



League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area

November 2014
President: Denise Hartsough

www.lwvka.org

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League Phone: 269-544-0303

Looking Ahead

By Terry Hluchyj

During the past few months, members answered the call to kick off our strategic planning process by completing preliminary work in preparation for a group session.

Their work, brainstorming and researching potential initiatives for the coming 3–5 years, is organized in four focus areas:

- Election administration processes
Goal: Identify and address current problems with voting processes throughout Kalamazoo County
- Voter outreach and education
Goal: Increase voter registration and improve turnout of informed voters
- Issue study and advocacy
Goal: Advocate on key issues
- Candidates for elected offices
Goal: Increase the number and diversity of people who run for office

We'll take the next step on Saturday morning, November 22, when we'll look at the collective work and set priorities. If you are interested in joining the group, please contact **Fran Eckenrode** at 269-903-9372. We know that having a plan matters. Please lend your thinking to the process.

Calendar

Nov. 4 General Election
Tues.

Nov. 18 LWVKA Board Meeting
Tues.
5:30 pm
6:00 pm
The Park Club
219 W. South St, Kalamazoo
Food available for purchase
Meeting
Questions? Call 269-544-0303
or email president@lwvka.org

Nov. 22 LWV Strategic Planning
Sat.
9 am–
12 noon
Call Fran Eckenrode
269-903-9372 to reserve space

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



Got Any News?

LWVKA Board Members and active committee members do their best to keep current on local government developments. Help is always appreciated. If you are aware of activities that may be of interest to other League members or if there are developments that you feel the League should be monitoring, let us know. Share that information with the League by calling 544-0303 or emailing president@lwvka.org.

President's Column

Consider how LWVKA can contribute to 'Making Democracy Work.'

By Denise Hartsough

Shortly before the August primary, I realized my husband would be out of state on voting day. I checked the County Clerk's website to learn how he could obtain an absentee ballot. Much to my dismay, I found that he would have to go in person immediately to the County building to request a ballot—action he was not willing to take while he was busy preparing for his extended trip out of state. He did not vote in the primary.

My daughter goes to college in Ohio. She received an email inviting her to register to vote in Ohio. I warned her that she might have to change her driver's license from Michigan to Ohio in order to vote in Ohio, because I know that in Michigan, our voter registration address must match our driver's license address. She found that was not an issue in Ohio, and was able to register to vote.

My parents live in Oregon, where everyone votes via U.S. mail. A 1998 ballot measure established vote-by-mail as the single form of voting for elections in Oregon, eliminating polling places and their associated costs. In the 2000 presidential election, the first in the U.S. to be conducted solely by mail, 80% of registered Oregon voters participated.

As a Michigan resident, I tend to take for granted our State's rules and regulations for registering to vote and for voting. My family members' experiences suggest that there are other options that our state could consider.

I urge you to vote on November 4 and to encourage your family, friends, co-workers and neighbors to vote, as well. Please use the current system in Michigan to exercise your right to elect officials to represent your interests and beliefs.

At the same time, consider how we in the Kalamazoo area and our sister Leagues throughout Michigan may pursue these goals for Making Democracy Work[®], as described on the League of Women Voters of the US website:

“We seek to protect and expand voting rights through advocating for proactive reforms such as expanded early voting and online voter registration, ensuring existing pro-voter laws are being followed and challenging all efforts that limit the ability of voters' to exercise this basic right. The League actively opposes voter photo ID laws, advocates against barriers to the voter registration process, works to prevent last-minute Election Day barriers and helps millions of voters get the information and any required documentation they need to vote.

“We work to modernize our voting systems, streamline the voting process, promote transparent and accountable redistricting and make it easier for all eligible citizens to become active participants in our electoral process. In efforts to improve the voting experience, the League focuses on efforts to establish permanent and portable statewide voter registration, expand early voting, improve polling place management, expand online voter registration and implement electronic streamlining. We also work to ensure compliance with laws like the Voting Rights Act (VRA) and the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA).”

Thank You, Karen Eddy

Karen had a passion for voter registration.

