

**EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE
CAPITOL
VOTER**

MAY 2020

IMPORTANT MEMBER VOTING INFORMATION

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Annual Meeting has been postponed until health officials and the LWV-Lansing Area board determine that it is safe to meet. Following guidance from the LWVMI board, the LWV-LA board suspended Roberts' Rules of Order to enable membership to *vote from home* for new board members, as well as to approve the 2020-21 budget.

Voting information was sent to members electronically on Friday, May 15 using Constant Contact, the email service used to send the *Capitol Voter*. (Those without email received information via the USPS.)

Check you email for this important message. Don't forget to vote!

A MESSAGE FROM THE CO-PRESIDENT

A reporter asked the aging Robert Frost what he thought the most important thing about life was. He replied, "In three words, I can sum up everything I've learned about life. It goes on." He went on to say, "In all the confusions of today, with all our troubles...with politicians and people slinging the word 'fear' around, all of us become discouraged...tempted to say this is the end, the finish. But life—it goes on. It always has. It always will. Don't forget that."



The work of the League has continued to go on over the past couple of months. Please look at the reports from our committees below. You will see that they've been busy making progress in this new world that they have made brave.

Voter Services is planning ways to support voter education and registration without being able to be physically present. The Environment Committee learned how to present a Zoom webinar that will be the model to build on for the rest of our programs until it is safe for us to leave our homes and meet in groups. The Gun Violence Prevention Committee is working on the issue of increased domestic violence. The Education Committee was *already* studying online learning—how forward thinking of them! The Book Club meets on Zoom. The Board has developed and continues to develop virtual replacements for the Annual Meeting. The Program Committee is a big part of that, plus continuing with the celebration of suffrage. PLUS, finding new opportunities and methods to do outreach.

If you have additional ideas of how we can fill our mission in these very interesting times, please let me know at donnamullinslwvla@gmail.com. In the League of Women Voters, life goes on.

Donna Mullins

A STANDING OVATION

Donna Mullins

Three members of the Board of Directors will be finishing their terms and leaving by the end of the month: President (for the last two years) Margo Smith, Voter Services Director Marilyn Wilson, and Publicity Chair Carol Swinehart. We hope to give them a standing ovation in appreciation when the day comes that we can meet again, but until then a few words will have to do.

Margo Smith became an active member of the League when her children were young. (She has grandchildren now; you do the math.) She was President in 1981-82 and was willing to do the job again after nearly 30 years off. Margo brings extraordinary dedication and energy to everything. She was active in all the League's activities and committees, a strong promoter of taking stands on issues, passionate about diversity, equity and inclusion, and the local League expert on septic tanks. That is a full plate but not for Margo,

who is also a devoted grandmother, tennis player and member of her church. There's more, but let's wait until we can toast her in person.

Marilyn Wilson has been Director of Voter Services for 8 years! Marilyn's organizational skills and vision have helped to expand the League's voter registration activities with high schools and Michigan State University. Candidate forums were well received by citizens and candidates alike. Marilyn is the first to say that she did it with an army of volunteers. She is right, and they would follow her anywhere!

Carol Swinehart brought her professional experience to the job of Publicity Chair. Her experience helped every issue committee promote community forums. Her far reaching community network assisted more than a few committees in finding venues and sometimes speakers for programs. The success of our programming in the last five years is in large part due to Carol's effort at publicity and public relations.

We offer Margo, Marilyn and Carol a standing ovation for their service to the League. We will miss you at board meetings but we are certain that we will continue working side by side for years to come. Thank you!

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Donna Mullins

Judy Culham is the friendly and helpful person who keeps our local website going and our membership roster up to date. If someone googles the League in Lansing, what they see is the result of Judy's hard work (Judy's husband Barry chips in now and then, too).



Judy's involvement with the League started when she left GM and became office manager of the LWV Michigan in 2005. Part of those duties included administering the LWVMI website. Local League President Kathy Esselman wondered if Judy would be interested in running our website as well. Thus it began, and continued after Judy left her position with the State League.

