

**EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE
CAPITOL
VOTER**

**MARCH
2025**

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LWVLA CALENDAR

Thursday, March 27 – LWVLA Social event/legislative update. 7-8:30 pm. “Pizza, Pints & Politics,” with MIRS reporter Sam Shriber. Coral Gables in East Lansing. You may [register here](#).

Thursday, April 17 -- Book Discussion Group. 10 am. Chapbook Café at Schuler Books (see below). Contact [Donna Mullins](#) for information.

Earth Day Week, date TBD. Environmental program hosted by EAG—stay tuned for details.

Tuesday, April 29 -- Education Committee program on school vouchers. 7-8:30 pm.

Friday, May 9 -- Memorial for Beth Moore. 2 pm. Edgewood United Church on Hagadorn Rd., East Lansing.

May 11-17 -- Schuler Days. Benefit for LWVLA. Watch for details.

SAVE THE DATE

Tuesday, May 13 -- LWVLA Annual Meeting at Eagle Eye, with keynote speaker Dr. Matt Grossman.

May 16-18 -- LWVMI State Convention, Grand Rapids

Tuesday, May 20 -- Membership Luncheon. 11:30 am. "School Funding and Vouchers," with Dr. Josh Cowen. MSUFCU on Mt. Hope.

See articles below for more information.

From our partners' calendars:

Tuesday, April 15--LWV-Washtenaw County webinar. 11 a.m. "Saving the Huron Watershed: Why Is It Important and How Can We Protect It?" Guest speaker Rebecca Esselman, Executive Director of the Huron River Watershed Council, will discuss how the Huron River Watershed Council has been working for over 50 years to protect and restore the river, which drains water to the Huron River through hundreds of tributary creeks and streams throughout Oakland, Livingston, Ingham, Jackson, Washtenaw, Wayne and Monroe counties and 6 local Leagues.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kathy Ruby Petroni



As Dianna Wynn, our President of the National LWV, discussed in her recent [blog](#), we must fight back against the "barrage of assaults on our democratic processes." She made several suggestions for grassroots action, including contacting your elected officials and protesting. Your Lansing Area League is doing its best to join the fight on these two fronts.

First, from March 24 through April 20, as a form of protest, the Lansing Area League is renting out two billboards in Lansing, one on Michigan Avenue just east of the Capitol and one on Pennsylvania Avenue near Jolly Road. The message on the billboards is "Our Democracy is Under Attack. Demand Congress Defend It." The billboards will also have our website address. Our website will provide links for contacting members of Congress.

We anticipate that this strong message will convince some people who may not be paying

attention to the news that our democracy is in peril. Hopefully, in turn this will cause more people to contact their elected officials or join the fight in other ways. This may bring us more members but that is not our primary intent. Contributions to our operating fund will cover the cost of the two billboards. We cannot use Education Fund dollars for this type of protest. If we have contributions that exceed the cost of the two billboards, we could expand our reach to more billboards.

Second, the Lansing Area League had a visible presence at the rally to protest the SAVE Act on March 22 at the Capitol. The rally was organized by The Great Lakes Democracy Alliance (GLDA). As an invited speaker at the rally, I spoke about the ways in which the SAVE Act would serve to silence voters, especially women voters, and is therefore a threat to our democracy. Members of our League were there protesting with signs that matched our billboards.



Under normal circumstances, local leagues take stands on local issues, state level leagues take stands on statewide issues, and the national league takes stands on national-level issues. But we are not under normal circumstances. National is asking the local and state leagues to be actively engaged in fighting the threats to our democracy at the national level. This is especially the case with the SAVE Act and the way in which Congress is abandoning its authority to protect the rule of law, defend the Constitution, and rein in the executive branch's overreach. Please understand that the Lansing Area League is hearing the call. I appreciate the efforts of our members that help respond.

Democracy must win,
Kathy

PROGRAM COMMITTEE REPORT **Lisa Moore & Donna Mullins, Co-chairs**

Program Planning for the State Convention

The primary responsibility of Program is to supervise the state program-planning process. Committees met to review government, natural resources and social policy positions. On February 18, Judy Karandjeff spoke to members, describing the process the League uses to develop policies, and gave a brief synopsis of existing positions. Committee chairs briefly discussed what their recommendations were regarding changes to existing policies. There was discussion but no additions were made to the committee recommendations.