By Paula Manley

For the past five years, **Karen Eddy** has served as the Voter Registration Chair for the LWVKA. She has spent countless hours recruiting volunteers to register voters at events throughout the county, including the National Voter Registration Day. During 2014 Karen organized 14 voter registration events at which she and volunteers gave out 123 voter registration applications.

Karen has a passion for voter registration and ensuring that people who may be marginalized by society have access to registration and to accurate information about the

voting process. She coordinated weekly voter registration efforts at the Department of Human Services (DHS) office and Michigan Works. She has seen that the League has been present to register voters and answer questions at Project Connect, a twice yearly community event for low income and homeless families, and at the Mothers of Hope annual summer event that supports women struggling with addiction.

Thank you, Karen, for all you have done on behalf of the LWVKA in promoting voter registration, educating voters and making certain that democracy works!

Stats Tell the Story

Voter Guide is a real accomplishment!

By Terry Hluchyj

33 races
120 candidates
28 pages
1 talented designer, **Tamara Carpenter**
26,000 copies
18 pounds per bundle of 100
2 tons of paper on a porch
225 delivery sites
and 34 volunteers who distributed it throughout the county:

Aedin Clements, Betty Ongley, Charlotte Russell, Cheryl Lyon-Jenness, Connie Ferguson, Denise Hartsough, Diane Worden, Elaine Jayne, Fran Eckenrode,

Gail Walter, Jackie Wylie, Janet Jones, Janet Scarrow, Jennie Hill, Jessica Reiser, Joanne Mobey, Karen Eddy, Kay & Rick Anderson, KC Miller, Mabel & Jochanan Stenesh, Mary Baggerman, Michele McGowen, Norma Clack, Paula & Ken Manley, Rochelle Habeck, Ruth Caputo, Sara Wick, Sue Nelmes, Tanya & Larry Potter, and Yolanda Mitts.

The *Voter Guide* – thanks to all for helping to make democracy work!

Candidate Forums

By KC Miller

The League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area partnered with Michigan United, YWCA, and WKZO to sponsor a Candidate Forum on Thursday, October 16, 2014 at the First Presbyterian Church in Kalamazoo. The Forum was divided into two parts, the first for the House of Representatives Candidates in Districts 60, 61, and 63, and the second for the State Senate Candidates in District 20. Over 70 people attended the Forum and participated by submitting questions.

WKZO recorded the event with the intent of posting the audio on-line at their web site and at lwvka.org.

Kalamazoo City Ballot Proposals: The League Point of View

Please consider these proposals carefully and be sure to vote on November 4.

By Terry Hluchyj

Because of our interest in election processes, the League Board decided to take a position on the upcoming City of Kalamazoo ballot issues regarding election of the Commission.

With the guidance of our local government election process position, study of research regarding municipal election methods, and discussion among our members, including reference to pro and con Viewpoints, the Board decided to support Proposal 1 – separate election of the Mayor – and take no position on the other proposals. Here’s the summary of our rationale in a letter sent to the *Gazette/M-Live* editor.

While the League of Women Voters is a non-partisan organization that does not align with candidates or political parties, we study and advocate on issues important to us. Election processes are core to our goal of making democracy work. That’s why we’re interested in the ballot proposals regarding Kalamazoo City Commission elections.

When deciding on our position, we consult League principles, conduct research and seek diverse viewpoints.

After this deliberation, the League encourages voters to approve Proposal 1 which provides for separate election of the Mayor. We believe that the role includes leadership expectations making it important for those interested in being Mayor to run specifically for

that office. Voters should make their choices based on candidate’s qualifications and vision. We believe this makes government more effective without confusing our governance model or powers of the Mayor.

We are not taking a position on Proposal 2, or others tied to it. We found that pro and con arguments are equally compelling in view of our principles. For example, four-year staggered Commissioner terms may encourage attention to complex issues; two-year terms may prompt short-term action. Each can promote responsive government, active discussion of issues and creative leadership.

Making democracy work requires citizens’ informed participation in political processes. We encourage voters carefully to consider proposal pros and cons which we’ve outlined on our website (www.lwvka.org), and, most importantly, to vote on November 4. None of the proposals guarantees better voter turnout, yet that is as important as the election outcome itself.

