



The Michigan VOTER

A Publication of the League of Women Voters of Michigan
200 Museum Dr., Suite 104 Lansing, MI 48933
office@lwvmi.org
www.lwvmi.org
517.484.5383 Fax: 517.484.3086

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Make the Clean Air Promise

In 1970, President Richard Nixon signed the LWV-supported Clean Air Act, which was renewed and strengthened in 1990 by a series of amendments. The Clean Air Act is one of the most successful public policies in history. It has provided strong public health protections that have saved hundreds of thousands of American lives and prevented countless asthma attacks, heart attacks, premature deaths and other pollution related illnesses. The EPA, which is responsible for policing the provisions of the Clean Air Act, has done an outstanding job of reducing emissions over the last forty years. Some of us remember leaded gas, yellow air and acid rain. Now with Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards, emissions inspections and other common sense standards, our air is safer. But not close to safe enough for the most vulnerable in our communities.

Unfortunately, some current members of Congress are working to undermine the Clean Air Act and to strip the EPA of its ability to be effective. The leadership of the U.S. House of Representatives has announced plans to repeal protective standards that are already in place and to prevent the EPA from following the law. They also want to prevent standards under development from taking effect. Industry lobbyists are busy working to roll back the public health protections provided by the Clean Air Act – the potential result is thousands of American deaths, hundreds of thousands of children suffering more asthma attacks and unborn babies exposed to levels of mercury that will harm their mental development

LWVMI is participating in the Clean Air Promise campaign, a national effort to protect children and families from dangerous air pollution by obtaining commitments from our leaders to safeguard the Clean Air Act and the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) enforcement authority. President Sue Smith and LWVMI Natural Resources Director Suzanne Dixon have visited the offices of Senators Stabenow and Levin, and Representatives Clarke (Detroit), Huizinga (Holland), Amash (Grand Rapids) and Walberg (Jackson), and plan to meet with Reps. Dingell and Kildee. Letters were sent to the rest of the Congressional delegation. Joined by Rep. Hanson Clarke, President Smith participated in a media event on September 29th at the Delray Community Center in Detroit. At the event, Rep. Clarke made the promise, which we urge all League members to make:

Make the Clean Air Promise by visiting www.peoplenotpolluters.org.

Review the Clean Air Fact Sheet on the LWVMI's website to learn the economic impact of eliminating Clean Air protections.

"I promise to protect America's children and families from dangerous air pollution because toxics and pollutants such as mercury, smog, carbon, and soot, cause thousands of hospital visits, asthma attacks, and even deaths. I will support clean air policies and other protections that scientists and public health experts have recommended to the EPA to safeguard our air quality."

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

Sue Smith, LWVMI Ann Arbor, LWVMI President

This past summer and fall, many Local Leagues have been busy providing candidate forums and voter guides. In our communities, we are probably best known for our **voter service** activities. When you mention League of Women Voters to the general public, they usually say, "Oh, yes, you're the ones who put out the voter guides."

Not as well known to the general public, but equally important, are our **advocacy** efforts at the local, state and national level. The Clean Air Promise Campaign, Redistricting and "No Reason" Absentee Voting are just some of the issues local Leagues and the state League are working on this fall.

Suzanne Dixon, LWVMI Natural Resources Director, and I have been travelling across the state, meeting with as many of the 15 members of our Michigan Congressional Delegation as possible. We are asking our U.S. Representatives and Senators to "Make the Promise" of protecting clean air for our children and grandchildren.

During the summer, I testified on behalf of LWVMI and the Michigan Redistricting Collaborative at numerous state legislative committee hearings, asking for transparency and public involvement in the redistricting process.

Many of you participated in our "Take Action for Convenient Voting". It was inspiring to see so many League members walking across the Capitol lawn to various legislative offices, carrying the message that the League of Women Voters and the people of Michigan support "no reason" absentee voting.

I encourage you to take action on local issues in your communities. Of course, if you are speaking as a League member, you need approval of your board. Local League members may speak to local officials on local issues, based on local, state or national positions, if members have the approval of their local League Board.

Advocacy, that is, writing letters, meeting with legislators or their staff, and speaking at public meetings are all important ways of letting our representatives and the general public know where we as League members stand on important issues of the day.

