



# The Michigan VOTER

A Publication of the League of Women Voters of Michigan  
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## Training and Advocacy Event Set for April 21<sup>st</sup> in Lansing

Mark your calendar and dust off your advocacy hat for **Voting and Elections Training and Action Day**, April 21<sup>st</sup> in Lansing. Sponsored by LWVMI's Michigan Voter Power Campaign, the event will feature a briefing on the status of current policy priorities, training on effective advocacy by Tim O'Brien from the LWVUS, and a luncheon to honor the League's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and legislators who have supported our issues. Participants will have the opportunity to visit their legislators after lunch.

The event is open to League members and other individuals who want to learn more about the issues and how government works in Lansing. Local Leagues are encouraged to recruit a delegation to attend.

Details of the event will be available soon or contact Kris Zawisza, Project Director at [voterpower@lwvmi.org](mailto:voterpower@lwvmi.org) or 517-484-5383.

## Join us in Atlanta! Making Democracy Work: a History of Change, a Future of Hope.

The LWVUS invites all members to join fellow Leaguers from 50 states, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and Hong Kong to celebrate 90 remarkable years of League achievements and chart the course for the next biennium of League programs. Set for June 11-15, 2010, the convention will be held in downtown Atlanta.

All League members are invited to attend Convention, but Presidents of local, state and ILO Leagues appoint their allotted delegates. Non-voting members can be part of the excitement as the Convention delegate body debates and adopts the 2010-2012 National Program, the LWVUS Budget for the next fiscal year, and amendments to the LWVUS Bylaws. Delegates will also be choosing the LWVUS Board officers, directors and nominating committee for the next biennium.

LWVMI hopes to have a strong delegation – at least one member from every local League. If you would like to attend the convention, which will also be celebrating the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of the LWVUS, please discuss this with your local League president. If you cannot attend, you can participate in all the pre-convention discussions by joining the Convention listserve on [www.lwvus.org](http://www.lwvus.org).

### 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

Jessica Reiser, LWV Kalamazoo  
LWVMI President

First of all, I wish you a Happy 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. I hope you will celebrate this event within your local League. LWV has so much to celebrate and be proud of at all levels. From the LWVMI perspective, I am celebrating you, our members. Just take a look at the contributors listed in this *Voter*. Your financial support is one way you tell us that we are important to you. Your contributions, along with grant monies, have allowed us to take actions and move forward with plans for the future. Just look at the articles in this *Voter* about what we have planned—such as Advocacy Day on April 21.

Member support has kept the League of Women Voters alive for 90 years and it is essential for the LWV to continue in the future. I need to tell you about the forethought and generosity of one of our members who died this past December. Julia Costello knew that the LWVMI needed to have a financial plan for the future. With her persistence and financial support, LWVMI established the endowment fund. Julia was instrumental in working with our finance committee. She was an inspiration and great friend to the LWV and to me. Our endowment is her legacy.

With regret, the Board has accepted the resignation of Katherine Barnhart, who is moving to New York. We now have two board positions open (Secretary and Advocacy VP) and welcome any interested members. If you would like to discuss this further, please contact the LWVMI Nominating Chair, Kathy Esselman (Lansing Area) via the state office.

We are all working hard doing hands-on work to safeguard democracy. Thank you for all that you do for LWV.

## Stay Connected!

If you would like to receive LWV e-alerts and information, please contact Mary Howarth at [tenormary@gmail.com](mailto:tenormary@gmail.com). Mary manages [LWVMI's email distribution list](#), and sends out information about once a week.

Become a fan of LWVMI on [Facebook](#). You can read and comment on postings about LWVMI's priority policy issues, news and musings on LWVMI's Facebook page.

Visit [lwv.org](http://lwv.org). Loaded with up-to-date advocacy news, press releases and issue alerts, the site is also a great source of resource material for all League members. Whether you're going or not, check out the LWVUS Convention section. There's also an interesting section on the League's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary, including new historical material with pictures.



## State League Activity: Michigan Voter Power

*Convenient and Accessible Voting* (e.g., Early and No-Excuse Absentee Voting): Current efforts to raise awareness and gain support for policy change on these issues include:

- Developing messages and communications tools to support outreach to media and community leaders;
- Communications training for LWVMI Board members and interested volunteers; and
- Partnering with the municipal clerks association to conduct a poll on voter attitudes about these reforms.

*Fair and Impartial Courts*: The American Board of Trial Advocates and Wayne State University are co-sponsoring a symposium entitled "Options for an Independent Judiciary in Michigan" on February 9, 8:30 am to 4 pm. Retired U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor will be the keynote speaker. LWVMI has been involved in event planning and will be part of the "next steps" following the event. For information about the event, call (313) 577-3099.

*Public Advocacy for Voter Protection*: LWVMI is working with the Oakland Area League to review MI Department of Human Services (DHS) voter registration procedures. The goal is to ensure that registrations submitted at DHS offices are treated as in-person registrations. LWVOA has interviewed the manager of a local DHS office and several local clerks to gain an understanding of their procedures and identify any barriers. A secondary goal is to encourage voter registration opportunities in DHS offices.

