

**EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE
CAPITOL
VOTER**

**JANUARY
2022**

IN THE JANUARY CAPITOL VOTER

- President's Message: Keep Up the Good Fight
- Voter Service: Share the Facts on Voter Rights
- Book Discussion Topics
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- Education Initiates Study Group on *The 1619 Project*
- PHS: Courage and Action Needed for Firearm Safety
- EAG: LWVMI Speaks Up For the Environment
- One Thing: Visualize Spring
- Membership Renewal Deadline, January 31

LWVLA CALENDAR

Tuesday, January 18, 10 am. Book Discussion Group via Zoom, *Chasing the Scream: The Opposite of Addiction is Connection* by Johann Hari. Contact [Donna Mullins](#) for info or to participate.

Tuesday, February 8, 10 am. Book Discussion Group via Zoom, *Jesus & John Wayne* by Kristin Kobes Du Mez. Contact [Donna Mullins](#) for info or to participate.

February 13 - 19. Shop at Schuler Books and 20% goes to LWVLA. Read below for more information.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT Donna Mullins



Welcome to the new year! I just read this [article](#) in the *Toronto Globe and Mail* that suggests our democracy might end by 2025. (And become entirely fascist by 2030.) Wasn't it enough to work toward bringing people out to vote in 2020? In the face of viruses or tyranny, we can never be satisfied that we have done enough. And some days, it's a little exhausting. How do we keep it up?

One way is by working with others to protect our democracy. At our best, members of the League focus on the mission and the “glorious task” of making this a more perfect union. Alone, we make noise but together, we make progress. I repeat myself when I say that your membership alone makes a difference. When you are a member, those of us who have the time to be active can say that others have signed on to this mission.

Another way is to focus on principles and the love of democracy, rather than spend our energy being angry at people and behaviors that are pretty darned infuriating. Venting helps (and for me, wine too) but love will bring us together. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Nelson Mandela were transformative because they chose love even as they were jailed or had their lives threatened. They decided that love was the better road, the higher road. Did someone just think, “Well, I’m no Nelson Mandela”? You aren’t, but you are no less important. Do you think they did it alone?

There are details I could add but the gist is we can keep up the good fight by focusing on our love of democratic principles. Membership counts. If you can volunteer some of your time, that helps, too. We’ve developed a short online [talent and interest survey](#) to find out who is currently interested in supporting the League’s work in other ways. It’s extremely helpful for our committee chairs to know if you are available to help.

What can you expect this year? We are trying to educate the community about the risk to voting in Michigan. (Be sure to read Joanne Winkelman’s article.) We are offering virtual training on voting to local schools and will be in the classroom as soon as we are allowed. We are observing local government meetings in an effort to connect people with public servants and government. We are partnering with formerly incarcerated citizens to register people who are temporarily in jail. We will have forums on issues that make a difference in day-to-day living, like kids going to school safely, and the prospect of regularly occurring once-in-a-lifetime storms. We will embrace the students at MSU and LCC and be amazed and inspired by their youthful energy. We will partner with all interested parties. We will register voters and we will get out the vote!

I haven't seen most of you in almost two years (although you may have seen me on ZOOM). This distance is another challenge on top of several other challenges. Still, I've said it before and have no evidence to see things otherwise...we are up to it because we are in it relentlessly

Together,
Donna

PLEASE SHARE THE FACTS ON VOTING RIGHTS! **Joanne Winkelman, Voter Service Director**

On December 14, 2021, the "[Update on Voting Rights, Voting Bills, and Petition Initiatives](#)" webinar was presented by the LWVLA as part of the Make Democracy Work Grant to spread the word regarding Michigan's current voting laws. It was also designed to inform the public about voting bills and the Secure MI Vote initiative which would change how Michigan votes.



Please feel free to share this factual webinar with your Michigan family members, neighbors, friends and organizations. Members of the LWVLA can also provide this information to groups in person or via Zoom using a PowerPoint and a script. If you are interested in presenting to a group, email [Joanne Winkelman](#) or call 248-804-7433.

Book Discussion Groups **Hosted by Donna Mullins**

On Tuesday, January 18, the Book Discussion group will review *Chasing the Scream; The Opposite of Addiction is Connection*, by Johann Hari, in which the author explores the devastating effects of the War on Drugs, and how some drug addiction programs are changing the landscape by replacing punishment with compassion.

