

**EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE
CAPITOL
VOTER**

**MARCH
2024**

IN THE MARCH CAPITOL VOTER

- **President:** Celebrating Amid Challenges
- **Voter Services:** Out and About With the League
- **Three Upcoming Book Discussions**
- **Schuler Books Giving Support to the League**
- **Membership:** Invite Friends to Our Annual Meeting
- **Education:** Discussions on Priorities for the Year
- **Let's Stop Planting Invasive Plants**
- **One Thing:** Avoid 'Neonics' When Buying Plants

LWVLA CALENDAR

Thursday, March 21, Book Discussion Group, *Poverty by America* by Matthew Desmond, 10 am via Zoom.

Tuesday, March 26, League Basics for New Members (see below), 7 to 8 pm via Zoom.

Thursday, April 18, Book Discussion Group, *Raisin Bran and Other Cereal Wars: 30 Years of Lobbying for the Most Famous Tiger in the World*, in person with the author at 10 am at the MSUFCU on Mount Hope.

Tuesday, April 23, LWVLA Annual Meeting, 5:30 to 8:30 pm at Eagle Eye Banquet Center.

April 29 to May 5, Schuler Book Days

See articles below for more information.

From our partners' calendars:

Thursday, March 21, "Water Justice," 7 to 8:30 pm, hosted by [GLUNA](#) via Zoom. Commemorates UN World Water Day by exploring water's role in peace and justice with leading experts.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Donna Mullins

We have two events coming up, one that is challenging, the other is in every way celebratory. Let's start and end with celebratory. Our annual meeting is April 23 at the always wonderful Eagle Eye Banquet Center. Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson is our featured speaker. Our state is known internationally for policies that ensure safe and secure elections while they work to include as many eligible voters as possible. That's what the League works toward, and that's what Secretary Benson has implemented (with help from us!). She's a compelling speaker. I'm delighted that my last annual meeting as president will be punctuated by her presence. Register [here](#).



Our League, along with the Peace Education Center, is sponsoring a criminal justice-themed program sometime in the future. (Our original event was cancelled because of a scheduling error. Not our mistake but we are not immune to them.) We will be showing "[Beyond Bars](#)," which illustrates the impact of incarceration on families by using the experience of former progressive San Francisco District Attorney Chesa Boudin. It will include a panel of experts on criminal justice reform, hopefully including former Ingham County Prosecutor Carol Siemon.

Making the decision to show the movie was a difficult decision for me, even though I am committed to justice reform. (After having done case work with teenage delinquents, I know a bit about the system.) My problem was that Boudin's parents were imprisoned for crimes they definitely committed which ended up with people being murdered. I was afraid that, by using this example to make the point, it would appear that *any* part of me thought the crime was in *any* way acceptable. That concern definitely opened up an intellectual can of worms.

And it's the self-questioning that the movie compelled me to do that was the tipping point. Our society at its best is compassionate, but when the right buttons are pushed our motivation changes to anything but compassion. Our society reflects the people who

inhabit it. (While I know this, I hesitate to admit it to myself.) When we are generous, we are sometimes wary of being taken advantage of. When we have hope for transformation, we hold that back a little just to be safe.

A movie that causes any one of us to question the strength of our values is a worthwhile movie. If that reflection moves us closer to living up to our values then, as tired as I am of that never ending trek, it's a good thing. My own conclusion is that it is possible to hold people responsible for their behavior in a manner that reduces collateral damage, but that it necessitates thought.

And that brings us back to celebration. One of my favorite things about most League members is that they want to create a "more perfect" democracy. Our members so love this country that they want it to live up to its promise. When democracy is on the line we are there to fight for it. We look at ourselves the same way, always trying to see if our behavior aligns with our values. That's one reason why I am a member. And that's something to celebrate. Let's cheer

Together,
Donna

VOTER SERVICES NEWS

Joanne Winkelman, V.P. Voter Service

The League has been (and will continue to be) out and about....

Board of Canvassers

The following members of the League volunteered to view the Ingham County Board of Canvassers' meetings for the primary election: Charlene Vanacker, Kathy Matteo, Judy Karandjeff, Mary Pollock, Kathy Crooks and Trudy Bower. We will need many more volunteers for the August and November elections. No one volunteered for Eaton or Clinton this time around, but we will want to cover those locations this fall.

