

League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area

November 2011

www.lwvka.org

Co-Presidents: Connie Ferguson and Paula Manley

Vol. 57 No. 3

League Phone: 269-544-0303

Education Study

By Denise Hartsough

LWVKA members are invited to a consensus meeting on the "Role of the Federal Government in Education" on Wednesday, November 9 at 7pm at the Greater Kalamazoo United Way, 709 S. Westnedge. Consensus questions focus on a) common core standards and assessment, and b) funding and equity, including funding for special education and early childhood education.

Concise briefs are available at www.lwv.org. Click on For Members, Projects and Programs, Public Education, then, in the Voter Ready Articles box, click on Read the Articles.

Briefs that have appeared in the LWVKA *Bulletin* are "History" (August 2011), "Funding and Equity" (September 2011) and "Common Core Standards" (October 2011). For briefs on "Special Education" and "Early Childhood Education," please see the webpage described above.

If you would like to provide input but cannot participate on November 9, please send your responses to the consensus questions (in the October *Bulletin*) to dhartsough@charter.net or Denise Hartsough, 2690 Timberleaf Ln., Kalamazoo, MI 49006 by November 2.

Welcome New Members

Julie Rogers
3428 Marlane Ave
Kalamazoo, MI 49006
ptbookworm@hotmail.com
269-349-3352

Linda L. Clark
340 Monroe St.
Allegan, MI 49010
TCandLC7@yahoo.com
269-673-7080

Calendar

Oct 26 Water Quality Forum - Kalamazoo Environmental Council

Wed. 7 pm
LWVMI Workshop
Fetzer Center, WMU
Panel featuring Jeff Spoelstra of the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council & John Paquin, Environmental Programs Manager for the City of Kalamazoo

Nov 9 LWVUS Education Consensus Meeting

Wed. 7-9 pm
Greater Kalamazoo United Way, 709 S. Westnedge, Kalamazoo

Nov 15 Board Meeting

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

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

Dialogue—Artful Conversation

Dialogue is the balance of inquiry and advocacy.

By Terry Hluchyj

“If we think together, then maybe we can solve our common problems”

David Bohm, *Changing Consciousness*

One evening in late September, the Ladies’ Library was the scene for a group of eighteen League members interested in the practice of dialogue. In these times when discussion often tends toward debate, they saw dialogue as a way to engage in the kind of civil discourse the League strives to model.

We began with the understanding that dialogue is a specific way to engage a group in an exchange of ideas. It is especially useful for understanding complex issues and welcoming diverse points of view. A key to dialogue is active inquiry. Rather than defending one’s own position or attempting to persuade others, participants listen to understand and find value in others’ viewpoints, while revealing their own underlying assumptions. The outcome is an opportunity for group learning and discovery of broader, more creative ideas.

While this sounds like group process nirvana, we acknowledged that it can be difficult to do and requires preparation and practice—even reprogramming of our typical responses when we disagree with others. For example, rather

than promoting our own points of view with increasing vigor, in dialogue we ask: “can you help me understand your thinking?” or “do you see any flaws in my reasoning?” Such questions make some people uncomfortable, yet they are ones that can help a group achieve greater understanding. Dialogue is the balance of inquiry and advocacy. It exposes one’s own thinking and makes that thinking open to the influence of others.

The group practiced dialogue on a topic that’s a national League study this year—privatization, the policy agenda to transfer government functions, services and assets to the private sector. In the debrief afterwards, members commented on the experience, including the observation that some questions for active inquiry came easily, while others would require more practice. They also found that a facilitator—as a formal role for one person or informally for several—could help draw out common themes and ensure that all had an opportunity to speak.

All in all, League members are usually curious learners, and dialogue is a skill we can all develop. In addition, our role as advocates requires mindfulness about when our convictions prevent our thinking about other ideas. When we are in the inquiry process, dialogue can serve us better than debate.

