



The Michigan VOTER

A Publication of the League of Women Voters of Michigan
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2011 LWVMI Convention: May 20-22

The theme of the League's biennial convention is *Taking Civility in Politics to Heart*. The League is using this year's convention to call for greater civility, including courteous communication between our politicians and leaders, openness to new ideas by listening to and learning from those whose opinions differ from theirs, and promotion of greater public participation in government.



Highlights of the 2011 Convention will include:

- 3 Plenary sessions where members will discuss and decide on program priorities for the next two years including new studies, pass a budget, and elect new officers
- An exciting Saturday night banquet: former Governor William Milliken will receive the "Making Democracy Work" award, Hans Voss, Executive Director of the Michigan Land Institute, will be the guest speaker, and the League will present its biennial awards to deserving members.
- Participation from LWVUS Board member Pat Donath and LWVUS Director of Membership and Field Support, Kelly McFarland-Stratman.
- A wares market where local Leagues can sell products, and a silent auction featuring at least one donation from each local League (don't forget your checkbooks!)
- A variety of workshops members can attend including
 - ▶ Making the Most of Websites and Social Media
 - ▶ Best Practices for Voter Service
 - ▶ Growing Your League - Membership Recruitment
 - ▶ Michigan Voter Power Campaign.
- A "dine around" on Friday night with restaurant suggestions from the Grand Traverse League.
- "Community Conversations" program on redistricting on Saturday, facilitated by the Center for Michigan (public also invited).

Besides all of the League business, members will have a lot of opportunities to enjoy each other's company, learn how Leagues around the state handle similar challenges and discover ideas that may be useful back in their home Leagues. This is an energetic weekend where we must get work done, but one that also has lots of fun packed in between. One of the factors in making this a successful weekend is having a lot of members from all of Michigan's local Leagues attend. There's still time to register! Visit the website or call the League office for details. See you in Traverse City!

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

We have planned an exciting few days beginning on May 20th and encourage all of our members to join us in Traverse City for the League's 2011 convention.

Former Governor William Milliken will receive our "Making Democracy Work" award for his lifetime example of exemplary service to the people of Michigan. The award this year is for taking civility in government to heart (our convention theme), and his 14 years as governor of Michigan have long served as a shining example of cooperation across political party lines. Our banquet speaker is Hans Voss, Executive Director for the Michigan Land Institute. This is a non profit founded in 1995 to establish an approach to economic development that strengthens communities.

Kelly McFarland-Stratman and Pat Donath will be representing the national LWV. We will hear the latest about membership recruitment, leadership development, non-partisanship, and streamlining.

The Grand Traverse League has helped us plan some fun parts to the weekend: a wine tour at Brys Estate Vineyard and Winery for those who can arrive by 1:00 pm on Friday, the "Bodies Human" exhibit at the Denos Museum for adults and kids 5 and up, and an array of restaurant choices for Friday evening. Many are within walking distance of the Park Place Hotel and the cuisine covers the gamut of options that will please even the most epicurean tastes.

Most importantly, we will conduct the business of convention, attend interesting and informative workshops, and just have a chance to chat with other LWV members from across the state. I hope to see you there.

This is my last message as state president. Thanks to all of you who have supported me over the past four years.

Learning about Redistricting: March 14 Draw the Line Event

Nearly ninety citizens attended the Draw the Line Michigan forum on March 14th at Schoolcraft College in Livonia. Sponsored by the Michigan Redistricting Collaborative, of which the LWVMI is a member, the event brought citizens together with an array of expert speakers.

The presenters included Keesha Gaskins, Senior Counsel of the Brennan Center for Justice who said, "If there is no partisan balance in the legislature, there is no partisan balance in redistricting." Virginia Martinez, Attorney for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, discussed how minority districts can be manipulated to dilute their voting power. Kurt Metzger, Director of Data Driven Detroit, pointed out the startling population losses and shifts in Michigan and especially, the metropolitan Detroit area. Also featured were Dr. Michael McDonald, Professor of Government and Politics George Mason University, who is an expert on mapping districts, and Christina Kuo, director of Common Cause who spoke about the Michigan Redistricting Collaborative's goals of making the redistricting process more transparent and inclusive of public input.

