

**EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE
CAPITOL
VOTER**

DECEMBER 2019

LWVLA CALENDAR

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

Tuesday, December 17 -- Centennial Celebration Committee Meeting. 6 to 7 pm. Grand Traverse Pie Company, 1403 E. Grand River Ave., East Lansing..

Tuesday, December 17 -- Gift Wrapping. 12 noon to 9 pm. Schuler Books & Music, Meridian Mall, 1982 Grand River Ave., Okemos.

Saturday, December 21 -- Gift Wrapping. 9 am - 3 pm. Schuler Books & Music, Meridian Mall, 1982 Grand River Ave., Okemos.

Tuesday, January 7 -- LWVLA Board Meeting. 6 to 8 pm. Meridian Township Fire Station Community Room, 5000 Okemos Road, Okemos.

Thursday, January 9 -- Program Committee Meeting. 5:30 to 7 pm. Edgewood United Church, 469 N. Hagadorn Road, East Lansing.

Thursday, January 9 -- Making Democracy Work: Town Hall Meeting. 6:30 to 7:45 pm. Bath Township Public Library, 14033 Webster Road, Bath.

Monday, January 13 -- LWVLA Buffet Luncheon. *Impact of Schools of Choice on Lansing Schools - Guillermo Lopez.* 11:30 am to 1:00 pm. Spartan Hall of Fame Cafe, 1600 LakeLansing Rzoad, East Lansing.

Monday, January 13 -- Making Democracy Work: Town Hall Meeting. DeWitt District Library, 6:30 to 7:45 pm. 13101 Schavey Rd., DeWitt.

Tuesday, January 14 -- Book Discussion Group. 10 to 11:30 am. Grand Traverse Pie, 1403 E. Grand River, East Lansing.

Wednesday, January 15 -- Making Democracy Work: Town Hall Meeting. Charlotte Community Library, 226 S. Bostwick Avenue, Charlotte.

Saturday, January 18 -- Gun Violence Prevention Committee. 10:30 am 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, 5000 Okemos Road, Okemos.

Tuesday, January 28 -- Environment Committee meeting. 1:30 p.m. Meridian Township Fire Department Community Room 5000 Okemos Road, Okemos.

Wednesday, January 29 -- Making Democracy Work: Town Hall Meeting, 6 to 7:30 pm. Delta Township Public Library, 5130 Davenport Dr, Lansing.

Thursday, February 13 -- Making Democracy Work: Town Hall Meeting. 6 to 8 pm. Grand Ledge District Library, 131 E. Jefferson St., Grand Ledge.

MESSAGE FROM THE CO-PRESIDENTS Donna Mullins and Margo Kauahine Smith



“How do you measure a year?” sings the cast of Rent.

Our local League might measure it in member lunches that covered schools of choice, gun violence, the census, recycling, and how to save on energy; speakers included Michigan Supreme Court Justice Elizabeth Clement and Representative Julie Brixie. We could measure it in community forums on the climate emergency or schools of choice or school funding. We could measure it by our work in

Voter Services with its work in high schools, registering voters, and holding candidate forums.

We could measure in tours of recycling centers, the Hall of Justice and the State Capitol. Or working with allies to talk about water issues. We could measure it by our work with county clerks as well as local governments.

We could, as the song finally suggests, measure it in love. We can celebrate our Helen Milliken award-winning past president Beth Moore. We can warmly remember Carolyn Callen, Rita Klein and Stuart Wilson, who passed away this year.

We can think of countless discussions about issues with some of the brightest, most committed people in the tri-county area, and remember the discussions that brought us insight and laughter and connection. All of our members demonstrate their love of our country's principles in myriad ways, all of them important.

The next year is almost upon us and we will spend time on voter services, the census, gun violence prevention, the environment, education issues, discussing books, celebrating 100 years of suffrage, and probably a few surprise issues. We will be very busy in 2020. If the generosity that our members have shown in the last year is evidence, then we will have another extraordinary year defending democracy and changing the world for good.

