

***EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY***



**THE
CAPITOL
VOTER**

MARCH 2020

LWVLA CALENDAR

**Due to the COVID-19 situation, events may canceled.
Check your email for updates on League events.**

Saturday, March 21 -- Gun Violence Prevention Committee Meeting. CANCELED

Saturday, March 21 -- Fate of the Earth Symposium. CANCELED

Monday, April 6 -- Suffrage Tour of the Capital. CANCELED

Monday, April 13 -- League Lunch. CANCELED

Tuesday, April 14 -- LWVLA Book Discussion Group. CANCELED

Monday, May 4 -- Tentative deadline for Suffrage Centennial Poster Contest (extended from April 1)

Monday, May 11 -- League Lunch. CANCELED

Tuesday, May 14 -- LWVLA Book Discussion Group. 10 to 11:30 am. The book has not been chosen yet. Watch for details. Grand Traverse Pie Company. 1403 East Grand River Ave., East Lansing.

Saturday, May 16 -- Preventing Gun Violence Committee. 10:30 am. East Lansing Public Library, 950 Abbot Rd, East Lansing.

Wednesday, May 20. LWVLA Annual Meeting. 5:30 to 8:30 pm. Featuring Jocelyn Benson, Michigan Secretary of State. "Michigan Democracy. Accessible, Secure, & Citizen Led." Eagle Eye Banquet Center, 15500 Chandler Rd, Bath Township. Reservations required.

Monday, June 8 -- League Lunch. 11:30 am to 1 pm. "No Fault Insurance," George Sinas, Attorney at Sinas Dramis Law Firm, Lansing. Spartan Hall of Fame Cafe, 1601 Lake Lansing Road, East Lansing. Reservations required.

COVID-19 AND THE LEAGUE

The League is deeply concerned about the *public* health of our country as well as about its *civic* health. Every level of the League of Women Voters has acknowledged the necessity of following national, state and local advice to reduce the impact of COVID-19. The national League [states](#):

- The health and safety of our members is paramount. LWVUS will follow the [guidance from the CDC](#), and we encourage you to follow their guidance as well as that of your state and local public health agencies regarding the appropriate course of action in your state.
- Many of our members fall in the 60+ age range, which the [CDC notes](#) are at high risk for serious illness from the virus. Even if you are not a member of a high-risk population, you can still risk exposing high-risk folks to the virus. It is important that we all work together to curb the spread of this virus as much as possible by not taking unnecessary risks.
- Leagues should consider cancelling March 2020 events at which 35 or more people will gather. LWVUS has already canceled March 2020 travel and events out of caution.
- Also, consider adapting your events and meetings to web-based presentations where possible. The state League just held its monthly board meeting with video conferencing. Locally, we have canceled our March luncheon.

By following federal, state and local guidelines we can assist in preventing the spread of this virus. Thank you for your cooperation, patience and concern for your neighbors.

MESSAGE FROM THE CO-PRESIDENTS
Donna Mullins and Margo Kauahine Smith



Walking the talk, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:

At the February 10 League Lunch, Winona Singel, assistant attorney for Governor Gretchen Whitmer and on leave from the MSU College of Law, told the crowd about the dispossession and removal in Michigan of native Odawa, Ojibway, and Potawatomi, members of the Anishinabe language family. Michigan tribes ceded land by treaties in 1819 and 1836. According to Singel, "This was not fair or just."

Besides an imbalance of power and a lack of understanding, food was withheld and other tactics were used until the tribes agreed. In the end, native peoples were removed from their lands and sent to Kansas, though many escaped to Canada.

In 1840, General Hugh Brady led a forcible removal campaign. In nearby Mason, a school teacher and her class witnessed natives fleeing General Brady's troops. Children were removed from their families and sent to boarding schools in Pennsylvania and in Mount Pleasant. Some were removed for adoption by non-Indian families, which was less costly than boarding schools. In 1978 Congress passed the Indian Child Welfare Act to protect native children. Since the 1970s, tribes have achieved self-determination, self-governance, and sovereignty. Indians were not considered to be citizens until 1924, when they received the right to vote through the Indian Citizenship Act.

Native Americans at present comprise .7% of Michigan's population of almost 10 million, or 69,971.

We regret having to cancel the April 13 League Lunch. Member Pat Quinn was to speak about Hallie Quinn Brown, a black woman who continued to fight for the right to vote for black Americans, after suffragists declared voting rights for black women was a race issue, not a women's issue.

You can view a video of the Feb. 10 lunch on the League's new website, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_345x421kBc&feature=youtu.be

Margo Kauahine Smith

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION
Donna Mullins



This month the book discussion group chose Mitch Landrieu's *In the Shadow of Statues*. The book was so enlightening we thought it deserved a short review in the *Capitol Voter*.