The Center for Michigan facilitated "Community Conversations" after a lunch provided by the Schoolcraft College Culinary students. These sessions of approximately 20 participants sought to expand citizen knowledge about the redistricting process with how their legislative boundaries are chosen. The Center gathered participant input regarding potential approaches to redistricting reform by having participants cast votes on hand-held 'clickers' that registered their choices.



Community
Conversations clicker

The League is grateful to all of the participants who helped educate us about this complicated topic.

Governor's Budget Causes a Giant Tax Shift in Michigan

Eva Packard LWV Oakland Area
LWVMI Board

Governor Rick Snyder's proposed budget will decrease taxes on businesses \$1.8 Billion (82%) by replacing the Michigan Business Tax with a 6% Corporate Income Tax. It will increase personal taxes \$1.7 Billion (31%), with seniors and low income working families taking the biggest hits. On the appropriation side, K-12 education and higher education would be subject to the biggest of the \$1.5 Billion in cuts to balance the budget.

Some of the significant components in the Governor's proposed budget will:

- Eliminate Michigan's Earned Income Credit which gives 700,000 Michigan low-income working families an average of a \$432 tax credit.
- Limit public assistance to 4 years, with some undefined exceptions for the disabled and hardship cases.

Though Gov. Snyder said one of his priorities was to reduce child poverty, his plan to eliminate the Michigan Earned Income Credit will cause 25,000 people, including 14,000 children to slip into poverty. Both of these cuts, opposed by the League, can lead to higher costs in terms of homelessness, special education, and juvenile justice.
- Reduce K-12 Education funding from the fiscal year 2011 level by \$452.5 million (4.1%) to 12.2 Billion. The budget reflects an additional \$300 per pupil reduction on top of the fiscal year 2011 \$170 reduction.

Steep cuts to K-12 education will devastate many school districts already reeling from school financing reductions in recent years. LWVMI, which supports adequate state funding for financing education, feels the state is abdicating its responsibility for financing K-12 public education. Funding to Community Colleges (which the League supports) is maintained at \$296 million, but partly by taking money from K-12 schools. Funding for Early Childhood Education, which the League also supports, is maintained at \$110 million.

- Reduce funding for local libraries by \$2.3 million.

The League opposes these cuts, believing that public libraries should be funded to ensure basic services to all residents in Michigan.
- Tax all public and private pensions and other retirement income, except for Social Security.

While this proposal is controversial, Michigan has one of the most generous exemptions in the country for pensions and retirement income (up to \$90,240 if married). Because LWVMI supports the development of a state tax structure that is adequate, equitable, flexible and moderately progressive, it considers taxing such income to be equitable, although suggests some exemption should be offered for low-income seniors who receive a pension but no Social Security, or who are renters.
- Maintain Health Care funding of \$12 Billion for Medicaid.

LWVMI supports a basic level of quality health care available to all Michigan residents.
- Cut Higher Education by 22% but provide incentives such that, if tuition increase is kept under 7%, cut for a university will be reduced to 15% (or a total budget cut of \$222 million)
- Cut statutory Revenue Sharing for local governments but provide incentives for use of best practices, resulting in a total budget cut of \$144 million.
- Reduce employee expenses by \$180 million through negotiated concessions.
- Freeze the income tax at 4.25% so it does not continue to drop as planned.

LWVMI does not have positions on many aspects of the Governor's budget, but does support alternative funding options such as a graduated income tax, sales tax on services, or a higher income tax rate (individual and business) in order to fund programs supported above.

As the budget process continues to unfold in Michigan, the League's voice will be heard with those of others who oppose some of these cuts and hope to influence the process to make a more equitable quality of life for Michigan residents.

LWVMI BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINEES: 2011-13

We have an excellent slate of candidates that are running for the League of women Voters of Michigan's Board of Directors for the 2011-13 term. The nominees are:

President: Sue Smith

Sue joined the Lansing Area League in 1968 and the Mt. Pleasant League eight years later. While living in Mt. Pleasant, Sue served on the School Board and the City Commission; she was also Mayor. After retiring from Central Michigan University where she had been a management professor and administrator for 20 years, Sue moved back near her hometown of Ann Arbor. Currently President of the Ann Arbor Area League, she has been on the state board for four years, as Vice President for Program. Sue has three children and five grandchildren. She enjoys hiking, camping and reading.