Thank you for all your work!

Donna Mullins

HAVE YOU DONE THIS ?!?!?



The League of Women Voters of the Lansing Area (LWV-LA) has been given the opportunity to do even more good than it already does by **earning up to \$5,000** in incentives from **Consumers Energy** to fund their good causes.

How? By convincing others to save energy.

Here's how it works:

We need to encourage as many Consumers Energy gas customers as possible to sign up for a free home energy assessment by one of their trained analysts, something we're only too happy to do. You'll learn how to save energy—good for your pocketbook and good for the environment— and by participating in the Home Energy Analysis program you'll also receive free about \$50 worth of energy-saving measures that provide an estimated savings of \$100 to \$150

after the first year. It's a win-win proposition! For more information please click on this link.

http://lansing.mi.lwvnet.org/files/reduce_energy_consumption.pdf

NOTES FROM THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Dorothy Engelman, Program V.P.

"Dark" and "Brilliant" describe life as we approach the longest night of the year and celebrations of brightness and light! The Planning Committee provides you with opportunities to help the LWVLA and stay involved in the community during this busy season.

Thank you for participating in the Schuler Books & Music Fundraiser in November! The grand total is being calculated and will be shared as soon as it's available. Schuler's is providing the League with *two more opportunities* in December to raise money and spread the word about the LWVLA. See below for details.

2020 is going to be a busy, celebratory time for our country as we celebrate the **Centennial of the 19th Amendment and women's right to vote!** The Centennial Celebration Committee is sending out a survey to all members to determine how you'd like to be involved in the projects planned. You will receive it through Constant Contact and email; please respond and let the committee know how to proceed. Projects include a Poster Contest for students grades 7-12 in Clinton, Eaton and Ingham counties; a Centennial Book Club; a field trip to Swords into Plowshares Peace Center and Gallery; parades, and more! Thanks in advance for your participation.

Four videos from the "Climate Change: Crisis & Opportunity" forum on Sept. 26, 2019, are available on YouTube. Please view and share. A hearty "Thank You" to Harold Mondol for preparing these for the LWVLA.

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: Christian Gaia Smith, "Sylvan's Neighborhood - A Sustainable Community and Farm" <https://youtu.be/4kb4A72kPZ8>

Thank you for your support and participation in League programs in 2019. 2020 is going to be a spectacular year! Please join us as we look over our shoulders at history and forward to progress.

Dorothy Engelman
VP - Programs 435.879.1558
lwvla100years@gmail.com

A VOTER SERVICE ACTIVITIES REPORT IN NOVEMBER AND A CALL TO ACTION

Marilyn Wilson, Voter Service Director

The LWVLA actively engages a range of community groups as part of our mission to increase voter participation. Here are **two examples of new voter registration events held in November:**



1. A Discussion with the Association of Black Social Work Students at MSU

Donna Mullins, Margo Smith, and Marilyn Wilson spoke to the Association of Black Social Work Students at MSU on November 13. Marilyn laid out recent voter trends in voter participation: 2018 was the highest voter turnout in a mid-term election, and the most racially and ethnically diverse for a mid-term election. Michigan saw an increase in voter turnout of over a million voters. Marilyn also talked about the new voter rights that have been implemented as a result of the passage of Proposal 3 in 2018.

Margo discussed concerns about voter suppression across the country.

Donna shared information from various social work sites regarding nonpartisan ways that social workers can provide voting information to their clients. Encouraging agencies to include questions about voter status during the intake process is a common practice. The students discussed the possibility of facilitating voter registration within the school of social work.

2. Voter Registration with Beekman Center (Lansing) students who are transitioning to independent living

On November 15 Joanne Winkelman and Marilyn Wilson attended a class of Beekman Center students, where they presented information about the voting process and the importance of voting, and helped several students to register. Joanne and Marilyn stressed to them their right to vote, regardless of attempts to limit their access to the process. The students were enthusiastic about voting and asked good questions. A particular focus was the use of absentee ballots for those who would wish to vote from the comfort of their homes. Several students registered and wore their "I Registered to Vote Today" stickers with pride.

