

**EMPOWERING VOTERS  
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**

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**THE  
CAPITOL  
VOTER**

**NOVEMBER 2019**

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**LWVLA CALENDAR**

**Sunday, November 17 through Saturday, November 22. LWVLA Fundraiser, Schuler Books and Music,** Meridian Mall or on-line. See item below for details.

**Tuesday, November 19 -- Centennial Celebration Planning Committee.** 6:00 p.m., Grand Traverse Pie, East Lansing.

**Thursday, November 21 -- Program Planning Committee.** 5:30 p.m., Edgewood United Church, 469 Hagadorn, East Lansing.

**Tuesday, December 10 -- LWVLA Book Discussion Group.** 10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Grand Traverse Pie, 1403 E. Grand River, East Lansing.

**Monday, January 13 -- LWVLA Luncheon. *Impact of Schools of Choice on Lansing Schools.*** 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Spartan Hall of Fame Cafe, 1600 Lake Lansing Road, East Lansing.

**Saturday, January 18 -- Gun Violence Prevention Committee.** 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon, East Lansing Public Library, 950 Abbot Rd, East Lansing .

**Wednesday, January 22 -- Voter Registration Workshop.** 5:30 to 6:30 pm,  
Meridian Township Fire Department Community Room, corner of Okemos Road  
and Central Park.

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## **MESSAGE FROM THE CO-PRESIDENTS**

### **Margo Kauahine Smith and Donna Mullins**

Here are some of my observations about LWVLA as we near the end of 2019.

Membership is growing. At the Nov. 11 luncheon meeting with State Representative Julie Brixie, who spoke about gun violence prevention legislation, my guest, Deborah Wiese, joined to become our 205th member. When I told her how Pat Quinn, Diane Levy and I recently registered 37 students at Eastern High School, she asked how she, too, can help register voters. Deb said, "I can do it if I have some help. I can bring my service dog and stand in the hallway to ask students to register to vote. My dog always attracts attention." Deb doesn't let her blindness get in the way. So I said we would find a way to make this happen in high schools, at rallies at the State Capitol, and at community events.

Our programs and candidate meetings are attracting record numbers. The candidates meeting for East Lansing City Council attracted a standing-room only crowd of 135 persons. At our September program sponsored by our Environment Committee, the young speaker for Sunrise said, "Who would have thought that a meeting in the basement of a church would attract 105 people on a Thursday evening to talk about climate change!"

As an area League, we cover Ingham, Eaton and Clinton counties, but most of our work is conducted in Ingham County. So the question is, how can we best serve people in Eaton and Clinton counties? One way is by offering Make Democracy Work town hall meetings for people in these areas. John and Deanna Hanieski have teamed up with Howard and Nell Pizzo to present three town hall meetings in Eaton County on new voter rules, the importance of the census, and how redistricting will work. Alice Hill and Melany Mack will present these Make Democracy Work meetings in Bath and DeWitt in Clinton County. Voter Service Director Marilyn Wilson wants to register high school seniors in these counties and can use your help in identifying teachers who will invite the LWVLA into their classrooms and their schools.

We have hard-working, thoughtful, and creative leaders who bring these outstanding programs and events to you and to people in our larger community. I am grateful to all of you, to members for your support and

donations, and to our volunteers who work tirelessly to Empower Voters and Defend Democracy.

Note: As co-presidents, Donna Mullins and I rotate writing the message for the *Capitol Voter*. Although it was attributed to me, the October message was written by Donna Mullins.

*Margo Kauahine Smith*



**Schuler Books Pitches in for the League!  
Fundraising Event - Schuler Books at Meridian Mall**

**SUNDAY, NOV. 17 - SATURDAY, NOV. 23**

Schuler Books will donate to LWV-LA  
20% of total of new book and gift item purchases!  
Fabulous or what?!