VP for Program: Fran Hamburg

Fran was a founding member of the Midland Area League in 1967 and has been a perennial board member, serving as President, Finance Director, Treasurer, Membership Chair, and working on many studies and position updates. She was on the state board from 2003 to 2009 as Natural Resources Director and VP for Advocacy. She chaired the boards of the local ARC and the Center for Independent Living. Currently, she administers a Jane Doe fund for the Midland Coalition for Choice. A Bryn Mawr College graduate with a chemistry major, she studied and/or worked at U Wisconsin, NIH in Washington DC, UC Berkeley and Midland. Fran says that she truly appreciates this second chance to serve on the LWVMI Board.

VP for Advocacy: Judy Karandjeff

Judy recently retired as the Executive Director of the Michigan Women's Commission. Judy also was the Executive Director for Planned Parenthood Affiliates of Michigan and Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan, worked on the Michigan House of

Representatives' Policy Staff on Public Health issues and as an aide for former Kalamazoo State Representative Mary Brown. She has a Master's of Public Administration from Western Michigan University and now lives in East Lansing, MI.

VP for Membership: Judy McDowell

Judy returned to Michigan in 2006 upon retirement from her work as director of community education and fundraising for an international relief, development and refugee agency. Her return to the Midland community, where she had previously lived for over 20 years, opened the opportunity to reconnect with colleagues in the Midland Area LWV which she first joined as the mother of preschoolers back in 1980. Now, a bonus for moving back to Midland is being close to six-year old triplet grandchildren which are a constant joy and source of entertainment. Judy presently serves as Vice President for Membership of the LWV of the Midland Area, and for the past two years has served in the similar position for LWVMI.

Treasurer: Barb Moorhouse

Barbara Moorhouse has been an LWV member since 1979. After being Treasurer and President of the former Birmingham-Bloomfield LWV, she served on the state board from 1989-1995: two years each as Voter Service Director, Treasurer and Advocacy Vice President. In 1992 she represented LWVMI (and co-led the coalition) in the successful fight against Proposal C, Governor Engler's attempt to cut property taxes for schools, with no replacement revenue. She returned to the state board in 2009 as Treasurer. She co-founded the Women Officials' Network and does analysis for the MI Campaign Finance Network. Her other interests: travel, photography, genealogy and soon her first grandchild (girl).

Secretary: Eboni Lamar

Eboni is a member of the Grosse Pointe League and currently serves on its Board of Directors, as well as the LWV Detroit Metro Area Board. For over 20 years she has contributed to community wellness through civic engagement and community service, working to increase community civic engagement, including helping create a culture of voter participation. She enjoys recreational golf, stand-up comedy, and all aspects of wine.

Director, Voter Service: Eva Packard

Eva has served on the LWVMI Board as Voter Service Director for the past two years. She joined the League in Detroit in 1963 and has served on boards in Southfield, Warren and Oakland Area with portfolios including Treasurer, Voter Service Chair, Administrative VP, Citizen Ed VP, President and currently VOTER Editor. Eva has a BS in Math from Wayne State and a Masters in History from Oakland University. Her career included the development of computer operating systems at General Motors Research and management positions in GM and EDS, from which she retired after 34 years.

Director, Communications: Camilla Davis

Camilla has been a League member for seven years. She belonged to the Kalamazoo Area League for most of her "League life," serving on the board in Voter Service and as Secretary. In August of 2010, she transferred her membership to the Lansing Area League and in December, assumed the Communications position on the LWVMI board. Camilla is a retired English and social studies teacher and joined League because she was impressed with the resources the League provides schools. She and her husband Gary recently moved to De Witt, just north of Lansing, to be closer to family.

(Cont on P. 5)

*Nominees, Cont.***Director, Development: Sherrill Smith**

Sherrill Smith is a long time LWV member who is currently President of the Saginaw County League, and LWVMI Secretary. As Assistant to the Director for the Public Libraries of Saginaw, she raised \$1,000,000 for a renovation project, and over \$1,000,000 for endowments. She has administered over 80 local, state and federal grant projects. In her spare time she enjoys music and travelling.

