



League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area

December 2011/January 2012

www.lwvka.org

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Co-Presidents: Connie Ferguson and Paula Manley

League Phone: 269-544-0303

Candidate Forums 2011

By **KC Miller**

LWVKA sponsored two Candidate Forums this election season. The first one, the Kalamazoo City Commission Candidate Forum was hosted by Friendship Village in their Kiva auditorium on Wednesday, September 28, at 7:15 p.m. Thirteen of the then 14 candidates participated. **Ben Jones** recorded the opening statements and assisted us in posting them on the internet. We met with the candidate who could not attend to record his statement for posting. Two more people registered as write-in candidates after the forum, but we did not have time to record and post their statements. **Terry Hluchyj** was able to add them to the on-line *Voter Guide*, however. After the candidates made their opening statements, they joined the constituents in the audience to answer their questions. It appears that about 50 people may have viewed the statements on-line. League members who assisted at the Forum were **Connie Ferguson, Denise Hartsough, Terry Hluchyj, Ken Manley, and Paula Manley.**

The second Candidate Forum was for the Allegan City Council. A constituent contacted LWVKA and asked if we would sponsor a Candidate Forum for them because Allegan had never had one, and community engagement was wanted. The *Kalamazoo Gazette* and the local *Allegan News* both publicized the event. On Tuesday, October 11, at 7:00 p.m., the Allegan District Library hosted the Forum. Four of the five candidates participated. The fifth candidate submitted a written statement. Each answered seven questions that the League composed and then six from the audience. Approximately 13 constituents attended. League members who assisted at the forum were **Ruth Caputo, Karen Eddy, Connie Ferguson, and Terry Hluchyj.**

Calendar

Dec. 3 Get Acquainted Brunch

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

Dec. 20 Board Meeting

Tues. To be determined

Jan. 17 Board Meeting

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

Jan. 21 Program Planning (LWVUS & LEVKA)

Sat. Disability Network
9 am 517 E. Crosstown Parkway,
Kalamazoo

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

**Roads, parks, and schools
We've collectively built.
Without strong government
They surely will wilt.**

Welcome New Member

Sam Urban

8058 Wimbledon

Portage, MI 49024

surban@Kazoochamber.com

News From National and State

Message from LWVUS President Elisabeth MacNamara

Carrie Chapman Catt called for a League of Women Voters to “make our democracy so safe for the nation that every citizen may feel secure and great men will acknowledge the worthiness of the American Republic to lead.” A major effort to register new women voters and educate them in the political process was prominent on the newly formed League of Women Voters’ agenda.

In 1924, existing state Leagues were challenged to increase voter turnout by 25 percent. In September of that year, the LWV of Alabama sent in this report: “As you know it is a very difficult matter to qualify for the vote in Alabama, the registration books are only open three months during the even years and ten days during the uneven years, and the poll tax books are open only four months every year. Hence after February 1st of any year, it is a practical impossibility to increase materially the number of qualified voters in Alabama.”

In the Deep South of the early 20th century, this scheme was doubtless intended to limit qualified voters. Today, early in this 21st century, states are taking steps that will impact the number of qualified voters in the 2012 Presidential Election. Requiring voter ID, limits on third party voter registration drives, eliminating election day registration and curtailing early voting are all measures that have been proposed or passed in a disturbing number of states this year. Coupled with dramatic budget cuts which are closing driver’s license offices, democracy is growing increasingly unsafe for the nation.

In October I was a guest on the National Public Radio call-in show, “On Point,” featuring an hour-long program on voter suppression. A number of callers pointed out the disproportionate impact these laws will have on underserved communities. An election official in

rural Tennessee noted that she would be required to turn away voters with whom she is personally acquainted, if they lacked the requisite government issued ID.

