

**EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



THE CAPITOL VOTER

**OCTOBER
2021**

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LWVLA CALENDAR

Monday, October 18, 7-8:30 pm - "Redistricting: Mapping Your Future Representation," an online event open to the public. Please pre-register [here](#).

Tuesday, October 19, 7-8:30 pm - "Plugging Into The Future: Making Wise Energy Choices," an online event open to the public. Please pre-register [here](#).

Saturday, October 30, 1-6 pm. - LWVLA Voting Booth. Contact [Joanne Winkelman](#).

Tuesday, November 9, at 10 am. - Book Discussion Group via Zoom. Contact [Donna Mullins](#) for info or to participate.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT Donna Mullins



Here's something you all know: The League is about voting. Born of the suffrage movement, our foremothers were willing to risk physical harm, imprisonment, angry relatives and even some of their principles to demand their right to vote. That's because voting is the path to policy and policy affects lives. There are three opportunities this month to participate in activities focused on voting and policy.

The Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (MICRC) will hold public hearings in Lansing on Thursday, October 21. There will be an afternoon and evening meeting. (You can volunteer to be an usher at the meeting by [emailing me](#).) The commission now has draft maps for state house and senate, as well as congressional districts. These hearings will give the public a chance to comment on them.

Are you wondering how to learn about the draft maps? We are sponsoring a webinar that will include a little bit of background on redistricting and an opportunity to view the draft maps. Matt Grossmann, Director of the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research, will be at the October 18 Redistricting Forum, 7 p.m., to help us understand the current draft maps. The NAACP is cosponsoring this event and there will be diverse panelists to help make the case that people should be involved in the process. This was put together quickly, upon receiving notice of the commission meeting, with the help of our Community of Interest Committee and friends of the committee. [Fair Maps](#) is a major focus of LWV. Register [here](#).

We value voting because we care about issues. The League strongly supports actively addressing climate change—a really big issue. Besides voting for change, we can act for change. The eager Environmental Advocacy Group is sponsoring a webinar—Plugging into the Future: Making Wise Energy Choices—on Tuesday, October 19. You'll learn about cool electric products that are better for the planet and even see electric tools and cars that members are using right now!

Did you notice that ALL of these meetings are the same week? Believe me, we did! The MICRC public comment meeting date was outside our control, so the week is packed. Thanks to all who worked to bring this information to our League and beyond!

Together,
Donna

PROGRAM NOTES **Susan R. Chalgian, VP-Programs**

There are two scheduled LWVLA programs coming up and you won't want to miss either one! Both are Zoom events open to the public (you may want to tell your friends!); each offers a link to register to attend.

On Monday, October 18 at 7 p.m., LWVLA is hosting the very timely webinar "**Redistricting: Mapping Your Future Representation.**" You can read more about it in the President's Message. Register to attend [here](#).

And on Tuesday, October 19 at 7 p.m., the Environmental Advocacy Group will present "**Plugging Into The Future: Making Wise Energy Choices.**" Join guest speaker John Sarver of the GLREA for an interactive discussion on options for replacing fossil fuel-powered devices with electric versions. Learn the comparative costs, health and climate benefits, and the latest public policies and trends. Get advice on tackling climate issues specific to Michigan and watch short videos demonstrating electric vehicles and various appliances in action! Register to attend [here](#).

Any members with program ideas or interest in planning one, please feel free to [email](#) or call me at 517-420-0637.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR LWVLA BOOTH ON OCTOBER 30! **Joanne Winkelman, Chair**

Volunteers are needed to pass out League “swag” and candy as families drive by our booth on October 30.

In addition, the League will be the last booth in line, so we have an additional opportunity to encourage the families to register and vote inside the Clerk’s Office.

The Clerk has created a children's ballot so the entire family can participate in the election process.

Last year was such a success that the City Clerk is bringing it back! If you can volunteer for an hour or so, please contact [Joanne Winkelman](#) or call/text me at 248-804-7433.



MAKE DEMOCRACY WORK UPDATE

Donna Mullins

LWVLA will be submitting the following opinion piece by local member Judy Karandjeff about the efforts that will lead to disenfranchising voters in Michigan. We are proud that she is an important part of this effort to protect voting rights!

Voting is our foremost democratic process. Many people throughout history have fought for the right of specific groups to vote.

A citizen-led proposal in Michigan threatens to derail decades of progress. Secure MI Vote has received approval of its petition by our state’s Board of Canvassers to enact legislation that would take away Election Day voting options, make absentee voting less accessible and gut funding for election administration in Michigan.

In short, it would make voting harder for many people.

The League of Women Voters of Lansing Area, along with other local Leagues and the League of Women Voters of Michigan, is working hard to educate voters on the security of our elections.

Here is what we know.

