to stay very active and will administer our Facebook page, member roster, website and the book group. We will continue to rely on Donna's connections with individuals and organizations throughout the state supporting democracy. We will miss her creative and motivating communications in the *Capitol Voter*.



My primary focus for the rest of 2024 will be the upcoming August and November elections. I will be working along with Joanne Winkleman, our VP for Voter Services, to do all we can to mobilize our membership to help get out the vote and to inform those who do vote. At the same time, I will never lose sight of our need to protect our legacy of being a nonpartisan and reliable source of information.

My email address is kathypetroniLWV@gmail.com. I encourage you to reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns or, better yet, if you see opportunities to contribute to our goals. It will be all hands on deck in this critical election cycle.

Kathy enjoys all the time she can get playing with her three Border Collies and two horses.

VOTER SERVICES NEWS

Joanne Winkelman, V.P. Voter Service

The LWVLA has been working with [Nation Outside](#) on a pilot project to inform the

formerly incarcerated of their voting rights and new voting laws. We've visited the Ingham County Parole and Probation offices and presented at Loaves and Fishes and at Peckham Roots and were able to register a number of people to vote at these events. We hope to continue this collaboration in the future and bring in more League volunteers.

Looking Ahead

I thought I would use the rest of this space in the *Capitol Voter* to give a "heads up" on various activities that will need volunteers this election season:

1. Assisting the Lansing City Clerk's office when they need volunteers to register voters at various locations around the city this summer and fall.
2. Providing the East Lansing City Clerk with volunteers to help with early voting and election day assistance on campus at the early voting site and/or satellite office. The clerk will train people to be "wayfinders," who will triage students as they arrive to make sure they get in the right line. Many students think they vote in East Lansing because that is their address, but they actually live in other cities/townships.
3. Get Out the Vote Campaign: The LWVLA is *contemplating* participating in a Get Out the Vote campaign sponsored by the LWVMI. For us to participate we will need volunteers to handwrite notes to first-time voters. The League will supply the cards, addresses, stamps, and a sample message. We are thinking about a "postcard party" where we can write our messages and socialize at the same time. If folks are unable to attend, there will be opportunities to write and send the postcards individually.
4. Delivering Voter Guides: We hope to have a printed local voter guide this year but will definitely have a LWVMI statewide guide and will need lots of volunteers to distribute it throughout the tri-county area.
5. Board of Canvassers: After each election we are asked to watch the County Board of Canvassers' meetings to ensure that the canvassers complete their constitutional duty to certify elections for all local, countywide and district offices which are contained within the county they serve. Groups have tried to influence the BOCs in certifying the vote, so we will be asking volunteers to be present as the canvassers work through the process.

As activities arise, I send an "all call" out to the volunteer list. If you want to be added or deleted, send an email to jwinkelmanlwvla@gmail.com. All of these activities require volunteers, so I hope to see many of you in the coming months.

MEET OUR NEW BOARD MEMBERS

At the Annual Meeting we elected three new members to the LWVLA Board. (For the complete list of board members, see the website.)

Suan R. Chalgian is the new Secretary. Susan has lived in the Tri-county area since 1987 and has been a member of the League since 2019. She and her husband raised three daughters, who now have careers and families of their own. Susan uses her middle initial 'R' because one of her daughters is a local attorney with the same name. Susan enjoys spending time with family and friends as well as reading and spending time outside.

Ranjani Krishnan is the new Treasurer. Ranjani and her husband, Satish, live in East Lansing and they both recently joined the League. Ranjani was specifically recruited for the position since she is very well suited for it, having been an accounting professor at MSU for over 20 years. She is passionate about democracy and getting more citizens informed and voting.

Ann Marston is the new Co-Vice President of Programs. Ann is the former President and CEO of the Michigan League for Public Policy. She has a particular interest in public policy as it pertains to the well-being of children and low-income families and individuals. Ann has been a member of the LWV for over 30 years.

Lynn Wilson is stepping down from the board due to other commitments. Lynn served as an outstanding secretary for the past year. The good news is that she plans to stay engaged with League activities.

SAVE THE DATE

The evening of Friday, June 21, Time2Play will be performing their classic rock, pop, blues & country music at Reno's East from 7-10 pm. Why are we reporting that here? Because all of the band's proceeds will go to the LWVLA's Voter Education Fund! These funds will be used to register and provide voters with election information in the Lansing Area. Please consider coming out for an evening of live music and good company, all for a good cause.



MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Camilla Davis, Membership Director

WELCOME NEW MEMBER

Bethany Mueller, East Lansing

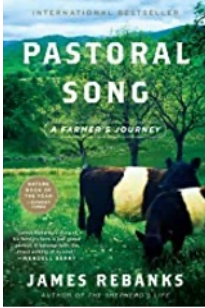
KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE LEAGUE

The League of Women Voters wants to keep its members informed about all things League. Since you received this issue of the *Capitol Voter*, LWVLA has your correct email address. You should also be receiving LWVMI's *League Links* monthly, plus Action Alerts. Communications from LWVUS come as League updates and Action Alerts.

If you are not receiving communications from LWVMI and LWVUS, please contact [Camilla Davis](#), who will help you establish contact with these two important levels of the League and answer any questions you may have.

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

In June the book group will be reading the memoir *Pastoral Song: A Farmer's Journey* (304 pp) by James Rebanks.



James Rebanks grew up on a family farm in the Lake District in England. But when he inherited the farm, it was not the farm he remembered. Commercial farming had changed that landscape. Named “Nature Book of the Year” by the *Sunday Times*, this is a story of how Rebanks returned the farm to a balanced ecosystem. If you would like to participate in the discussion on June 20 at 10 a.m., contact [Donna Mullins](#).

EDUCATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

Bettie Landauer-Menchik, Chair

At our recent meeting we decided to rotate planners for each session. The planner will select a current topic being discussed in the state and will send members something to read. The first three topics will be Ann Arbor’s financial mess and the impact of schools of choice on the district; the governor’s plan to make community college free; and the impact of Artificial Intelligence on schools. We welcome additional members interested in education.

AN ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECTIVE ON SOLUTIONS TO THE HOUSING CRISIS

Marion Gorton, EAG member

The issues of homelessness and the lack of affordable, safe housing have been the subject of many recent news stories. The situation has become a crisis here and across our nation. The problem exists locally wherever we look in Ingham, Eaton and Clinton counties. The problems may not always be as visible in small towns, villages and rural areas, but it is a fact that low- and middle-income people in our area are faced with challenges in paying rent, mortgage payments and utility bills. Community leaders generally agree that more and affordable housing must be built and rehabilitated to house these families and individuals.

What is often left out of these stories is the issue of ensuring that these new homes are built using principles of sustainability, including energy efficiency, beneficial use of land, and protection of the natural environment. While the potential environmental impacts are often missing from the articles and news coverage, those factors are vital to creating safe, sustainable communities. Environmentally friendly homes and neighborhoods will enhance the lives of those who inhabit them by being safe, less expensive to heat and cool, easier to maintain, and simply more appealing. Building and rehabilitation practices that are sensitive to environmental factors will also reduce waste and the drain on natural resources.

Recent articles do give us hope that policy makers and government leaders are looking for good alternatives. A *City Pulse* article, ["Fixing our housing shortage: Lansing to consider shared-use zoning changes."](#) discusses several options for helping to solve the housing crisis, including rooming and boarding houses, cooperatives and cottage developments. Another *City Pulse* article from September 2022, ["Old ideas proposed to](#)

[alleviate Michigan housing shortage.](#)” discusses building homes, even multi-family homes, from a set pattern or from a toolkit provided to prospective homebuilders, similar to the homes one could order from the Sears catalog in the early 20th century.

Very recently, University of Michigan Health – Sparrow announced that they are donating several homes to the [Ingham County Land Bank and to Habitat for Humanity Capital Region](#) for rehabilitation to provide housing in the Sparrow neighborhood. This donation was chosen instead of destroying those houses and using the land for other purposes. The Lansing community should celebrate this wise choice.

When we see new homes, apartments and multi-family buildings being constructed, we should each ask ourselves: **How can we help ensure that those solutions take issues of environmental integrity and sustainability into consideration? What can we do to ensure that new homes are positive additions to our neighborhoods and to the planet we want to protect?** As members of our communities, we must enter into the discussion. When there are community meetings or news stories asking for input, be ready to provide suggestions and concerns about the way the projects must protect and enhance the natural areas and the community environment and to ask questions about building practices. These new and rehabilitated homes must be not just livable but sustainable and energy efficient—in other words, environmentally friendly.

Please take some time to read [Habitat for Humanity’s U.S. Sustainable Construction Standards](#). It is an impressive document that sets standards not only for building practices but for defining the amount of living space for individuals who will call it home. It calls for the installation of Energy Star appliances and landscaping with native and drought-tolerant species. It will help you ask pertinent questions when homes in your city, village or township are being built. Your questions can make the difference between just a new house or apartment building and a home that will enhance every aspect of life for its new residents.

ONE THING

Need a pick-me-up on the environment? Too much gloom and doom, worry and woe can be defeating. One thing that may help to revive our hope is to realign our perspective by reading some positive stories, like these from [Euronews](#) and [NPR](#).

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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