Tuesday, February 8, the group will discuss *Jesus & John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Ruptured a Nation*, by Kristin Kobes Du Mez. This book examines a Christian view of manhood and how it has influenced our society.

Book discussions are from 10 - 11:30 am via Zoom. To participate and receive the link, contact [Donna Mullins](#).

OBSERVER CORPS **Valerie Lafferty, Chair**

Please click this [link](#) and discover the amazing things our LWVLA Observer Corps volunteers are finding out about our area! As the mantra goes, information is power. So powerup, fellow protectors of our democracy, and sign up to be an observer at a municipality near you! The more public bodies we observe, the more educated we



become on how our area's public governmental bodies work and the more chances to pollinate creative ideas from one area to another. Most importantly, it puts you in a position of being a factual voice in the mix...and, simply, an influence for good, to keep up the analogy! **Please consider!** (In case anyone is looking for a suggestion, covering Ingham County Board of Commissioners and the City of Lansing would be awesome!)

In addition to observing, we have an optional regular debrief meeting at the end of each month with a subject matter expert speaker. At our Zoom meeting on Wednesday, January 26 at noon, Deena Bosworth, Director of Governmental Affairs for the Michigan Association of Counties, will explain the role of counties in our Michigan government and help us understand the flow of dollars from the federal level to the local level, along with your questions.

You are warmly invited to join our meeting to observe the Observers. Please [email](#) me so I can include you in the Zoom invite. I also welcome your questions/comments about anything Observer Corps-related. Please stay healthy!

Val Lafferty

SCHULER BOOK DAYS, FEBRUARY 13 - 19

During the week of February 13-19, LWVLA will receive 20 percent of all online and store purchases made by shoppers who would like to support our organization. Here is how to designate funds: For online shopping, enter the code **LWVLansing** at checkout. In the store, mention **LWVLA** at checkout.

LWVLA PROGRAM NOTES Susan R. Chalgian, Programs VP

UPCOMING:

- **Book Days with Schuler's Book Store** – 20% of all purchases at the Okemos store will be donated to our local League February 13-19. Just mention the LWVLA when you make your purchases.
- **January Book Discussion Group** meets Tuesday, January 18 at 10 am. Reviewing *Chasing the Scream: The Opposite of Addiction is Connection* by Johann Hari. Email [President Donna Mullins](#) for Zoom link.
- **February Book Discussion Group** will Zoom again to discuss *Jesus & John Wayne* by Kristin Kobes Du Mez on Tuesday, February 8 at 10 am. To participate, email [President Donna Mullins](#) for Zoom link.
- **Sunshine Week** is March 14 – 20. Plans are to work with the League's Observer Corps and possibly develop and schedule a forum.
- **Annual Meeting** will be in April or May. League members interested in working on this project will likely need to create a Plan A & Plan B, given the COVID restrictions. The first task is to schedule the date. Interested? Contact me by [email](#) or at 517-420-0637.



RECENTLY TOOK PLACE:

Education Committee webinar, ["A Discussion of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in](#)

[Michigan Schools: What is being taught?](#)” on Tuesday, January 11. The guest speaker was Professor Dorinda Carter Andrews, Chair, MSU Dept. of Teacher Education, with moderator Pat Quinn. K-12 education has become greatly politicized with the events of the past two years. Michigan teachers struggle to make curricula more accurate and relevant for their students while classroom practices aim to recognize and respect the racial, social and cultural differences among students. At the same time, the state legislature and parents may have differing views about change. Change can be uncomfortable, and discomfort can be manipulated and inflamed. This presentation lowers the heat, offering a broader view of the challenges our schools are currently facing.

The presentation has already received great reviews. Check it out and let us know what you think—you can find it on the YouTube link above and on the [LWVLA channel](#).

The Education Committee also recommends LWV members view an excellent 30-minute video on the difference between Critical Race Theory and how we talk about the history of racism in schools. It's part of [PBS Newshour](#) and the speaker is Dr. Prudence Carter from Berkley.

Make Democracy Work Grant

On December 14, the LWVLA held a webinar, [“Update on Voting Rights, Voting Bills, and Initiative.”](#) with Grand Ledge Clerk Greg Newman, moderated by member Jacqueline Stewart. The discussion focused on spreading the word regarding Michigan's current voting laws and informing members about current voting bills and the Secure MI Vote initiative.

