

**EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE
CAPITOL
VOTER**

**AUGUST
2022**

IN THE AUGUST CAPITOL VOTER

- Ways We Can Help With Voter Turnout
- Voter Registration and Observer Opportunities
- LWVLA Welcomes New Development Director
- Observer Corps Findings
- Upcoming Book Discussion: *Gutsy Women*
- Beware of MSOS Ballot Proposal
- Gun Industry's Legal Shield Challenged
- Michigan's Non-Profit Green Bank
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LWVLA CALENDAR

August 26: The 102nd anniversary of passage of our country's 19th Amendment, guaranteeing women the right to vote.

Tuesday September 13, 10 am. Book Discussion Group: *The Book of Gutsy Women: Favorite Stories of Courage and Resilience* by Hillary Rodham Clinton and her daughter, Chelsea. See below for info and Zoom link.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



The ballot for November won't be certain until the end of August (possibly later for ballot proposals). The Democrat and Republican nominating conventions are held in the last third of August. It's possible for the ballot proposals to be approved by the Board of Canvassers at their August 19 meeting, however, the Secretary of State's office has until September 9 to approve the language that will go on the ballot.

What are we doing in the meantime? As much as we can, our League will be contacting local candidates for VOTE411 information. We may need to nudge people to actually send the information to us. [Joanne Winkelman](#) would love to hear that you would help with that effort!

Our pilot "Meet the Candidate" project to promote interest in county commissioner positions was successful! People did view the YouTube videos. VP for Observer Corps Val Lafferty is the lead in this effort. We are looking for members who would be willing to host a Zoom call with candidates in order to create a video for the public. Training and a script will be provided. Invitations to the candidates will be sent from Val. If you are interested in volunteering for this brand new effort to highlight local elections, contact [Val Lafferty](#).

It's such a joy to show up at the polls and have a member of the League as a poll worker. That happened to me during the August primary when Marie Wicks checked me in. The SOS office has a [great video](#) to tell you more about working the polls. As a bonus the video is narrated by Hannah Richardson, co-president of the Spartan LWV (and one of my favorite people).

There will be so much to do to ensure a good turnout for this November's election. We all joined because we know how important voting is. This is the time to help out. Let me know if you are interested in upping up your game for the next few months; here are just some of the things you might be able to do to help:

- Get organizations to invite the League to speak.
- Let a local friend in the media know that the League is happy to share information on voting.
- [Volunteer](#) to help Voter Service contact candidates for VOTE411.
- [Volunteer](#) to help with county commissioner Zoom interviews.
- Write postcards.
- Register voters.
- If schools are opening up, register students.
- [Let us know](#) about your talents that we might find helpful.
- Share FB posts.
- Donate to the League.

That's just a start. If we all do a little, we might also have time to enjoy such noble work. Oh, what a glorious task!

Together,

Donna

VOTER SERVICE UPDATES

Joanne Winkelman, Voter Service Director

League members love to register voters. Now's your chance—two sheets of opportunities!

The Lansing City Clerk's office created a [Google spreadsheet](#) that will allow anyone with the link to enter their name, phone and email for a shift at a wide variety of mostly outdoor events to register voters. This will allow everyone with this link to select their shifts and see what is available. There is a separate tab for September that has slots for LCC Voter Registration week. For LCC, volunteers can park in the City of Lansing ramp which is at Capitol and Shiawassee. You can pick up a free parking pass from the registration booth to get out.

If you have difficulty linking to the Google sheet, let [Joanne Winkelman](#) know. If you haven't registered in a long time, contact her to set up a "tutorial" over Zoom; it takes about 20 minutes. The Lansing City Clerk's office indicated that they have a 10x10 canopy tent for shade for any outdoor event.

Thanks to Board of Canvassers Observers!!

A HUGE thank you to all members who observed the Board of Canvassers' meetings in Eaton and Ingham Counties. The canvassing appears to have run smoothly in all three counties, and it was refreshing to see how the canvassers ensured that all votes were accounted for!

There were an unprecedented number of official write-in candidates in some jurisdictions which made the counting interesting. Many jurisdictions have also established absentee counting boards to facilitate the counting of absentee ballots on election day.

Need for More Observers after November Election

Leagues around the state will again be asked to observe all Board of Canvassers meetings after the November election. This is especially important to ensure that the counting is not disrupted or influenced in any way. The League provides nonpartisan observations and is the ears and eyes of the community to ensure our elections are free from interference.

