



## Empowering Voters Defending Democracy



# CAPITOL VOTER

## JULY 2019

### CAPITOL VOTER HIGHLIGHTS

#### NOTES FROM PROGRAM VP

#### MEMBERSHIP NEWS

#### BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP NEWS

#### LWVLA REGISTERS MORE VOTERS!

#### BOARD MAKES APPOINTMENTS

#### CO-PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

#### LWVMI FILES AMICUS BRIEF

#### EDUCATION COMMITTEE UPDATE

#### VOTER SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

#### VOTER REGISTRATION CHANGES

#### GUN LAWS MATTER

#### LWVLA REACTS TO CLIMATE CHANGE

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**Wednesday, July 24** Michigan Hall of Justice Tour. 11 am - 12:30 pm. 925 W. Ottawa, Lansing.

**Monday, August 26** Women's Equality Day Supreme Court Justice Elizabeth Clement. 11:30 am - 1pm. (Lunch event) Location TBA.

**Monday, September 9, 2019** LWVLA's Role in 2020 U.S. Census. 11:30 am - 1 pm. (Lunch Event). Location TBA.



A MESSAGE FROM THE CO-

## **SCHOOLS OF CHOICE IN MICHIGAN**

### **LWVMI CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS**

#### **NOTES FROM V.P. PROGRAMMING**

*Dorothy Engelman*



It's exciting being part of this essential organization and I look forward to coordinating informative, timely programs for you. The Planning Committee consists of League members --long-time, brand-new, and everything in between -- who give it history and vibrancy. Luncheon programs, Community Forums, Candidate Forums and more are being planned and a schedule will be in the next Capitol Voter.

The July Luncheon Program, "The Only Thing Constant is Change," was on July 8 at the Lansing Brewing Company. If you're interested in helping with any aspect of programming or have feedback/suggestions, please contact me at 435.879.1558 or [lovelaughter49@gmail.com](mailto:lovelaughter49@gmail.com). I look forward to getting to know

## **PRESIDENTS**

What a time we will be having in the next year and a half! In addition to voter registration, Vote411, issue-oriented activities and the occasional good time, we have a census and a very big election coming up! The League of Women Voters of Lansing Area will work with community partners to educate people regarding the importance of participating in the census. We will work to register voters and we will do our best to get them to the polls.

We will base our advocacy on the belief that when enough well informed people participate in a democracy, good things happen. The League burns brightly as a trusted source of information that allows citizens to make up their own minds according to their own values. There is something wonderful about that carefully guarded reputation. We are trusted. You can bank on it.

No person or organization of people is perfect, but the League has a heck of a mission that the lot of us believe in and it strives toward a more perfect democracy. We've heard it said that happiness comes from dedicating yourself to something bigger than yourself. In that case, we are on our way to happiness. What's more, we are in good company.

*Margo Smith and Donna Mullins*

#### **LWVMI FILES AMICUS BRIEF FOR ACLU**



The League of Women Voters of Michigan has joined the ACLU of Michigan on an amicus brief filed June 19 urging the Michigan Supreme Court to reject the Legislature's attempt to undermine the will of the voters by removing citizen-led proposals from the

all of you!

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

*Angela Arsenault,  
East Lansing*

*David Batten, Haslett*

*Maria Bruno,  
East Lansing*

*Leslie Page Moch,  
East Lansing*

*Laurie Morse-Dell, Okemos*

*Judy Standley, Haslett*

*Jane Waun, East Lansing*

*Amy Winans, East Lansing*

ballot through an anti-democratic maneuver known as "adopt and amend." [READ MORE to learn about the brief.](#)

## EDUCATION COMMITTEE PLANS TO EDUCATE

*Bettie Menchik*



The Education Committee is choosing a focus for the coming year. We are weighing several topics and would appreciate input from LWVLA members:

- School financing: What have been the effects of Proposal A and Schools of Choice? What are the alternatives?
- How do Michigan's charter schools compare with one another? How does Michigan's oversight of charters compare with other states?
- What is likely to be the impact of the new law requiring that third graders who cannot read at grade level be retained?

## BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP NEWS



LWVLA's book discussion group met on Tuesday, July 9 to discuss *The Matriarch, Barbara Bush and the Making of an American Dynasty* by Susan Page.

We plan to organize a LWV luncheon presentation and an evening program open to the general public. We welcome input as we choose our focus, and encourage more members to join our committee. Contact Bettie Menchik ([menchikb@msu.edu](mailto:menchikb@msu.edu)) or Judy Andre ([andre@msu.edu](mailto:andre@msu.edu)).

## VOTER SERVICES AT THE READY

The group meets monthly from 10 to 11:30 am at Grand Traverse Pie in East Lansing. August's book is *There Will Be No Miracles Here* by Casey Gerald.