Our recommendations included a change to existing education policy and a concurrence recommendation to adopt the Utah Policy on “death with dignity,” now referred to as “medical aid in dying.” The teamwork by all made it possible to beat the deadline by two days! Well over 40 members participated in this process. Committees were led by Joanne Winkelman, Dorothy Engelman, and the EAGers. Elaine Fischhoff, Ellen Link, Kathy Petroni and Camilla Davis made certain that there was food and drink that was fully compostable. It was very much a “League way” luncheon!

Green Investing Webinar

The EAG-initiated discussion on strategies for sustainable investment, led by speakers Tom Stanton and Henry Shilling, garnered 44 registrations. The presenters were excellent. All registrants received copies of the slide shows presented and a link to view the presentation. Environmental Advocacy co-chairs Elaine Fischhoff and Ellen Link were particularly helpful in organizing the event. You can see the webinar on [YouTube](#).

March Events

Jacqueline Stewart and Donna Mullins presented the LWVUS slide show on Disinformation at a membership luncheon in March. LWV Greater Pittsburgh has a great [interactive training](#) that is based on the slides, if you missed the luncheon. This presentation is available for members to share with anyone in the community; contact [Joanne Winkleman](#), who is organizing the effort.

On March 27, a combined social event/legislative update we're calling Pizza, Pints and Politics will be held at Coral Gables in East Lansing. Our featured speaker, Samantha Shriber, is the Michigan Information & Research Service (MIRS) reporter who specializes in state politics. Sam hosts a weekly podcast on state politics. A pizza buffet will be available for \$15; you may purchase your choice of beverages at the venue. [Please register here](#).

April Events

The EAGers are planning something for Earth Day, the date(s) and subjects to be announced after they meet this month.

The Education Committee is hosting a Zoom presentation to give you background on issues in school funding. This is intended to prepare you to hear noted researcher and author Dr. Josh Cowen. Which brings us to...

May Events

Early in the month, the Community Advisory Resource & Education Center (CARE) will present the second in a 3-part series addressing extremism and radicalization. Our League is participating in this pilot effort led by American University and the Southern Poverty Law Center. Having worked with churches and schools, CARE is now developing a program for communities to use in addressing the harms caused by those holding extremist views. (And look at us—on the ground floor!)

On May 20, there will be a membership luncheon at the MSUFCU on Mt Hope and Farm Lane featuring Dr. Josh Cowen, speaking about his book *The Privateers: How Billionaires Created a Culture War and Sold School Vouchers*. Reviewed in the *NY Review of Books*, the book is a must read for people interested in public education. May's programs are significant to us both locally as well as nationally.

Your Involvement is welcome and encouraged. The Program Committee knows that the best way to bring you relevant programming is to follow your lead. We are carefully reviewing the program interest surveys filled out by many of you to develop our summer and fall events. You can help us with your ideas, and if you know someone who might be a good speaker, please send us their contact information.

EVIDENCE THAT WEHAVE AN IMPACT

Donna Mullins

If you ever wondered if the League's efforts to support democracy are effective, here's a story:

For the first time in at least six years, we received a "fact check" notice from Facebook. What was being checked? Information on the SAVE Act, which would demand verification of citizenship if a person registering or reregistering to vote has a last name that does not match the name on their birth certificate. (Yes, that means ALL of you who changed your name when you married.) The check came from a center right/right "news" organization. Strangely, Leagues nationwide were also fact checked.

We also received two negative comments suggesting we were being partisan. Both comments were sent from suspicious senders, likely professional trolls. Then our Facebook page was suspended for, wait for it, impersonating our FB page!

I appealed. I was denied. I posted a question on the LWV Media Group page and, strangely, discovered this was happening to other Leagues throughout the nation often enough that one of the members was collecting a list of them. One of the members suggested getting in touch with a person at LWVUS, who asked for very specific information, and two days later we had our FB page again.

Now, it's time to add this up. Local LWV pages are being trolled. Don't you think it's odd that we have followers from Vietnam, Myanmar, Mexico, Laos, Ireland, Greece, Germany and Cameroon? (Canada too, but they are so nice!) The trolls don't like it when we are effective. So, *the good news is that we are effective*. The bad news is that we are a target because of it. The good news is that a whole bunch of us turn into She-Hulk when we are targeted.

We *do* make a difference—and we will continue to make a difference!

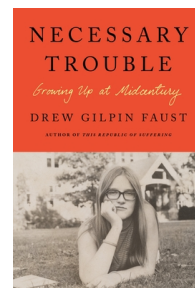
MARCH BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

Donna Mullins

This month we read and discussed *Etty Hillesum: A Life Transformed* by Patrick Woodhouse, about a young woman who, though an unlikely hero, came to inspire her fellow prisoners of the Nazis and died with them at Auschwitz. If you missed our conversation or just want another look at the book there's a good [presentation](#) by the author at St. Paul's Cathedral.

