



The Michigan VOTER

A Publication of the League of Women Voters of Michigan
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Extra! Extra! Non-Partisan Voter Guides Now Available!



In preparation for the November general election, the League of Women Voters of Michigan has printed 98,000 Voter Guides for statewide distribution. League members in 23 local Leagues have made the Guides available to voters in public buildings all around Michigan, but especially in public libraries. The Voter Guide prepared by LWVMI includes congressional and state-wide offices, and many local Leagues have supplemented it with printed guides covering candidates running for school, community college and library boards, as well as municipal, judicial, and county offices.

The League of Women Voters is the most trusted source of non-partisan candidate information across the country. This trust has been earned by continually providing voters with responses to questions from the candidates themselves, free of 'spin' from campaign operatives or opinion pieces from the media. The League respects all candidates running for office, including those running with minor party affiliations. In 2016, Democratic and Republican candidates were given the opportunity to participate in the Voter Guide, as well as candidates from the Libertarian, Green, US Taxpayers, Natural Law and Working Class parties, and those with no party affiliation. Our goal is for the voices of all candidates on the ballot to be presented so that voters can make their own educated choices.

The League's Voter Guide is also available online through VOTE411.org. By simply plugging in an address, a voter can confirm their voter registration, their polling place and review the responses from all the candidates that will appear on that voter's ballot. Through August 6th, Michigan voters accessed VOTE411 49,373 times this year, double the usage of two years ago. The Detroit News has partnered with the League and will be using the candidate responses the League has collected in their on-line Voter Guide in Wayne, Macomb, Livingston, Oakland and Washtenaw Counties.

The League's Voter Guide is paid for by contributions from the League of Women Voters Education Fund (which is supported by contributions from League members and friends) and the Michigan Non-Profit Association.

MISSION STATEMENT

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.



President's Message

Judy Karandjeff, LWV Lansing Area,
LWVMI President

Tuesday, November 8, is rapidly approaching! I know you are aware of the importance of being informed and voting because you are receiving LWVMI's newsletter. However, how many Michigan voters will vote this year?

To increase participation in our democracy, on July 13, 2016, Michigan Representatives Gretchen Driskell and John Hoadley introduced House Joint Resolution PP that would amend the Michigan Constitution to guarantee voting rights, if approved by the Legislature and MI voters. The rights would be to: 1) vote a secret ballot in all elections, 2) have an absentee voter ballot sent to a member of armed services serving overseas 45 days prior to the election, 3) remain registered once registered and to vote by absentee voter ballot or regular ballot immediately upon signing a registration affidavit, 4) be automatically registered to vote if issued a state driver license or a state ID, 5) register to vote in person or by mail up to 15 days before an election, 6) vote by absentee voter ballot in person during, at a minimum, the 15 days before an election, and 7) vote by absentee voter ballot without having to provide a reason. The League of Women Voters of Michigan supports the legislation. The bill was assigned to the House Elections Committee and no hearings have taken place. So our numerous voting restrictions remain in place.

In May 2016, the A. Philip Randolph Institute, Common Cause and several individual voters filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern Division of Michigan to challenge the new state law banning straight ticket voting. Although we have had straight ticket voting for 125 years and the voters rejected two referendums to stop straight ticket voting, the Michigan Legislature and Governor banned straight ticket voting. However, a preliminary injunction has been issued and upheld, going all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, and straight ticket voting continues.

The result is Michigan's election laws remain as

they were but, in spite of that, the challenge is to increase voter turnout. According to the MI Secretary of State's website, in 1960, 72.7% of the voting age population voted in the presidential election (Kennedy vs Nixon). In 2012, 63% of the voting age population voted in the presidential election (Obama vs Romney).

Let's turn this trend around! Help inform the voters about their voting rights, make candidate information available and get them out to vote!



LWVMI Adopts 2-Year Strategic Plan



Every organization needs a plan to help focus its energy and ensure that members are working towards the same goals. Recently, the LWVMI Board of Directors adopted a 2-year strategic plan that will help the League maintain its course of exercising its mission of encouraging active participation in government, working to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influencing public policy through education and advocacy.