A Call to Action in 2020

The LWVLA has critical work to do in 2020, and we need your help! Please consider attending the **Voter Registration Training** on

Wednesday, January 22nd, 5:30-6:30 pm, in the Meridian Twp. Community Room in the Okemos Fire Station, located at the corner of Okemos Road and Central Park Drive. Learn about how changes in Michigan voting laws are affecting upcoming elections and how you can help provide support for voter registration/education drives. For details please contact Marilyn at 517-927-7164 or wilsonmlwvla@gmail.com.

ELECTION 2020

Clerks' Offices throughout the area are looking for election workers for 2020. There are more positions than being a poll worker, so explore the possibilities! Lansing and East Lansing are listed below; check out your location, too. You do not have to volunteer where you live.

Lansing: <https://www.lansingmi.gov/186/Elections>

East Lansing:

<https://www.cityofeastlansing.com/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=955>

Some members donate their earnings from Election Day to the LWVLA as an easy way to make an extra donation...will you?

MAKE DEMOCRACY WORK Margo Smith, Co-President

At our first Make Democracy Work town hall meeting at Delta Township Public Library on November 14, Howard and Nell Pizzo spoke about new voter regulations, the census and redistricting. Delta Township Clerk Mary Clark attended and said that, for the November 2019 election in her area, there was a 60 percent increase in the number of persons who requested to be placed on the permanent absentee voter list! Clark said she hopes to have 10,000 persons on the list by spring 2020.

If you would like speakers at your organization or group meeting on one, two or all of these topics, please contact Margo Smith, smithmk@msu.edu. We can use PowerPoint slides or simply have a conversation and answer your questions.

Upcoming meetings open to members and the public:

January 9, Bath Township Library, 6:30-7:45 pm, Alice Hill, Melany Mack

January 13, DeWitt Public Library, 6:30-7:45 pm, Alice Hill, Melany Mack

January 15, Charlotte Public Library, 6-8 pm, Howard and Nell Pizzo

January 29, Delta Township Public Library, 6-7:30 pm, Howard and Nell Pizzo

February 13, Grand Ledge Library, 6-8 pm, Howard and Nell Pizzo

GIFT WRAP FOR THE LEAGUE

Debby Starnes is coordinating the Gift Wrap Station and needs people to staff it. Schuler's is providing the paper (and training!); all we need do is wrap gifts and tell folks about the great work we do. The public will have the opportunity to donate to the League. The following shifts are available and we need 3 volunteers per shift. Please contact Debby Starnes at deborahcstarnes@icloud.com or 517.230.8753 to sign up.

Tuesday Dec. 17 noon - 3 pm 3-6 p.m 6-9 pm
Saturday Dec. 21 9 am-noon noon - 3 pm

POTENTIAL FOR LWVLA CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Judith Andre

The LWVLA Board is exploring the possibility of forming a committee focused on criminal justice. The subject is receiving a lot of media attention, and there is bipartisan support for change.

The issues are many. Some concern the lives of prisoners: Can they remain engaged parents? Can programs help them find meaning, even if they will never leave prison? (One prison offers a chance to help rehabilitate dogs.) What will help them create better lives when they leave? What sort of health care do they receive? Life sentences mean prisoners grow old and die in prison. What kind of geriatric or hospice care is available? (On this, listen to WUOM's *Stateside* special edition, "Life on the Inside," Nov 6, 7, and 8.)

Another set of issues involves sentencing: Michigan still has prisoners sentenced to life when they were minors. Race is always a factor; see Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*. Still other issues concern jails: our jail population has tripled while crime has declined. Governor Whitmer has set up a Task Force on Jail and Pretrial Incarceration.