Mitch became mayor of New Orleans post-Katrina, succeeding a somewhat ethically challenged mayor. His family is well known in Louisiana—his father was a former mayor of New Orleans and his sister represented Louisiana in the US Senate. The great jazz artist Wynton Marsalis asked Mitch to take down those statues in New Orleans that paid homage to Civil War generals and white supremacy. Sympathetic to the request but also completely aware of the political implications, Mitch agreed only to investigate the matter.

The process between thinking about it and the removal of the statues mirrors the efforts necessary to approach a full and accurate understanding of racism in the United States. He researched the history from all sides. He looked humbly at his own history and beliefs. He tried to understand what those statues meant to people who were African American. Knowledge. Self-assessment. Empathy. Unlike most of us, Mitch received death threats for his efforts. Still, he persisted. He believed that his civic duty was worth the risk. I would like to think I could be as brave, but very grateful that I haven't been put to the test.

The book discussion group enthusiastically recommends this book (the audio version is great). If you don't have the time, here are a few informative links:

- A discussion on uniting the American South:

<https://politics.uchicago.edu/news/entry/mitch-landrieu-and-bakari-sellers-on-uniting-the-american-south>

- Here's Mitch's speech when he announced the removal of the statues: <https://youtu.be/csMbjG0-6Ak>
- And a long one from C-Span: <https://www.c-span.org/video/?442973-1/in-shadow-statues>



FROM THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Dorothy Engelman, Program VP

Program Updates!

Program planning has definitely become a challenge as we acclimate to a new "normal" resulting from COVID-19. Dates listed in the calendar are subject to change as are many things in our lives right now. Please take care of yourself and your loved ones.



The Suffrage Centennial Poster Contest has extended its deadline for students in Grades 7-12 to submit entries as many students were creating them in area schools, which are now closed. All information about the contest is on the **NEW!!!** [website](#). Urge your children and grandchildren to be creative and get involved; the first place prize is \$250! Other Centennial celebrations are being planned but still tentative due to the uncertainty of what will

be able to occur.

Plans *are* moving forward for the **Annual Meeting** at Eagle Eye Banquet Center with **Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson** on Wednesday, May 20. Details are being finalized and will be shared by email as soon as they are complete.



The Suffrage Centennial Celebration Committee will be hosting a silent auction at the meeting to raise money for upcoming activities. Please contact me at lwvla100years@gmail.com if you have items or services to be auctioned. We need volunteers to help decorate, set up the auction and check in; reach out to me if you'd like to get involved!

My apologies for the briefness of this update but it's difficult to look too far ahead given current circumstances. You'll get updates from the Program and Suffrage Centennial Celebration committees via Constant Contact, email, and on Facebook as activities solidify.

Ending on an upbeat: ...

These are links to some great websites and programs dealing with the celebration of the passage of the 19th Amendment and women's rights struggles. Check them out while you're socially isolating.

[Michigan Women Forward](#)

[National Women's History Museum](#)

[The movie: Iron Jawed Angels](#)

[Rise Up: Songs of the Women's Movement](#)

Dorothy Engelman

V. P. of Program Planning

LWVLA100years@gmail.com 435.879.1558

VOTER SERVICE REPORT
Marilyn Wilson, Voter Service Director



The Michigan Primary is over, and until the coronavirus threw us all for a loop, we were busy gearing up for voter registration drives in area high schools. I will be re-contacting high schools as soon as our lives get back to something approximating normalcy. At that point I'll send out requests for volunteers for any rescheduled schools or new schools on our list.

I am hopeful, of course, that concern about the virus will be history by the start of summer, when we hope to have

the following voter registration drives:

1. **June and July:** Voter registration activities in June/July for **MSU's New Student Orientation**.
2. **July and August:** VR drives in **8 CADL library branches in Ingham Co.** during July/August. Our goal is two 3-hour drives in each of the participating libraries.
3. **Summer:** Helping the **Lansing City Clerk's office** with VR drives around the city of Lansing over the summer months.
4. **Summer and Fall: Senior Living Facilities** around the tri-county area for updating voter info, providing help with absentee voter applications, etc.
5. **Fall:** Volunteers for the **Ingham County Jail** VR drive (with Ingham County Clerk)
6. **Summer/Fall: additional Voter Service opportunities**
 - **Media/publicity** for voter registration and getting out the vote
 - **Working with elementary classrooms** on voter education, September/October
 - **Voter Guide distribution** in October

Please contact Marilyn Wilson at wilsonmlwvla@gmail.com or wilsonm@msu.edu or 517-927-7164 if you have questions about volunteer opportunities or if you'd like to volunteer for any voter registration events or other voter service opportunities.

Please stay well—and stay tuned.

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND FIREARMS:
AN OVERVIEW OF EFFECTIVE PREVENTION LEGISLATION**
Marty Courteas
Gun Violence Prevention Committee

Laws that restrict domestic abusers' access to firearms save lives. The following is a summary covered in depth on <http://lawcenter.giffords.org>

When background checks are required and properly enforced, they can keep guns out of the hands of dangerous and irresponsible people. In the absence of the uniformity of effective federal legislation, it is the responsibility of the states to legislate for the public safety of its citizens.