**At checkout you must say you want to support the LWV-LA  
with your purchase (otherwise we get nothing).**

The store is filled with gift inspirations—books, puzzles, quality toys, cd's, State of Michigan items, paper goods, and gifts galore! Shopping in-store is a pleasure, with more choices than online.

HOURS: 9 AM TO 9 PM MONDAY - SATURDAY  
SUNDAY 11 AM TO 6 PM

SHOP ANYTIME ONLINE: [www.schulerbooks.com](http://www.schulerbooks.com)  
Code: **Vote**

**Debby Starnes, Development Director**

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**NOTES FROM THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE**  
**Dorothy Engelman, Program V.P.**

Wow! It's time to take a breath after all the great programs the LWVLA has had in the last month! Please look at our Facebook Page and [website](#) for a recap.



The next Luncheon Meeting is a buffet on January 13, 2020 (!!)

at Spartan Hall of Fame, with Lansing School Board Member, Guillermo Lopez, addressing "The Impact of Schools of Choice on Lansing Schools."

The cost is \$15/person, which includes the buffet, beverage, tax and gratuity. Reservations are necessary ... watch for the invitation in mid-December.

Plans for the Centennial Celebration are at the top of the Program Committee's list now and we'll have updates in the coming month, with a kick-off in January 2020.

***Please, please, please*** support the Schuler Books & Music Fundraiser November 17 - 23! It's an excellent way to benefit YOU, the League, as well as a local business. See details elsewhere in the *Voter*. Thanks to Debbie Starnes for her leadership in this undertaking.

Speaking of books, the LWVLA Book Discussion Group will meet on Tuesday, December 10, 10 a.m. at Grand Traverse Pie Company on Grand River in East Lansing. The December pick is *Dying of Whiteness* by Jonathon Metz and all are welcome to participate. For more information, please contact Co-President Donna Mullins - [mullinsdj@outlook.com](mailto:mullinsdj@outlook.com).

Thank you for your continued support and ideas! As we approach Thanksgiving, I'll close with this thought: "Showing gratitude is one of the simplest, yet most powerful things, humans can do for each other." (Randy Pausch)  
I'm grateful for you and your participation in the League of Women Voters!

Dorothy Engelman  
435.879.1558 (text or call)  
[Lwvla100years@gmail.com](mailto:Lwvla100years@gmail.com)

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## **GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE**

**Martha Couretas & Melinda Frame**

Did You Know...?

Lawmakers who are reluctant to support "Red Flag Laws" and laws that support Universal Background Checks often suggest that mental illness may be a factor in deaths and injury from firearm violence. However, a Columbia University study attributes only 3-5 percent of violent events to mental illness. Other factors, such as substance abuse, account for a larger portion of violent behavior. (JAMA Psychiatry - <https://doi.org/10.1176/ps.2010.61.7.652>)

In support, a separate study from the University of Texas Medical Branch concluded that the link between mental health and violence is small. Although public perception may be that violence is caused by people who are mentally ill, people with mental illness are often more susceptible to being victims of violence rather than perpetrators. ("Dangerous weapons or dangerous people? The temporal associations between gun violence and mental health." Lu and Temple, *Preventative Medicine*, April 2019, 121:1-6. Here's a [link to the article](#))

An additional study from the American Psychological Association found that the most consistent and powerful predictor of future violence is a history of violent behavior. The presence and use of a gun were found to greatly increase the odds that violence would lead to a fatality. Firearm prohibitions for high-risk groups—domestic violence offenders, persons convicted of violent misdemeanor crimes, and individuals with mental illness who have been adjudicated as being a threat to themselves or others—have been shown to reduce violence. These studies suggest that we should think about environments that may promote gun violence and how the implementation of more restrictive gun laws may aid in the reduction of gun-related deaths.