For April we are reading ***Necessary Trouble: Growing Up at Midcentury***, a memoir by Drew Gilpin Faust, former Harvard president. It recounts her childhood in the segregated South during the 1950s and 60s, which were marked by political and social upheaval, and her journey towards activism and a career as a historian.

We are now meeting in person at Schuler's bookstore, the next date



being on April 17. They have a cavernous coffee shop, where we can easily find room to meet and talk about the book. Contact [Donna Mullins](#) to receive emails from the book group. It's not a commitment to attend but you will receive our emails.

DIGGING INTO DISINFORMATION: FACT- AND BIAS-CHECKING TOOLS

This information was developed by LWV of Greater Pittsburgh.

Fact-checking websites are valuable resources for anyone looking for accurate information about a suspicious news report or viral post. The websites listed below are good places to check when you think you have run across misinformation and *before you share* information.

However, responding to misinformation with *just* a fact check or news article is not usually effective or persuasive, whether online or in person. Instead of reporting the results of the fact-checking site, use the original sources and backup information cited in the article or report to move your discussion forward.

Example: Photo circulates showing politician posing with an offensive sign.

Ineffective Response:

- A. "Snopes says that's not true."
- B. "Well, Snopes is biased."

More Effective Response:

- A. "That photo has been doctored. You can see the original here."
- B. "Oh, let me see that."

Fact-checking sites

[Rumorguard.org](#) - News Literacy Project, a nonprofit, educational organization

www.reuters.com/fact-check - Reuters News

[Factcheck.org](#) - Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania

[Snopes.com](#) - Independent publication of the Snopes Media Group

[Politifact.com](#) - The Poynter Institute for Media Studies, a nonprofit journalism school

Media Bias Charts rank news sources for both accuracy and political bias. While their definitions of bias and accuracy are subjective, the best of these sites are very transparent about their process and keep a public database of the articles that were used in the rankings. These charts are very thought-provoking, but are they useful in countering disinformation? Well, yes and no:

Yes:

- When you run across information from a source you don't recognize, a media bias chart can help you get a rough idea of what you're looking at and how reliable it is.
- Viewing your own favorite sources on a media bias chart may surprise you and can help you consider your own media diet's bias.

No:

- Using media bias rankings is practically useless in an argument—even less convincing than using a fact-checking site.

Media Bias Charts

[Interactive Media Bias Chart](#) from Ad Fontes Media; a static chart and other resources are also available.

[All Sides Media Bias Chart](#) - Side-by-side reporting on selected news stories; other resources are also available at this site.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Camilla Davis, Membership Director

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Jessica Brown-Mysliwiec, Mason

Anne Esdale, Okemos

Diane Koscielniak, Okemos

Tanna Meyers, Haslett

Vicki Nunn, Haslett (Correction)

Louis Porter, Okemos

Jeffrey Winchester, East Lansing (Student)



WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR OWN NAME BADGE?

If you've admired the plastic name badge worn by some of our members at League events, you, too, can own one. A nice feature of this badge is that it attaches with a magnet, not a pin. It's available from Midwest Graphics at a cost of approximately \$10 each, plus tax and postage. You can place your own order with [Midwest Graphics](#) or be part of a group order, which will save you some postage. If you'd like to participate in the group order, please email Camilla by April 10.

REPEAT WITH US: REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

Marion Gorton, EAG Member

Next month, on April 22, we will celebrate the 55th Earth Day. You may have celebrated the beginning of this new calendar year with resolutions to be better people—healthier, happier, more helpful to others. This year, let's use Earth Day to make resolutions to have a healthier planet by resolving to reduce, reuse and recycle our household waste whenever possible.

The growing plastics problem

Our resolve is more important now than ever before. While the community of environmentalists is trying to quickly come up with affordable methods of reducing plastic waste in our environment, the petroleum industry is marching full speed ahead to produce more and more plastic to protect their profits from the effects of renewable energy and electric vehicles.

An article in *Barron's* (April 12, 2024), ["Plastic Is Everywhere. Now Big Oil Companies](#)

[Are Producing Even More of It](#)", discusses the change in the petroleum industry's focus from refining petroleum into gasoline to harvesting the chemicals in raw petroleum. Those chemicals are the ones that go into making plastics of all shapes and sizes. The article states, "Big plastics producers such as Exxon Mobil, Lyondell, Shell, and Dow have collectively plowed tens of billions of dollars into new plants." We are even seeing it here in Michigan with a new plastic manufacturing facility coming to Charlotte.