# League Reminders

February 14	LWVUS' 90 <sup>th</sup> Birthday
March 1	LWVUS Program planning reports from local Leagues are due
March 15-21	Sunshine Week
April 21	All-member Advocacy Day in Lansing
May 1	Local League consensus forms due on LWVMI's Prison Re-study
May 14	Registration deadline for LWVUS Convention
June 11-15	LWVUS Convention in Atlanta

## Detroit Victory

Leagues all over Michigan participated in last fall's local elections by publishing voter guides, holding candidate forums and even advocating on local issues supported by LWV positions. Being the engaged electorate that we are, LWV members enjoyed the election night drama as we watched our democracy in action.

While the eyes of Michigan's media concentrated on the Detroit mayoral race last November 6<sup>th</sup>, Detroit LWV President Mildred Madison was focused on the results of the Detroit ballot proposal which would require city council members to be elected by district, instead of at-large.

After the disappointment of a failed petition drive in 2001, the League joined forces with a number of coalition groups, including Publius.org, ACORN, Our Detroit, the Black State, as well as state representatives, neighborhood groups, students and other activists. Together, they eventually got the initiative on the November, 2009 ballot. Seventy-two percent of city voters gave the newly elected Charter Commission, a mandate to change the way the Detroit City Council is elected

– at least seven members are to be elected by district beginning in 2013.

After the victory, Madison and the Detroit League were lauded by the media for leading this grassroots campaign. Crains Detroit Business praised Madison as the “elder stateswoman” who was the “heart of the Prop D. campaign”.

*“There was no accountability to the community, so we decided the best way to do it was to have council by districts, where you have a person living in those districts and accountability to the people. We studied other large cities and they all had council by districts except us. We decided we were going after it, after access and accountability. We stopped talking about it and decided to go into action.”*

Mildred Madison  
LWV Detroit President,

Detroit Free Press Columnist Rochelle Riley paid tribute to Madison's tenacity and determination to give Detroiters access to government.

The newly formed Detroit Charter Commission meets two Tuesdays each month. Though there is certainty that the new charter will include elections by district, members of the Detroit LWV attend each meeting, determined to be part of the public process that will modernize and improve the way city government works. We congratulate Mildred Madison, Renata Polk and the other members of the Detroit League who worked for more than nine years to reach this goal of election by district.

## Julia Costello

Kay Perry, LWV Kalamazoo

Julia Costello, a member of the Kalamazoo Area League, passed away in December following a brief illness. Julia played a key role in encouraging the Kalamazoo Area League to establish its own education fund. As chair of the LWVKA Education Fund Board, she then worked to establish an endowment fund and managed those funds until her death.

Julia was an enthusiastic fundraiser, identifying grant opportunities, helping to develop wares for the League to sell, and staffing the wares table at LWV Conventions, as well as other events.

She was also instrumental in helping the LWVMI to establish its endowment fund, and was on the LWVMI finance committee that helped manage the funds.

Julia had a wide variety of interests, and despite her limited vision, she read a great deal about a variety of subjects. Julia's positive, can-do attitude was a source of inspiration.

Julia's family has asked that contributions in her memory be made to the League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area, to the endowment fund at the League of Women Voters of Michigan, or to Kalamazoo Family and Children Services, where she was once employed as a social worker.

## *Thank You to all of our 2009 Contributors*

### **2009 Contributions to LWVMI Operating Fund**

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### **2009 Operating Fund Tributes**

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 Marilyn Jarema  
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 Dorothy Lynch  
 Joseph & Janet Rossi  
 Thomas Wurster  
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#### **In Memory of Martha Schaefer-Fowler**

Pamela Brady

#### **In Memory of Mary Heritage**

LWV of Detroit Metropolitan Area

#### **In Memory of Janice Nieuwenhuis**

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#### **In Memory Jane Cameron**

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#### In Honor of Judy McDowell

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#### In Honor of Mr. Oris Ware

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#### In Memory of Martha Schaefer-Fowler

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Lillian & Walter Dean

#### In Memory of Mother who was member

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#### In Memory of Mother

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\*\*Anonymous

All attempts to make this list as accurate as possible have been made. If you believe there is an error, please contact us at: [president@lwvmi.org](mailto:president@lwvmi.org) or 269-629-5378

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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.

# Getting the Count Right: Snowbird Guidelines

**Snowbird:** a quaint tag given to Michigan residents who travel to warmer climates during the winter months.

**Problem:** Michigan can lose up to \$200 million in federal funds per year (\$2 billion per decade!) and may also lose a seat in the US House if snowbirds are not included in the Michigan census.

**Solution:** Snowbirds receiving a census form at their winter retreat should enter "0" for the number of people living at their winter address and then write only these words, "Usual residence elsewhere" so the person reading the form understands why "0" was entered. When they return to Michigan, they can fill out the census form that was delivered to their Michigan address OR wait until a census worker visits them at their Michigan home. There is no penalty for having a census worker make a home visit.

Census forms are delivered to households, not to individuals. The form does not ask where you live, nor is there a place on the form to indicate a primary address if you respond to the form from your winter retreat. Every US resident should be counted by the census once, at the official residence where they live most of the year.

Counting Michigan snowbirds as residents of another state reduces Michigan's political influence in Congress, reduces the level of federal funding received by state and local agencies and reduces the accuracy of the census data.

*Help Michigan be counted correctly!* Please circulate this information to your snowbird friends so that Michigan can receive all the resources it deserves!

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

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