*The proposal comes after the 2020 election, when we heard claims of fraud and that the presidential election results were unfair or incorrect. However, we know **those claims are false** because multiple audits, court cases and a report by the Michigan Senate Oversight Committee have all affirmed our election was fair and secure.*

*In Michigan, registered voters who don't have their photo ID at the polls can verify their identity at their polling location by taking an oath and signing an affidavit. Thanks to this security feature in **Michigan's current voter identification law**, more than 30,000 registered voters who did not have their photo ID at their polling place were able to perform their civic duty and vote in the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections.*

The proposal eliminates this option and others that make voting more accessible to all, particularly Black and brown communities, seniors, youth, people with disabilities and rural voters.

The proposal also includes an appropriation that, if approved by the Michigan Legislature, would prevent a vote of the people from overturning the law, further denying voters of Michigan a voice on this issue.

We know what voters want because they told us in 2018 when they overwhelmingly approved Proposal 3, providing a constitutional amendment to enhance voting opportunities yet maintain their integrity and widely expanding voter access with the creation of no-reason absentee voting, among other measures, that made voting more accessible to eligible voters. Our state already has safeguards for elections. Not only is the proposal unnecessary, it disenfranchises voters from participating in the democratic process which so many people have fought for. We cannot go backwards and silence the voices of voters in Michigan.

LWVLA will be joining other local Leagues to educate the public regarding this grave threat. If you would like to participate in this response, [email me!](#)



OBSERVER CORPS
Valery Lafferty, Chair

We had another informative round of observations in September. We also had a great discussion with Eric Schertzing, Ingham County Treasurer, at our monthly meeting. He explained that a large portion of federal monies will be (or have been) targeted to offset the devastating losses incurred in our county due to COVID. In addition, Eric offered that the purpose of the yet-to-be-determined federal funds should be "transformative" to

Ingham County...and other counties. The Observer Corps is eager to witness those discussions by our elected and appointed officials—those who will marshal the represented into a more vibrant and healthy future!

Unfortunately, a second meeting about governmental spending with LWV Washtenaw and Washtenaw County Treasurer Catherine McClary has been postponed. We will try to reschedule.

The OC is doing important and interesting work—and we could use more volunteers! Please reach out to me, [Donna Mullins](#), [Cele Friestater](#) or [Beth Moore](#) with your questions or to sign up. It's a great way to contribute to the mission of the League by volunteering a few hours a month. For a better understanding of what we do, read the Observer Corps [reports](#) for September.

NOVEMBER BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

Donna Mullins



Our discussion of *Second Shift: The Inside Story of the Keep GM Movement* is delayed until the November 9 meeting at 10 a.m. via Zoom. It was written by local authors about Lansing's successful effort to keep GM alive in the city. Author and Spartan basketball fan Ray Tadgerson will join us to tell us more about the backstory. If you would like to receive a link to the

meeting, [email me](#).

OCTOBER IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

Newly Introduced Legislation

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

Presently, petitions are circulating across Michigan to support newly introduced bi-partisan legislation to protect survivors of intimate partner violence from armed abusers. Coordinated Michigan House and Senate bills were introduced on October 6 that prohibit abusers convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence crimes from possessing firearms.

Why is the federal law that already prohibits abusers from possessing firearms not sufficient?

State and local prosecutors cannot enforce the federal prohibition because they lack the corresponding jurisdiction. Enforcement of the federal law is restricted to agencies like the FBI and ATF. Michigan needs a similar state law prohibition in order for those who violate the law in Michigan to be prosecuted.

Title 18, United States Code, Section 922(g)(9) (the Lautenberg Amendment, passed in the fall of 1996). [This provision](#) amends the Federal Gun Control Act of 1968 by banning the possession of firearms by individuals convicted of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence.

What is the Michigan bipartisan legislation that would prohibit abusers convicted of misdemeanor domestic violence crimes from possessing firearms?

Senate bills 0678 and 0679, sponsored by Stephanie Chang (D, 1) Wayne Schmidt (R, 37), Rosemary Bayer (D, 12) and Sean McCann (D, 20). The bills have been assigned to committee on Judiciary and Public Safety. House bills 5371 and 5372, sponsored by Caire Rendon (R, 103) and Amos O’Neal (D, 95), have been assigned to committee on Judiciary.

The LWVLA will follow the committee hearings and will work with both local advocates and LWVMI Advocacy to issue Action Alerts when support is needed.

What can I do now to support the process of moving this legislation forward?

Write thank-you emails to the co-sponsors of these bills. The principals are: **Senator Wayne Schmidt**, **Sen. Stephanie Chang**, **Rep. Claire Rendon**, and **Rep. Amos O’Neal**.

Follow the progress of these bills. Remember that firearms and intimate partner violence are inextricably linked. In Michigan, two-thirds of women killed by an intimate partner were killed with a gun. Other family members are often killed in the same attack. Research has found that the federal law prohibiting gun purchase and possession by people convicted of domestic violence-related misdemeanors led to 17% fewer gun-related homicides among female intimate partner victims and 25% fewer gun homicides among child domestic violence victims ([Giffords Law Center](#)).

