

**EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE
CAPITOL
VOTER**

**OCTOBER
2024**

IN THE OCTOBER CAPITOL VOTER

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LWVLA CALENDAR

Wednesday, November 20. Thank You Social Event, 5:30 to 8 pm at Jimmy's Pub on Abbot Rd., East Lansing.

Thursday, November 21. Book Group discussion 10 am via Zoom on Barbara McQuade's *Attack from Within: How Disinformation is Sabotaging America*.

See articles below for more information.

From our partners' calendars:

Wednesday, November 13, hybrid program. 7 to 8:30 pm. Terry Link discusses “SDGs as a Compass: Could the UN Sustainable Development Goals point us away from a great global unraveling?” Hosted by [GLUNA](#), Edgewood United Church, 469 N. Hagadorn, East Lansing, or via Zoom.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Kathy Ruby Petroni



Voting has begun!

Early voting on the MSU campus kicked off on October 21 and MSUvote’s attempts to engage the students are in full swing. In my previous Capitol Voter article, I mistakenly referred to MSUvote as a new committee, yet this nonpartisan committee has been around for many years. It has, in fact, been instrumental in earning MSU the designation as a [Voter Friendly Campus](#) every year since 2016 and an “ALL IN Most Engaged Campus for College Student Voting” in 2022 by the [ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge](#)! We have League members with yellow jackets volunteering at the MSU early voting site in the WKAR studio in the Communication Arts and Sciences Building.

Did you see our sign off of Coolidge Rd. by Frandor? We were thrilled to receive a \$10,000 donation to our Education Fund from the Baxter and Dora Fund at the Amalgamated Charitable Foundation, which provided us with funding for the sign to advertise VOTE411.org and early voting. We hope the sign will be a helpful reminder to all those who drive by that intersection.

At this stage of the election our focus is on getting out the last-minute votes as well as on planning for post-election activities. Please read Joanne Winkelman’s article—she does a great job describing the many efforts we are working on.

Much of what we have accomplished is the result of hard work by our many volunteer members and their generous donations. In addition, the LWV of Michigan has been a great resource. They recently gave each local League \$1,000 to spend on our get-out-the-vote efforts and are awarding us grants to help cover some of the costs of the voter guides and our postcard-writing campaign. In addition, they are also taking the lead in helping us train and organize observers of the Board of Canvassers for our three counties. I know if we have any concerns over voter rights or election processes, the state League will be available to assist.

To celebrate all the great work that we have accomplished related to this election, we are planning a Thank You Social Event. It will be on November 20 from 5:30-8:00 p.m. at Jimmy’s Pub on Abbot Rd.; details have been emailed to all members. If you can join us, please be sure to RSVP to [Dorothy Engelman](#).

As the election period starts drawing to a close, I know many of us are feeling very stressed. Let's all work hard to shut out election concerns for portions of our days to maintain our mental health. We should have confidence that our democratic process will run smoothly.

Let's get out the vote,
Kathy



WE'RE NOT FINISHED YET....

Joanne Winkelman, V.P. Voter Service

September

September found us **registering voters** at Lansing Community College, Haslett High School, East Lansing High School, and the Wilson Talent Center. Thank you to all who helped register!

The Tri-County **Voter Guide** was delivered to the printer on time to meet the deadline to be inserted into the September 19 edition of *The City Pulse* with a distribution of just over 13,000. We also had 4,500 extra copies printed for us to distribute around the tri-county area. Kathy Petroni and her husband picked up the guides from the *Pulse* parking lot and brought them to my garage the following Wednesday, and the State League delivered 4,500 copies of the statewide guide. I'll just say, 9,000 guides take up a lot of garage space! Luckily, 30 volunteers arrived a few days later to whisk the guides off to libraries, senior centers, religious institutions and businesses. Thank you all for making this possible. League volunteers are the best!! We have a few local guides left if you need one but no statewide guides.

October

On October 4, we taped a forum regarding **East Lansing's Proposal 1**. We invited both sides of the issue to answer questions that were solicited by East Lansing Information (ELI). Donna Mullins taped, Kathy Petroni gave the welcome, and Jacqueline Stewart was the moderator. As of this writing, the recording has been viewed almost 400 times!

The **Yellow Jackets** are volunteering at the Early Voting site on the MSU campus. East Lansing's early voting started on October 21 and runs until November 3. The so-called Yellow Jackets are members of the League of Women Voters and Voters not Politicians who help direct students through the early voting process. We're called Yellow Jackets because our vests are neon yellow/green.