Judy has the organizational skills needed to support a system that has hundreds of documents, sorted in a manner that makes them easy to access. She doesn't seem to be daunted by the constant updating needed to keep the site current or the constant learning that is necessary when involved with technology.

Because the website and the membership roster integrate with everything our local League does, Judy works with board and committee members regularly. She is, obviously, generous with her time. Judy is also gracious and forgiving as some of us are a little late in getting her information.

I know a little about what it takes to put together a website and that is why Judy is the first member being spotlighted in the *Capitol Voter*. Websites feel like they write themselves, but they most certainly do not. For your expertise, patience, and hard work...Thank you, Judy!

NOTES FROM THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Dorothy Engelman, Program VP



Have I got an opportunity for you!
Take your pick -- or do all of them!

Option 1:

According to the bylaws, we must hold an Annual Meeting; the current COVID-19 situation prevents that happening in person, so we want to be flexible and pioneering. The current "Tentative" (with a capital T) plan includes some kind of digital/electronic interaction with members. What that will look like is definitely not definite! I'm looking for members who are willing to meet over Zoom or Skype to solve this challenge. Please email me at LWVLA100years@gmail.com if you have questions or would like to volunteer. I hope to get a group together by June 1,

Option 2:

As much of the LWVLA activity for the foreseeable future will be via internet, the committee is looking for 4-6 members to be trained in the use of Zoom webinars and meetings. Donna Mullins has been coordinating these to date and has trained with a few people from the Environment Committee. You'll always be working in a team, so it's important you enjoy working collaboratively and are willing to attend training and view Zoom tutorials. A sense of humor and flexibility will also be helpful! This is a great opportunity to learn new skills, meet new folks and help the League adjust to new circumstances. We hope to get started within a week or two. Thanks in advance for your willingness to help!

There are several positions on the team with different skill sets:

1. Tech-friendly and willing to learn and practice new skills
2. Good organizational and writing skills to create a story board

For more information, contact Donna Mullins at donnamullinslwvla@gmail.com.

Option 3:

The LWVLA Book Club meets the second Tuesday of each month at 10 am via Zoom and you're invited to participate! It's a great opportunity to socialize with others while learning. ***The Fate of Food*** by Amanda Little is the book for June 9. In the fascinating story of the sustainable food revolution, the environmental journalist and professor asks the question: Is the future of food looking bleak—or better than ever?

Part of being a member of any organization is involvement and I hope you'll raise your hand to help! Stay safe and be well!

Dorothy Engelman
V. P. of Program Planning

LWVLA100years@gmail.com

435.879.1558

"Be the change you wish to see in the world" ...Gandhi

VOTER SERVICE WORK IN THE AGE OF COVID-19 **Marilyn Wilson, Voter Service Director**



Elections don't stop (we hope!) during the COVID-19 pandemic, and neither do voter service opportunities. Some of the ways we are staying active and maintaining a presence in the greater Lansing area include:

- Sending several PowerPoints and videos to social studies/ government teachers for use in their distance learning classrooms.
- Sending requests to candidates for information to be included in Vote411 and building the Vote411.org site for candidate information.
- Planning webinar forums for candidates in the tri-county area.
- Exploring opportunities to distribute materials on voting, absentee voter applications, and candidates to public libraries and senior centers during the summer months.
- Developing plans with Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson to participate in a webinar in August or September focused on election issues and election security.
- Working with schools and teachers to facilitate voter information and registration in the fall.
- Developing details for working with local clerks regarding absentee voting, polling help, and voter education for upcoming elections.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the myriad numbers of volunteers who have helped promote the cause of democracy through voter education/registration drives, candidate forums, and distribution of Voter Guides over the past eight years that I have been Voter Service Director. It has been an energizing experience working with all of you talented, enthusiastic, and energetic League members. Together we have indeed made a difference!

I encourage you to give Joanne Winkelman, the incoming Voter Service Director, your continued support in this critical fall election. She is ready and eager to pick up the baton and run the next lap to the fall election and beyond!