Highlighted in the strategic plan are our values, our vision and our goals. The goals include:

1. *Program*: Assure LWVMI positions needed for advocacy are relevant and up to date.
2. *Advocacy*: Advocate on issues for which LWVMI has positions, with emphasis on priority issues.
3. *Voter Service*: Educate to create a more informed and engaged electorate
4. *Voter Protection*: Protect the right to vote, including making voter registration and voting more accessible and electoral districts more representative.
5. *Membership and Leadership Development*: Expand LWVMI and local League capacity for promoting and sustaining organizational growth.
6. *Development*: Ensure LWVMI development capacity to effectively meet program and staffing needs.
7. *Communication*: Communicate effectively with internal and external audiences.

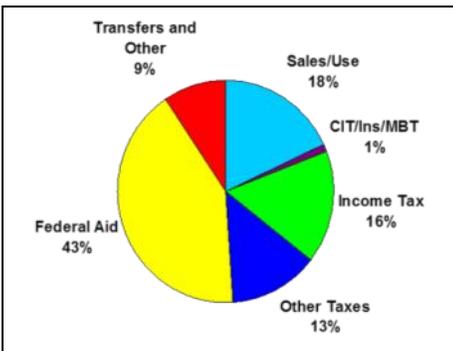
The entire strategic plan can be found on LWVMI's website: www.lwvmi.org.

Taxation and Budgeting Position Study

Delegates at the LWVMI Convention in May, 2015, voted to update our Taxation and Budgeting Position. The Taxation and Budget Study Committee has prepared consensus questions that will guide local Leagues in the study process.

Additionally, the committee has done a thorough job of preparing materials to help local Leagues learn about the complicated topic. From sources of state revenues to earned income tax credits, local Leagues will explore this important topic so that they can reach consensus on the study questions. Consensus responses are due to the League office by March 1, 2017.

In the Members Section of the LWVMI website, the consensus questions, background information and resource material are all posted. The committee has also included recommendations on how to approach the study and include the public in the learning process. Suggestions for assembling a panel of experts and a Power Point presentations are posted too.



A slide depicting Michigan Major Revenue Sources (2016) from the Power Point presentation

The Committee is hosting a series of conference calls to assist local Leagues participating in the study. The next call is January 12, 2017; call details will be available early in 2017.

If you have any questions, contact the Committee Chair, Sue Smith, LWVMI VP Program at susanprak-kensmith@comcast.net



Public Advocacy for Voter Protection Project

The Public Advocacy for Voter Protection (PAVP) is a project funded by the League of the Women Voters of the United States. LWV of Michigan has been participating in PAVP since 2012. Leagues in eight Michigan communities, working with the local clerks, will provide observers at various voting precincts on election-day, November 8, 2016.

The eight Michigan Leagues participating in this project this year are: Dearborn-Dearborn Heights, Eastern Upper Peninsula, Lansing Area, Ann Arbor Area, Kalamazoo Area, Mt. Pleasant Area, Flint Area, and Holland Area. Coordinators of the 2016 PAVP project are LWV Lansing Area co-presidents, Camilla Davis and Beth Moore.

The League observers will receive training that will explain the role of an observer (i.e. observers are not "challengers") and review the basic aspects of Michigan election law. Some of the areas of concern in the voting process (voter

identification, long lines, etc.) will also be highlighted.

Following election day, the volunteer observers will record their findings, which will be shared with the local clerk and the state and national League of Women Voters.

The recorded results from the PAVP observers will help local Leagues identify major areas for voter education in future elections and will provide information for local clerks concerning the way the precincts function on a busy election day,

Is This on Your 2017 Calendar ?

Block out May 19-21, 2017 for the League of Women Voters of Michigan's biennial convention in East Lansing at the Kellogg Center!

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Founded in 1920, the League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization which encourages citizens to play an informed and active role in government.

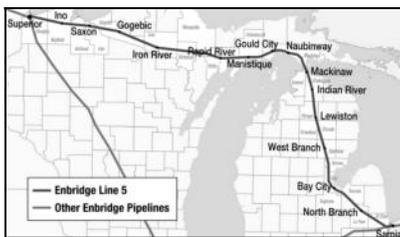
The LWVMI welcomes tax-deductible contributions to the LWVMI Education Fund and encourages interested persons to name LWVMI as a beneficiary in their wills.