**Public employees are
Treasures for sure
‘Stead of cutting their wages
We want them secure.**



Privatization of Public Services

By Paula Manley

The LWVUS is beginning a national study of the Privatization of Public Services this fall. The study will conclude with a consensus in May, 2012. According to the LWVUS, "The purpose is to identify those parameters and policy issues to be considered with proposals to transfer federal, state or local government services, assets and/or functions to the private sector. It will review the stated goals and the community impact of such transfers

and identify strategies to ensure transparency, accountability and preservation of the common good."

If you have an interest in learning about this important issue, consider joining the local study committee. The commitment would involve reading materials provided on the LWVU website and attending several committee meetings over the next few months. Contact **Paula Manley** at pjmanley@hotmail.com or 345-7623 to join.

TAG Update

**Watch for
your TAG
gift.**

By Diane Worden

Members in the Tax Attitude Group (TAG), wanting to change some too-popular attitudes about taxes, began with a big idea that has been progressively reduced in size.

From giant billboards to 2-foot wide yard signs to wallet-sized business cards, TAG is ready to launch its droll verses as carry-on accoutrements. However, we will still appreciate your help.

You will soon receive a TAG gift in the postal mail from LWVKA for your personal use whenever you deem it appropriate. Your help

in identifying allied groups and their newsletter contacts (persons, phone numbers, and/or email addresses) is the next step in disseminating the message. At first, we'll be preaching to the choir. Please call or email **Diane Worden** (349-3624, WordenDex@aol.com) with possible allies.

**A race to the bottom
Is very destructive.
Investing in government
Is much more constructive**
www.lwvka.org



editing • indexing • layout • design

Diane Worden	Dale Abbott
269.341.9207	269.532.2255
WordenDex@aol.com	dale@ten8ious.com

www.wordsdesign.net

Flegal & Tibbitts

Certified Public Accountants

2750 Old Centre, Suite 150 Portage, Michigan 49024 Phone (269) 383-1900	202 Trowbridge Street Allegan, Michigan 49010 Phone (269) 673-2222
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Clean Air Saves Lives and Money

Tell Representative Upton to make the promise.

By Jessica Reiser

Air quality is significantly better across the country and thousands of lives have been saved because of the Clean Air Act. We need our elected officials to support the Clean Air Act and efforts to improve it. In Michigan, nearly 1 million people suffer from asthma, including more than 225,000 children.

Unfortunately, there are ongoing attempts in Congress to roll back public health protections provided by clean air policies that, in some instances, have been in place for decades. For too long, polluters have been able to focus the debate on “overregulation” and false assertions that environmental protections hurt our economy.

H.R. 2401, which passed in the House of Representatives, represents the single greatest assault on the Clean Air Act in its over 40 year history. The legislation blocks two long overdue standards to reduce smog, soot, mercury and toxic air pollution from the country's biggest polluters, coal-burning power plants.

House Majority Leader **Eric Cantor** made it clear that H.R. 2401 is the first in a suite of radical attacks that seek to block the EPA's ability to clean up life-threatening air pollution from the nation's largest polluters. Very soon the House is expected to vote on two bills. The first, H.R. 2681, would reduce regulation of cement plants, which are one of the largest sources of industrial mercury toxics in the country. The second, H.R. 2250 would reduce regulations on incinerators and industrial boilers which dump large amounts of toxic pollution into our air. His extreme agenda will cost lives, not create jobs. It prioritizes the narrow interests of politically connected polluting industries over the broader

goal of safeguarding the lives and health of our children, families, and communities.

The Cantor agenda will also hurt the economy and make it tougher for families to make ends meet. It will force Americans to collectively miss millions of days of work each year to care for sick family members or for themselves. It will force Medicare and Medicaid to waste billions of taxpayer dollars treating preventable illness and disease caused by pollution, and will further burden American families and businesses with out-of-pocket medical costs and higher health insurance premiums.

