



The Michigan VOTER

A Publication of the League of Women Voters of Michigan
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FEBRUARY, 2017

LWVMI CONVENTION: May 29-21, 2017

This year's Convention at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing promises to be informative, productive and fun. State Convention provides us with an opportunity to conduct important business of the state League as well as an opportunity to participate in workshops, learn more about the League and renew friendships with League members across the state.

Delegates will:

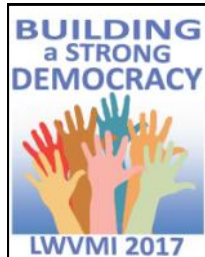
- Adopt the 2017 - 2019 state program, including any state studies
- Adopt the LWVMI budgets for the next two years, including the per-member-payment (dues)
- Elect LWVMI Officers and members of the Board of Directors
- Consider Amendments to the LWVMI Bylaws, if proposed

Voting delegates are determined by a local League's membership count, but all members are welcome.

A detailed schedule of events, a registration packet and other Convention documents will be sent to all Leagues later in the spring and also be available on the website.

Business Meetings:

The business of the League will be conducted in three Plenary Sessions: Friday Evening, Saturday Morning and Sunday Morning.



Special Events/ Activities:

- Optional Pre-Convention Workshops on Friday afternoon.
- "Dine Around" in East Lansing for Friday dinner, guided by Lansing Area League members.
- Workshops on Saturday afternoon.
- Convention Banquet on Saturday evening: Presentation of Key Awards and an engaging Speaker. Separate tickets for the Banquet will be available for purchase.
- Wares Market/Silent Auction: Please let state office know if your League wants to sell items at the Wares Market so we can plan enough display space. See auction information on page 2.

Please keep in mind these State Convention deadlines:

FEB, 15, 2017: Proposed Bylaws Amendments due

MARCH 1, 2017: Program Planning reports from local Leagues due to the state office

APRIL 1, 2017: Award Nominations Due. Visit the League's website at www.lwvmi.org to view the award packet of information for these awards:

- Belle Brotherton Award
- Helen Milliken Leadership in Civic Engagement Award
- Mary Ann Mahaffey Community Service Award
- Belle Ringer" Awards

APRIL 19, 2017: Convention Registrations due to LWVMI . (Late fee charged after April 19).

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

The LWVMI has been extremely busy at the local, state and national levels. Hopefully you have been involved as we reached record numbers with our voter service information. Thank you for everyone's hard work to make our voter education programs successful statewide, especially Eva Packard, LWVMI's Voter Service Director.

Now that the elections have been held, we are facing new work. LWVUS is diligently working to keep members informed when action is needed at the federal level. The next step is to make sure you are responding to those calls for action.

Our priorities continue to be to support the Democracy Agenda:

- Voter protection and mobilization
- Election reform
- Money in politics, constitutional amendment and redistricting

The Michigan House of Representatives is organizing for the new legislative session. Of the 110 members, we have 63 Republicans and 47 Democrats – the same as the last legislative session. Committees are getting established and have not begun moving legislation. The Senate with 38 members, 27 Republicans and 11 Democrats, will continue their committee assignments from the past legislative session. LWVMI will be monitoring legislation as it is introduced through our Advocacy Committee chaired by Linda Hoff, Vice President for Advocacy. The committee recommends to the LWVMI Board of Directors what actions should be taken. In turn then, LWVMI will send out action alerts to you and keep information on our website, www.lwvmi.org, so you can take action.

Regarding redistricting, LWVMI has received many calls and emails asking about what we are doing on redistricting. The League is committed to educating Michigan citizens about redistricting. Just contact the League office if you need a speaker. We have a lot of materials and a video on the website: www.lwvmi.org. There is a lot of education that needs to happen prior to a ballot proposal campaign. The League has not developed or joined any ballot proposal campaign yet. The League does support the establishment of an independent redistricting commission. If anything changes, we will let you know immediately.

We look forward to working with you in these new times!