For the first time the LWVLA did **text banking**. A lively group met at the State League office in Lansing on October 23 to text voters with a reminder about early voting. It was easy and fun. Kathy Petroni organized the activity.

On **October 24, the League will be teaming up with AARP to promote voting**. The movie "A Man Called Otto" will be shown free to people invited by AARP. We are targeting the 20–50-year-old age group to inform them about flexible options for voting. We want people who work and/or have children to know that there are evening and weekend hours for voting.

The LWVLA will once again be participating in the **Souls to the Polls/Trick or Treating with the Lansing City Clerk**. This year it will be an inside event at Reo Election Office on **Saturday, October 26**. The League will have a table to give out "goodies" and promote voting to the parents, and will direct mock voting for children.

November

The election will be over on November 5, but the canvassing will not. League members will be asked to volunteer once again to assist in **observing the County Board of Canvassers** in one of our three counties. There will be more information coming on training and sign-up. Whew...that's a lot of activities and doesn't even cover the various presentations that happen whenever groups ask us to talk about voting.

Finally, we could not do any of this work without the wonderful members who step up, show up and lend a hand whenever there is a call for help. If you are not on the volunteer list let me know and I will add you. If you want to be removed, just send an email.

Thank you all for your help!!!

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF PAT DONATH

Donna Mullins

Nearly 30 years ago, Pat Donath thought it would be nice to bring the program from a Martin Luther King, Jr. luncheon to Millie Buroughs, who had to miss the luncheon. Millie was the president of the Lansing Area League at the time. She had to have a medical procedure and, out of an abundance of caution, Millie gave Pat a box full of League documents so that Pat, as the VP for Programs, could more easily lead the League while she recovered. Pat knew Millie would appreciate hearing about this event. Program in hand, she entered Millie's hospital room only to find an empty bed in the room. Millie had passed away. Pat was now grieving the loss of a friend...and filling a term as the new League president.



That led to Pat being asked to become president of the state League. Having observed a meeting of the state board that included fierce and loud disagreements, She said she would accept the position only if the most rambunctious members of the board did not remain. That happened, and Pat said she had a very pleasant four-year term with a collegial board. Then *that* led to her serving on the LWVUS board for three terms. (Pat joked that the clock she received for her service needed to be fixed.)

While serving on the state board, the League participated in a campaign finance reform initiative supported by a Joyce Foundation grant. That effort created the Michigan Campaign Finance Network. Pat remained on the board of the network, working tirelessly toward good government. Pat definitely knew government. She brought a history of government service to the job, including being a nonpartisan staff person serving the New Jersey legislature. She was particularly proud of having a critical part in designing a revision to NJ's criminal code. Pat also worked for the Michigan legislature in a time when there were friendships between members of opposing parties. She felt strongly that term limits made the legislature more partisan and less willing to compromise.

Pat paid attention to details. It was not uncommon for her to bring those details to the attention of League officers over the years. My experience, as I treaded COVID waters as president, was that Pat knew when someone needed support and she gave it to me generously. She was one of the folks who kept me from drowning that year, and I will always be grateful for her kindness.

There is a spiritual that says, "If I can help somebody...my living shall not be in vain." Like a good camper, Pat left things better than she found them. We celebrate her life of service. And, boy, will we miss her. This [link](#) to a clip of her speaking at a LWVLA luncheon last December provides a great memory of Pat; here is her [obituary](#).

Pat's Memorial service will be on Saturday, November 9, 10:30 am at Pilgrim Congregational United Church of Christ, 125 S Pennsylvania Ave, Lansing. A reception will follow.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Camilla Davis, Membership Director

WELCOME NEW MEMBER
Elinore Morin, East Lansing

Congratulations to Jill Messer!

The drawing for the \$65 refund, offered as an incentive for members to renew early, resulted in 49 early renewals. Jill Messer's name was selected at random to receive the refund.

IT'S MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!

LWV-Lansing Area values and appreciates each of its members. So, it's important to the League that each member renew their membership to keep their active member status.

If you joined the League of Women Voters **before February 1, 2024** it's time to renew your membership.

There are two ways to pay your dues.

#1 Join Online by using the link below and your credit card or PayPal account :

1. Scroll down to "How Do I Join?"
2. Choose the type of membership from the drop-down menu.
3. Provide a 2nd name if you choose household.
4. Indicate it is a renewal.
5. Click the "Pay Now" button below.
6. There are fees we must pay when online payment is used. Please consider leaving a "tip."