Background Checks

A statistically effective approach to gun violence prevention ensures that guns are not sold to prohibited people by requiring a background check at every point of sale or transfer by licensed dealers or law enforcement. Fifteen states have passed this legislation. Michigan is NOT one of them.

Restrict Access to Guns by Domestic Violence Offenders (Misdemeanors)

This legislation would prohibit those found guilty of domestic violence misdemeanor crimes from buying guns and/or ammunition. HB 4497, introduced on April 24, 2019, would prohibit a person convicted of a misdemeanor domestic violence crime from possessing a firearm. It would also apply a gun ban to a person who is subject to a personal protection order. No action has followed. Thirty states and the District of Columbia have passed this legislation. Michigan is NOT one of them.

Extreme Risk Protection Order

This legislation is commonly referred to as "Red Flag" laws. These bills authorize the surrender of guns and/or ammunition of an individual deemed a danger to themselves or others. In Michigan, HB 4283 proposes that family members (current or former), partners, or law enforcement may petition the court to issue an extreme risk protection order. This bill was introduced on Feb. 28, 2019 and assigned to the Committee on the Judiciary. No action has followed.

Eighteen states and the District of Columbia permit law enforcement to remove firearms from individuals who may be a danger to themselves or others. Michigan is NOT one of them.

[READ MORE](#) on pending legislation.

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
Debby Starnes, Development Director

Anyone interested in helping contact local businesses for financial gifts to the League for our Centennial recognition project should contact Debby Starnes by email: deborahcstarnes@icloud.com Suggestions or ideas are always welcome. If you have a business, I would be interested in talking to you about sponsorship for our poster contest.

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
Judith Andre



The Education (K-12) Committee, after its February visit to a high-performing cyber school, will choose another to visit—after schools resume, presumably sometime in April or May. In the meantime we are educating ourselves on background issues and following proposed legislation in Lansing. (For instance: One bill under consideration in Lansing would require all Intermediate School Districts to have an elected school board.)

UPDATES FROM THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Ellen Link

Among the many activities undertaken by the Environment Committee is the monitoring of pertinent legislation. One bill that has come to our attention is House Bill 5423.

Everyone knows how Michigan's Bottle Deposit Law, passed in 1976, created funds that helped clean up our roadsides and much more. But did you know that recently introduced legislation—HB 5423—purporting to reform that bill would strip \$21 million from the funds allocated for cleaning up the more than 24,000 contaminated sites across Michigan?



Under current law, 75% of all unclaimed bottle deposits the state receives go directly to identifying and cleaning up contaminated sites. HB 5423 would cut that to just 40% and then further divide that with recycling, leaving *just 10% of unclaimed deposits for cleaning up contaminated sites*. The bill is opposed by the Michigan League of Conservation Voters, Sierra Club, Clean Water Action, and the Michigan Environmental Council (of which the LWVMI is a member).

House Bill 5306 and Senate Bill 701, on the other hand, would expand environmental protection by placing a deposit on water, juice and wine bottles. Given the explosion in bottled water consumption, co-sponsor Rep. Jon Hoadley claimed this would result in approximately 600 million more bottles being taken out of the waste stream. It has been argued, however, that the plastic recycling market could suffer from the decrease in materials, and that the best solution is to find a way to capture more of that waste. The bills were referred to the Committee on Regulatory Reform last December.

ONE THING

Help lower fossil fuel consumption (and possibly your bills) by using energy-hungry appliances like the clothes dryer and dishwasher during off-peak hours (early mornings and overnight) and not running several appliances simultaneously.

THE NEW LWVLA WEBSITE IS LIVE!

Please bookmark the [LWVLA website](#) and visit it often as this is where updated information about events, speakers, and opportunities will be posted. A mighty "Thank You" to Judy and Barry Culham for the numerous hours of tedious work they put into transferring information from the former site to the new one.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Sherry McCue - Lansing
Suzanne Robinson - Okemos
Linda Stephan - Williamston
Dottie West - Lansing

OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP MAKE DEMOCRACY WORK!

VOTER SERVICE: Contact Marilyn Wilson at wilsonmlwvla@gmail.com or 517-927-7164 if you'd like to volunteer for potential voter registration and education events during October.

K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE: 3rd Wednesday of the month, 5:30 p.m. at Grand Traverse Pie, East Lansing. Contact: Judy Andre judith.arlene59@gmail.com or Bettie Menchik menchikb@msu.edu.

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE: 3rd Saturday of the month, 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon, East Lansing Public Library. Contact: Marty Couretas couretam@comcast.net or Melinda Frame framem@msu.edu.

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE: 4th Tuesday of the month, 1:30 p.m., Meridian Township Community Room. (Okemos Road Fire Station) Contact Ellen Link elink767@gmail.com.

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

[Unsubscribe judyculham@yahoo.com](mailto:judyculham@yahoo.com)

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