Since this election will include top state and federal offices, we are anticipating a huge turnout of voters. Therefore, the canvassers' meetings may take the entire 14 days they have to finish their work. All this translates to having enough volunteers willing to be at the meetings to observe. Ingham always has a virtual option while Clinton and Eaton do not. Watch for sign-up notices closer to the November election. On-line training from the LWVMI will be required for new observers.

LWVLA WELCOMES NEW DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Welcome Delores!

We are pleased to announce that Delores May has agreed to be appointed to the position of Director of Development for our League. Delores has been a member of our League for over six years. She has a career in financial services and a history of volunteering in the community and being relentlessly friendly.



We appreciate the work that Kate Lein has done in this position and know she will continue supporting the League as she tends to new challenges. We look forward to having Delores on the board!

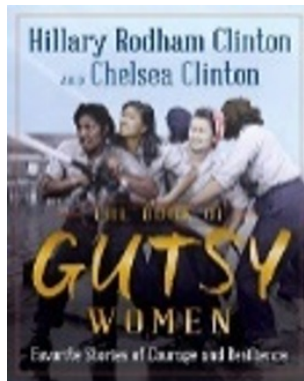
OBSERVER CORPS

Valerie Lafferty, Chair

As usual last month, cities and townships dealt with a variety of issues, from processing ballots for the primary to an inadequate septic system infrastructure support for our entire tri-county area. One city received an award for its outstanding affordable housing program, while a township is updating its five-year Environmental Sustainability Plan. Plus, there is continued tension and change in area school boards. Read all about it below in the reports from our intrepid observers. Share the news! Knowledge is power!

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

Donna Mullins



Our September Book Group will meet on Zoom Tuesday, September 13, 10 - 11:30 am. We're reading *The Book of Gutsy Women: Favorite Stories of Courage and Resilience* by Hillary Rodham Clinton and her daughter, Chelsea, who share the stories of the gutsy women who have inspired them—women with the courage to stand up to the status quo, ask hard questions, and get the job done. The audio version is read by them and feels very conversational. To participate in the discussion, contact [Donna](#) for the Zoom link.

BEWARE THE MICHIGAN STUDENT OPPORTUNITY SCHOLARSHIPS BALLOT PROPOSAL

Bettie Landauer-Menchik, Education Committee Chair

As most LWVLA members are probably aware, the Let MI Kids Learn group, backed by former U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, turned in more than 500,000 signatures to the state last Wednesday. The petition proposes a voucher-like school scholarship program which initiative organizers hope to put before the Republican-led legislature for approval this year. The two-part initiative would create a tax credit program for donors to a Student Opportunity Scholarship program that would help families pay for children's education, including private tuition and home-school materials.

A recent report (May 2022) by the Mackinac Center, “Michigan Student Opportunity Scholarships: Overview and Fiscal Analysis,” claims that the Michigan Student Opportunity Scholarship (MSOS) “neo-voucher” program has the potential to create fiscal benefits for the state of Michigan and its school districts. Contrary to what the petitions claim, there are few fiscal benefits for the state of Michigan and school districts. Christopher Saldaña of the University of Wisconsin-Madison found the report to be more misleading than useful, with poorly grounded assumptions and a narrow use of research.

States fund neo-voucher programs through tax-credited donations, which sets up a more complicated fiscal analysis that requires more assumptions than a conventional voucher policy. To inform its key assumptions about the factors influencing the fiscal impact of neo-voucher policies, the Mackinac report relies overwhelmingly on problematic reports and approaches produced by think tanks that regularly advocate for school choice.

Because of this, Professor Saldaña concludes, the report paints a misleadingly rosy picture of how the MSOS will impact the state’s finances and the finances of its school districts. On closer examination, the assumptions the analysis relies upon are flawed in several ways, rendering the report’s results, conclusions and broad policy recommendations useless for Michigan policymakers. Legislation creating the MSOS program was passed by the Michigan legislature in 2021 but was vetoed by the state’s governor.

It is vital for all LWV members to advocate against MSOS in the fall election. If you think charter schools have had a negative impact on public education in the state, the passage of MSOS will be worse.

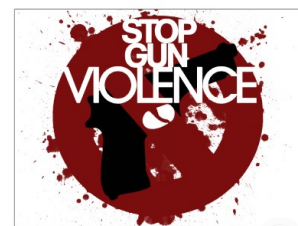
To become better informed on this issue, read the [review](#) by Christopher Saldaña, as well as the [Mackinac Center report](#) by Ben DeGrow and Martin Lueken. The [National Education Policy Center \(NEPC\)](#), a university research center housed at the University of Colorado Boulder School of Education, produces and disseminates high-quality, peer-reviewed research to inform education policy discussions.