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## **CITY OF LANSING MUST ADDRESS THE CLIMATE CRISIS**

**Elaine Fischhoff, Environment Committee**

As reported here last July, the board of LWVLA formally acknowledged the climate crisis in June 2019 and joined the League of Women Voters of Oregon, California, Florida, Massachusetts, Illinois and Colorado in passing a climate emergency resolution as put forth by the Environment Committee. Our resolution called upon the LWVMI Board and local leagues "to advocate for consideration of 'Climate Emergency Declarations' for the state and all county and local municipalities (governments)." LWVMI followed suit in August by passing a resolution calling for members of local units of government to adopt their own "climate goals and policies based on the best available climate science to combat this climate emergency."

The time has come to press the City of Lansing to take such action. Unlike other Michigan units of government that already passed Climate Action Plans—among them the cities of Traverse City (2011), Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti (both in 2012), Grand Rapids (2013), Kalamazoo and Meridian Twp. (both 2017), with many others, like East Lansing, formulating sustainability plans. Sadly, the City of Lansing has not taken any action to recognize the urgency of addressing all of the adverse impacts of climate change since it passed a resolution committing to the Paris Climate Accord. Nor does Lansing have any climate action plan to migrate to sustainable city operations and eliminate greenhouse gas emissions. Further, it does not have any position in city government specifically tasked with developing and implementing a climate action plan.

Consequently, at its November meeting the LWVLA board voted to ask the Lansing City Council to adopt a climate emergency resolution.

[http://www.lwvnet.org/lwv/mi/lansing/files/resolution\\_to\\_declare\\_a\\_climate\\_emergency.pdf](http://www.lwvnet.org/lwv/mi/lansing/files/resolution_to_declare_a_climate_emergency.pdf) It will then entreat the City of Lansing to adopt a climate action plan and create a Sustainability Manager position.

[http://www.lwvnet.org/lwv/mi/lansing/files/letter\\_to\\_accompany\\_resolution.pdf](http://www.lwvnet.org/lwv/mi/lansing/files/letter_to_accompany_resolution.pdf) The

Intergovernmental Relations Committee will be sent a proposed resolution to endorse and place on the agenda for the full Council. Our chapter will be pursuing these actions in tandem with the Lansing Area Environmental Action Team, which has been working diligently to convince the Board of Water and Light to move more swiftly from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

But it's not enough for organizations alone to address this issue. We need every citizen to weigh in with his/her elected officials—whether they represent the City of Lansing, a county government, or any other municipality—asking that actions be taken, *now*, to combat climate change before it's too late. The future of our environment, our livelihoods and economy, and our children depend on it.

**[READ MORE](#)** about climate actions in other Michigan communities.

Videos of the speakers at the September LWVLA Climate Change Forum are now available for viewing:

Part 1: Dr. Jeff Andresen "Past and Future Climatic Changes for the Great Lakes" <https://youtu.be/wf6lJjCjdzk>

Part 2: Dr. Missy Stults "Climate Change and Innovations in Ann Arbor" <https://youtu.be/9MyPv8cYsI>

Part 3: Sylvan's Neighborhood - "A Sustainable Community and Farm" <https://youtu.be/4kb4A72kPZ8>

Part 4: Environmental Action in the Lansing and Grand Rapids areas. <https://youtu.be/cohIB7WKIQY>

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## **WHAT'S SO COMPLICATED ABOUT FUNDING MICHIGAN'S SCHOOLS?**

**Joanne Winkelman, Education Committee**

On October 29, the LWV-LA Education Committee sponsored a forum entitled, "What's so Complicated about Funding Michigan's Schools?" Although speaker Craig Thiel, Research Director of Citizens Research Council of Michigan, was unable to attend, committee co-chair Bettie Menchik used Mr. Thiel's slides to provide a thorough overview of school funding.

The key objective of Proposal A, enacted in 1994, was to substantially reduce the property tax burden in Michigan, which essentially paid for local school operations, by increasing the role of state taxes in financing public education. It did this by creating a foundation allowance (per-pupil grant) as the primary mechanism for allocating funding for school operations. It also established a per-pupil funding *floor* for each school district to reduce funding disparities across the state. By most accounts, Proposal A has accomplished these objectives.