Voting Laws

Presentations on the new voting laws continue. Judy Andre, Kathy Lovell and Jacqueline Stewart presented in February and Jacqueline again in March. ***A huge thank you to all volunteers!***

Lansing City Charter Commission

On Saturday, March 2, Donna Mullins and I presented at the Allen Neighborhood Center on the Lansing City Charter. The PowerPoint examined the contents of the city charter so residents are aware of areas that may be up for suggested changes. There are 36 candidates running for nine seats on the council. It is too great a number to have a candidates' forum, but they were all asked two questions for Vote411.org and the answers will go live the end of March, when the absentee ballots become available. WLXZ videotaped us and Donna was interviewed. See our [Facebook](#) page for the link.

Other Activities

We have been working with [Nation Outside](#) to set up presentations/discussions with the

formerly incarcerated. As I get confirmations on dates and places, I will be asking for volunteers to assist in registering and presenting on the new voting laws.

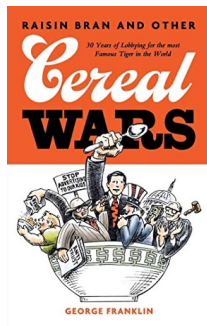
T-Shirts

The new LWVLA T-Shirts ([details here](#)) are in my basement! For \$25 you can own your very own! Just let me know if you want one or many and we can make arrangements for pickup. They will also be available at the Annual Meeting on April 23.

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP IS OPEN TO ALL!

Donna Mullins

We'll be discussing Matthew Desmond's *Poverty by America* on Thursday, March 21 at 10 a.m. via Zoom. This book asserts that the cause of poverty in America is rooted in structure and systems, and the author presents data to support his position; it's very readable. Find out more [here](#). Join the Zoom meeting at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82669221944>.



On April 18 our Book Discussion Group is inviting any members who can make it to a discussion of *Raisin Bran and Other Cereal Wars: 30 Years of Lobbying for the Most Famous Tiger in the World* by George Franklin. The author will join us to talk about what it was like to be a corporate lobbyist, and we're thrilled that we may learn more about lobbying. In addition, Mr. Franklin has become very interested in homelessness since [discovering that his sister had been homeless](#), so he will likely want to talk about that issue as well. Mr. Franklin is flying in as a favor to Book Group member Linda Burnham. If you are not a "regular" to the book group, you may want to spend some time with this very good man.

We will meet in person at the MSUFCU on Mount Hope on the regularly scheduled date and time, April 18 at 10 a.m. There will be bagels and muffins to nosh on. Come one. Come all.

In May, we'll discuss *The Mutual Admiration Society: How Dorothy L. Sayers and her Oxford Circle Remade the World for Women* (a title that rolls off the tongue) by Mo Moulton. It's described as "a celebration of feminism and female friendship."

FYI: We meet on the 3rd Thursday of the month from 10-11:30 am. If you would like to be added to the group or just attend one of the discussions, contact [Donna Mullins](#).

GOOD READS FROM SCHULER'S SUPPORT LWVLA

You can support the LWVLA this spring when you buy reading materials for yourself or others at Schuler Books in the Meridian Mall! From April 29 to May 5, Schuler Books will donate 20% of your purchase to the League. Just inform the cashier to credit the LWVLA when checking out; for online orders, mark LWVLA. Whether you're buying for yourself, or someone else, a well chosen book (or two or three!) is always appreciated.

Do it for yourself. Do it for that special mom for Mothers' Day. Do it for birthday gifts, or to donate to a library or school. Because when you do any of those, you're also doing it for the League!

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Camilla Davis, Membership Chair

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Lori Simon, Lansing
Merri Anne Stowe, East Lansing

BRING A FRIEND TO LWVLA'S ANNUAL MEETING

LWVLA's Annual Meeting is April 23, and it is a wonderful opportunity to invite friends and family to join you for an interesting evening. We will have Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson as our featured speaker. Plus, this is a chance for everyone, both members and guests, to learn more about how the League works and to hear about its mission to empower voters and defend democracy. We are hoping that guests will be interested in joining the League to help with its mission. Watch your email for information about how to make reservations. Questions about membership? Contact [Camilla](#).