Convenient Voting Action Day

Kris Zawisza, LWV Lansing, LWVMI Project Director

League members and friends convened in Lansing on October 12 for Take Action for Convenient Voting, an informative and spirited advocacy day that focused on no reason absentee voting. People are busier than ever. We need voting laws that serve today's more complex world and the needs of today's families. Michigan voters want to have the option to vote absentee, to make it more convenient to participate. Event participants learned about how to advocate for this issue and carried the message to their legislators.

Rep. Jeff Irwin (D-Ann Arbor) gave welcoming remarks and stressed that we can make a difference by talking with our legislators, especially if we recruit others to do the same. Chris Swope, Lansing City Clerk, discussed the Michigan Municipal Clerks' legislative agenda and gave an update on voting and elections legislation. Government relations expert Jean Doss presented tips and techniques for effective advocacy and warmed up the group for legislative visits. League leaders Sue Smith, Judy Karandjeff, and Pat Donath facilitated the morning program and provided background on the issue and LWVMI's Convenient Voting campaign.

No reason absentee bills have been introduced by Sen. Bieda (SB 49) and Rep. Irwin and Rep. Constan (HB 4520 and HB 4698) and await hearings in their respective chambers: Senate Committee on Local Government and Elections and House Committee on Redistricting and Elections. Participants visited with more than 40 legislators to ask them to call for hearings on the bills and to learn more about their views on the issue. The event brought attention to the League's message and coincided with Sec. Ruth Johnson's announcement of her legislative package, which included bills on absentee voting. Stay tuned for actions members can take to support our campaign.



As Jean Doss (white shirt) coaches them, Sherrill Smith (Saginaw) and Carole Swinehart (Midland) role play in preparation for their legislative visit to advocate for no reason absentee ballots.

Volunteers Needed

The LWVMI has a new Advocacy Committee which is meeting monthly in Lansing. We are looking for individuals who want to participate in monitoring issues of importance to the league, such as taxation, budgeting, education, health care, social services, or representative government.

LWVMI would like to announce the formation of an Observer Corp at the Michigan Legislature. The legislature usually has committee meetings on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays throughout the year. The observers would be asked to attend committee meetings on issues of concern to the League (the House or Senate Committee on Natural Resources for example).

This is the time for you to volunteer, help us develop the program and learn more about Michigan's governmental process. If you are interested and would like more information, please email Judy Karandjeff, Vice President for Advocacy, at jkarandjeff44@aol.com or call her at (517) 332-7825.

Plan Ahead for Conventions

The 2012 LWVUS Convention will be held in Washington DC from June 8–12. The Washington Hilton will be the venue.

The 2013 LWVMI Convention is set for May 17-19 at the Radisson Hotel in Lansing.



Study Update

A committee has been formed for the LWVMI study on **Redistricting**, which is in the process of composing consensus questions. Once approved by the LWVMI Board, local Leagues will be urged to "fast track" this study so that LWVMI can advocate on legislation that we expect to be initiated after the current redistricting process is completed. More committee members are welcome (and needed). If you can help, please contact Fran Hamburg through the LWVMI office.

The LWVMI **Alternative Forms of Voting** study that most local Leagues participated in during this past year has been completed. No consensus was reached. Therefore, the LWV of Michigan will not create a new position. Despite this, we are confident that local League members learned a lot about Plurality, Approval and Instant Runoff Voting Systems.

Local Leagues are required to submit their responses to the consensus questions for the **Role of the Federal Government in Public Education** study by November 30th. All study materials can be found on www.lwv.org.

Consensus questions should be available soon on the LWVUS website for the study on **Privatization of Government Services**. Local Leagues should be planning study meetings from November through May, 2012.

Are You Receiving League Links?

If you have email you should be receiving a new communication from the LWVMI state board. Beginning in September, the board began sending *League Links* to members with email addresses on file with LWVUS. This on-line newsletter is designed to keep members up-to-date on the work of the LWVMI board and includes information about advocacy, program, membership, voter service, natural resources, and development. Links to event information, registrations, and contacts are part of the service.

If you're not receiving *League Links* through your email, contact Camilla Davis, Communications Director, at cdavis.lwvmi@gmail.org.

