

**EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE
CAPITOL
VOTER**

**JANUARY
2025**

IN THE JANUARY CAPITOL VOTER

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LWVLA CALENDAR

Friday, January 31 – Membership Luncheon. 11:30 am to 1 pm. “MSUvote: Engaging Students in the Electoral Process”, with speakers Renee Brown and Suchitra Webster. MSUFCU-Mt. Hope & Farm Lane. [Register here.](#)

Tuesday, February 18 -- Membership Luncheon. 11:30 am to 1 pm. “LWV Policies,” with speaker Judy Karandjeff. MSUFCU-Mt. Hope & Farm Lane. Registration link to come.

Thursday, February 20 – Book Discussion Group. Contact [Donna Mullins](#) for information.

Tuesday, February 25 – EAG webinar. 7 pm to 8:30 pm. “Go Green to Get Green,” on green investing, with speakers Tom Stanton and Henry Shilling. Registration link to come.

See articles below for more information.

From our partners' calendars:

Thursday, January 30-- LWVMI Environmental Network webinar. 7 pm. “Building Bipartisan Support for Climate Action,” with speaker Linda Racine of Citizens Climate Lobby. An educational presentation focusing on practical ways to build bipartisanship in partisan times. Register for Zoom link [here](#); contact [Sandy Sorini Elser](#) for more information.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kathy Ruby Petroni



I am writing this message on Inauguration Day, a day of taking oaths. The National LWV suggests that because the new administration is likely to bring unprecedented challenges to our democracy, there could be no better time to pledge our own [oath to protect and preserve democracy](#). Accordingly, I hope you will pledge, along with me, to continue to support the LWVUS, LWVMI and LWV Lansing Area, and our mission at this very critical time in the history of our country. Institutions that serve to protect our democracy need to step up to the challenges we face.

An important example of efforts that the LWV undertakes to protect our democracy can be seen in North Carolina (NC). On January 1, 2025, the LWVNC had an [amicus brief](#) filed on its behalf by Protect Democracy, in response to what appear to be baseless legal claims made to undermine the voters and overturn State Supreme Court election results in NC. It is threats like this that I find incredibly troubling while also making me proud of my association with the LWV and our role in the resistance.

Our Lansing Area League, under the leadership of Lisa Moore and Donna Mullins, is focused on revitalizing our informative programming offerings for our members in 2025. To kick off the year, on January 15 we offered a Zoom webinar titled “Understanding Radicalization.” We had over 30 attendees who learned the basics of effectively recognizing and addressing issues of radicalization and extremism, both of which threaten our democracy. We hope to offer more opportunities for learning about how to effectively protect our democracy.

We will be holding our first membership luncheon of the year on January 31, which will focus on MSUvote. I hope you will join us. I look forward to us all coming together as a community. Details follow in the Program Committee Report.

Starting February 1, 2025, membership transactions (e.g., joining and renewing), which

have historically been handled locally, will occur via a system controlled at the national level. Our Director of Membership, Camilla Davis, has been working towards making it a smooth transition. To that end, she is offering a webinar on Wednesday, February 5 at 7 pm for members to learn about the new system. Details follow in Camilla's Membership Report.

We are also beginning to plan for our annual meeting, which will be held in May at the Eagle Eye Golf and Banquet Center in East Lansing. Stay tuned for details.



Democracy must win,
Kathy

Here is to finding peace with the things you love.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE UPDATES

Lisa Moore, Co-chair

January welcomes the beginning of our 2025 event programming. We are planning monthly evening and luncheon events throughout the year.

This month many members participated in a Zoom training on “Understanding Radicalization.” The training was provided by the Community Advisory Resource & Education Center (CARE), which is a part of American University’s Polarization & Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL), in collaboration with the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). Participants were given a baseline of knowledge to more effectively recognize and address issues of radicalization and extremism. At the end, many asked to learn more about this timely subject. The good news is that this national organization will be providing more information on this subject throughout the year. Weather permitting, further training will be in person!