Representative **Fred Upton** says he wants to fully understand the consequences for our economy before Environmental Protection Agency rules take effect. He voted in support of H.R. 2401. He says that if the President is serious about job creation, he must do much more to rein in EPA's over reach.

Now more than ever, the American people need their members of Congress to work together to solve the nation's problems in a bipartisan manner. Urge Representative Upton to reject polluter-led attacks on public health and instead focus on real solutions that grow the economy, not cost lives.

Tell Representative Upton to listen to his constituents and make “The Promise:”

"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."

New Members Spotlight

By Norma Clack

While reading the LWVKA *Voter Guide* last fall, **Georgiann McWilliams** decided it was time to join the League of Women Voters and learn more about the development of this voter education tool. That started the ball rolling and she quickly became involved in a couple of League projects. Georgiann assisted in reviewing Michigan's legislative activities that resulted in the publication of *Report Card: Citizen Access to Government in Michigan, 2011*. She then attended the State LWV Convention in Traverse City this summer. She feels blessed to have had these learning opportunities during her first year of membership.

In addition to voter service, Georgiann is also very interested in environmental issues, having written her master's thesis about the Great

Lakes. Her education encompasses mathematics, science, education, and management. She taught math in public schools and then launched her own management consulting firm. She is now retired from full-time consulting, but continues to manage her husband's medical practice. They live in Plainwell. She is president of the Wolverine Chapter of the Women's Business Association and belongs to a local investment club.

Georgiann has a passion for orchids. She is an advanced master gardener, belongs to the Orchid Society, and teaches classes on growing these amazing flowers. She assists in setting up the annual orchid shows at MSU and Meijer Gardens where you will find her in mid-January for the Grand Valley Orchid Society 14th Annual Orchid Show.

