

THE BULLETIN

League of Women Voters Kalamazoo Area

November 2015 • Vol. 61 № 3

President's Column

By Denise Hartsough

Last month I had the privilege of serving on a panel at Western Michigan University. A traditionally African American fraternity convened the panel to offer information and spark discussion on voting and political engagement. Listening to the earnest, heartfelt comments of the students, I realized that they constantly navigate a contradiction. On the one hand,

“ I will indeed vote on November 3rd with the optimistic belief that my vote counts! ”

they experience and are highly aware of the power that racism marshals against them. On the other hand, they have been told and want to believe that they can be anything they want

to be. Perhaps the students temper optimism with experience, or overcome negative experiences with faith in themselves.

Two events coming up in November make me think the League of Women Voters navigates a contradiction of its own. I put a sign in my yard every election day that asserts: VOTE! It counts! I will indeed vote on November 3rd with the optimistic belief that my vote counts. Then on November 19 I will participate in a presentation by state expert Rich Robinson (6:30pm at the Kalamazoo Public Library downtown) on the role that big money plays in politics. Please join me there! It takes collective support both to acknowledge the power that big money plays in our democratic system and to affirm faith in our ability to make that system work for everyone.

Election Day is November 3rd—be sure to vote!

Please urge your family, friends, neighbors and co-workers to also vote!

Calendar

NOVEMBER

- 3 General Election**
Polls Open from 7am-8pm
- 3 LWVKA Board Meeting**
The Park Club, 219 W. South St.
5:30 pm Food available for purchase
6:00 pm Meeting
269-599-1801 and denise.hartsough@gmail.com
- 9 Redistricting Presentation**
Rotary
- 19 “Money in Politics” program**
by Rich Robinson
Kalamazoo Public Library —6:30pm

DECEMBER

- 1 LWVKA Board Meeting**
The Park Club, 219 W. South St.
5:30 pm Food available for purchase
6:00 pm Meeting
269-599-1801 and denise.hartsough@gmail.com
- 1 Consensus on Constitutional Amendment Due**
- 3 Meet and Greet—**
The Boatyard Brewing Co.
432 E. Patterson —5:30-6:30pm

Note: Board meets on 1st Tuesday. Members are welcome to attend all Board Meetings.



★ Voter Outreach & Education ★

2015 Candidate Forums

by KC Miller

“The success of the forums was due in part to hard working League members!

LWVKA started off the Candidate Forum season with the Portage City Council on September 9, 2015 at the Portage Senior Center. The forum was well attended, including the five candidates: Jeff Bright, Tim Earl, Richard Ford, Jim Pearson, and Patricia Randall. Mayor Peter Strazdas submitted an opening statement. There were approximately 60 people in attendance along with media presence from MLive, Public Media Network, WKZO, and WWMT Channel 3. Public Media Network video recorded the forum which is available for viewing from our Facebook page or Cable TV.

The success of the forum is due in part to the hard working League members who assisted with it: **Janet Jones, Ken Manley, Paula Manley, and Betty Lee Onglay.** We also thank Public Media Network for making the video recording accessible.

Our second Candidate Forum for the Kalamazoo City Commission was held on September 29, 2015 at the Kalamazoo Public Library. We partnered with Michigan United who chose the moderator. It was also well attended with 13 of the 14 Commission candidates and both mayoral candidates. The audience attendance was over 100 with the same media present from the Portage forum. Ken Manley did the timing while Janet Jones and Paula Manley screened the audience questions. With over 30 audience questions, LWVKA volunteers did their best to ask as many as possible given the time frame and sent the candidates a summary of the questions.

The video recording of the Kalamazoo City Commission forum is available on our Facebook page.



Redistricting Presentations in Kalamazoo

By Fran Eckenrode

The League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area hosted an educational Town Hall on Redistricting on October 5 at the Kalamazoo Public Library. Our honored speaker for this event was Judy Karandjeff, President of the Michigan League. This presentation was part of a state-wide League effort to help educate citizens about how legislative districts are drawn, who draws them, and why this issue is critically important to people who care about fair representation. A second presentation was also made to the Westside Kiwanis at The Fountains of Bronson Place on October 13. A third presentation is planned for November 9 for the Downtown Kalamazoo Rotary.