Director, Natural Resources: Suzanne Dixon

Suzanne retired in 2001 from a career in magazine marketing and moved to Michigan, where she had vacationed for many years. She sought out opportunities to become active in her new community and joined the LWV Holland Area where she currently serves as Co-Chair of Natural Resources. The League introduced her to other opportunities of leadership within the Interleague Organization of Lake Michigan League of Women Voters. She currently serves as Board Secretary of the Allegan County Brownfield Authority and the Advisory Board of Michigan Sea Grant. Suzanne's interests in water quality led her to create a non-profit to promote sturgeon rehabilitation on the Kalamazoo River.

Director, Voter Editor: Paula Bowman

Paula joined the League in the early 1990s. This will be Paula's 6th term on the LWVMI Board, where she continues her position as *Voter Editor*. She enjoys working with the intelligent, progressive women that join her on the state Board. Paula graduated from EMU with a teaching degree (French) she never used and works as an administrator in a large, independent real estate firm in Ann Arbor. She has 2 adult children, lives in Plymouth with her husband, and is also President of her local League, NW Wayne County.

Director at Large: Susan Gilbert

Susan Gilbert has been a League member since 1970, the year her first child

was born and she realized she needed an outlet. Born and raised in Michigan and a graduate of the U of M, Susan and her husband then moved to Evanston, IL. By the time that little girl was 7, Susan was co-president of the busy 400+ member Evanston League, having already served in many leadership positions. After a career and retiring back to Michigan, Susan began another period of involvement in the League. She served as President of the Berrien/Cass League for 5 years (one year as Co-President, an arrangement she recommends). Susan is now the Communications Director responsible for the website, e-newsletter and public relations.

Director at Large: Deb Macon

Debbie Macon is a member of LWV Oakland Area. She served in various leadership roles in LWV West Bloomfield/Farmington Area including President. As a current member of the LWVMI Board, Debbie is actively involved in strengthening local League member recruitment and engagement. Debbie was elected to the LWVUS National Board in 1991-1996 and served on its Membership Committee. She is a passionate volunteer in her local community where she champions the ideals of diversity & inclusion. Debbie is a member of the National Association of Parliamentarians and served as a local elected official.

Save the Date

Tuesday, June 14, 2011
9:30 am to 2:30 pm (tentative)

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and other distinguished panelists will speak about Michigan's judicial selection system and related issues at Wayne State University Law School. Sponsored by the Michigan Judicial Selection Task Force, the event is open to the public. Event details will be announced as they become available.

League Member to Receive Women of Wayne Honor

Laura Callow (NW Wayne) who was inducted into the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame in 2010, will be honored by The Women of Wayne Alumnae Association at its Headliner Awards luncheon on May 14th. Other Wayne State alumnae also receiving honors are First Lady of Detroit, Yvette Bing, Michigan's Secretary of State Ruth Johnson, Supreme Court Justice Marilyn Kelly and Ann Fitzsimons, Co-Founder and Associate Director of Compassionate Passages.

If you would like to attend, call 313-577-2300 or reserve online at www.alumni.wayne.edu/events.

Congratulations Laura!

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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.

Auction Items Needed for Convention



Do you have a stray gift certificate for a golf weekend laying around? How about an afghan that you've just completed? Consider including it as a donation to the LWVMI Convention's Silent Auction. Local Leagues are urged to donate at least one item with a minimum value of \$25. Popular items in past years have included gift baskets, get-away weekends, boat trips, chef's services, music collections, political memorabilia and of course, restaurant and retail gift certificates.

Once your League has decided on its items to donate, please fill out and send the Donation Form to Sherrill Smith by April 30th. The form can be found on the League's website: www.lwvmi.org. If a formal solicitation letter is needed to present to a donor, contact Sherrill who can provide that. (Thank you letters will also be sent after the convention.) We hope to be able to provide a list of the auction items by early May so that even those who are not attending convention can give an attending member a proxy to make a bid on a favorite item.

Auction items can be brought to the convention on Friday evening. They will be displayed and bids will be accepted until Saturday evening, when the winners will be announced. Bring your check-books so that you can have a chance at taking home some of these wonderful items.



The Auction provides much-needed support to off-set the convention costs, but it's also a lot of fun! One more reason to come to Traverse City on May 20-22!

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

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