Natural Resources

Suzanne Dixon, LWV Holland Area,
LWVMI Natural Resources Director

The Legislature may not have been in session, but LWVMI was busy monitoring key areas of interest in natural resources.

A public comment period was set for Enbridge to come into compliance on Pipeline 5 which carries oil under the Straights of Mackinac. The operating permit with the state



of Michigan calls for pipeline anchors every 75 feet and requirements for the thickness of the walls of the pipes. During inspections, it was found that the pipelines have shifted and no longer meet the anchoring requirement. It was also found that rusting and deterioration have impacted the thickness of the pipeline walls. LWVMI submitted comments seeking sanctions and substantial fines for noncompliance as called for in our positions. We also sought the state's consideration to terminate Enbridge's operating permit based on these findings of noncompliance.

LWVMI usually stays within state legislation, but requested action from LWVUS on **Senate Bill 2848**. This bipartisan bill, also known as the Senate Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) was very important to the residents of Michigan. This bill provides funding for Flint to provide the food, education, and testing for students impacted by the lead crisis in Flint. The bill had

passed out of committee months ago with a recommendation to pass, but had not been taken up for a full Senate vote.

The good news is that this week a call for "cloture" has been called. This will limit debate, then bring the bill up for a roll call. The LWVUS quickly signed on to a group letter sponsored by the National Wildlife Federation, calling for quick action by the Senate, under our request.

Governor Snyder has appointed a new Department of Environmental Quality Director, Heidi Grether. One of the first acts of the House and Senate since returning to session have been to hold hearings in support of her nomination. Her background includes being a lobbyist for the oil and gas industry and representing public relations for BP after the Gulf oil spill.

A major legislative goal this year is new energy policy to replace P.A. 295 which sunsetted this year. This law gave us our successful renewable energy standards of 10% and energy efficiency programs sponsored by the utility companies to lower our bills and save energy. The Senate has proposed **SB 437-438**. These bills will eliminate these standards. The concern is that utility companies may not continue to pursue renewable energy efforts and energy efficiency programs for customers without a requirement. The Senate Bills are on the floor awaiting a vote. The House bills are substantially different. The question is whether our legislators will hurry this through, or chance a restart in the new year with the uncertainty of the House election in November. They have less than 3 weeks in session. Important bills to watch:

HB 5613. Passed a House vote, now in Senate Government Operation Committee. This bill would restrict any regulation stricter than federal regulations. It went to the Governor to sign a few years ago, and he refused. This time it allows the governor to use scientific data to allow a proposed regulation to proceed. This mechanism may allow the governor to sign.

SB 962. Passed Senate, now in House Oversight and Ethics Committee. This bill will put a hold on administrative rules for up to a year, allowing the committee to introduce a bill that changes the rule.

HB 5557- 5558. On floor for a vote. These bills would provide tax exemptions to AK Steel, which has been found out of compliance for air quality standards.

LWV Lake Michigan Region Hosts Conference

The Art and Craft of Saving Lake Michigan is the theme of the 2016 Conference of the LWV Lake Michigan Region (LWVLMR) set for October 14-15 in Porter, Indiana. Besides conducting routine annual meeting tasks, field trips (Indiana Dunes!) dynamic speakers, a resources fair and shared information await the delegates.

MI delegates are Ruth Caputo and Vina Mikesell, and alternates are Suzanne Dixon and Chris Zilke. Local Leagues should keep in mind that LWVLMR is available to provide programs on water concerns throughout the year. Visit lwvlmr.org for information.

League Members Represent Michigan at Convention



Michigan was well represented at the LWVUS national convention this past June with 32 members from Leagues all over Michigan. Nineteen of the delegates came to Washington DC a day early to participate in “Lobby Day”, a deliberate, group effort to visit congressional representatives and discuss voting rights and voter protections.