LWVLA facilitated a webinar with clerks last November in collaboration with All Voting is Local and featured Ingham County Clerk Chris Swope, with Jacqueline Stewart as the moderator.

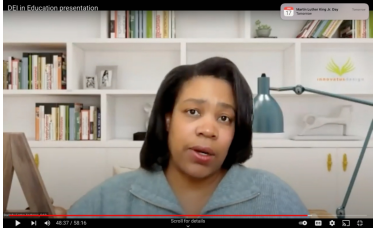
Board member Joanne Winkelman is the lead in this grant. The next objective or activity is to encourage League members, with some training, to share the webinar with their neighborhood groups, church members or other organizations (see Joanne's Voting Rights article).

Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (MICRC) – League members Joanne Winkelman, Andrea Yokich and President Donna Mullins attended the last meeting of the MICRC that included public comments, December 28 and 29. Several people commented virtually. Throughout the entire map redistricting process League member Jacqueline Stewart provided our ad hoc committee with brilliant summaries and occasional editorial comments. These were enormously helpful as we encountered questions from the public regarding the redistricting effort.

[Susan Chalgian](#) 517-420-0637

EDUCATION COMMITTEE ADDRESSES THE 1619 PROJECT **Bettie Menchik, Chair**

This week, the Education Committee presented an

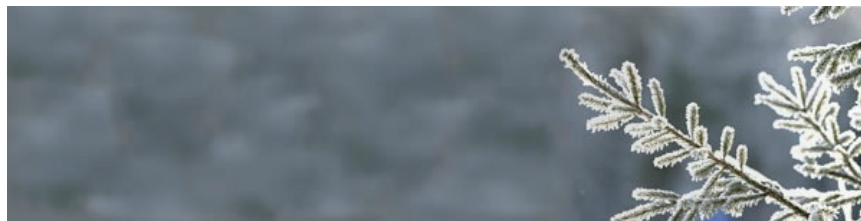


outstanding webinar by Dr. Dorinda Carter Andrews on reactions to Critical Race Theory in schools. To follow up on this important and controversial topic, the committee will begin a study of *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story* by Nikole Hannah-Jones. *The 1619 Project* is a collection of essays summarizing the Black experience in America. It explores every aspect of slavery and its continuing legacy, in which being white or black affects everything, from how you fare in courts and hospitals and schools to the odds that your neighborhood will be bulldozed for a freeway.

We invite any LWV members who are interested to join us. It's a lengthy book, with each chapter being a separate essay. Click [here](#) for the *New York Times* review of the book. Each month a member of the study group will select an essay and lead the discussion. The [Pulitzer Center](#) has produced study guides for each of the original essays. This new book includes additional essays that weren't in the original volume. We will also discuss legislation introduced into the Michigan Legislature which would impact how race and racism is discussed in classrooms.

Judy Andre has agreed to initiate discussion at our meeting on February 9 at 5 pm on Zoom. In preparation for that meeting we ask participants to read the Preface (16 pages) plus Chapter 1 (43 pp). As Judy says, be forewarned: The book is large and heavy and handsome, printed as the phenomenon it has become. It's also expensive (\$38 at Schuler's, half that on Amazon before taxes).

All LWV members are invited to join us on February 9. To receive the Zoom link, email [Bettie Menchik](#) in advance. If you weren't able to attend Dr. Carter's webinar on Tuesday, be sure to watch it on the [LWVLA website](#).



NO WORDS

Martha Couretas, Co-chair, Public Health and Safety Committee

We have no words to express our sadness, frustration and anger for the deaths and injuries at Oxford (MI) High School on November 30, 2021. We can honor these victims and their grieving families and friends by recognizing that our nation differs from other developed countries by the perverse presence and accessibility of firearms. We are currently experiencing some legislative interest in strengthening firearm legislation. When asked what citizens can do, Michigan State Senator Rosemary Bayer (District 12, Oxford Township) responded that we act by creating a groundswell of support for legislation that has statistically reduced gun violence.

On June 17, 2021, legislation to provide penalties for leaving a firearm where it may be accessed by a minor was introduced by Bayer as SB 550. This bill was assigned to

committee where it has seen no further action. This is the history of firearm violence prevention bills in our divided legislature. We who are supporting these bills are not anti-gun. We are promoting firearm safety through well-regulated gun ownership.