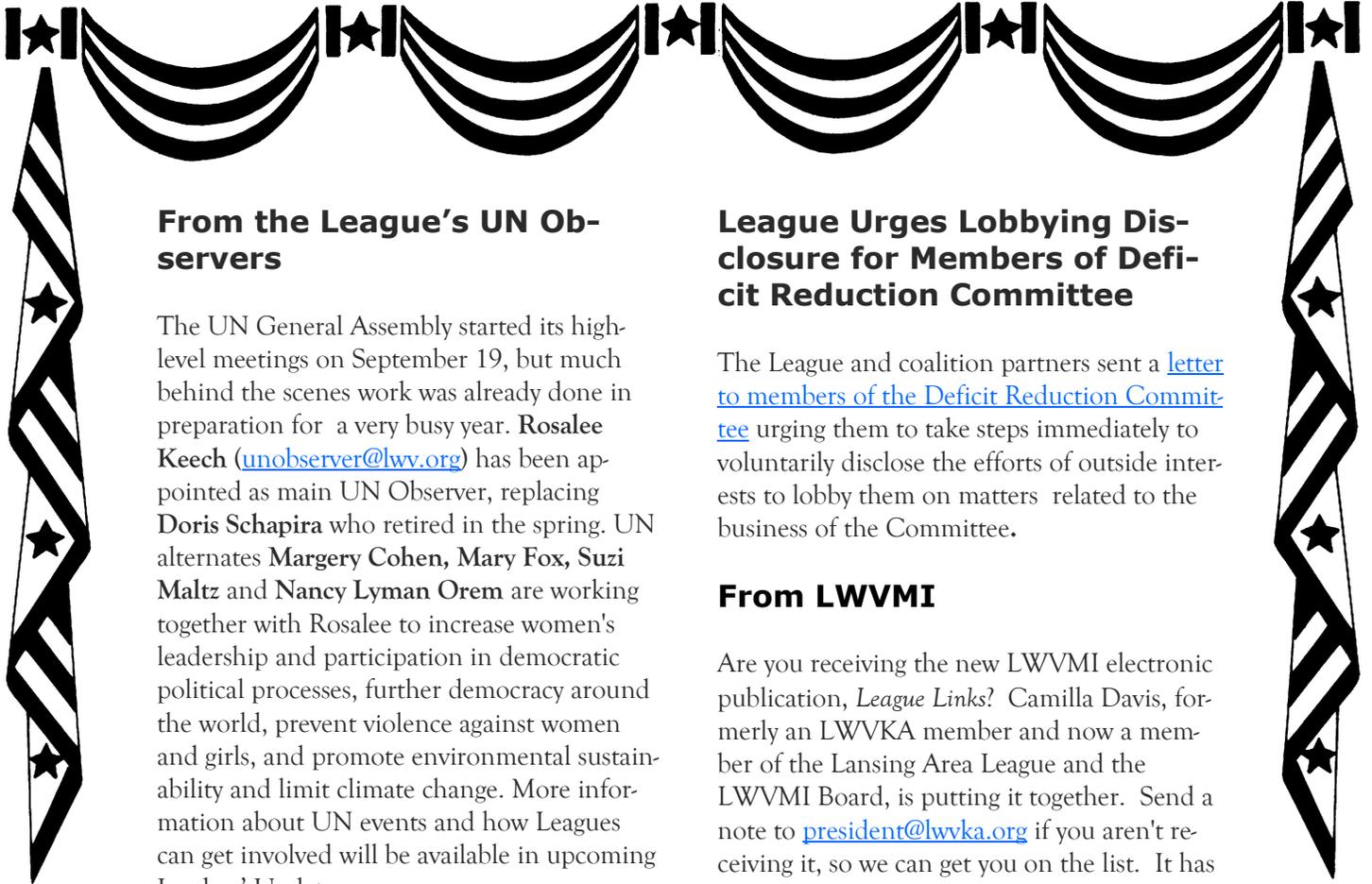
Voter Registration Need

Outdoor voter registration can be challenging without protection from precipitation. All of our paper work needs to be kept dry as do the hands handling the documents. Please keep your eyes and ears open for a used QuickShade Commercial 10 x 10 canopy with sturdy legs. If the price is right, we will consider the purchase. Please contact **Karen Eddy** @ 269-599-6399 or kseddy2@yahoo.com if you hear or read about a possible good deal.

Video Voter Guide for Kalamazoo City Commission Online

Check the links on our LWVKA.org website for video statement by all 14 city commission candidates. Pass the word!

News From National and State



From the League's UN Observers

The UN General Assembly started its high-level meetings on September 19, but much behind the scenes work was already done in preparation for a very busy year. **Rosalee Keech** (unobserver@lwv.org) has been appointed as main UN Observer, replacing **Doris Schapira** who retired in the spring. UN alternates **Margery Cohen**, **Mary Fox**, **Suzi Maltz** and **Nancy Lyman Orem** are working together with Rosalee to increase women's leadership and participation in democratic political processes, further democracy around the world, prevent violence against women and girls, and promote environmental sustainability and limit climate change. More information about UN events and how Leagues can get involved will be available in upcoming Leaders' Updates.

League Urges President to Deny Permit for Keystone XL Pipeline

League President **Elisabeth MacNamara** sent a [letter to President Obama](#) expressing opposition to the proposed Keystone XL Pipeline and urging him to deny the permit for the pipeline's construction. The League believes that the President should deny the permit for three key reasons: the pipeline would be inconsistent with meaningful action on climate change, the route of the pipeline poses an unacceptable risk to a critically important water source, and reducing demand is the best way to improve America's energy security.

League Urges Lobbying Disclosure for Members of Deficit Reduction Committee

The League and coalition partners sent a [letter to members of the Deficit Reduction Committee](#) urging them to take steps immediately to voluntarily disclose the efforts of outside interests to lobby them on matters related to the business of the Committee.

From LWVMI

Are you receiving the new LWVMI electronic publication, *League Links*? **Camilla Davis**, formerly an LWVKA member and now a member of the Lansing Area League and the LWVMI Board, is putting it together. Send a note to president@lwvka.org if you aren't receiving it, so we can get you on the list. It has lots of good and timely information.