COVID-19 AND GUNS

Melinda Frame
Gun Violence Prevention Committee

The COVID-19 pandemic has been an anxious time for many of us. Stay-at-home orders have created an unexpected isolation. There is an increased tension within homes over child care and education. Fear of exposure to the virus, serious health concerns for our families, and the uncertainty of our current and future economic welfare have contributed to a high level of stress. These same factors, along with a spike in weapons and ammunition sales across the state¹, are unfortunately leading to an increased potential for gun violence.



Unintentional Shootings: In the U.S., "...unintentional shootings by children increased 43 percent in March and April compared to average gun deaths during the same two months over the last three years, according to data analyzed by the advocacy group Everytown for Gun Safety."² With schools closed, kids are spending more time at home, which increases the risk that they may find unsecured guns. Although Michigan does not have legislation regulating safe storage of firearms and ammunition, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends storing guns unloaded and locked, with ammunition kept in a separate location.

Domestic Violence: Recent contacts made to the Michigan Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence more than doubled in March and April compared to this same time last year.³ Unfortunately, if an abuser has access to a firearm, it is five times more likely that the victim will be killed. Domestic violence assaults involving a gun are 12 times more likely to result in death than those involving other weapons or bodily force.⁴

Suicides: As reported by *Bridge Magazine*, "A recent study by a large Kent County mental health provider forecasts a 32% rise in Michigan suicides this year due to COVID-19."⁵ The combination of unemployment, social isolation, and a potential decrease in funding for mental health facilities may lead to a rise in mental health issues. To counter these concerns, the state has established a website—*Stay Home, Stay Well* ([Michigan.gov/Staywell](https://www.michigan.gov/staywell))—offering connections to mental health support specialists.

1. "Guns and viruses: Why Michigan gun and ammo sales are exploding," *Bridge*, March 19, 2020.
<https://www.bridgemi.com/economy/guns-and-viruses-why-michigan-gun-and-ammo-sales-are-exploding>
2. "Alarming" spike in deadly unintentional shootings by kids as gun sales soar during lockdowns." Erin Donaghue, CBS News, May 8, 2020.
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/unintentional-shootings-guns-kids-sales-coronavirus-lockdowns/>
3. "Stay home, don't stay safe. Domestic violence calls up amid Michigan lockdown," *Bridge*, April 19, 2020.

<https://www.bridgemi.com/children-families/stay-home-dont-stay-safe-domestic-violence-calls-amid-michigan-lockdown>

4. <http://lawcenter.giffords.org>

5. "With higher suicide risk during coronavirus, Michigan makes plans to help," Ted Roelofs, Bridge, May 5, 2020.

<https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-health-watch/higher-suicide-risk-during-coronavirus-michigan-makes-plans-help>

ADVICE FROM THE PAST

Debby Starnes, Development Director



As the Development person for our League chapter's board, I thought I would share an interesting item published in 1886 as a fundraiser for the Suffrage Movement which has been republished. *The Women's Suffrage Cookbook* was edited by Hattie A. Burr of Boston, MA. She states that it is a practical and carefully prepared resource from contributors who are eminent in their professions as teachers, lecturers, physicians, ministers, and authors. I have skipped listing the "Election Cake" and "Eminent Opinions on Woman Suffrage"

and gone straight to the parts that apply to us as we deal with the pandemic of 2020. May you all stay safe.

Disinfectants.

Cholide of Zinc. This is one of the best of disinfectants. It is superior to the copper as solution, but being more expensive, is not so available for use in large quantities. Prepare in proportion of chloride of zinc, one pound: water, two gallons. Throw this into kitchen sinks, house drains, cess-pools, water-closets, and the like; also use it in chamber-vessels, about the sick-room.

Now, if you have a room to fumigate from the wicked COVID-19 a suffragist might use the following:

Fumigation. To fumigate a room, put some sulphur (brimstone), broken into pieces, in a tin vessel and set this on a brick which is placed in a tub having a little water in the bottom. Set the sulphur afire and hasten from the room, having all windows and doors tightly closed, and all cracks well stuffed, even to the keyhole. Keep the room closed for six hours, then open and air it. Eighteen ounces of sulphur should be used for each space of one thousand cubic feet—a room ten feet square.

