

**EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE
CAPITOL
VOTER**

**DECEMBER
2025**

IN THE DECEMBER CAPITOL VOTER

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LWVLA CALENDAR

Thursday, January 15 – LWVLA Book Discussion Group, 10 am at Schuler Books Café, Meridian Mall, Okemos.

Wednesday, January 21 – “Let Voters Vote,” LWVMI program on voter suppression, via Zoom.

Wednesday, Jan. 21 – “Jeanette Rankin, First US Congresswoman,” with author Lorissa Rinehart. Membership luncheon, details pending.

Thursday, Feb. 12 – “History of Women’s Suffrage,” with MSU Prof. Emily Conroy-Krutz. Membership luncheon, details pending.

Saturday, April 18 – “Suffs,” musical at Fisher theatre in Detroit; contact [Donna Mullins](#)

Thursday, May 7 – LWVLA Annual Meeting. Save the Date.

See articles below for more information.

From our partners' calendars:

Thursday, January 29 – “The Work of the UN and SDGs around the World,” GLUNA program, at East Lansing Public Library, Abbot Rd., 6:30 pm.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kathy Ruby Petroni



Our League had a productive November. We had two outstanding evening programs: Pasta and Politics with MIRS reporter Sam Shriber, and an informative presentation on microplastics with MSU Professor Yoora Noh and Heather Sisto, an active member of the Michigan Microplastics Coalition. We also played a critical role in the recent decision by the Board of Commissioners of the Lansing Board of Water and Light to withdraw a resolution regarding contracts for data centers. We strongly opposed the resolution. The Chairman of the Board specifically thanked the Lansing Area LWV for our interest and comments, which they found useful in their decision making.

We don't have any programming planned for December given the holidays. Our next membership lunch is January 21, with Author Lorissa Rinehart. She will discuss her new book: [*Winning The Earthquake: How Jeannette Rankin Defied All Odds to Become the First Woman in Congress*](#).

Speaking of the holidays, every year at Thanksgiving my daughter and I gather pictures and create our family holiday card, often relying on templates provided by the printer. It is a tradition that I cherish. This year we initially picked a design that centered around “Oh, What Fun It Is!” We settled on the card but before ordering it, I changed my mind. It just didn’t seem right to be so upbeat when our democracy is in such peril, with many undocumented immigrants living in fear, and our country committing other atrocities. My daughter agreed. So, back to the drawing board. We considered not sending a card or focusing the card on a political theme but in the end, we settled on simply “Happy Holidays.”



The point of sharing this mundane story is that it represents the struggle that many of us are having balancing concerns for our nation while embracing the holiday season. We may feel guilty celebrating with family and friends. We may find ourselves spending time with loved ones who have views that we are unable to understand. That said, I hope that we can happily continue with our holiday traditions while using this time to gear up for giving it our all in 2026.

Democracy must win,
Kathy

2026 OPPORTUNITY TO UPGRADE YOUR LEAGUE INVOLVEMENT

Camilla Davis, Nominating Committee Chair

If you've been wondering how you can get more involved in the League's mission to make democracy work, this is your chance. LWVLA's Nominating Committee will begin its work to fill open 2026 officer and director board positions in January. Serving on LWVLA's board is an opportunity to support the League and to work with interesting, dedicated and resolute members.

Please consider your talents and interests, then contact a member of the Nominating Committee to find out more about which board positions are open. (LWVLA's bylaws require staggered terms for board members, so not all positions are open at the same time.) Position descriptions are available. You will find a [list of board positions](#) on LWVLA's website. Officers and directors are elected at LWVLA's annual meeting, held each spring, and take office on July 1 for a two-year term.

The committee also welcomes recommendations from LWVLA members of other League members whose talents and interests would foster growth and development in our League. Please share names with contact information.

Committee members are [Camilla Davis](#) and [Kathy Crooks](#), both elected at the 2025 Annual Meeting, and [Donna Mullins](#), appointed by the current board.

We hope to hear from you. This is a wonderful opportunity to take on a new challenge in the new year. Please seriously consider taking advantage of it.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE REPORT

Lisa Moore, VP Programs

We had our post-election debrief the evening of Wednesday, November 12 at One North. MIRS reporter Sam Schriber returned to lead this discussion with members and their guests. It was a lively and candid interaction, with speculation on all the various races and ballot proposals coming up in 2026.