One result, however, has been to shift what had been local school funding decisions to the state and to tie it more closely to state economic conditions. School funding now competes with other state priorities via the state budget process, while local school boards are unable to respond to increased service demands through higher taxes.

David Arsen, Professor of Education Policy at the MSU College of Education, reiterated some of those details, then shared his team's research. According to their report, *Michigan School Finance at the Crossroads, A Quarter Century of State Control*, one significant consequence of Proposal A was a curtailing of local voters' discretion to set millages for operating revenues. While most of the operational revenue follows students when they switch to another district or to a charter school, the foundation allowance has never been calibrated to the actual cost of providing education services. Proposal A did not address school facilities, which are funded exclusively by local property taxes with voter approval. The complete report is available online at <http://education.msu.edu/ed-policy-phd/pdf/Michigan-School-Finance-at-the-Crossroads-A-Quarter-Century-of-State-Control.pdf>

**READ MORE** about the Education Forum.

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## **ANNUAL MEETING OF THE LWV LAKE MICHIGAN REGION**

**Margo Smith  
& Deanna Hanieski**

This year's 52nd Annual Meeting of the LWV Lake Michigan Region, held October 25 and 26 at Lakeside, Michigan, was attended by our chapter's John Hanieski (a

delegate), Deanna Hanieski, and Margo Smith. This interleague organization is made up of 42 dues-paying local leagues within the Lake Michigan watershed area, along with four state leagues — Michigan, Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin. LWVLA pays annual dues, so all in our membership are considered to be members of this interleague organization. The Lake Michigan Region League strives to protect and defend the health of Lake Michigan through education and advocacy on issues affecting the lake. These include invasive species mitigation, preventing contaminants from entering the groundwater and the lake, and protecting the lake from excessive water withdrawals.

The theme of this year's meeting was the groundwater in the Lake Michigan Region—what For Love of Water (FLOW) calls "The Sixth Great Lake." Keynote speaker Liz Kirkwood, Executive Director of FLOW, outlined the many threats assaulting our groundwater. In Michigan, about 45% of our state's population depends on groundwater for their drinking water source, yet we treat it pretty shabbily. For instance, Michigan is *the only state in the nation* without a statewide law regulating septic system contamination.

There are thousands of sites in the Great Lakes region spewing alarming toxins into the ground. Michigan has over 3,000 groundwater sites where the contamination is so bad that the site has been withdrawn from any further use. Of particular concern is contamination from PFAS. Poly- and Perfluoroalkyl substances are a group of chemicals occurring in thousands of products, including fire retardants, firefighting foams, water repellents, and

non-stick cookware. It is even in dental floss! These chemicals are very stable but water soluble and migrate in groundwater very quickly. They are known to affect internal organs as well as infant and child growth and development, and are likely carcinogens. Suzanne Dixon from Michigan and David Mueller of Illinois, board members of the LWV Lake Michigan Region, provided us with information on PFAS, and Suzanne related what Michigan is doing to respond to this brewing crisis with an interdepartmental team and other experts. She toured the sanitation station where she learned that PFAS-contaminated sludge would be sent to a special landfill in Michigan set up to contain PFAS.

**[READ MORE](#)** about the LWV-LMR Annual Meeting.



## **VOTER SERVICE INITIATIVES FOR 2020 OUR DEMOCRACY NEEDS YOU!**

**Marilyn Wilson, Voter Services**

Please plan to attend a Voter Registration Workshop on Wednesday, January 22, 5:30-6:30 pm at the Meridian Township Fire Department Community Room on Okemos Rd. . The meeting will be used to gear up for the Presidential Primary on March 10, as well as the general election on November 3, 2020.