THE GUN INDUSTRY’S LEGAL SHIELD CHALLENGED

Martha Couretas, Chair, Public Health & Safety Committee

There is a small glimmer of light as gun violence prevention advocates continue to move through barriers to prevent, not just react to, the deaths, injuries and trauma of firearm violence.

Your vote is your voice. Identify candidates at all levels of civic responsibility who will continue this work.



I met Sandy and Lonnie Phillips. It was a privilege to be in their company and hear their story. This couple lost their daughter in July 2012 in the Aurora, Colorado movie theater shooting. Twelve other families lost loved ones and 70 people were injured on that day.

This couple then traveled the country speaking about the pervasive presence of guns; they also sued the gun store owner who supplied the ammunition in Aurora. They never got a chance to prove their case in court. The [case was dismissed](#) and the judge held the couple responsible for \$200,000 in legal fees. The suit was dismissed because of federal immunity protection that shields gun companies from most lawsuits—the [Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act](#) (PLCAA).

The PLCAA has posed a barrier to most lawsuits against gun companies since 2005. It has withstood constitutional challenges and lawsuits from shooting victims. The [NRA referred to the bill](#) as “...the most significant piece of pro-gun legislation in 20 years.”

In a legal move against gun companies doing business within their borders, New York, Delaware, New Jersey and California have [passed laws](#) to require gun companies to impose “reasonable controls” on their distribution chains. These states referenced a narrow exception in PLCAA for lawsuits that allege violations of state laws surrounding the sale or marketing of firearms. This means that if a gun company advertises or distributes its products in a way prohibited by the legislature where it operates, it will be held legally liable. These laws directly regulate gun sales and marketing and provide grounds to sue gunmakers.

New York State successfully used its bill to sue gun wholesalers who transferred ghost gun kits to New York residents. Firearm law experts say the state statutes may generate transparency in an industry that has long conducted its business above the law.

MICHIGAN’S NON-PROFIT GREEN BANK: Low-Cost Financing for your Energy Efficiency Projects

Elaine Fischhoff, EAG Co-chair

With fall approaching, utility prices are climbing and flooding and extreme temperatures can become more intense and frequent. The need to stop adding greenhouse gases to our warming atmosphere by transitioning from fossil fuels to electricity is becoming ever more urgent.

Projects that will make your home more energy efficient and comfortable and that can lower your utility bills and reduce your greenhouse gas emissions cost money and time. The biggest contributors to carbon emissions for residential buildings are gas-fired furnaces, so replacing furnaces with heat pumps is the main goal of electrification, followed by substituting electric appliances, machines and tools. A Guide to Electrification can be found [here](#).

Fortunately, Michigan has established a program to make any electrification and other energy efficiency projects as easy and low-cost as possible. [Michigan Saves](#), the nation’s first nonprofit ‘green bank,’ offers both a list of competent contractors from all over the state to do the work reliably and efficiently as well the as low-cost and longer-terms financing to make it happen. Michigan Saves calls it “no-gimmick, no-gotcha” financing. Over 150 residential [improvements](#) are eligible.

Three steps make it happen.

1. First, pick your project and select a contractor from the [list of contractors](#) doing that work in your area who have demonstrated their competence and reliability, many of whom have been customer rated. For instance, 54 contractors offer energy audits in the Lansing area, 47 provide insulation services, and 51 offer heat pumps/mini-splits. Your selected contractor will give you an estimate on qualifying energy improvements for your home and a MI Saves ID number.
2. Second, apply for financing. The Michigan Saves website offers an [application](#) that you can complete online or by phone call. You need your contractor's ID number, the type of improvement--there are extra funding sources for [lead paint abatement](#)--your county, and personal and employment information.
3. Third, you pick from a list of [participating financial institutions](#) and their loan rates depending on the size of your loan (from \$1,000 to \$100,000), then add that information to complete the application. A pop-up screen uses the loan amount, term and interest rate to calculate your [estimated monthly payment](#). However, creditworthiness determines the actual rates, terms and amounts.

You can read about the experiences of other homeowners, businesses, churches, and nonprofit institutions who have used MI Saves. It also offers a comparable program for commercial buildings.

ONE THING



Vacuum your refrigerator coils once or twice (if you have pets) a year. According to [Bob Vila](#), "Dirty coils force a fridge to work harder keeping food cold, resulting in higher energy costs and a reduced lifespan for the pricey appliance."

