

**EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE
CAPITOL
VOTER**

**AUGUST
2024**

IN THE AUGUST CAPITOL VOTER

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- Introducing Our New Director of Development
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LWVLA CALENDAR

August Book Discussion postponed. There's still time to get in on the discussion about this month's book written by Michigan's own Barbara McQuade, *Attack from Within: How Disinformation is Sabotaging America*. See the article below for more information.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kathy Ruby Petroni

Much has happened since our last issue of the Capitol Voter. Most notably, on July 21, 2024, President Biden announced he



would not run for reelection. Soon after that it became apparent that Kamala Harris and Tim Walz would be at the top of the Democratic ticket, with Donald Trump and J.D. Vance at the top of the Republican ticket. On August 6, we had a primary election. The upcoming November 5 election is now foremost on our minds. The Lansing Area League is focused on working to provide nonpartisan and accurate information in advance of the election, to help get out the vote, and to help ensure the voting process is smooth and fair.

To this end, much of our efforts have been on three initiatives. First, under our Director of Voter Services Joanne Winkleman's leadership, we are putting together the 2024 Nonpartisan Lansing Area Voter Guide, which is a herculean task. There have been some very generous donations to help cover the cost of the production and printing. Donors include The Michigan Civic Education Fund; Marilyn and Dale Fitschen; Peckham Industries; and John and Martha Couretas. We expect the Guide to come out at the end of September as an insert of the *City Pulse* and as a stand-alone document that we will distribute, along with the LWV of Michigan Voter Guide, across the tri-county area.

Second, we held a postcard-writing party where over 30 member volunteers hand-wrote over 800 postcards reminding voters to either vote on November 5 or to use an early voting site. The recipients are first-time women voters in the Lansing area. We provided specific details about the early voting locations, dates, and times. We anticipate sending out 1,000 postcards just prior to early voting. The cost of the postcards is covered by a grant from the LWV of Michigan.

Third, some members were trained and made some observations of the Board of Canvassers (BOC) as the boards worked to certify the results of the August 6 primary. This was good practice in anticipation of observing BOCs after the November elections. I personally observed a meeting of the Clinton County BOC and was very impressed with their diligence and bipartisan work towards providing a completed certification. Observing the BOC is a great way to learn more about how our elections work in Michigan. If you are interested in learning about how one observes a Board of Canvassers for the November election, please reach out to [Joanne](#).

Looking forward, we will continue to work on completing the Voter Guide and getting it distributed. Please look for it at the end of September. We will also be taking advantage of any opportunities that we have to get out into the community to provide voters with information on where and when to vote as well as nonpartisan information to help them make informed voting decisions. If you are interested in helping us in any of these endeavors, please watch for any emails from us via Constant Contact informing you of volunteer opportunities. It is "all hands on deck" through the November election and certification.

Let's get out the vote,
Kathy

Dorothy Engleman was elected to the board as Development Director at the August LWVLA Board meeting. Dorothy joined the LWVLA in 2019 when she moved back to Michigan from Utah, where she ran for the Utah House of Representatives and the Utah Senate. She has been an active LWVLA member, serving as Program Chair and on the Nomination Committee.



Dorothy is a retired high school teacher, and more recently worked in domestic violence and hospice; she is currently employed part-time at Estes-Leadley Funeral Homes. Dorothy lived aboard a 44-ft. motorsailer for seven years on the West Coast. Among her main interests are travel and art—she teaches Zentangle art classes and exhibits her art locally. We know she'll be a great asset to the board.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Camilla Davis, Membership Chair

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Laura Braun, Ovid

Margaret Keeler, Dimondale

Krishnakali Majumdar, East Lansing

Sheila Myron, East Lansing

Corbin Skarich, Owosso

Leslie Watson, Grand Ledge

IT'S ALMOST MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!

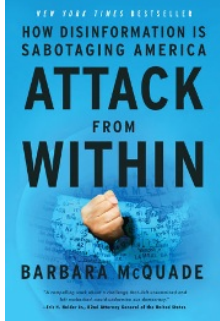
If you joined the League of Women Voters **before February 1, 2024**, it's almost time to renew your membership. You will be receiving information about how to renew by September 3. This year, as an incentive to act promptly, members who renew before October 1 will have their names placed in a drawing for a chance to receive a refund of the cost of one Primary Membership. This is a \$65 value! So watch your email for the communication from LWVLA with renewal details.

If you have any questions, including asking about your join date, please email Camilla at cdavis.lwvmi@gmail.com. (Members who joined after February 1, 2024 will not receive renewal information.)