On January 31 we will have a Membership Luncheon to learn more about **“[MSUvote](#) and the 2024 Election”** from speakers Renee Brown and Suchitra Webster. Members are always welcome to bring a guest. Registration is required (it helps us to know the number expected). When you register you may order lunch from Sultan’s Express—we must place our order by Jan. 29—

but you are also welcome to bring your own lunch or just enjoy a complimentary beverage. [Register](#) now to hear from our great partners at MSU.

Every two years prior to our state convention the LWVMI Board reviews state positions and determines whether existing positions need revision or new studies are needed to facilitate our advocacy needs. Local Leagues are invited to review state positions prior to convention time. Our February luncheon will feature LWVMI Vice President of Advocacy Judy Karandjeff (a member of our chapter) to talk about current League positions. Members will learn more about the great work of our League and will have the opportunity

to provide input on our positions. Registration information will be coming soon for this February 18 luncheon.

Also in February, the Environmental Advocacy Group will be hosting an educational forum on Green Investing. Read more about the subject in their Voter article.

We're excited about the luncheons and educational forums that we are planning and hope you will be, too. If you have ideas for future events, please let [Lisa Moore](#) know.

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

Donna Mullins

The discussion of Robert Penn Warren's *All the King's Men* was far reaching. If you haven't read this Pulitzer Prize-winning book, now is a great time. Inspired by (but not about) Louisiana Governor (1928-32) Huey Long, it's full of poetic narrative (Warren was our Poet Laureate). Great art begs for alternative interpretation, and this book fills that definition perfectly. I gained a deeper understanding of the way we humans awkwardly stumble in our efforts to find meaning in life. It's been a while since I've been so deeply affected by a book.

In February we will be discussing Hillary Clinton's *Something Lost, Something Gained: Reflections on Life, Love, and Liberty*. It was published before the election, so the Foreword of the book might choke you up a bit. The first chapter on how she used her considerable network to help desperate women escape the Taliban when Afghanistan fell is edge-of-the-seat exciting and inspiring.



In March we'll read *Etty Hillesum: A Life Transformed* by Patrick Woodhouse. A friend of mine from the Netherlands sent me her diary, written during World War II. This book is a short history which will introduce you to this fully human life. I have several copies of the book that I can share with people.

We are going to try to provide hybrid book group meetings. This will meet the needs of those who can only attend virtually, as well as the desire of others to meet in person. All are welcome. To be added to the book group mail list, contact [Donna Mullins](#).

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Camilla Davis, Membership Director

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Chris Hogan Brynn, Okemos

Jill Canny, East Lansing

Kelly Nevison, DeWitt

Chris VanDeKerkhove, Lansing

Jeffery Winchester, East Lansing

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL CHANGES ARE COMING IN 2025

On February 1, 2025, how League members renew their membership will change to using ChapterSpot, a new system for paying dues and updating members' information. The transition to ChapterSpot is being implemented by LWVUS to streamline the membership system nationwide.

What do members need to do?

- In early February 2025, members will receive an email from ChapterSpot. They will be asked to log in to ChapterSpot to connect their membership to the new system.
- Members will enter their email address and receive a code. When the code is entered, they will be logged in; no password will be needed.
- Members will receive notification from ChapterSpot when it is time to renew for 2026.
- LWVLA members who have renewed for 2025 have October 31 as their renewal date. (October 31 is the renewal date listed in the current LWVLA bylaws.) New members' join date will be their renewal date.

More questions? Click on this link to find [NEW MEMBERSHIP SYSTEM FAQs](#). Join LWVLA's online seminar on the new membership system on Wednesday, February 5 at 7 pm. There will be a brief presentation about ChapterSpot basics, followed by time for questions. Here's the [link](#) to the Zoom.

MARGARET ROCKWELL: IN MEMORIUM

Margaret Rockwell, a longtime League of Women Voters member, passed away on November 30, 2024, at the age of 98. Margaret became a member of LWV – Lansing Area in 2007, having previously served as a local League newsletter editor and president in other Leagues. Read more about Margaret's life, including details about a February 15 celebration of her life, on [MLive obituaries](#).

