



League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area

Dec. 2013/Jan. 2014

www.lwvka.org

Co-Presidents: Paula Manley and Denise Hartsough

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League Phone: 269-544-0303

LWVMI Education Study

By Denise Hartsough

The League of Women Voters of Michigan has asked local Leagues to provide input for an update of the State League's education position by May 1, 2014. The LWVMI has released consensus questions and helpful background information, including a PowerPoint overview. A group planning the LWVKA's study of the education issues will meet in January. Please watch for consensus meeting dates in future *Bulletins!*

Topics include: teacher evaluation; students and schools at risk; schools of choice; technology tools for teaching and learning, including distance learning and cyber schools; and common core state standards.

If you are interested in joining the group organizing the Education Study, [please contact Denise Hartsough](#).

National/Local Position Review

By Amy Sue Manley

Your help is needed! Join us to review the League's national and local positions on Saturday, January 25, 2014. We will meet at the Disability Network, 517 East Cross-town Parkway from 9-11 a.m. Are the positions still relevant? This is our opportunity to review positions and make recommendations to the LWVMI Board regarding possible studies or reviews.

If you have an interest in an area such as government, natural resources or social policies, please consider choosing a position to read and review prior to the meeting. If you would like to volunteer to review a state or local position, [contact Amy Sue Manley](#). The positions can be found at the following links: <http://www.lwv.org/content/public-policy-positions> and <http://www.lwv.org/content/impact-issues>.

Calendar

Jan. 21 LWVKA Board Meeting
Tues.

The Park Club
219 W. South St, Kalamazoo
5:30 pm Food available for purchase
6:00 pm Meeting
Questions? Call 269-544-0303
or email president@lwvka.org

**Jan. 25 National/Local
Position Review**
Sat.

9:00 am
Disability Network
517 E. Crosstown Pkwy,
Kalamazoo

Feb. 15 Founders' Day Brunch
Sat.

10:30 am
Ladies' Library Association
333 S. Park St., Kalamazoo

Note: Board meets on 3rd Tuesdays. Members are welcome to attend all Board Meetings.

SAVE THE DATE!
Founders' Day Brunch
Saturday,
February 15, 2014.
See page 2 for more details.

LWVUS Agriculture Study Update

Agricultural policy impacts everyone.

By Paula Manley

In the next few months, we will be looking at the LWVUS Agriculture Study Update. The LWVUS Agriculture Study Committee has issued three background papers you may be interested in reading. One explains the U.S. Department of Agriculture and its agencies. A second explores the role USDA plays in American nutrition. A third paper discusses the Environmental Protection Agency and the effects of pollution on water, air and food.

Anyone interested in reading any or all of these articles may go to the LWV.org website. Click on members at the bottom of the page and then click on Advocacy and Projects to find Agriculture Study Update information.

We will be preparing for a consensus meeting on this important topic in spring, 2014. Watch the *Bulletin* for further information.

Founders' Day Brunch—Save the Date!

Please invite potential members.

Our Founders' Day Brunch will be held on Saturday, February 15, 2014, from 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. at the Ladies' Library Association, 333 South Park Street, Kalamazoo. The brunch will include egg casserole, ham, cranberry relish, cinnamon rolls, fruit, and your choice of juice, coffee, or tea. Following the brunch, Ladies' Library Association members will give tours of their newly renovated building.

Please invite people who may be interested in joining the League. There will be no charge for potential members or for those who have joined the LWVKA in 2013. Make your reservation today at president@lwka.org or call (269) 544-0303. The cost of the brunch will be \$15. The reservation deadline is February 1, 2014.

Year 2013 Update of Voter Registrations

Voter registration gears up for 2014—can you help?

By Karen Eddy

In contrast to 2012, a presidential election year, 2013 generated less interest in registering to vote. Even so, LWVKA turned over to the Clerk's offices 120 completed applications. Twenty-four members volunteered their time to assist new voters in completing their registration forms. Each volunteer seemed to enjoy the process and the interactions.