Michigan legislators returned on January 12. We will be aware of legislative actions and recognize opportunities for our voices through LWVMI Advocacy Action Alerts and gun violence prevention organizations:

- <https://lwvmi.org/advocacy-2021/>
- <https://michigancoalitiontopreventgunviolence.org>
- <https://momsdemandaction.org/work/>

Who we vote for *matters*.

Our voices matter.

We will not accept any more “thoughts and prayers” without COURAGE and ACTION.

LWVMI SPEAKS UP FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Ellen Link, EAG Co-chair



On January 8, the LWVMI passed a [Climate Change Resolution](#) calling for, among other things, “...local Michigan Leagues to adopt similar resolutions and advocate with local governments to adopt ‘Climate Emergency Declarations’ committing to take urgent action to significantly reduce net carbon emissions to net zero in the next decades.” It’s now up to us to use this tool.

If you have Netflix, you may well have watched “Don’t Look Up,” the much publicized and lauded (though not by everyone) film that came out over the holidays. With a cast of stars, including Meryl Streep as a thoughtless, self-centered president, the film uses the threat to human survival posed by an oncoming asteroid and the blasé reaction by her and most other people to depict the very real and present danger of climate change and the shortsighted responses to it. The satire even posits the job-creating opportunities created by the dilemma. Sound familiar?

One would have to live sealed in a bomb shelter to remain ignorant of the threat being posed by climate change and the totally inadequate “solutions” that have been forthcoming from governments around the world, particularly those wealthy ones who have contributed most to the problem. The U.S. is key among them, and too many of our legislators either haven’t bothered to become informed or don’t have the courage to stand up and tell their constituents that climate change will be lethal to us all if we don’t change our energy-profligate ways. Has your city, township, and/or county government done so? Have you asked them to do so? The scary statistics and dire predictions at the November [Glasgow Climate Change Conference](#), COP26, fell on too many deaf—or greedy—ears. We each need to help our elected leaders understand the situation. (FYI: The Michigan League of Conservation Voters maintains a [legislative scorecard](#) to track how each lawmaker has voted on key environmental priorities each session.

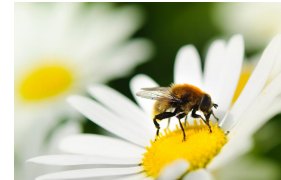
Government mandates dictating responsible actions for manufacturers and [large corporations](#) that will get us to [net-zero carbon emissions by 2050](#)—a *must*—have been woefully insufficient. (The very notion that we need to extract more oil for life-

endangering projects like Line 5 is insane!) It will take action on numerous fronts to reduce emissions while ramping up production of fossil-free energy and that definitely includes citizen lobbying. Individuals can also help by switching to renewable energy wherever possible and investing in solar.

Each individual act may be small, but when aggregated with those of millions of others the tide might at least be slowed and turned. There's not enough room here to list the countless tools to fight climate change, but you can find them online (start [here](#)). Some can even be found on League websites. From reducing your energy use to planting a nature-friendly landscape to investing in solar energy to ...what's a good start for you? Just don't keep it to yourself. Share the message with family, friends and, above all, with elected leaders. Consider joining the EAG (Environmental Advocacy Committee). There's so much we could do with more members! And do *look up*—and all around. You'll see there's no time to waste.

ONE THING

Sit down with a cuppa and a seed catalogue, then look out your windows to contemplate where you might plant native plants and trees come spring. You'll have all winter to dream up gardens and the bees and butterflies that will grace them.



MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Camilla Davis, Membership Director

HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

Just a reminder that to remain an active member of LWV, dues must be received before January 31, 2022.

There are two ways to renew:

- 1. Pay online.** Use this [link](#) to take you to the LWV–Lansing Area website *Join* section. Scroll down to the *Join Online* option. Be sure to select *Renewal*.
- 2. Pay by check.** Print and complete the [Membership Form](#) and mail it, along with your check, to the address on the form.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Amy Kief – Laingsburg
Marty Liphard – East Lansing
Stacey McCarthy – Lansing
Lisa Moore – East Lansing
Jane & Donald Speer – DeWitt
Lisa Schafer – Williamston

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/GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE: Contact [Marty Couretas](#) or [Melinda Frame](#).

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