For more information contact Donna Mullins at [mullinsdj@outlook.com](mailto:mullinsdj@outlook.com)

### LWVLA JOINS FORCES TO REGISTER VOTERS



LWVLA joined forces with Fems for Change to register voters at the Abortion Rights Rally held on the Capitol grounds on June 22. Margo Smith represented LWVLA at the registration table.

Photo credit: Dasheng Shao



### Marilyn Wilson

Voter Services is gearing up for the fall local elections and anticipating the 2020 elections. We eagerly encourage all LWVLA members to get involved in one of the following projects:

- Staffing voter registration tables for new MSU students during summer orientation (July)
- Organizing two candidate forums for East Lansing City Council and Lansing City Council (early October)
- Working with local clerks to get voters on the permanent absentee ballot lists
- Doing voter registration at high schools before the fall elections (September, October)

Please contact Marilyn Wilson at

[wilsonmlwvla@gmail.com](mailto:wilsonmlwvla@gmail.com) or

[wilsonm@msu.edu](mailto:wilsonm@msu.edu)

or 517-927-7164 if you would like to volunteer for one of these projects-or if you have questions about any of these events. Marilyn will be organizing a voter services meeting for all interested members in August. Stay tuned! We need to use all our energy and talents to get out the word that the health of our democracy depends on voter participation!



**FOUR CHANGES TO  
VOTER REGISTRATION**

## LWVLA MEMBERS LEARN ABOUT CAPITOL BUILDING ART & ARCHITECTURE



League members and their guests toured the Michigan Capitol Building on Friday, June 28. Valerie Marvin, Michigan State Capitol historian, guided the tour and chronicled the architectural history of the building, including the influence of ancient Roman architecture, the choice and source of materials used in construction, and the current restoration project. She also covered significant art work and highlighted historical events involving women throughout Michigan's history. After the tour, some participants gathered for lunch at a local restaurant and enjoyed discussing the experience of learning more about this beautiful building. Watch your email for information about the next Field Trip, a tour of the Michigan Hall of Justice.



## REQUIREMENTS

*Marilyn Wilson*

1. The deadline to register to vote is no longer 30 days before an election. Under the new 2018 law, voters may register in person or by mail up to 15 days prior to an election. Voters may also register in person with their local clerk within 14 days of an election, up to and including Election Day.
2. If people who have never voted in Michigan register by mail or at a VR drive, they should accurately enter their state-issued driver license number, personal ID card number, or SSN on the form. Complying with this requirement will allow them to vote an absentee ballot. If they do not have a MI driver's license or a state-issued ID, they may send in a copy of a paycheck stub, utility bill, bank statement, or a government document that lists their name and address. If they do not have this information, an acceptable form of ID must be provided before they vote in the first election in which they wish to participate.

[READ MORE - CHANGES 3 & 4](#)

## GUN LAWS MATTER

*Martha Couretas and Melinda Frame*

One of the key missions of the LWV-LA Gun Violence Prevention Committee is to monitor firearm legislation currently moving through the Michigan Legislature. A 50-state analysis done by the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence indicated that states with strong gun laws have a lower rate of gun deaths. In their ranking for each state based on the strength of its gun laws, Michigan received a C-minus. Many may be familiar with pleas for gun safety laws such as universal




---

### LWVLA BOARD MAKES TWO APPOINTMENTS

At its June meeting, the LWVLA board appointed Ellen Link Newsletter Editor and Elaine Fischhoff Event Coordinator.

According to the bylaws, the Board of Directors may appoint additional Directors, not exceeding seven, as they deem necessary to carry on the work of the League. With the addition of these two positions, the board currently has four appointed directors.

Membership/Webmaster and Publicity are the other appointed positions.

---

### 2019 - 2020 LWVLA BOARD

Co-presidents  
**Donna Mullins**  
**Margo Smith**

background checks, extreme risk protection orders, or bans on large-capacity ammunition magazines. However, many lower-profile bills are introduced each year in Michigan that serve to erode and weaken our existing gun laws. Several such bills are currently passing through Michigan House and Senate committees. For example, HB 4200 and HB 4201 (Rep. Gary Eisen) would weaken current gun legislation by significantly lowering the penalties for individuals with Concealed Pistol License (CPL) permits that are found to have concealed pistols in designated "gun-free zones." Similarly, HB 4434 would repeal criminal sanctions for carrying a concealed pistol after a CPL has expired.

Gun laws should be designed to support the rights of those who choose to carry firearms and to encourage responsible gun-safety behavior, but should also provide penalties to those who choose to ignore gun-sense legislation.

Gun violence is a public health and safety issue, and strong gun laws are needed in Michigan to reduce gun violence within our state. It is more important than ever to monitor, understand and educate others on the state's firearm legislation and its potential effect on the safety of the state's residents.