BOOK CLUB NEWS

Donna Mullins

At our July meeting we discussed Heather Cox Richardson's book, *Democracy Awakening: Notes on the State of America*. August's book is from Michigan's own Barbara McQuade, *Attack from Within: How Disinformation is Sabotaging America*. This issue is increasingly



important with the recent improvements in artificial intelligence. The book delves into the history of disinformation being used by authoritarians, with explanations of tactics and why our country is more vulnerable to it, and suggests some solutions.

Due to some scheduling issues our meeting date is yet to be determined. If you want to make sure you're aware of the date we meet, contact [Donna Mullins](#). We always send out links to videos and podcasts with the author to enable the very busy to participate in the discussion even if they haven't read the book. [Here's](#) the author speaking at the Commonwealth Club of California!

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

[Bettie Landauer-Menchik, Chair](#)

Have some extra time on your hands? Lansing Schools would love to have LWVLA volunteers help in any way they can. Jacqueline Stewart and I have been volunteering at Averill School. Averill and Lyons Elementary would welcome you to read to children, help with math—almost anything you have time to do. Because we know all League members are super busy (especially with this being a major election year), perhaps we can pick a time when one or two members could read to children and we would rotate. If you are at all interested, this is a wonderful way to give back to the community. Please contact Bettie at 517.402.3903 or menchikb@msu.edu.

We will begin the fall with discussions of Artificial Intelligence; our first meeting, via Zoom, will be on Monday, September 16 at 5 pm. We will also begin to discuss what issues the committee would like to explore next. All suggestions are welcome. Several issues of concern include what makes a successful community college (now that the state will fund two years for all students), how AI is changing education at all levels, whether vouchers lead to more successful schools, how recent Supreme Court decisions impact schools (e.g., school prayer and funding for religious schools), how race is taught in schools, mental health issues in schools, pre-school access and funding, and so on.

We welcome new members to our committee. We will adapt meeting times and place according to the interests of members. Contact me, [Bettie Menchik](#), if you are interested.

LBWL'S MISGUIDED NEW GAS PLANT

[Elaine Dierwa Fischhoff, EAG Co-chair](#)

The “clean energy” plan created by Lansing’s Board of Water and Light (LBWL) starts with building a RICE (Reciprocating Internal Combustion Engine) plant that will burn natural gas and increase the amount of greenhouse gases being emitted in the Lansing area. LBWL should reverse its decision to build this plant.

First, as Manager Peffley recently (July 17, 2024) finally admitted, there is currently no legal sense in which the proposed RICE plant (costing \$170 million) is “clean

energy.” [State statutes](#) require “clean” energy sources to either NOT emit greenhouse gases, to be a combined-cycle plant (which the RICE is not), OR to have 90% effective carbon capture and storage (CCS). As LBWL noted in their air permit application, CCS would double the cost of the RICE plant and so is unaffordable. Thus, the RICE plant should *not* be considered “clean energy” and should not be included in a “clean energy plan.” To include it is misleading the public.

Second, another mistaken claim concerns the role that battery storage can serve. Manager Peffley has repeatedly stated that additional battery storage must be rejected as an option because it can only provide four hours of electricity. However, the batteries available at utility scale can be drawn down variably (much like our phone batteries) and so do not have a strict four-hour time limit. Indeed, drawing power out of a battery more slowly than the maximum draw tends to increase the life of a battery. Batteries like these can provide resilient support for the Lansing electrical grid, as has been shown in other states.

Such misinformation undermines confidence in the decision-making at LBWL. Confidence is further eroded by the facts that 1) the RICE plant is more than half the cost of the whole “clean energy plan” despite its not being clean; and 2) the cost of the fuel needed to run the plant is not included. Recent economic analyses show that building new intermittent “peaking” gas plants (such as the RICE) are among the most expensive ways to generate new electricity capacity. And given [state law](#), such a facility is likely to be a stranded asset by 2040. This will impede LBWL reaching 50% renewable energy by 2030—another state standard. [Stranded assets](#) are “assets that have suffered from unanticipated or premature write-downs, devaluations or conversion to liabilities.” In essence, customers will be paying for a plant that won’t be allowed to operate under Michigan law after 2040. A gas plant typically lasts at least 30 years. In short, the RICE plant is not clean energy and is a waste of money.

Furthermore, LBWL is asking for a 7% rate hike to pay for this dirty and wasteful expenditure. LBWL should invest in less expensive sources, such as wind energy to complement its growing solar portfolio and distributed energy systems and utility grade storage. This is the economically responsible way to build a strong hometown energy system. Such a path is also the most plausible way to meet state standards for renewable and clean energy.

Please add your voice of protest by writing or emailing the [LBWL Board of Commissioners](#).



ONE THING

Switch from gas-powered landscaping equipment like leaf blowers and mowers to electric to reduce your output of greenhouse gases and noise. Your neighbors will appreciate it and maybe even follow your lead.

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 Dierwa Fischhoff](#)

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

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