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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.

Recent Legislative Highlights

Judy Karandjeff, LWV Lansing, LWVMI Advocacy Vice President

EDUCATION

In April 2011, Governor Snyder released his education agenda, which included a call to require all public schools to participate in schools of choice, removing cap on charter schools and allowing dual enrollment. The bills SB 618-624, SB 709-710, have been introduced and some are moving their way through the Senate.

NATURAL RESOURCES

A bi-partisan package of legislation to deal with invasive species and setting the stage for a regional compact, SB 508-510, passed the Senate on October 6th and is now in the House Natural Resources, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee. Also, Public Act 149 was signed into law raising landfill fees from 7 to 12 cents per cubic yard.

PRISONS

The Michigan Corrections Director announced a plan on September 28, 2011, that would close the Mound Correctional Facility in Detroit, put up for bid operations at the Woodland Center Correctional Facility in Whitmore Lake that houses severely mentally ill prisoners and also bid out all health and mental health services throughout the department. This would reduce the number of employees and costs.

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

On October 8, the **LWVMI Board of Directors voted to support passage of HB 4520, 4698 and SB 49** for no-reason absentee voting. The bills are in committee. The Legislature passed and the Governor signed a bill to allow the presidential primary to be held on February 28, 2012. Voters must declare a party, and that information is subject to Freedom of Information Act.

On September 10, the **LWVMI Board of Directors voted to support the referendum on the Emergency Manager Law**. Petitions for the referendum are currently being circulated. LWVMI's position is limited to the issue of representative government. For more information, please contact your president for the details of LWVMI's position

SOCIAL POLICY

Numerous anti-choice and Prevention First pieces of legislation are moving through the legislature. In Sep-

tember, Governor Snyder announced his health care agenda which includes dealing with issues of obesity, infant mortality, insurance mandate for autism, and implementation of the Affordable Health Care Act by establishing health care exchanges. One of the requirements in the federal legislation is for a state to create health exchanges (or if they don't the federal government will).

The Governor signed and the Michigan Legislature approved a 48-month-limit that includes some exceptions for welfare recipients. **LWVMI opposed the 48-month limit**. The laws took effect Oct. 1, 2011 but a judge stopped the implementation on Oct. 4th as a result of a lawsuit filed by Center for Civil Justice. Following the ruling, DHS sent notices to clients of the cutoff.

TAXATION & BUDGETING

Michigan's new budget with lots of changes started October 1. A 2010-11 spending bill that includes money for railroad projects, Medicaid and the first state interest payment on unemployment benefit loans was signed into law.

Governor Snyder has convened a work group looking at a proposal to repeal the personal property taxes for businesses. This could result in up to \$1.2 billion lost to local governments. SB 34 to repeal the tax has been introduced, but is likely to be changed.

Large packages of legislation are moving through the House and Senate to make needed changes in tax legislation as a result of the budget passed for this year. Passed by the Senate in June, the House approved SB 331 on September 20 that lowers taxes by 1.85 percent on liquor purchases in retail stores for off-premise consumption. The Governor signed PA 166 of 2011 which takes effect October 1, 2012.

Governor Snyder signed legislation creating a health care claims assessment that should net the state up to \$780 million in federal money and about \$1.2 billion total. The new fees in SB 347 & SB 348 (PA 141 and PA 142 respectively) were considered critical to ensuring the state's 2011-12 budget was balanced. In a statement, Governor Snyder also said the fee, which replaces a 6 percent use tax on Medicaid fees from managed care organizations, would help ensure that low-income individuals have health care.

Sources: Gongwer, Michigan government website, newspapers.

Local Leagues in Action

This fall, prior to the local November elections, many Leagues are involved in candidate forums and voters guides. Highlighted here are some of the additional activities that Leagues have squeezed into their busy schedules.

The **Grand Traverse Area League** is supporting a Yes vote on Traverse City's Nondiscrimination Ordinance which corrects prior law to add gay and transgender people to protections in employment and public school accommodations just as it protects people based on age, color, family status, heights, marital status, national origin, physical or mental disability, race, religion, sex and weight.