The Board encourages members who live in the City of Kalamazoo to study the proposals and weigh the rationale for and against each one. There are compelling arguments on each side. Even if you think the current system has been working well enough, it’s important to consider whether this is the time for a better alternative.

Congratulations to LWVKA Member Dick Knapp

Dick Knapp, long time LWVKA member, was honored with the 2014 Golden V Award recently at Friendship Village. The Golden V Award is given to a Friendship Village resident each year in recognition of his/her volunteer work.

LWV Lake Michigan Region Annual Meeting

Watch presentations on-line from this informative Annual Meeting.

By Ruth Caputo

“Climate Change and Biodiversity for Lake Michigan” was the theme of this year's LWV Lake Michigan Region Annual Meeting in Traverse City. In addition to **Ruth Caputo** who served as co-chair for the meeting with **Mary Lee Orr** from the Bettie Chapter, Kalamazoo attendees included **Georgiann McWilliams** and **Paula and Ken Manley**.

As part of a “meet and greet” Friday evening, **Nate Winkler** from the Conservation Resource Alliance talked about “deconstructing” a system of dams on the Boardman River which flows through Traverse City.

Saturday began with presentations by LWVLMR Board members **Krista Grimm** and **Jeanette Neagu**. Krista spoke on the Stormwater Project which she has presented to numerous groups in Illinois. Now she's volunteered to visit LWV groups in all four states in the coming year. Jeanette spoke on above-ground storage tank inspections and how to get them, as well as drinking water issues (as in Toledo this summer). Jeanette is also happy to come speak with local Leagues.

Dr. Jeff Andresen, Michigan State University, addressed issues of climate change, trends, and off-the-charts variable weather. For a very educational perspective on climate change, watch his presentation on the [LWVLMR site](#). **Dr. David (Bo) Brunnell**, a USGS Research Fishery Biologist, gave a research-based presentation about how climate change and human-induced stressors are affecting the food web in Lake Michigan. This talk is also available on the LWVLMR site. Also available on-line is **Kevin Skerl's** talk on climate change in the Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Kevin is Chief of Natural Resources at the Lakeshore.

Helen Taylor, State Director of the Nature Conservancy, spoke on The Changing Scale of Conservation. A self-described practitioner and activist, Ms. Taylor gave a brief history of world conservation practices and some success stories. **Dr. Grenetta Thomassey**, Program Director of the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, talked on “2014, A Year to Speak Water to Power.” She advises advocates to make friends on both sides of the aisle and advocate around issues, not politics. Since 2000, funding for protecting clean water infrastructure has been consistently cut. We need to change this. If we are to face the future and climate change with healthy ecosystems in place, we need clean water.

As keynote speaker at the banquet, **Dr. Hans Van Sumeren**, Director of the Great Lakes Studies Institute, spoke to solutions for various problems in the area including loon deaths and avian botulism. (And yes, we all enjoyed the dinner.)

In spite of the cool, damp weather, many attendees went on field trips Sunday - kayaking on the Boardman River, driving and walking along the Pierce Stocking Drive in the Sleeping Bear Dunes, and visiting the Inland Seas Education Center.

Next year's meeting will be in Illinois.



Flegal & Melnik
Certified Public Accountants

Mary K. Flegal, CPA

269.383.1900
2750 Old Centre • Portage, MI 49024



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
of the Kalamazoo Area
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The Public Advocacy and Voter Protection Project 2014

By Paula Manley

LWVKA has been awarded a Public Advocacy and Voter Protection Project Grant (PAVP) from the LWVMI through the LWVUS. The goals are: to implement election observer programs in up to 10 communities in Michigan to help ensure all votes count and to develop a voter information campaign for use throughout the area, particularly in targeting underrepresented voters.

A regional workshop was held in Kalamazoo in late September to train election observers and also train local Leagues in the use of social media for election education campaigns. We have recruited ten interested volunteers from LWVKA and the community who will be nonpartisan poll observers on Election Day at several precincts around the area. These observers will take two hour shifts to watch for any problems that voters may encounter and record their observations.

Another part of the project is to educate the public about voting and Vote411.org. You may access the LWVKA Facebook to view messages encouraging people to access Vote41.org and to vote on November 4.

Thanks to all who have volunteered to be part of this project. It is another way to see democracy in action and help make democracy work!