

**EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE
CAPITOL
VOTER**

**SEPTEMBER
2025**

IN THE SEPTEMBER CAPITOL VOTER

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LWVLA CALENDAR

Monday, Sept. 29 – Tour of the Michigan Capitol, led by Matthew J. VanAcker, author of *Lansing and the Civil War*.

Tuesday, Sept. 30 – Education Committee meeting, 5 pm via Zoom.

Thursday, Oct. 9 – Lansing City Council Candidate Forum, 6:30 pm at Allen Neighborhood Center

Thursday, Oct. 16 – Book Discussion Group, 10 am at Schuler Books Chapbook Cafe

Saturday, Oct. 18 – No Kings 2 rally, 3-7 pm at Michigan Capitol

Wednesday, Oct. 29 – League Luncheon, “Sanctuary Cities,” time and place TBD.

Wednesday, Oct. 29 – “Understanding Extremism,” joint event with Michigan Country, 6-8 pm at Charlotte Community Center, 226 S Bostwick St.

See articles below for more information.

From our partners' calendars:

Sept. 15 thru Oct. 24 – PEACE QUEST: Greater Lansing comes alive with music, art, hands-on projects, and community programs that bring people together to celebrate and promote **Peace Quest**. Coordinated by the Greater Lansing United Nations Association (GLUNA). There's still time to join with others in working for a cause that our world needs now more than ever. Click here for the [full schedule](#) of events.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kathy Ruby Petroni



It has been a tough month for democracy. Political violence is escalating as evidenced by the horrific assassination of Charlie Kirk in front of hundreds of college students. The administration is increasing its threats to free speech as people reflect on and voice opposition to many of Kirk's political and social positions. We have witnessed the continued and expanded use of the military in our cities without due cause. The push for more gerrymandering and voter suppression further erodes the

chances that our elections will remain free and fair. My list could go on.

I am starting to feel defeated and I long for a time when my daily concerns were more mundane. You may feel the same. That said, we cannot give up. We have the League to channel our energies and to give us opportunities to stay engaged and resist the threats to our beloved democracy.

Along those lines, the Lansing League celebrated National Voter Registration Day on September 16 by registering students at a local high school. We have several other voter registration events coming up in anticipation of the November election. We are also gearing up for a text banking effort. Please look for email notifications of opportunities to volunteer.

On September 10, we had a Lunch and Learn on the Electoral College that was very well attended. It was interesting to learn how the Electoral College serves to give some voters more say than others. The League supports abolishing the Electoral College so every person will get one vote! On October 29, we are planning a Lunch and Learn on “Sanctuary Cities.”

In the September 10 edition, the *City Pulse* included a letter to the editor that I submitted. The letter asks that citizens say NO to deceitful anti-voter petitions. The full text of the letter can be read [here](#).

On September 17, we co-sponsored with Eli (East Lansing Info) a forum for the six candidates running for East Lansing City Council. Ninety people attended. The forum was also recorded and freely provided for anyone interested. On October 9, we will be providing a similar type of forum for the Lansing City Council candidates. We are also working on getting VOTE411.org updated for the November election.

Most importantly, please mark your calendar to be at the Capitol for No Kings 2 rally on Saturday, October 18. The LWV is a partner for this rally. The goal is to double the number of attendees at No Kings 1 rally, so please attend and bring a friend or two! The rally lasts from 3-7 pm but don't feel like you must stay the entire time. Do what works for you. Also, bring a chair if that will make you more comfortable. You can sign up at nokings.org. Peaceful protest is a patriotic and democratic act of courage.



Many of you have received emails from National asking you to renew your membership with the League. I hope you will decide to continue to be a member. I believe our work is more important than at any other time in our lives. I assure you that the board is doing our best to wisely use resources that your dues and contributions provide. Please don't hesitate to share ideas you have to make the work of the League more impactful as our country struggles to find its footing. I can be reached at KathyPetroniLWV@gmail.com.

Democracy must win,
Kathy

VOTER SERVICE UPDATES

Joanne Winkelman, VP Voter Service

Lansing At-Large City Council Candidate Forum

The League of Women Voters Lansing Area and the Allen Neighborhood Center are co-sponsoring a candidate forum for the Lansing City Council at-large candidates. The forum will be held on **October 9 at 6:30 p.m.** at the Allen Neighborhood Center, 1611 E Kalamazoo St, Lansing. The Center will be soliciting questions from the community and audience members will be allowed to submit questions at the event. All questions will be screened by the League. The event will be videotaped and a recording will be available shortly after the event on both the Allen Neighborhood and LWVLA websites.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE REPORT

Lisa Moore, VP Programs

The Environmental Advocacy Group arranged an extensive tour of the Tollgate Wetlands

on August 29, led by Ingham County Drain Commissioner Pat Lindemann. The Tollgate Wetlands comprise a 14-acre space that features three ponds making up the Tollgate Drain system designed by Lindemann and managed by the drain commission. For those who missed the tour and want to explore this eco-friendly community asset, there is excellent information on the [county website](#), including a map and video.