THE ENVIRONMENTAL SIDE OF THE LEAGUE

Ellen Link, EAG Co-chair

Why, you might ask, is my League addressing environmental issues? I thought the LWV was mostly concerned with voting and elections.

Take a look at the integral issues outlined on the LWVUS site and you’ll find the League takes a firm [stand on the environment](#):

“Since the 1960s, we have been at the forefront of efforts to protect air, land and water resources.

Our approach to environmental protection and pollution control is one of problem solving. The League’s environmental goals aim to prevent ecological degradation, and to reduce and control pollutants...”



In reality, the League’s activism began much earlier. An article on “Citizen Experts” by Terriane K. Schulte, published in [Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies](#), found that “...much of the League’s work in environmental conservation and in restoring and protecting the environment has been largely ignored or forgotten. The League played a key role in environmental conservation throughout the twentieth century.” Who knew?

The US League has taken action numerous times by joining with others in calling for or opposing official actions. For example, in September 2020, the LWVUS endorsed the [Children's Fundamental Rights and Climate Recovery Resolution](#), stating, "In order to uphold children's fundamental rights, the resolution mandates that the United States develop and implement a bold and comprehensive climate recovery plan. This plan must put the nation on a trajectory consistent with reducing global atmospheric carbon..." When the EPA agreed in December 2020 to let Florida bypass federal regulations and issue its own wetland permits, violating the Clean Water Act and endangering Florida's wetlands, the LWV joined with the Center for Biological Diversity and others in protest. The League also signed onto a letter from the Indigenous Environmental Network in February of this year urging the President and Vice President to shut down the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) during its court-ordered environmental review period. The list goes on.

But what about state Leagues? How many have taken their cue from the national to pursue environmental protection? California's League tops the list, with 15 separate positions concerning Natural Resources. The LWVC has a [Climate Change Task Force](#) made up of over 300 League members across California who are working on climate action, and 59 of California's 62 Leagues are acting at some level to fight climate change. LWV New York has made the Climate Emergency a focal point of its efforts. Michigan's LWV has five subject categories in its natural resources position but climate change is not one of them, even though it is rumored the state board passed a Climate Emergency Resolution this year. The LWV Lake Michigan Region ([LWVLMR](#)), made up of 48 local Leagues and four state Leagues within the Lake Michigan watershed, acts on selected governmental issues affecting the watershed. LWVLA members are welcome to participate.

The League of Women Voters U.S., having declared climate change a key priority at the [2020 Annual Convention](#), initiated a [Climate Interest Group](#) open to all League members interested in working on climate action. It currently has over 1500 members from Leagues in all but two states, working on ten national issue teams ranging from Carbon Pricing and Climate Justice to Oceans and Renewable Energy. Visit the website to join or simply learn more about this national effort. But don't forget the EAG! We would love to have more members (see below) working with us on the most important issue of our time.

ONE THING

Plant a tree. It can grow in more ways than you think. To choose from some of the best tree-planting organizations, visit [Click a Tree](#).

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT
Bettie Menchik, Chair



The Education Committee has begun to look at the politically charged issue of **Critical Race Theory (CRT)** that is being widely debated in school boards around the state, many of which are facing observers who claim CRT is now influencing American K-12 curriculums. What we are learning is that Critical Race Theory is a concept first written about in graduate school literature in the 1990s. The theory argues that historical patterns of racism are ingrained in law and other modern institutions and that the legacies of slavery, segregation and Jim Crow still create an uneven playing field for Black people and other people of color. The

idea is that racism is not a matter of individual bigotry but is systemic in America. Recently, critics have made CRT a catchall target for opposition to equity efforts, affirmative action and “wokeness” in general.

Instead of focusing on CRT, the committee is looking at how **Culturally Responsive Teaching** connects students’ cultures, languages and life experiences with what they learn in school. Culturally responsive teaching and Critical Race Theory are not the same. Culturally responsive teaching is defined as using the cultural characteristics, experiences and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for reaching students more effectively. This teaching model requires five motivational conditions: 1) developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity; 2) including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum; 3) demonstrating caring and building learning communities; 4) communicating with ethnically diverse students; and 5) responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction.

We will be discussing how to respond to individuals who claim a school district’s educational equity policy, equity initiatives, or culturally responsive teaching practices are CRT in disguise. Our next meeting will be on Zoom on Wednesday, November 10, at 5 pm; [email](#) me for the link if you would like to attend.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE: IT’S TIME TO RENEW!

Camilla Davis, Membership Director

October is Membership Renewal Month. Continue to be a part of the League’s mission to Empower Voters and Defend Democracy. Volunteers are needed and appreciated, but if you can only participate through paying your dues, that’s important, too.

Download the [membership form](#), complete it, and mail it with your check to the address on the form. Or if you’d like to pay online, go to the [LWVLA website](#), scroll down to How Do I Join, and complete the process.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBER
Rachel Bennick, Holt (Student)

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](#).