Auction Planning

The proceeds from the League's convention auction bring needed funds to our treasury, allowing us to keep the convention registration fee charged to League members affordable. It's also a lot of fun! We need your help. We are asking every local League to contribute at least one item to the Silent Auction at the 2017 LWVMI Convention.

This is not a 'white elephant' event--- we are looking for items with a minimum value of \$25. To trigger the creative side of your brain, here are some of the items that were donated at past Conventions: golf packages, museum memberships, gift baskets, gift certificates to restaurants or country clubs, a sailboat ride, and items with a political slant. Ask your League members to help. Remember that one gift is not the limit--- we're happy to take multiple donations!

Auction items can be brought to the convention on Friday evening. They will be displayed and bids will be accepted up until Saturday night, when the winners will be announced. Members are encouraged to bring their checkbooks so they have an opportunity to purchase any of these wonderful items.

Donation forms will be available on our website soon as part of the convention materials. If you have any questions in the meantime, please contact Auction Chair Paula Manley at pjmanley@hotmail.com.

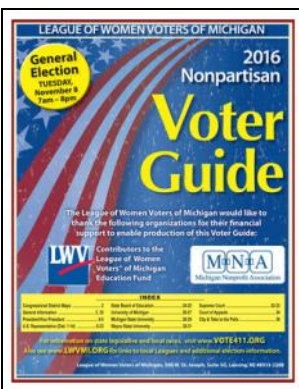


Voter Service Activities for 2016 Elections

Eva Packard, LWV Oakland Area,
LWVMI Voter Service Director

THANK YOU to all the Local League members who provided voter services for the voters in their areas! 2016 was a very busy year with many online and printed guides, candidate forums and voter registration.

VOTE411.org online: 218,066 voters viewed races prepared on VOTE411 by the League of Women Voters for Michigan's March Presidential Primary, May proposals, August Primary and November General Election. The national League provided the Presidential guides; Michigan League provided 3 special legislative election races in March + 125 Primary + 135 General Election races; and Local Leagues provided 872 races for the Primary + 1381 for the General Election. Total views were 2.4 times totals in 2012 and 2014!



Printed Voter Guides: LWVMI printed 99,100 36-page voter guides containing the Presidential race,

14 Congressional districts, 4 state boards, 2 Supreme Court, and 4 Appeals Court races, sending 67,600 to Local Leagues to distribute and the rest to libraries, guide sponsor Michigan Nonprofit Association, a college, and contributors.

The printed guide was also available on LWVMI.org for voters to flip through for desired races. Individual federal and state races were also posted there.

Four Local Leagues (Kalamazoo, Oakland, Midland, Copper Country) printed 62,200 local guides covering all US & MI races as well as their local races for delivery, and also posted them on their websites. Eight Local Leagues (Alpena, Dearborn, Delta Co, Holland, Lansing, Mt. Pleasant, Northwest Wayne, Troy) printed 22,050 local guides covering their local races and their State Rep races to distribute with MI guide copies. Flint placed a printable guide of all of its races on its website.

League Voter Guides were also provided to newspapers when requested: The Detroit News received federal, state and local races for Wayne, Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw and Livingston Counties to publish on its website for both the Primary and General Election. St. Ignace News, Lansing City Pulse, and Blissfield Advance received federal or state races they requested to publish in their newspapers.

Candidate Forums: Local Leagues held at least 114 General Election and 50 Primary Candidate Forums for ballot races with many of them available for viewing thereafter on cable or online or both up to election day.

Voter Registration: Local Leagues registered 5,161 voters in Michigan. Leagues also handed out VOTE411 bookmarks, voter registration, absentee ballot and other voting information to college and

high school students, senior citizens and other community groups, often giving presentations about election processes.

Possible election dates in 2017 are May 2, August 8 and November 7. The only scheduled candidate races in odd years are in November for most cities and possibly some district library boards. There may be some city Primaries in August. Proposals are the main other contests on ballots. There may also be a few vacancy, recall, and charter commission races.