I'm hoping that you all re-volunteer in 2014, and that we have new volunteers joining us as this next election year is bound to be interesting. We continue to expect another member – seasoned or new to the system – to consider taking over the organization of voter registration opportunities. Call or email me so we can talk. **Karen Eddy**, 269-599-6399, or karen.eddy336@gmail.com.

News From National and State

LWVUS

2013 – A Watershed Year for Voting Rights – A Look Back at the Year that Was

Over the past several years we have seen a steady increase in voter suppression across the country. It is possible that when we look back at 2013, it will be seen as a watershed year - a year that America hit a turning point in the battle for voting rights and recognized that we must do what we can to expand access to the polls, instead of creating new barriers that make it more difficult to vote.

IRS Rulemaking—(from LWVUS President Elisabeth MacNamara) At the end of November, the IRS issued a notice asking for public comment on proposed rulemaking regarding 501(c)4 organizations. The League of Women Voters has issued a statement welcoming this new rulemaking process because we applaud those aspects that would rein in the dark money abuses that we have seen since *Citizens United v. FEC*. On the other hand, we are deeply concerned about those aspects of the proposal that would define voter service work, including the non-partisan work of the League, as political activity inappropriate for 501(c)4 social welfare organizations.

Much of the reaction from other organizations, even those with whom the League works closely, has been aimed at stopping the rulemaking process. The League has been held up as an example of why the proposal overreaches in defining political activity. It is

important to note that we are at the beginning of a very long process of developing a rule that will clearly define what tax exempt organizations can do in the political arena. This definition of “political activity” will likely be at the heart of the debate. We intend to be very involved in the rulemaking process because the issues under consideration are so important to the League and to our democracy. The initial comment period ends February 27, 2014, after which there would normally be a new, fully developed proposed rule and an additional comment period.

It will be important to find the right balance between protecting our elections from huge amounts of secret money and providing voters with truly nonpartisan voter information. But the fact that the task might be hard is no reason to scuttle the process before it begins. Given the gridlock in Congress, executive action to control money in elections is a key avenue that is available to us. I believe the right balance can be found if we do what League does best: speaking with one voice, providing facts and advocating in the public interest. The League has never shied away from challenges. Finding a way through legislative and administrative thickets to arrive at a solution that promotes the common good is something we know how to do. Let’s take this opportunity to make democracy work!

The Latest News from LWVUS can be found on the blog (www.lwv.org/blog) and on the League of Women Voters of the U. S. Facebook page.

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News National continued

LWVMI

LWVMI Regional Work-

shops Mark your calendar now for the LWVMI Regional Workshop at Davenport University in Holland on Saturday, April 5, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. You may choose between sessions on Voter Service (Vote411 and candidate forums) and on the Membership and Leadership Development Program. More informa-

tion will be available closer to the workshop date.

LWVMI News is posted on lwvmi.org and on the League of Women Voters of Michigan Facebook page.

Voter Education Project for Fall 2014

**Can you help
with the
Voter
Education
Project?**

By Georgiann McWilliams

In December, LWVKA received approval from Superintendent Rice, for continuing the voter registration process in KPS next fall. **Johnney Edwards**, Director of Secondary Education, will work with us. Mr. Edwards, the former principal of Loy Norrix High School, worked with LWVKA Voter Education Project twice before. His expertise will be most helpful

with the fall 2014 project.

I have started the grant process with the Kalamazoo Foundation. I have also had several short meetings with Kalamazoo Deputy Clerk **Shelby Moss** to start setting up the process. I am now in the need of committee members to help with this project. If you are interested please email at me at georgiann@charter.net or call and leave a message at 269-685-1167.