The Rev. Annie H. Shaw

REPORT OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Judy Andre

The Education Committee met, by Zoom, on May 14. We have been studying online education in its various forms, a broad inquiry we expect to take several years. The pandemic, however, has presented us with an immediate and specific focus: a sudden and complete move to online education forced by the COVID-19 quarantine. Now that schools have been forced to move everything online, with almost no preparation, we want to get a sense of what's happening. Each of us will try to interview someone involved: a teacher, a superintendent, or perhaps tech support personnel. There are five of us; each will contact a different district or academy. We are drawing up a set of questions to frame the conversations, and realize that we may have to wait until this school year, with its unprecedented intensity, ends.



Informed by what we learn, we hope to organize a luncheon presentation for the League this fall. We will meet, again by Zoom, on Thursday June 18 at 4 pm. We would welcome anyone interested in these issues to join us. Contact Bettie Menchik (menchikb@msu.edu).

RECYCLING AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Ellen Link, Environment Committee



A recent *Frontline* report, "[Plastics Wars](#)," shown on PBS on March 31, delivered an eye-opening exposé regarding the extensive environmental damage caused by our burgeoning use of plastics—especially single-use plastics. But it also put forth the premise that the plastics industry created the promotional concept of recycling to hide the truth that their product never really goes away.

We all want to believe that recycling is a virtuous, environmentally friendly activity—and it is, to some extent. Metals, paper, cardboard: all can be recycled into other products, thereby conserving natural resources and landfill space.

But plastics is another ball of wax, er, petroleum. Sometimes plastics must be trashed simply because they are so unclean that they will contaminate the rest of the load. And what can be accepted changes depending on what facility you use; rules, based on markets, vary everywhere. The introduction of single-stream recycling led many folks to think they could just throw anything in the bin and it would magically disappear. It's no wonder China stopped taking our materials. And how many of us haven't seen the [ugly photos](#) of sea life slowly killed due to their encounters with inescapable plastics? With the plastics industry now geared to expand, this will only get worse.

We all have a choice to make. Either we take the time and (not that much) effort to recycle properly only that which *can* be recycled, or we contribute to a contaminated *world*. The best way to do that is to think about what we buy in

the first place. Pay attention to packaging. Think about better options—get the kids to help as part of a game (maybe with a reward?)—and then alter your shopping habits. Buy in bulk when you can and, when commerce gets back to normal, use your own saved plastic bags and containers or cloth bags (remembering to take them with you can be the hardest part!). And take along your own refillable water bottle, coffee mug and/or doggie bag when you're out and about.

But even better, consider the 3Rs, the first of which is REDUCE. Do you really need that item? Can you REUSE (second 'R') rather than buy new, or buy used? Then recycle. Also, check out our file on the [4Rs](#) on the LWVLA website's Environment page. And, as the song goes, don't forget to teach your children well.



NOTE: Unfortunately, recycling has become another victim of the pandemic, temporarily closing down many drop-off facilities (East Lansing, MSU and Charlotte). Still open are [Meridian Township](#) (517-703-4498), [Granger Recycling Center](#) on Wood Rd. (517-372-2800), and [St Johns Lions Club](#) Drop-off Center in St Johns (989-640-1313).

ONE THING

Plugged-in items draw power even when they're not being used.
Save money—and energy—by unplugging items not in use.

WELCOME TO A NEW MEMBER

Colleen McNamara - Okemos

OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP MAKE DEMOCRACY WORK!

All committees are meeting virtually using Zoom. Contact the chair for more information.

VOTER SERVICE: Contact Marilyn Wilson
at wilsonmlwvla@gmail.com or 517-927-7164.

K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE: Contact Judy Andre
judith.arlene59@gmail.com or Bettie Menchik menchikb@msu.edu.

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE: Contact: Marty Couretas
couretam@comcast.net or Melinda Frame framem@msu.edu.

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE: Contact Ellen Link elink767@gmail.com.

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