At the September 10 Lunch and Learn, League member Maria Woloson gave the LWVUS presentation on the Electoral College, making the case for its elimination on the basic principles of fairness—that one person’s vote is equal to another person’s vote. In addition to skewing presidential election results, it also suppresses voter turnout in non-swing states. Maria then discussed different strategies to address these issues, from federal laws that cap representation to Congress to a constitutional amendment. The presentation was followed by thoughtful questions and discussion, while members enjoyed lunch using the MSU catering service.

While this type of change can feel impossible at times, it is not. Michigan voters have repeatedly shown up to level the playing field of our government in the past several election cycles, using their petition power to put proposals on the statewide ballot that changed both our state laws and state constitution. Examples of this are the establishment of an independent redistricting commission, taking partisan power politics out of this part of the election process; allowing for early and no-excuse absentee voting, which makes voting accessible to more registered voters; and requiring audits as a part of election best practices. These presentations allow us to be informed about key proposals that may find a future foothold in our change process.

Looking forward to the coming weeks and months, there are several activities planned. We have a tour of the Michigan Capitol, sponsored by the Book Discussion Group, coming up on September 29. Our host will be Matthew J. VanAcker, the Michigan Capitol’s education director and the author of the 2023 book, *Lansing and the Civil War*. See form below to RSVP.

The October luncheon will be on Wednesday, October 29 and will focus on the topic of “Sanctuary Cities.” The EAGers are also planning an evening forum in October that addresses microplastics. After the election In November we will be doing another “Pizza, Pints and Politics,” with MIRS reporter Samantha Schriber debriefing on the state and local election results.

As always, a reminder to check your email from us for detailed flyers on these events. To facilitate organizing, we ask you to register for the events so we can prepare accordingly. It always helps to have enough seats and food prepared! The registration links are in the emailed announcements.

Tour of the Michigan Capitol with Matthew J. VanAcker

LOCATION

Michigan Capitol

DATE AND TIME

09/29/25 10:00am - 09/29/25 1:00pm US/Eastern

Hear Matt VanAcker talk about his book "Lansing and the Civil War" followed by a personal tour of the Capitol led by Matt

I'll Be There!

Maybe

I Can't Make It

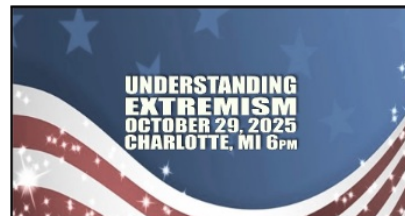
THOUGHTS FROM THE DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Dorothy Engelman



The Eaton County Outreach Project with [Michigan Country](#) continued in August with additional Personal Care Drives and Community Chats. Six people attended the Eaton Rapids Community Chat and sixteen participated at the Charlotte Community Chat, including a county commissioner and a city council member. All items collected at the Personal Care Drives were donated to [SIREN/Eaton Shelter](#). A special "Thank You" to the LWVLA members who participated and made this project a success.

The next joint event with Michigan Country is "Understanding Extremism" on Wednesday, October 29, from 6-8 p.m. at the Charlotte Community Library, 226 S. Bostwick St., Charlotte. This event is co-sponsored by the LWVLA, Michigan Country, the [Community Advisory, Resource and Education \(CARE\) Centers](#), and the Charlotte Community Library. A light supper will be provided; [registration](#) is recommended.



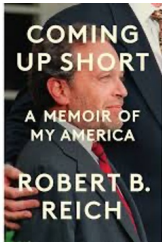
The Polarization & Extremism Research & Innovation Lab ([PERIL](#)), in strategic partnership with the Southern Poverty Law Center, has launched a two-year pilot initiative to establish the Community Advisory, Resource and Education (CARE) Centers. The mission is to provide tools to communities and local organizations that empower them to recognize, prevent and combat hate, discrimination, supremacist ideologies, and all forms of polarization and extremism. This event is open to the public and League members are encouraged to attend as we strive to establish more connections with Eaton County. Please contact me if you're interested in carpooling: call 435-879-155 or email doengelman@gmail.com.

BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

Donna Mullins

In September the book group discussed **James** by Percival Everett. The discussion

wound its way toward rage, then turned to current events (for some reason). If you haven't read it yet, it's worth reading or listening to!



In October we'll be reading ***Coming Up Short: A Memoir of My America*** by former US Labor Secretary Robert B. Reich. His newsletters probably reach many of your email boxes! In this deeply personal and politically reflective memoir, the author traces his journey from postwar optimism to a sobering reckoning with America's unrealized promises. Through stories of childhood bullying, civic activism and public service, Reich examines the cultural and economic choices that shaped his generation—as well as the consequences they've left behind. Thoughtful, candid and timely, *Coming Up Short* invites us to reflect on what it means to build a more just and hopeful future: perfect for anyone interested in memoirs with a conscience and a call to action.