We must take action to answer this growing challenge of more and more plastic in our world and manage the increasing threat of being a "use and throw away" society. Consider these facts and actions to help you write your own resolutions to protect your community and your planet:

Reduce waste by being a smart shopper. The USDA states that each U.S. consumer throws away *almost 5 pounds of waste each day*. US Department of Agriculture (USDA) studies show that between 30 and 40 percent of food is wasted in the U.S. Take your own take-out containers to restaurants. Don't stock up on food that you will later need to throw away. And consider composting leftovers rather than sending them to a landfill (where they will create the potent greenhouse gas, methane). Above all, avoid single-use products whenever possible.

Reuse and repurpose items rather than throwing them in the trash. Donate your (still wearable) used clothing and household items. With a bit of creativity and a search on the internet, you can find many clever uses for items that have outlived their original purpose. Don't just *purchase* the cute tote bag in grocery store; keep it in the car and *use it* instead of using the single-use plastic bag. Tear up those t-shirts that just have too many holes; they make ever-useful rags.

Recycle whatever and *only* what your local recycling facility will accept, and be sure to follow the rules to avoid contamination. Put only clean products in the recycling bins; food waste and grease can contaminate an entire container of recyclable product.

Successful recycling depends on your recycling company or organization being able to find markets for the products they accept. To ensure that what you intend to recycle does not end up in a landfill, here are some items for which markets are extremely difficult to find here in Michigan:

- Hard plastic, the kind used in trash cans, kitty litter buckets and lawn chairs.
- Plastics that have a number higher than 5.
- Plastics designated as #1 that aren't bottles or jars. These thin "clam shell" plastics, used for fruits and vegetables, deli salads, cookies, and so forth, don't recycle well with other #1's and so [are often rejected](#).

BE BOLD! Sometimes it's just better to buy a different product than to reward retailers for using more and more plastics that will very likely pile up in landfills across our state. Tell the retailer that you are choosing a different product or choosing *not* to make a purchase because the packaging is not a responsible choice for our environment.

Spring—a happy/sad time: dormant and migrant wildlife start reappearing, but too many are killed by cars. So: *Slow down*, especially around wet areas; help a turtle get safely across a road, watch out for young or disoriented birds, and don't assume any animal will move out of the way.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Bettie Landauer-Menchik, Chair

Following the recommendations of Project 2025, President Trump has initiated **the elimination of the Department of Education**. The fallout will be enormous. In addition, the House Ways and Means Committee recently advanced a proposal to offer federal tax credits nationwide for donors to scholarship-granting organizations that support private school students. Project 2025 calls for a nationwide federal tax-credit for private education scholarship policy as well.

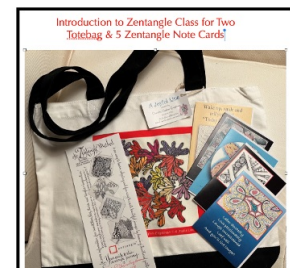
In FY25, \$9.38 billion of all state education funds are in private education with the percentage of education dollars going to private schooling rising every year. Thirty-three states now have some kind of program for funding private schools, with 22% of state education dollars going to private options in Florida, 12% in Arizona and 9% in Wisconsin.

Join the Education Committee on Tuesday, April 29 at 7:30 pm when we will offer a primer on school vouchers via Zoom. This will prepare members for the May 20 luncheon presentation by Dr. Josh Cowen. Materials for the zoom session will be available in advance and on our Facebook page. Stay tuned for details, or [contact me](#) for more information.

AND NOW, A WORD FROM DEVELOPMENT

Dorothy Engelman, Development Director

As Director of Development, I have a request: We're looking for "experiences" and donations that would be of interest to our members as a way to raise money for the LWVLA at the May 13 Annual Meeting and have fun at the same time.



An example of an "experience" is a "Zentangle Exploration," which I'm donating; it includes an *Introduction to Zentangles Class for Two*, a tote bag, and note cards. Other suggestions include:

- Afternoon or evening gathering at a park for a picnic
- Cocktails or wine tasting
- Dinner outdoors on your deck
- Boating on a lake
- Home concert
- Music or game night
- Collections/baskets of multiple items, perhaps organized around a theme, such as MSU, Michigan, music, gardening, arts, crafts, pets

Let your imagination and interests guide you to a great idea. To sign up, please contact Dorothy at doengelman@gmail.com or 435.879.1558 (call or text).

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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