### LWVLA REACTS TO THE THREAT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

*Elaine Fischhoff*



With scientists now estimating that we may have only 12 years to prevent truly catastrophic consequences, if not the virtual extinction of the human species, the board of the LWVLA unanimously passed a climate emergency resolution in June submitted by the Environment Committee. [READ the resolution.](#) With

**VP - Program**  
**Dorothy Engelman**

**Secretary**  
**Sherri McConnell**

**Treasurer**  
**Barb Bidigare**

---

**Directors**

**Voter Service**  
**Marilyn Wilson**

**Finance/Fund Raising**  
**Debby Starnes**

**Parliamentarian &  
 Government**  
**Cele Freistater**

**Publicity**  
**Carol Swinehart**

**Roster & Webmaster**  
**Judy Culham**

**At-Large**  
**Bob Miller**

**Education**  
**Bettie Menchik**

**Environment**  
**Ellen Link**

**Gun Violence Prevention**  
**Melinda Frame**

**Voter Editor**  
**Ellen Link**

**Events Coordinator**  
**Elaine Fischhoff**

that Resolution, our local League joined the League of Women Voters of Oregon, California, Florida, Massachusetts, Illinois and Colorado that passed similar climate emergency resolutions this year. Our Resolution "call[s] 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)."

We have reached a point where no matter what we do, we cannot avoid a very different climate future. Yet, with heat records being broken, glaciers melting, seas rising and becoming acidic, weather growing more chaotic and damaging, and a million animal and plant species facing extinction, we must do whatever we can to mitigate this disaster. We decided to start by formally recognizing the problem, spreading the word, and urging voters to choose candidates willing and able to find and implement solutions.

[READ MORE.](#)

**SCHOOLS OF CHOICE IN MICHIGAN**

*Bettie Landauer-Menchik*

No single legislation has had a greater impact on Michigan's schools in the last 50 years than the changes in school funding instituted in 1994 and the subsequent creation of the Schools of Choice program. Since 1995, education dollars have followed the student to whatever district or charter or online program (s)he enrolls in. Participation has grown exponentially even as overall enrollment in Michigan's K-12 schools has declined. Of the 1.4 million K-12 students in Michigan schools, 1 in 5 now participates in Schools of Choice, making it difficult for districts to plan from one year to the next. Schools of

---



---

## QUICK LINKS

[LWVLA WEB SITE](#)

[LWVMI WEB SITE](#)

[LWVUS WEB SITE](#)

[LWVLMR](#)

**KEEP UP WITH THE LATEST  
LWVLA HAPPENINGS!  
VISIT OUR FACEBOOK  
PAGE**



**BE SURE TO *LIKE* US!  
SHARE LEAGUE NEWS  
WITH YOUR FRIENDS!**

Choice is a controversial issue, as our speakers discussed at the March LWVLA meeting.

One example of the continuing controversy: In the last few months, Detroit newspapers have been filled with articles about potential closures of two schools in Grosse Pointe. Like most districts across the state, Grosse Pointe schools have experienced declining enrollment. The district has been losing about 100 students per year, which translates into about \$1 million a year in funding decreases. The school board recommended closing two schools rather than opening the district to Schools of Choice. A recent posting on the "Save the Grosse Point Schools" website read, "We need a school board that commits to the public school system of Grosse Pointe-not charter schools-and will not allow Schools of Choice to meet funding needs."

[READ MORE to see how choice is affecting districts in the Lansing area.](#)



**2019 LWVMI**



## CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

*Donna Mullins*



Beth with daughter Lisa Moore, member of LWVLA - Midland.



Beth with League Member and featured convention speaker Kathleen Strauss

The biennial LWVMI Convention in May-"Building on the First 100 Years" --convened local leagues for updates, education, workshops, and community. An email summarizing the events was sent out by LWVMI but a few items bear repeating.

Our own Beth Moore was honored with the Helen Milliken Leadership and Civic Empowerment Award for her dedication and years of service to the League's principles and goals. Beth received a standing ovation from the audience. Several LWVLA members received Bell Ringer Awards: Camilla Davis for member recruitment and engagement; Donna Mullins for voter service; Marty Couretas for advocacy for her tireless work on gun violence prevention; and Ann Marston for Strategic Planning of programs that accommodate and engage members.

A new state board was elected that includes our own Valerie Lafferty as the Director for Advocacy of Natural Resources. Past LWVLA co-president Camilla Davis is the Nominating Committee Chair.

Among the workshops was one on education regarding the 2020 Census, in which the League will be participating. Another focused on LWVMI's commitment to increasing outreach to communities with which we have not been sufficiently engaged. For us that means continuing the work we are doing but with strategies to serve all our citizens.

The LWVMI will soon be sending local Leagues materials on a study of legislative lame duck sessions. (You will recall that the 2018 holiday season was an active one for the Michigan Legislature.) This critical study is slated to be completed by the 2021

convention.

It's very inspiring to convene with like minded people. Being surrounded by positive people committed to the principles of the Declaration of Independence is a great way to spend a weekend. It makes you feel that progress is possible.