October Voter Registration Events Completed Our 2015 Efforts

By MerriKay Oleen-Burkey

Two events in October completed our voter registration for this year. On October 2nd, we provided a table at the Hicks Student Center at Kalamazoo College during lunch and dinner hours. Although we only registered four students, we talked with several more about voting at home or in Kalamazoo, and students from Portage picked up Voter Guides. On October 14th, we had a booth at Project Connect where six people registered. Voter Guides were also a popular give-away.

Thank you to our voter registration volunteers for October: **Karen Eddy, Connie Micklin, Micki Sinkula, MerriKay Oleen-Burkey, Paula Aldridge, Connie Ferguson, Sue Nelmes and Jessica Reiser!** And to all of you who worked at voter registration events this year, the Voter Registration Team extends a huge THANK YOU!!

Our next voter registration event will be at the start of the new semester at KVCC Texas Township in January. Look for a call to volunteer in the next Bulletin.

Money in Politics

By Paula Manley

At the LWVUS Convention in June 2014, delegates adopted a multi-part program including: “A review and update of the League position on campaign finance in light of forty years of changes since the Watergate reforms, in order to enhance member understanding of the new schemes and structures used to influence elections and erode protections against corruption in our political process, and to review possible responses to counter them in the current environment.”

The current League position on Campaign Finance as announced by the National Board, January 1974 and Revised March 1982 states: The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the methods of financing political campaigns should ensure the public’s right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and allow maximum citizen participation in the political process. This position is applicable to all federal campaigns for public office — presidential and congressional, primaries as well as general elections. It also may be applied to state and local campaigns.

The scope of a study, adopted by the LWV Education Fund Board, October 2014, states:

- The Committee will conduct an update of the League’s position on campaign finance for the purpose of addressing the lack of member understanding and agreement to the extent which political campaigns are protected speech under the First Amendment. The campaign finance position will be updated through a study and consensus process to consider the following:

- The rights of individuals and organizations, under the First Amendment, to express their political views through independent expenditures and the finance of election campaign activities; and
- How those rights, if any, should be protected and reconciled with the interests set out in the current position.

There are several ways you may become involved and learn more about this subject which is so relevant as we approach another election cycle:

- ✓ Plan to attend the presentation by Rich Robinson, Executive Director of the Michigan Campaign Finance Network, November 19th at the Kalamazoo Public Library Van Duesen Room at 6:30 pm. The Michigan Campaign Finance Network is a nonpartisan, nonprofit coalition of organizations concerned about the influence of money in politics and the need for reform in Michigan.
- ✓ Visit the lwv.org website and to view readings and information about the study of Money in Politics.
- ✓ Join local League members in learning more about this relevant issue by contacting Paula Manley at pjmanley@hotmail.com.

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LWVKA Member Survey

By Chris Kuthe

A member survey of the LWVKA was sent out through email on Wednesday October 28th. The survey is a short 8 questions and will be used by the board to help determine future programming and volunteers. The survey will be open until November 20th at 4:00pm. We appreciate you completing the survey by this deadline. Thank you for your time in doing so.

If you did not receive a survey it may mean we do not have your email address or we have an incorrect email address. If so, please contact Chris Kuthe at: ckuthe57@yahoo.com or call at 269-501-3305 to give me your accurate email. I will be able to send a survey to you when I receive your updated information.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

Kalamazoo Area

P.O. Box 2106
Kalamazoo, MI 49003-2106

Returned Service Requested

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK!

Did you know that **last year** there were **over 1,200 homeless school children** in Kalamazoo County?

- ✍ Research shows that **stable housing** is essential to children's **educational achievement**.
- ✍ A county-wide millage proposal on the **November 3 ballot** will provide housing help and mentoring for **600 homeless families** over the next six years.
- ✍ All this for only 0.1 mill. That's **just \$5 per year** for the average household.
- ✍ Endorsers include KRESA, KPS, Housing Resources, YWCA, LWVKA and many others.

See **VoteYesForKids.net** before you vote **November 3**

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