The new committee would choose its own focus. Members might want to begin by finding out what other local LWV groups are doing. After selecting and studying an issue, they could present public forums or, within the policies of LWVMI, advocate for particular reforms. Since LWVMI positions on prisons were last updated in 2010, a local committee might also try to have them expanded. (<https://lwvmi.org/documents/SocPolicy-Prisons.pdf>) Those accused of crime, and those convicted of it, remain human beings. A decent society will not discard them as trash. If you're interested in helping form a criminal justice committee, please contact Judy Andre at andre@msu.edu.

IMPACT OF SCHOOLS OF CHOICE

Bettie Menchik, Education Committee

	Students	% of Lansing resident students
Students living in Lansing School District	16,743	100%
Lansing School District	10,462	62%
Other LEAs	3,909	23%
PSAs	2,358	14%
ISD	14	0%

Last winter, the Education Committee began a series of programs on Schools of Choice. We will continue this theme at the January 13 luncheon meeting at Spartan Hall of Fame, 11:30 a.m. Our program will answer the question, "What Impact has Schools of Choice had on the Lansing School

District?"

Guillermo Lopez, a member of the Lansing School Board of Education since 1999, is exceptionally well qualified to speak on this topic. Mr. López was first appointed to the Lansing School Board of Education in 1999. He has since served 19 years on the board, including as president and treasurer. All of his children and grandchildren have attended Lansing schools.

In the 2018-19 school year, there were 16,743 children of school age living in the Lansing Public School District. Of these students, 10,462 or 62% attended Lansing schools, 23% attended other school districts (LEAs), and 14% attended charter schools (PSAs).

Use this [LINK](#) to view data on where students living in the Lansing Public School District chose to attend school during the 2018 - 2019 school year.

MICHIGAN ENERGY BILLS SHOW PROMISE

John Sarver, Environment Committee

Homeowners considering the purchase of solar systems will no longer have to worry about tax disincentives. Problems with property taxes on residential solar systems being inconsistently applied in Michigan communities were finally resolved when Gov. Whitmer signed solar tax exemption legislation on November 14.

House Bills [4465](#), sponsored by Rep. Yousef Rabhi (D), and [4069](#), sponsored by Rep. Bronna Kahle (R), along with [Senate Bill 47](#), sponsored by Sen. Tom Barrett (R), provide tax exemptions for solar projects up to 150 kW. The legislation clarifies that solar panels are not counted for the purposes of property tax assessment until the property is sold. Installing, repairing, and replacing alternative energy systems are now considered normal maintenance.

In addition to this major taxation bill being passed, the Michigan legislature is considering wide ranging legislation related to renewable energy and electric vehicles.

A bipartisan electric vehicle package has been introduced in the Michigan House that would help remove barriers to EV charging and support the development of a statewide charging network:

- [HB 4786](#) creates an Electric Vehicle Council to develop a statewide charging infrastructure plan.

- [HB 4787](#) allows the state to install or lease space for EV charging stations at state park-and-rides.
- [HB 4788](#) allows the state to install or lease space for EV charging stations in state parks.
- [HB 4789](#) creates tax incentives for small businesses and multi-unit housing to install EV charging stations.

[READ MORE](#) about Michigan bipartisan energy legislation.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Deborah Diesen, Grand Ledge

Elizabeth Pratt, Grand Ledge

DID YOU KNOW YOU CAN INCLUDE THE LWVLA IN YOUR WILL AND CONTINUE YOUR GOOD WORKS?

Including the League in your will can be as simple as adding a codicil or amendment to your current will. The following is suggested language for your lawyer to use to draft a bequest to the LWVLA:

"I devise and bequeath to The League of Women Voters Lansing Area, East Lansing, MI, (*Federal Tax ID# the League will provide this to you*) (*Insert amount of gift or insert the percentage of estate*) to be used for its general purposes."

Please contact Debby Starnes (deborahcstarnes@icloud.com) if you have questions. Thank you for supporting the League.

OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP MAKE DEMOCRACY WORK!

VOTER SERVICE: Contact Marilyn Wilson at 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 or Bettie Menchik 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 or Melinda Frame 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.