NEW MEMBERS ZOOM, TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 7 to 8 pm

LWVLA members who have joined the League since the 2022 November elections have been invited to a Zoom meeting on Tuesday, March 26 from 7 to 8 pm. It's designed to cover League basics and how the League offers voter education and encourages participation while maintaining its non-partisan position. We will also talk about what happens at the League's Annual Meeting and why it is important to participate. Newer members will receive meeting information via email, but all members are welcome to join. Again, if you would like more information, contact [Camilla](#).

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Bettie Landauer-Menchik, Chair

The Education Committee met with Rep. Jaime Churches, the Majority Vice Chair of the Michigan House of Representatives, to discuss the priorities for education for the current legislative session.

Rep. Churches spoke about increasing mental health services not only for children but also for parents and teachers, especially in rural areas where fewer services are available. She believes emotional help for families and communities will help address violence and learning gaps in schools. Rep. Churches supports the governor's initiative to continue providing breakfasts and lunches for all children. She also spoke about the necessity of programs to help districts retain teachers, citing high housing costs in many areas. As a woman, she addressed the unique problem women have serving in the legislature. One idea was to allow legislators to use campaign funds for childcare costs. When asked about

mandating registration for home schooled children, she cited how this has been blocked in previous sessions. If it's brought up again, it might revive the issue of school vouchers, which she is opposed to discussing. We appreciated the time Representative Churches made for the committee.

Bettie and Jacqueline will be meeting in April with the Lansing School District to discuss tutoring plans for next year. Jacqueline has already been working with the math aide at Averill Elementary and groups of students. We would welcome more volunteers—if you are interested, contact [Bettie](#).

LET'S STOP PLANTING INVASIVE PLANTS

Betty Seagull, EAG Member



Tens of millions of taxpayer dollars and countless volunteer hours are spent every year removing invasive plants from our public parks and natural areas. It's an unending task. Invasive species are those which 1) are non-native to the ecosystem under consideration, and 2) cause harm or are likely to cause harm to the economy, the environment and/or human health. *(Photo: Japanese barberry, invasive and commonly planted, speeds increase of ticks in woodlands by offering shelter to mice carrying the ticks.)*

Some invasive plants are introduced accidentally, but many are introduced through the nursery trade! According to a [recent study](#), unwitting gardeners are helping to increase the spread of invasive species by what they buy and bring home from local nurseries. Climate change is also playing a role, as a warming climate is changing growing zones. Regulations have been slow to ban the sale of invasive plants due to strong lobbying by the horticulture industry. Most Michigan residents are unaware that such common plants as burning bush, privet, Japanese barberry, Norway maple and Bradford/Callery pear, for example, are invasive. Developers like to install these and other trees and shrubs not locally native because they are inexpensive and easy to grow, and then people get used to seeing them and think they are local plants.

I often hear people say, "But it's not invasive in my yard." Yes, the problem isn't in suburban yards, the problem is in natural areas. Plants are the basis of the food web. Plants convert solar energy into food; every other creature survives by eating 1) plants, 2) another creature that ate a plant, or 3) both. Insects are the main energy transfer point between plants and the rest of the animal kingdom, but insects can only eat the plants they have co-evolved with. Native plants support native insects, and together they support all other life forms in the terrestrial food web. When invasive plants spread into our natural areas, they cause harm by outcompeting native plants for water, light, nutrients and space, thus starving insects and the birds and animals that depend upon them. (Some of them also cause other kinds of harm.)

When the bathtub is overflowing, doesn't it make more sense to turn off the tap than to keep mopping up the floor? We can start at the local level by asking our cities, townships and counties to adopt the following resolutions:

1. To stop purchasing and installing invasive plants on government-owned land.

2. To remove invasive plants on government-owned land and replace them with locally native plants.
3. To encourage developers and homeowners to refrain from adding invasive plants to private spaces in the local entity, instead choosing plants that are locally native.

It is not reasonable to expect each government entity to research which plants are invasive. Instead, they—and you--can refer to the [Midwest Invasive Plant List](#), which is periodically updated by experts.

ONE THING

Along with forgoing exotic, i.e., non-native plants for natives, try to buy your garden plants from stores and companies that do not use neonicotinoids from the get-go. (You'll have to ask, as most do not post this information.) Also called "neonics," these chemicals—[the most widely used class of insecticides in the world](#)—are extremely harmful to pollinators, beneficial insects and aquatic invertebrates, hence their being banned in Europe.

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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