Members from the Michigan delegation met with Michigan's U.S. Senators Gary Peters and Debbie Stabenow to thank them for supporting the Voting Rights Advancement Act, and others met with their US Representatives. Linda Hoff, President of the LWV Flint Area, and Lansing member (and former LWVMI President) Pat Donath, met with Rep. Dan Kildee. After pointing out the problem that some Flint voters have in getting to the polls because of a lack of transportation, Rep. Kildee tasked one of his aides with looking into the possibility of a bill requiring public transportation to voting precincts on election days.

Congratulations to LWVMI VP Sue Smith, who has been elected to the LWVUS Nominating Committee. And we thank LWV Kalamazoo

member Connie Ferguson for her service on the 2014-16 LWVUS Board, and to LWV Lansing Area member Pat Donath for her work as LWVUS Treasurer for the past four years.

BYLAWS CHANGE

At the LWVUS convention in June, the delegates voted to amend the League bylaws with these important changes: Anyone can join the League as a Voting Member if they are 16 years of age or older. No longer is there a citizenship requirement.

In August, the LWVMI Board agreed to change their bylaws to match the changes approved by the convention delegates. All local Leagues must also change their bylaws to reflect these more flexible membership requirements.



Geographical Units—a New Concept

Christina Schlitt,
LWV Vice President, Membership

Traditionally, if a group wants to form their own local League of Women Voters in their community, a number of challenging tasks must first be performed with a minimum of 10 members. The requirements can be intimidating to a group of enthusiastic, potential members whose immediate goal is to bring non-partisan voter service to their community.

The League of Women Voters of

Michigan has found a way to bring these interested potential Leaguers in new areas on board as Geographical Units (“geo units”) of a well-established nearby League. At their July, 2016 board meeting, the LWVMI Board of Directors adopted guidelines for geo units. A geo unit is loosely described as a “League in Training” that is hosted and mentored by a mentor League. The mentor League assists and coaches the geo unit as they start out with basic voter service tasks: candidate forums, voter registration, etc. The geo unit members belong to the mentor League, participate in the mentor Leagues’ meetings, activities and even fundraisers. At least one member of the geo unit is also asked to participate in board meetings of the mentor League.

According to the guidelines approved by the Board, a geo unit should be working towards becoming a “Member at Large” League, the second step in the process to become a full, independent League. Members of geo units often bring enthusiasm and new energy to the mentor League, and it is exciting to shepherd a group into becoming a stand-alone League. We have a number of geo units in Michigan, and we’re grateful to the mentor Leagues for supporting them. The current geo units and mentor Leagues are:

Jackson Geo Unit hosted by
Lansing Area League

Belleville Geo Unit hosted by
NW Wayne County League

Grand Rapids Geo Unit hosted by
Kalamazoo Area League

Macomb Geo Unit hosted by
Grosse Pointe League

League Supports SE Michigan Regional Transit Proposal

In November, voters in Wayne, Macomb, Washtenaw and Oakland Counties will vote on a Regional Transportation Proposal. Transportation advocates have been struggling for 40 years to get this regional plan developed and on the ballot. In August, 2016, the leaders of Wayne, Washtenaw, Macomb and Oakland Counties finally agreed to a "master plan" which will require voter support in November to assess a 1.2 mill property tax that will cost the average household about \$96 per year.

Using national and local positions, the League of Women Voters of Michigan and the Leagues in the affected four counties support the proposal.

The Regional Transit plan on the November 8 ballot will provide several new transit services including a convenient, affordable airport express service, a regional train service connecting Detroit, Dearborn and Wayne with Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, and fast, frequent, rapid bus transit between Detroit and communities in Oakland and Macomb Counties.

Even for those who never use public transit, there are significant benefits. National experts have found that effective regional transit means: an economic boost of \$4 return for every \$1 invested thanks to new jobs created, new development near transit, money not dumped in the gas tank, and other efficiencies. Additionally, employers will have more reliable employees with less turnover and less retraining costs since workers now will have reliable public transportation to job sites. Our region will attract and retain more talented young professionals, many of whom are now moving away to places like Chicago, DC, San Francisco or Atlanta which have vibrant urban centers accessible by public transit.

For more information about the regional transit master plan, visit www.rtamichigan.org.

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