We meet on the third Thursday of the month—October 16, 10 am at Schuler's Bookstore. For more information or to be placed on the mailing list, contact [Donna Mullins](#).

MICRO PLASTICS -- MACRO PROBLEM

Elaine Fischhoff, EAG Co-chair

Slowly, we are becoming aware that our environment contains more threats to living things than just PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl chemicals) and greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide and methane). Recent studies have determined that another product of chemical engineering that is an intrinsic part of modern living—plastics—also challenges the well-being of humans, wildlife and all other living things.

Plastics can be intentionally manufactured or unintentionally degraded into particles less than five millimeters (0.039 inches— microplastics) or less than one millimeter (nanoplastics) that adversely interfere with health and normal biological functions. And they are everywhere: in water bottles, food packaging, rubber tires, cosmetics, and clothing made of synthetic fibers; in the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat and our bodies, including our brains and breast milk. The Great Lakes have been shown to contain the highest concentration of plastics anywhere on the planet.

Microplastics have been detected in every fish in Michigan lakes and streams and in one in four fish in the oceans. They replace food in fish and other organisms, which can lead to malnutrition and even death, and move in tissue, causing inflammation and oxidative stress, endocrine disruption, cancer, and both cardiovascular and reproductive problems. Yet the use of plastic is increasing. The fossil fuel industry is expected to grow its plastics output by 150%—nearly 1.1 billion tons—by 2050!

But you can reduce your and your family's intake of micro or nano plastics:

- Drink less bottled and more tap water; heat foods in non-plastic containers.
- Buy fewer products with excessive packaging and more products made of paper, glass, metal and natural fibers (cotton, wool, and bamboo).
- Avoid using plastic cutting boards, cooking utensils and teabags.
- Especially for children, avoid polyester clothing, bedding and stuffed animals, as

well as soaps, lotion and body wash that contain microbeads.

- Support reuse programs and reuseable bags and take your own containers for take-out food.
- Do less laundry, use washing machine filters for microplastics, and air-dry your clothes when possible.
- Use HEPA air filters.
- Support policies like [Extended Producer Responsibility](#) (EPR) that foster production of products that can easily be recycled, reused or up-cycled, with prices that include a fraction of one cent to fund recycling.

The Environmental Advocacy Group hopes to offer a program on micro plastics this fall, so save your questions and input and stay tuned.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Bettie Landauer-Menchik, Chair

The Education Committee is following the Michigan Legislature's lack of action on the state budget. We are also monitoring how the state may implement some kind of voucher system based on federal legislation. For the September 30 meeting—5 pm on Zoom—we will be discussing an article by Dr. Josh Cowen, entitled [“How Can States Make School Voucher Systems More Accountable, Accessible, and Transparent?”](#) The paper evaluates newer voucher programs and identifies how voucher programs might be implemented for student success, accountability, access and transparency.

We welcome new members. Contact [me](#) for further information.

OBSERVER CORPS NEEDS YOU!

Sharon Feldman, VP Observer Corps

As I reported last month, LWVLA is committed to restarting an Observer Corps. Our goals are to see how the local units of government in the tri-county area are modeling good government through compliance with the Open Meetings Act, and to see whether issues arising locally merit League advocacy.

But we can't do this without you! We now have a few terrific volunteers for the Observer Corps—including a couple of members who worked with the Observer Corps in the past—but we need more. And hey, I'm new at this too, so we'll be learning the ropes together. I plan to attend as many upcoming League events as possible to encourage members to help, but if you already think you might be interested or just want a better understanding of what this entails, *p/lease* email me at sfeldman@comcast.net.

Are you already attending the occasional county, city, township or school board meeting, or watching online? Do you have knowledge of upcoming local issues that may be of interest to the League? Do you have other thoughts on how best to prioritize our time? I would love to hear from you! Defending democracy requires that we know what our governmental bodies are doing.

We will have an easy reporting form so information can be shared with the volunteer group, LWVLA, and LWVMI. Please remember that we are NOT asking anyone to argue with elected officials or their fellow citizens, but merely to observe government in action.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Ann Marston, Co-chair

Welcome New Member

Jan Daly, Charlotte

Renewal notices are now being sent to current members. When you renew, you are automatically renewing your membership at the local, state, and national levels of the League of Women Voters. Your continuing engagement and support are deeply appreciated.

ONE THING

If you haven't already, jump on board the "zero waste" train *now*. Food waste in landfills puts lots of toxic methane into the air; composted it creates nutrient-rich soil. Lansing and East Lansing city residents, check here for [options](#). Others may want to compost in their [own backyards](#).

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](#)

OBSERVER CORPS: Contact [Sharon Feldman](#)



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

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