LWVUS National Convention

The LWVUS 51st National Convention will be held in Dallas, Texas, June 6-11, 2014. The theme is "Power: Our Voices, Our Votes." If you would like to join hundreds of local, state and national League leaders from around the country to learn about issues important to our organization and the nation, hear informative speakers, and attend interesting training sessions, consider being a delegate. Contact **Paula Manley** or **Denise Hartsough** at lwvk.org for further information.

Something You Can Do to Protect the Great Lakes

By Paula Manley

Please read the following item excerpted from the October 29 *Brampton Guardian* (Brampton, Ontario) and stop using any personal care items that contain microplastics (plastic microbeads).

- Over the past two years, scientists have reported finding thousands of plastic bits — some visible only under a microscope — in [Great Lakes] water. Scientists believe some are abrasive "microbeads" used in personal care products such as facial and body washes, deodorants and toothpaste. They're so minuscule that they flow through screens at waste treatment plants and wind up in the lakes, where fish and aquatic birds might eat them, mistaking them for fish eggs. They [the beads] also could absorb toxins. Because of their size and wide distribution, there's no practical way to remove the particles from the lakes.
- The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative is pressuring companies to phase out microplastics quickly in favor of biodegradable abrasives such as grape and apricot seeds as the best way to deal with the problem. Additionally, the group is encouraging mayors in the eight U.S. states as well as Ontario and Quebec to urge residents to buy products without microbeads.

Thank You for All the Hard Work!

**Dedicated,
talented
people
support
LWVKA
activities.**

By Paula Manley

Carol Urban and **Ben Jones** have been working for the past several years on videos highlighting the history of LWVKA. Many of you saw the first one several years ago which featured interviews with past LWVKA leaders. We now have a second video which will premiere at our Founders' Day Brunch on February 15, 2014. We wish to thank Carol and Ben for all of the work they have done to produce this fine video and also thank those League members who participated in the process.

Each election cycle the public looks to the League for information on candidates and issues. The *Voter Guide* is much in demand. **Terry Hluchyj** has served as the *Voter Guide* editor for a number of years. Terry spends countless hours contacting candidates and putting together their responses as well as information on the issues. Her attention to detail is extraordinary. The past two years she has also put the information on the Vote411.org website. Thank you, Terry, for all you do to provide valuable election information for the public!

Another valuable election-time person is **KC Miller**. For the past several years, KC has put together the candidate forums. She spends a great deal of time contacting candidates and making certain they understand League ground rules. KC also works on venue locations, finding partner organizations, and recruits League volunteers to be moderators, greeters, and timers. Thank you, KC, for all you do!

Karen Eddy is our Voter Registration Chair. She works year round to offer voter registration around the county and has a group of volunteers who work at various locations. Karen has been innovative in not only offering registration at the usual sites such as colleges and community events, but has developed a relationship with DHS and Michigan Works. Karen and volunteers devote several hours each Tuesday working at DHS on Stockbridge (2nd and 4th Tuesdays) and at Michigan Works office (1st and 3rd Tuesdays) offering voter registration and answering questions about the voting process. We thank Karen and her team for their dedication.



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
of the Kalamazoo Area
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Board Changes

**A warm
thank you to
Michele
McGowen.**

By Paula Manley

Michele McGowen, who has been LWVKA co-president for the past two years, is resigning at the end of 2013. She has taken on more responsibilities at her job and feels she no longer has the time to devote to League activities. **Denise Hartsough**, currently

secretary, will fill Michele's positions as co-president. **Janet Jones**, board member, will take on the secretary duties.

We thank Michele for all she has done in her various roles on the board and as co-president. We are pleased that Denise and Janet have agreed to take on new responsibilities.

Gift Suggestion

Looking for a gift idea for that special occasion or birthday? Consider giving the gift of a LWVKA membership. Would your family member or friend like to join men and women who are working to safeguard democracy and create lasting change in our community? Joining the League is an opportunity to put concern about their community, state, nation and the world in action. Contact **Dawn Haley** at dawn.haley@stryker.com for information on giving the gift of membership.