Cash-strapped agencies can make seemingly innocuous decisions that impact the right of some Americans to vote. For instance, the U.S. Postal Service is proposing to close offices all across the country, including the reservation in South Dakota where Wounded Knee is located. That post office is a lifeline to the community, including vital voter services such as voter registration and requesting and returning absentee ballots. No one can accuse the USPS of deliberately impinging on voting rights, but regardless of the intent, the result is the same.

A complacent public may feel that democracy is safe for the nation because many live comfortable lives and have a wallet full of cards, but the League was founded to remove the “remaining legal discriminations . . . in the codes and constitutions of the several states” that offered stumbling blocks to the “feet of coming women” voters.

Privatization Study: LWV Privatization Case Study Papers Available Online

Four Privatization case study papers have been posted on lww.org. Additional papers will be available in the coming weeks. Leagues should plan on conducting Privatization Study meetings during the months of January through April 2012. The deadline for Leagues to submit consensus forms is May 1, 2012. [The Privatization Study list](#) is now available for members to hold discussions on this.

League Urges Senate to Oppose Termination of EAC

The [League sent a letter to Senators](#) urging them to oppose the termination of the Election Assistance Commission (EAC), the only fed-

News From National and State

eral agency that devotes its full resources to improving American elections.

Poll Shows Voters Overwhelmingly Support EPA and Stronger Standards

In October, the League of Women Voters, Natural Resources Defense Council and League of United Latin American Citizens released the [results of a national poll](#) by Public Policy Polling to measure support for the EPA, with particular emphasis on voters in California, Colorado, Florida, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia. The poll results showed overwhelming support in favor of more clean air standards, especially among women and Latinos. “Americans

clearly are very displeased that politicians are interfering with EPA scientists. It’s wrong to play politics with the health of our children and seniors,” said national League President **Elisabeth MacNamara**.

League Submits Comments to UN Committees

Earlier this year, LWVUS NGO Observer **Rosalee Keech** [submitted comments](#) to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The comments were submitted on behalf of the LWVUS and addressed the issue of CEDAW and the Right to Vote and Hold Office.

Help Wanted!

The LWVKA is looking for Leaguers who believe educating our young people about the voting process is important for the future of our democratic process. In 2008 **Sue Nelmes** and **Camilla Davis** created a successful program to teach high school students about the election process and held a mock presidential election. As we approach the 2012 presidential election, we have the opportunity to once again offer this educational training to Kalamazoo area students. We have the tools to create this opportunity; all we need are several interested people to spearhead the effort. If you believe that voter education for our youth is important, contact [Paula Manley via email](#) or phone at 269-345-7623.

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

Words by Design

editing • indexing • layout • design

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

www.wordsdesign.net



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
of the Kalamazoo Area
P.O. Box 2106
Kalamazoo, MI 49003-2106

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Climate Change Program Attracts Audience of 50

Peter Sinclair of Midland, a presenter with the Climate Reality Project founded by **Al Gore**, attracted an audience of about 50 people to his presentation at the Kalamazoo Nature Center on November 16. His blog and YouTube series “Climate Denial Crock of the Week” present data in a way that makes sense to non-scientists. He uses dramatic graphics to illustrate his points. LWVKA is a member of the Kalamazoo Environmental Council, which sponsored this event.

As part of an LWVUS/LWVMI initiative, LWVKA’s **Jessica Reiser** invited the group to visit [People Not Polluters website](#) and sign the Clean Air Promise to “support clean air policies and other protections that scientists and public health experts have recommended to the EPA to safeguard our air quality.”

Thank You, Fund Raising-Mailing Team

Many hands do make light work. The mid-November fundraising mailing was made possible by a number of people. **Denise Hartsough, Paula Manley, Paula Aldridge, Tanya Potter** and **Connie Ferguson** prepared the materials and supplies. **Carol Urban** recruited volunteers. **Michele McGowen** hosted the mailing party at her office. Paula A., Tanya, Connie, Carol, and Michele were joined by **Kay Perry** and **Jo Carpenter** for a couple of hours of envelope stuffing and chatting. Job done! Now it’s your turn. We look forward to receiving your donations.