Another evening event took place on November 24 at the East Lansing Public Library. The EAGers invited MSU Asst. Professor Yoorae Noh from MSU's School of Packaging and

Heather Sisto of the Michigan Microplastics Coalition to speak and lead a discussion on microplastics in the environment. The speakers surmounted technical challenges to provide informative lectures and lively discussion with the group.

While we don't have anything scheduled for December, we have many exciting events in the works for 2026:

- January 21, Membership Lunch – Author Lorissa Rinehart, will discuss her new book: *Winning The Earthquake: How Jeannette Rankin Defied All Odds to Become the First Woman in Congress*.
- February 12, Membership Lunch – MSU Professor of American History Dr. Emily Conroy-Krutz will talk to us about Women's Suffrage, and we will also celebrate the LWV's 106th birthday!
- April 18, LWVLA Field trip - We recently reserved a block of tickets for the *Tony Award® winning show "Suffs."* These discounted tickets (\$95 reduced to \$78) are for the matinee performance at 2 pm. Look for an email with specifics sent out earlier this month.
- May 7, LWVLA Annual Meeting – Save the Date!!! The speaker has been selected and the venue chosen. We are so excited and are wrapping up the details before communicating them to you in early 2026!

Finally, in these winter months, we may reach out with specific Zoom evening events as things become available, so keep an eye out for LWVLA specific communication in the coming months!

LET VOTERS VOTE!

On Wednesday, January 21 at 7 pm, LWVMI will host a panel discussion via Zoom on why Documentary Proof of Citizenship (DPOC) constitutes needless voter suppression and what we can do to stop it. Experts will address:



- Security and Integrity of Voting
- Unnecessary Red Tape of DPOC
- Impact on Voters in Michigan & across the US

The panelists will include:

- Christopher Thomas, former Michigan Elections Director
- Melanie Macey, Policy and Government Affairs director at Promote the Vote
- Valencia Richardson, Voting Rights attorney at the Campaign Legal Center



All are welcome to attend. You can register via the QR code or use this [online link](#). Questions? Contact Advocacy@LWVMI.org.

OBSERVER CORPS UPDATE

Sharon Feldman, VP Observer Corps

The LWVLA Observer Corps is making good progress! In January, we expect to have 8 to 10 observers in the field, attending local government meetings in person or remotely. We

held our first group meeting in November and plan to hold our next meeting toward the end of January or early February. With data centers, budget crunches, elections and a host of other issues coming, we could certainly use more help keeping track of what's going on in our local communities. If you can take on a meeting or two each month, please join us! If you would just like more information, we have plenty to share. Please email me, [Sharon Feldman](#).

BOARD OF CANVASSERS' OBSERVATIONS

Joanne Winkelman, V.P. Voter Services

All three of the LWVLA counties certified the November election with no issues. Thank you to Kathy Petroni, Ann Marie Ryan, Sheryl Mase and Susan Chalgian for observing the Board of Canvassers' meetings. Our presence makes a strong statement for defending democracy.

Unfortunately, the turnouts for the election were quite small: Ingham, 23.69% turnout; Clinton, 23.73%; and Eaton, 25.4%.

CELEBRATION OF 50-YEAR LEAGUE MEMBER

Donna Mullins



Barb DeLeeuw, our local League president from 1990-92, had a special anniversary this year: she has officially been a member of the League for 50 years! In those 50 years the United States had 9 different people as president, Michigan had 6 governors, and democracy has been challenged in numerous ways. The League has been a part of meeting that challenge and Barb has been with it, well, the entire time.

Beyond the League, Barb has been active in the development of the Greater Lansing Area Sports Hall of Fame. She remains a participant in the selection process to this day! And Barb knows government, having worked in constituent services for the Michigan House of Representatives.

What does someone who has been with the League for 50 years do in her spare time? She works as the office manager for the Michigan LWV. The woman gets things done and does it in a thoughtful and compassionate manner.

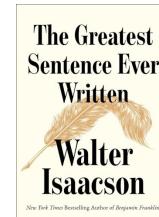
Our League is so lucky that this kind woman, who is devoted to her family, has taken the time to volunteer and work for the League at several levels. She's stuck with us for 50 years! We are grateful.

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

In October we read *Coming Up Short* by Robert Reich. It was interesting hearing his take on contemporary American history. Inspired by our luncheon on sanctuary cities, we

discussed the novel *The Book of Unknown Americans* by Cristina Henríquez in November.