LWVLA OBSERVER CORPS REPORTS July 2022

Clinton County Board of Commissioners - This meeting was only about a half hour-long with the usual agenda items. However, there were two issues that may be of general interest. There were eleven communications received from other counties in Michigan opposing a set of bills in the Mich. House of Representatives (HB7029-7032) that would require county treasurers to provide realty data to anyone requesting that data, at a nominal cost. County treasurers are currently providing such data to companies like Zillow but are charging fees that provide a net income to the counties. The Clinton County Board passed a resolution at this meeting opposing HB4730.

The second issue came up during a motion to approve a zoning change. A resident who operates a septic pumping service requested a special use permit to construct a septic receiving facility. (Such a facility separates solids from liquid septic waste and disposes of them appropriately.) There are currently no such facilities in Clinton County. He explained that he currently has to deliver the septic waste that he collects to a facility in Lansing that he believes will be ceasing operations. His alternative would be to truck the waste to the next closest facility, in Clare, MI, at a substantial increase in cost that would have to be

passed on to his customers. He has reported that the cost of constructing such a facility has more than doubled in the last year and he was not sure that he could now afford to do it. He appeared in person to ask the board if they knew of any grants or other sources of funding that he could apply for. This seems to me to indicate a problem with the septic disposal system that may be exacerbated if the State of Michigan passes legislation to require more frequent inspection and enforcement of septic system integrity.

East Lansing City Council - The City of East Lansing received the Housing Partner of the Year Award for 2022 from Capital Area Housing Partnership (CAHP), a nonprofit organization with a mission to develop strong, diverse neighborhoods with a focus on affordable housing, home ownership and financial security.

A public hearing was held on land use on Lake Lansing Road, removing the old Spartan Hall of Fame to bring in new development (a restaurant and medical offices). A second hearing involved moving money between different programs to meet community needs. Also discussed was whether to place a question before the voters to allow alcohol at community-sponsored events but they decided not to pursue that at this time. The atmosphere appeared cooperative and open to discussion. I attended virtually.

Meridian Township Board of Trustees - During a discussion of fireworks, Meridian Township debated the state's position on local vs. state control. Meridian recognizes that the state is not consistent on issues of local control, allowing it at some times and not others (Airbnb was a big issue in the past). Perhaps other communities may have similar frustrations—it may be time to unite. Clerk Guthrie gave an update on the Aug. 2 election. There was difficulty finding Democratic and Republican inspectors. Clerk Byrum does not like the E-poll book, which is a statewide issue and will be addressed as such. There is also an issue with spoiled ballots on voting day. A specific procedure must be followed. There were also some issues with absentee ballot signatures. For example, some couples mixed up their signatures so the office had to call and get them fixed. For voters who turned in their ballot the day before or day of the election, the office was unable to contact the voters with signature problems.

Meridian Township Environmental Commission – A Meridian-based regional group (currently called Food to Composting) has started a gleaning program at the Meridian Farmers Market. Vendors donate perishable produce at the end of the market on Saturdays and Wednesdays. Over the most recent week, 630 pounds of produce were gleaned and delivered to grateful food kitchens and food pantries in Lansing. There have been five Solarize Meridian Workshops hosted by residents with one more scheduled for the fall. Almost 100 participants have attended presentations, and several have installed or will be installing solar systems this year. Meridian is collecting food scraps at the Transfer Station on Lake Lansing and the Meridian Farmers Market. The scraps are picked up by My Green Michigan and composted at Hammond Farms in Holt. The five-year update of Meridian's Sustainability Plan is almost complete.

Williamstown Township Board of Trustees - Clerk Cleveland reported that 67% of votes in the August primary were by absentee ballot. They discussed the need for a second tabulator to process absentee ballots for the November election and where it might come from. A new version of the tabulator isn't available for purchase until after the new year, so they will probably borrow one from Lansing. Well run meeting with good discussion.

Grand Ledge School Board - The staff is currently reviewing NEOLA (Northeast Ohio Language Alliance) Policy Implementation Updates. These are standardized policies for public schools. NEOLA offers a service to assure excellence in public schools. The organization worked with the Michigan Association of School Boards. This standardized policy design was adopted by GL Schools in 2021 and is currently being reviewed by staff to understand the policies and compare them with the existing policies. This format and its support by NEOLA is a service to facilitate developing and updating policies in conjunction with the Michigan Association of School Boards. There was only one public comment but the individual did not speak into the microphone so we could not understand what she was saying. The staff did provide answers to some of her questions at the end of the meeting. The staff will share their work when ready for public review.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Camilla Davis, Membership Director

Welcome back, renewing member Ginger Ogilvie (East Lansing)

Welcome new member Sheila Kelly (Lansing)

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 Menchik](#).

PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE: Contact [Martha Couretas](#) or [Melinda Frame](#).

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

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

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