The League played a key role in providing non-partisan election information to the public in 2016. In this time of online rhetoric, 'fake' news and slanted journalism, the public depends on the League's straightforward and unbiased delivery of candidate information to make informed decisions on election day. Thank you again for providing such good public service!

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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.

LWVMI Thanks our 2016 Donors

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The League's Board of Directors appealed to new donors in November by promising to match donations from new donors up to \$3,000. We are very pleased to say that we received generous donations from 35 new supporters, and the challenge was matched in full.

The League is humbled by the generous donations from all of our friends, and are honored that you have the confidence in our efforts to carry out the League's mission.

All attempts to make this list as accurate as possible have been made. If you believe there is an error, please contact us at office@lwvmi.org or 517-484-5383,

Thank you

Nestle Water Withdrawal Request

Suzanne Dixon, LWV Holland
LWVMI Natural Resources Director

The Nestle Corporation received permission from the DEQ, Water Resources Division, to increase their water withdrawal rate in January, 2016. This went largely unnoticed by the public until an October news story announced a required 45 day comment period by the Michigan Safe Drinking Water Act. There have been two extensions, with a new comment deadline set for March 3. No public hearing has been established at this writing. This request was for the White Pine Springs bottling well near Evert.

In December, 2016, FLOW (For Love of Water), an advocacy group dedicated to protecting the common waters of the Great Lakes Basin, put the DEQ on notice that they should nullify the permission due to a procedural error and start over. Nestle is requesting a pumping increase from 250 gallons per minute to 400 gpm (576,000 gallons per day). A DEQ staff on-site review has overruled the computer model normally used to approve such requests, claiming that the model is overly conservative. Their findings, as well as those of Trout Unlimited, a coldwater fisheries conservation organization, have indicated that no harm will be caused to the environment.

While Nestle claims the request is because of increased sales, a well was found to be contaminated with perchlorate, a contaminant from years of firework displays. This well was owned by the city of Evert which sold water to Nestle. A significant portion of Evert's budget is

reliant on water sales. Nestle has promised to buy the city a 1000 gpm deep groundwater well for Nestle's continued use. Presently, 1/4 of Nestle's withdrawal comes from the city.

Michigan law uses the "reasonable use" doctrine which allows landowners use of water on or under their property, as long as it doesn't adversely impact neighboring ground water. Farms, parks, and golf courses are also big users. There is a glaring difference between Nestle and local users: the locals are using water for use on their property, while water bottlers are packaging and shipping the water for consumption out of the basin. The "Public Trust" protects surface water. The question is, should it also protect groundwater which impacts surface water? Aquifers need time to recharge.

Eighteen states currently have payment structures in place for commercial high-volume withdrawals. Certainly Michigan could join other states and charge for bottling which sends water out of the basin for consumption. But does this send a message that Michigan's water is for sale and open a door to more bottling or water grabs from drought-stricken states? This topic needs to be very carefully considered. The League of Women Voters of Michigan believes that increased withdrawals for agricultural or municipal use within the basin should be carefully evaluated and monitored before being permitted. We oppose new or increased diversions of ground waters to a place outside the basin.



Line 5 Opposition Continues

LWV Lelanau County has been working on a year-long project in opposition to Enbridge's Line 5 oil pipeline which travels under the Straights of Mackinac. LWVMI has already approved action in this area. This is an aged pipeline in a particularly turbulent area which would make oil containment difficult. One study on emergency response indicated that it would be impossible to contain and clean during periods the Lake is frozen.

This pipeline has had over 1,000 spills since 2000. The company has been found to be out of compliance with their agreement with the state several times. They have not been forthcoming with safety inspection data and helped write a bill which would protect inspection data from FOIA requests for security reasons. The Governor has created an advisory board headed by Attorney General Schuette. The Pipeline Safety Advisory Board has hired two consulting firms to perform a risk analysis and alternatives study. These reports are due in June, 2017. The Lakes are a shared resource for the benefit of the people of Michigan, protected under the Public Trust. This gives the Governor the power, as trustee, to make decisions concerning the pipeline.