Alpena County League members participated in a clean up of "Phragmites", a local invasive species growing along the shoreline of Lake Huron. Working with the Huron Pines Invasive Species SWAT Team, the crew were instructed on how to chemically destroy the nasty plants.

The **Lake Michigan LWV** held it's annual meeting on October 21 and 22 in Oak Lawn, Illinois. Discussions about invasive species, including Asian Carp, combined sewer overflows and other issues pertinent to the Great Lakes were covered.

The **Kalamazoo Area League** continues their work with the Tax Attitude Group, which works to educate people about the benefits of taxes. The Group will be launching their project soon with billboards and yard signs with witty verses such as:

A race to the bottom is very destructive,
Investing in Government is much more constructive.

Along with a number of local environmental groups, the **Copper Country League** is co-sponsoring the *Environmental Issues and Dialogue Series* this fall and *Green Film Series* early next year, which focus on sustainability, land ethics and climate change. This is a continuation of the League's co-sponsorship of similar programs in the past year that were popular and thought-provoking.

The **Oakland Area League** continued their series of topical meetings: "The Impact of Medical Marijuana Law on Local Communities" in May and a program on "Human Trafficking" on October 17th.

The **NW Wayne County League** again participated in the annual "School Daze Fair", at the local community college. They registered nearly 140 young college students who will (hopefully) vote for the first time this November.

The **Berrien/Cass Counties League** held a meeting in September on pipelines which nearly 75 people attended. There was great interest in the topic since the State Department was then taking public comments on the proposed 1900-mile Keystone XL pipeline that will ship tar sand crude oil extracted from BP in Canada to refineries and ports in Texas and Louisiana. The speaker suggested that additional regulations needed to be in place before the pipeline is built.

The **Grosse Pointe League** presented a discussion on redistricting on September 21. LWVMI Project Director, Kris Zawisza was part of the panel, along with State Rep. Tim Bledsoe and former state rep, Andrew Richner.

The **Midland Area League** will be broadcasting two shows per month on local TV. Filmed live before a studio audience, "Making Democracy Work" will be an issue-oriented, nonpartisan public affairs program intended to help educate and inform voters, as well as to increase the voter turnout by encouraging greater participation in government.

The **Dearborn/Dearborn Heights League** started off their study of the Federal Role in Public Education by viewing the controversial documentary film, "Waiting for Superman-How We Can Save American Schools."

The **Flint Area League** presented their 4th annual Making Democracy Work award on September 20th to Jane Richardson, a community activist involved in neighborhood revitalization and making housing more accessible to low income persons. The program can be viewed on their website.

The **Ann Arbor League's** popular Liberty Awakes exhibit about women gaining the right to vote is on the road. It has travelled to local libraries, retirement centers, and the VA Hospital. Zoe Behnke, one of the exhibit creators, has also given presentations at a variety of locations.

Tapping the Power of the League: Voter Service and the New Media

Though our League's mission to educate voters has not changed in the past 91 years, the delivery of that information certainly has. As more and more voters get their information from on-line sources, the League has a responsibility to be a player in the new media outlets that are now available. Reading a voter guide picked up from the library, or attending a candidate forum are still popular with many voters, but if we are to reach new generations of voters, we must adapt to their needs.

The LWVMI is hosting 4 regional forums around the state in October and November. All local board members and other members interested in information delivery are encouraged to register on the League's website and attend.

A key piece of the 5-hour events is the introduction of VOTE411, a LWVUS on-line vehicle that is a 'one-stop shop' for election information. In addition to polling place and registration information, VOTE411 includes a voter guide component that is a more efficient way of gathering candidate responses and presenting to voters. LWVMI is so positive about the benefits of VOTE411 that it is subscribing to use the program in 2012 for itself and all local Leagues in Michigan.

The final regional meeting is November 19th in Livonia, so there's still time to sign up for this valuable seminar. The League is known for providing trusted, non-partisan information, but we need to provide that information in the most up-to-date method available so that our citizens can vote wisely. Visit the LWVMI website to register!

** *The League of Women Voters is where hands on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement. * **

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League of Women Voters - Michigan
 200 Museum Drive, Suite 104,
 Lansing, MI 48933-1997
 Office@lwvmi.org
 www.lwvmi.org

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