On December 18 we discussed the short but inspiring ***The Greatest Sentence Ever Written*** by Walter Isaacson. It includes a transcript of the draft of the Declaration, with edits by Ben Franklin and John Adams. The reasoning behind those edits teaches us a great deal about our founders, including how people felt about slavery, freedom and faith.



We meet the third Thursday of the month at Schuler's Books. To be placed on the mail list, contact [Donna Mullins](#).

THE AGE OF DATA CENTERS

Ellen Link & Elaine Fischhoff, EAG Co-chairs

Unless you've been living in a closet, you are no doubt aware of the growing drumbeat to build more and more data centers, with Michigan a major target for such plans thanks in part to the sales and use tax exemption created for them by the Michigan Legislature last year.

LWVLA (and numerous emails) recently helped convince Lansing's Board of Water and Light (BWL) to withdraw a resolution that would have allowed their general manager to make the decisions concerning the proposed Deep Green data center without regard for transparency or input from BWL's customers. The BWL Board now retains the authority to approve or reject the negotiated contract/rate schedule that will be presented sometime soon. Then the Lansing City Council will have final approval of the contract and land sale; two more public meetings are planned. The project, outlined in a lengthy [LSJ article](#), will probably go forward—Deep Green supposedly wants to start construction by 3/26—but at least it's not super-sized and has a closed-loop water system. A data center currently being proposed by Meta for Howell Township, to be constructed on 1,000 acres of farmland, has also drawn public concern and protests.

What, exactly, are "data centers"? As described in the [Michigan Advance](#), they are "facilities made to house information technology equipment including servers, storage systems, networking equipment and other hardware used to store and distribute data. While these facilities provide the infrastructure for the internet and web-based services, they are also used in artificial intelligence development."

Perhaps the main objection to the huge-scale data centers being proposed is the enormous amount of energy required to keep them running and subsequently the equally enormous amounts of water required to cool them. A [monograph](#) put out by U of M's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy notes, "A single data center can consume up to 2 megawatt hours of power—equivalent to the power used by 2,000 homes—and millions of gallons of water annually for cooling, straining local resources and infrastructure."

Ironically, the *data* on those draws is proprietary and therefore not disclosed to the public, but the possibility that utility rates would go up to cover them is very real. The noise and air pollution—many data centers purportedly use large diesel-powered generators for back-up—pose an ugly threat. And should a data center go bust (think about some big box

stores), it's the taxpayers who would get left holding the bag. As for job creation, that would apply to the construction process but not to operations, which wouldn't require that many employees.

LWVLA's Environmental Advocacy Group hopes to host a program via Zoom this winter that takes a deeper dive on exactly what is going on with data centers and the best way to proceed, so stay tuned.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Bettie Landauer-Menchik, Chair

The Education Committee continues to meet on Zoom, discussing how to actively advocate for education choice issues.

We continue to discuss methods we can use to proactively address the inequities and lack of transparency that are likely to be raised by the discussion of vouchers, which will be raised during this session of the legislature. We are not waiting to see what happens. The League can't support or oppose legislation until we see it, but we can be prepared to advocate for the kinds of things Josh Cowen has shared with us. We will work on a statement incorporating these ideas so we are prepared when the legislature begins discussion. We'll keep track of the regulations when they are released. Joanne Winkelman shared the [link to federal regulations](#) where we can keep watch over how the voucher rules will play out.

Contact [Bettie Menchik](#) to find out more about the committee or when we'll hold our next meeting.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Ann Marston, Co-chair

Please welcome our newest members:

Sharon Kelly, Okemos
Sue Doby, Dewitt
Kathryn Reed, Bath
Kaylee Brookman-Singer, Lansing
Angela Fossi, Okemos

Many thanks to our 234 members for their support and involvement!

If you have received a notice that your membership has expired, please take the time to renew by going to [www.lwvlansing.org](#). Your membership supports the nonpartisan League work to encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government. It also provides information on League-sponsored local programs and events and networking opportunities.

ONE THING

As you become immersed in the holidays, look online for plenty of ideas on choosing eco-friendly and sustainable over wasteful and detrimental. Start with [The Conservation Foundation](#)'s thoughtful list of suggestions. Also, shop locally to support your community and buy fair trade when possible.

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](#)

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

OBSERVER CORPS: Contact [Sharon Feldman](#)



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