Use [this link](#) for paying your dues

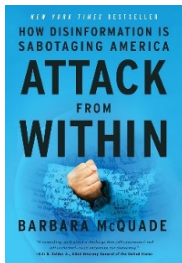
#2 Download this [form](#), fill it out, and send a check for the correct amount to:

League of Women Voters of the Lansing Area
P.O. Box 971
East Lansing, MI 48826

If you have any questions, including asking about your join date, please email [Camilla](#). (Members who joined after February 1, 2024 will not receive renewal information.)

NOVEMBER BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

Donna Mullins



The Book Group will meet on November 21 from 10-11:30 a.m. to discuss ***Attack from Within: How Disinformation is Sabotaging America*** by Barbara McQuade. The book is a compelling examination of how disinformation is undermining American democracy. McQuade, a former U.S. Attorney and legal scholar, delves into the ways false information is used to influence beliefs and actions, particularly during elections.

The book highlights how information is not just a tool of foreign adversaries but is also being wielded by domestic actors to sow division, inflame hatred and weaken democratic institutions. McQuade also offers practical solutions to combat disinformation and strengthen the public's resilience against it. It's a timely and urgent read for anyone concerned about the health of democracy in the age of information warfare.

Does this sound like something you'd be interested in reading? The above, which is all true, was created by Artificial Intelligence. Now are you interested? Contact [Donna Mullins](#) for more information.

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE UPDATE

Dorothy Engelman, Development Director

I'm excited to be the new Development Director! If you're looking for a way to get involved with the LWVLA, please join the Development Committee. The committee will work

towards engaging more community members to join the League and encouraging members to remember the League in their estate planning.

During the month of September, ten thank-you notes were sent to members who donated to the General Fund and four were sent to donors to the Education Fund. Please contact [me](#) if you're interested in helping me plan future actions of the Development Committee.

COMMUNITY SOLAR: AN ALTERNATIVE OPTION

Elaine Fischhoff, EAG Co-chair

Not everyone has a roof for solar panels to harvest free energy from sunlight. Many live in apartment buildings, other rentals or condominiums or just have a roof that doesn't get enough sunlight. For them, community solar can provide access to the benefits of solar.

"Community solar" refers to a solar-electric system that reduces the electric bills for members of a community who "subscribe" to one or more solar panels in an off-site array, meaning the panels are not physically on the subscriber's home or business. The reduction in their electric bills is based on the amount of energy generated by their allotted panels. A community can be defined by location, such as an apartment building, or merely be a collection of a utility's customers.

In Michigan, utilities such as Consumers and DTE may voluntarily offer to create community solar installations but do not do so because it would affect profits and require an adjustment of their business model. Michigan's legislature recently passed multiple bills to increase renewable energy sources but, unfortunately, requiring community solar was omitted due to DTE's and Consumers' objections.

However, bipartisan Senate bills 152 and 153 and House bills 4464 and 4465 would remedy the omission by requiring electric providers to connect a community solar facility within the provider's service area to its electric grid and provide a subscriber of the facility a credit on the subscriber's electric bill. These bills are likely to be considered in the legislature's lame duck session after the November 2024 election.

The benefits of community solar are multiple. A 2021 [MSU study found](#) that enabling community solar would create thousands of jobs over the next 25 years and bring \$1.5 billion in economic benefits. But community solar's greatest potential benefit lies in creating opportunities for low-income residents to lower their energy bills and access more reliable power. This benefit has caused the Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition (MEJC) to push for adoption of the bipartisan bills. It should be noted that residential customers in Michigan pay the highest rates in the Midwest, and DTE and Consumers are some of the worst utilities in the nation for blackouts.

In comments to the Michigan House Energy, Communications and Technology Committee in November, Dr. Elizabeth Del Buono, president of Michigan Clinicians for Climate Action, [said](#) community solar would also be a win for public health: it would make the grid more reliable during power outages when paired with battery storage, thereby protecting the health of vulnerable patients dependent on electricity to breathe and be mobile.

More information can be found in the [Great Lakes Renewable Energy Association Solar Communities Guidebook](#). Additional information is also available in the LWVMI Environmental Network recording of its recent [Community Solar forum](#) (passcode: 6j5l?0hq).

ONE THING

Now is the time to get an energy audit so you can face winter prepared. What are you waiting for? You've got nothing to lose and everything to gain. [Consumers Energy](#) and [Lansing Board of Water and Light](#) offer in-home energy audits for area residents. Check out this [link](#) for more information.

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 Landauer-Menchik](#)

PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE: Contact [Linda Melaragni](#)

ENVIRONMENT ADVOCACY GROUP: Contact [Ellen Link](#) or [Elaine Dierwa Fischhoff](#)

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