The LWVMI Board at its October meeting officially received the consensus report of the Alternative Forms of Voting Study Committee (**Kay Perry** and **Sarah Delia**). As sometimes happens, there was no consensus, so we are not adopting a new position. We hope members learned something about the issue and we thank those Leagues that participated.

Voter Guide Available Before Absentee Ballots Arrive

By Terry Hluchyj

We have heard in past years from voters who wish to use absentee ballots that they appreciate the *Voter Guide*, but are frustrated at having to wait until mid-October to receive one.

While we were sympathetic, our production schedule is primarily dependent on candidate filing deadlines. When the State of Michigan required cities to set a mid-August deadline—six weeks earlier than the City of Kalamazoo schedule—there was an opportunity for an earlier *Voter Guide* this year. And that's just what happened. The *Guide* was posted online by Tuesday, September 27 — six, rather than our usual four, weeks before the election. Printed *Guides* were on their way to more than 130 locations in Kalamazoo and Portage a few days later.

Our ready crew who made this effort successful deserves special thanks. Board Members weighed alternative options for candidate questions. **Kay Anderson** confirmed deliveries

to teachers for classroom use, while **Ann Perry** and **Janet Jones** did the same for representatives of community organizations who make *Guides* available to their members or constituents. Those contacts help ensure that *Guides* will get to youth and to groups that make door-to-door deliveries. As always, **Diane Worden** was a skillful co-editor, and **Tamara Carpenter** brought it all together into a very accessible product — both in print and online.

Appreciation is also due to our army of delivery volunteers: **Betty Ongley, Cheryl Lyon-Jenness, Connie Ferguson, Diane Worden, Jackie Wylie, Janet and Keith Jones, Janet Scarrow, Karen Eddy, Mabel and Jochanan Stenesh, Martha Cohen, Norma Clack, Paula Manley, Paula Presler, Rebekah Fennell, Rochelle Habeck, Ruth Caputo, Sara Wick, Sue Nelmes, Tanya Potter and Connie Wood**

We again heard many expressions of appreciation from candidates for the opportunity to participate in the *Voter Guide* and for all the League does in the community. Thanks to everyone for being a part of it!

Voter Registration Update

By Karen Eddy

We did a brisk business at Kalamazoo College's KFest on September 15. Because of the makeup of the student population, more absentee ballots with instructions were handed out. Fourteen voter applications were filled in and taken to the County and City Clerk's offices.

Many more students were encouraged to check online at the Secretary of State website and the City Clerks website. Also, thanks to **Connie Ferguson**, K College had listed the scrolling web message about students checking their voter status prior to election day. **Connie Ferguson, Beverly Byle and Karen Eddy** personed the table.



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
of the Kalamazoo Area
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Kalamazoo, MI 49003-2106

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**REMEMBER—EVEN IF YOU HAVEN'T THE TIME FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION,
YOUR MEMBERSHIP ALONE WILL STRENGTHEN OUR VOICE.**

- Yes! I want to Take Back the System. Please sign me up!
- I'm enclosing a check for \$60 for individual membership.
- I'm enclosing a check for \$30 for student membership.
- I'm enclosing a check for \$90 for household membership.

NAME OF SECOND HOUSEHOLD MEMBER _____

- In addition to my membership, I'd like to make a contribution of \$_____
- Please send me more information on the League of Women Voters.
- I can't join right now, but I'm enclosing \$_____ to support League activities.

Because we lobby at the local, state and national levels, membership dues and other contributions to the League of Women Voters are not tax-deductible.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____

ZIP CODE _____

PHONE HOME _____

PHONE OFFICE _____



Make check payable and mail to:
The League of Women Voters
Paula Aldridge, Treasurer
8035 Glenwynd Drive
Kalamazoo, MI 49009