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Bettie Landauer-Menchik, Chair

The Education Committee invites interested members to join us in our discussion of the privatization of education. We started our discussion with *The Privateers: How Billionaires Created a Culture War and Sold School Vouchers* by Professor Josh Cowen of MSU. But we realized that the issue of privatizing education is much broader than vouchers. About 15 states already have some form of privatization, including tax credits, education savings accounts that can only be used for private schools, and vouchers.

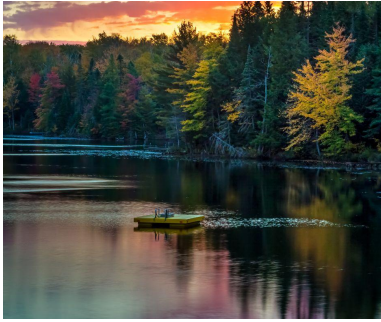
In his statement announcing his choice to lead the U.S. Department of Education, President-elect Trump said, "Linda (McMahon) will fight tirelessly to expand 'Choice' to every state in America." It is highly likely the incoming Secretary will prioritize voucher programs. Vouchers and other choice options direct public funds to parents to spend on homeschooling, online classes or at private and religious schools.

We have started looking at what other state LWVs have in their education policy statements that allow them to lobby on privatization. We are considering submitting a request for study to the state LWV. We welcome new members to help us out.

Contact Bettie Menchik at menchikb@msu.edu or 517.402.3903 to be a part of the discussion.

INVESTING IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Ellen Link, EAG Co-chair



I have a bumper sticker on my car that reads, “Every time you spend money, you’re casting a vote for the world you want” (Anna Lappe). In other words, whether you think about it or not, the money you spend on food, cell phones, clothing, hardware and countless other things can end up supporting people and practices that may or may not be what you would otherwise want to succeed. This is especially true for the long-term savings you have

invested in stocks, mutual funds and other financial engines that you want to grow and support you as you get older.

According to the [U.S. League of Women Voters](#), “The preservation of the physical, chemical, and biological integrity of the earth’s ecosystem is essential for the maximum protection of public health and the environment.” However, our economic system has evolved to include many large, faceless corporations and companies with billionaire owners and/or stockholders whose only objective is to make money, ignoring threats to the planet we depend on. How they make money and what they choose to do with it is not apparent to the consumer who buys their products or invests in them—unless they think to look behind the curtain.

How would you feel about finding out that the company from which you buy your house insurance invests your dollars in fossil fuels? How about the fast-food drive-thru that makes no attempts to reduce their waste or source their food products from sustainable and/or humane producers? Would you care whether the cell phone or chocolate you buy is made using child or forced labor, your clothing from underpaid factory workers? Did you know that beef, palm oil and cocoa production often result in massive deforestation?

The point is, you usually have a choice. And just as you need to know something about the candidates before you cast your votes, so too should you know something about the products you buy and the services you choose. Why use a huge, profit-driven private bank for your finances when there are credit unions, not-for-profit cooperatives owned by their members and created to serve *them*? Or better yet, a local [Community Development Financial Institution \(CDFI\)](#) that is *committed* to significantly investing in the local community?

If all you care about is profit, then you won’t mind whether that stock or mutual fund invests your dollars in armaments, fossil fuels and other harmful products and practices. But if you do care, you might want to put those investments in funds that exclude the bad

stuff and instead work for the betterment of our society and planet.

Money makes the world go 'round, and if everyone realized that they were voting with their wallets we could end up with a new and improved Earth 2.0. That's why the Environmental Advocacy Group will be hosting a program on "green" investing on February 25. Stay tuned for details. We think you'll learn a lot and be glad you did.

ONE THING

Don't let these scary times defeat you—help is on the way! Let [Reasons to be Cheerful](#), a nonprofit online magazine, restore your hope for the future. “Part magazine, part therapy session, part blueprint for a better world,” it's definitely “tonic for tumultuous times.”

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](#)

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