- Agenda will include:
- Questions about the voter registration form, the absentee voting application, and the processes of registering voters
- High school visitations/opportunities for voter registration during winter/spring
- Senior center visits for updating voter registrations and answering election questions
- PPT about voting requirements, rights, processes, and sources of information used in schools
- Plans for working with local clerks on support for voting procedures, poll workers, and absentee ballot counting boards
- Materials for distribution:
- New Voter Rules in Michigan
- Statistics on recent voting patterns (gender, race/ethnicity/age ) and trends for 2020
- Flyers to post/distribute about registration, absentee voting processes and deadlines
- Flyers on important facts about voting rights in Michigan
- Postcards and bookmarks with voting info
- Pamphlets from LWVMI about voting rights

Please contact Marilyn Wilson at [wilsonmlwvla@gmail.com](mailto:wilsonmlwvla@gmail.com) or at 517-927-7164 to indicate your interest in attending. Your attendance does not require you to participate in voter registration drives, but we do hope many of you will!

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!**

- Joyce Banish, Bath
- Laura Bates, Okemos
- Margaret Cottrill, Okemos
- Laska Creagh, Williamston
- Nancy Cuddeback, East Lansing
- Michael Dunn, East Lansing
- Barbara Edison, Lansing

- George Lafkas, East Lansing
- Betty Seagull, Lansing
- Jan Shoemaker, Okemos
- Ioana Sones, Okemos
- Joe Verreau, Okemos
- Deborah Wiese, East Lansing
- Kris Wisiewski, Lansing



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS' OF LANSING AREA

is sharing this information with its members as part of the upcoming 2020 Centennial

Celebration of the passage of the 19th Amendment.

## The 19th Amendment at 100: Women's Voices Then and Now

### *Upcoming Exhibition Commemorating Voting Rights for Women*

The **Michigan Chapter of the Women's Caucus for Art** is hosting an art show celebrating and commemorating the 19th Amendment.

### **Express and honor the importance of the Centennial through art!**

Exhibition is open January 24-March 2, 2020, at the Swords Into Plowshares Peace Center and Gallery, Detroit, Michigan.

#### **Opening Reception**

**Friday, January 24, 2020 6:00-8:00PM.**

The Center is open to the public, Thursday-Saturday, 1:00-4:00PM. The jurors are Dr. Clare Rogan (Detroit Institute of Art), Amy Lazet (College for Creative Studies), and Michelle Word (Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum).



#### **Submit your Art!**

Depict your message through paint, print, metal, clay, fiber, mixed media, paper, video, text, performance, computer-based art, or photography. Submissions open to artists 18+.

**Entry deadline: December 6, 2019**

You do not have to be a WCAMI (<https://wcami.org/>) member to enter.

Go to [EntryThingy](#) to enter on the Michigan WCA page, The 19th Amendment at 100: Women's Voices Then and Now.

For more info, please contact:

**Jane Reiter, WCAMI Membership Secretary**  
**517.327.0938**  
retreadart.com

#### *Amendment XIX*

*The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.*

**OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP  
MAKE DEMOCRACY WORK!**

**VOTER SERVICE:** Contact Marilyn Wilson at [wilsonmlwvla@gmail.com](mailto:wilsonmlwvla@gmail.com) or 517-927-7164 if you'd like to volunteer for potential voter registration and education events during October.

**K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE:** 3rd Wednesday of the month, 5:30 p.m. at Grand Traverse Pie, East Lansing. Contact: Judy Andre [judith.arlene59@gmail.com](mailto:judith.arlene59@gmail.com) or Bettie Menchik [menchikb@msu.edu](mailto:menchikb@msu.edu).

**GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE:** 3rd Saturday of the month, 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon, East Lansing Public Library. Contact: Marty Couretas [couretam@comcast.net](mailto:couretam@comcast.net) or Melinda Frame [framem@msu.edu](mailto:framem@msu.edu).

**ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE:** 4th Tuesday of the month, 1:30 p.m., Meridian Township Community Room. (Okemos Road Fire Station) Contact Ellen Link [elink767@gmail.com](mailto:elink767@gmail.com).