The Leelanau League has successfully made presentations to their local governments and secured resolutions opposed to the pipeline. The effort began by educating themselves, working with local officials to inform them, and then the public. The City of Lansing and Kalamazoo have also signed resolutions opposing the pipeline.

League Members Observe at Polls on Election Day

One Hundred Forty-Two League members from eight Leagues in Michigan (Ann Arbor Area, Lansing Area, Holland Area, Mt. Pleasant Area, Dearborn-Dearborn Heights, Eastern Upper Peninsula, Kalamazoo Area and Flint Area) were official election observers in 78 precincts around Michigan.

This project was generated and funded by the LWVUS as part of their Public Advocacy for Voter Protection goal. The observers were trained by the League to identify possible roadblocks to voting. The common issue noted by all the participating Leagues was problems with the ballot tabulators. There were many incidences of jammed ballots and several cases where the machines malfunctioned completely and the precinct had to wait for a replacement. Poll workers often spent a lot of time fixing problems. The problems with the tabulators caused voter frustration and some questioning by voters about the process. In many precincts, the line for tabulators was the longest part of the voting process.

Additional problems reported were: long lines caused by having only one electronic poll book, instructions to voters that were inconsistent and often omitted, too few poll workers, no offer of provisional ballots, and poll workers who were unsure about the cell phone policy.



After tallying the results, the League pointed to the fact that Michigan is one of the most decentralized voting systems in the US. The MI Secretary of State supervises 1,859 county, city, township and village clerks, all who administer elections independently for over 7.4 million registered voters. The League, which supports consistency of election laws in all jurisdictions, would like to work together with elected officials to improve the process,

Participating Leagues will report their observations to their local clerks and the state League will follow up with an official in the Michigan Department of the Secretary of State regarding the findings. The League will also use the project results to educate local legislators, especially those who serve on the House and Senate election committees.

Responses to Study Questions Due by March 1

As we tackle a study about Government Finance, League members in Michigan are learning a lot about revenue sharing, state budgets, federal aid, sales and use taxes and allocation of financial resources. Leagues are studying this complex topic in a variety of ways—holding intense study sessions, panel discussions or group analysis - so that members can come to consensus on the questions posed by the LWVMI study committee. All the information can be found on LWVMI.org.

We Marched!

League members from all over Michigan participated in the post-election Womens Marches on January 21. League boots were on the ground in Washington DC, Lansing, Detroit, Grosse Pointe, Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, Kalamazoo and other communities all around the state. Marchers representing the League marched for voting rights, human rights, affordable health care for all, reproductive rights and a myriad of social justice issues. We are proud of our sisters and brothers who have joined this movement of advocates who will fight for League values.



LWV Ann Arbor Area League President Nancy Schewe was sign-ready for the march in Ann Arbor on January 21

Equal Pay Day in Michigan: April 25

Though the national Equal Pay Day observance is on April 4 (this date symbolizes how far into the year women must work to earn what men earned in the previous year), Michigan is observing this day on April 25 because of the legislative schedule. We want our legislators to be in Lansing and hear the voices of women and men who are demanding pay equity.

Pay equity—evaluating and compensating jobs based on their skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions, and not on the people who hold the jobs—is a solution to eliminating wage discrimination and closing the wage gap.

There will be an event in Lansing on April 25 and the League of Women Voters, which has fought for pay equity for years, will be part of the event. Watch the LWVMI website for information as the day’s events develop.

Get Involved!

If the results of our recent election have prompted you or your friends to become more involved in the political process, joining the League of Women Voters is the ticket! Joining the League and becoming an active advocate and volunteer gives a member the satisfaction of being part of the solution. Many movements for change start locally. Work that League members do at the local level such as protecting voting rights, educating people about needed redistricting reform, bringing attention to social justice problems and fighting for a clean environment, often become the groundwork for statewide or national initiatives.

As members, a first step is to respond to the “Action Alerts” sent out by LWVUS and LWVMI. These pleas for YOUR action are crafted based on careful examination of an issue and our positions. It usually just takes a few email clicks or a phone call. When legislators hear from large numbers of people, they pay attention!

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