

# THE BULLETIN

League of Women Voters Kalamazoo Area

March 2018 • Vol. 64 № 6

## President's Column

by MerriKay Oleen-Burkey



The League of Women Voters of Michigan is part of a broad coalition sponsoring the **Promote the Vote** ballot initiative that would amend the Michigan Constitution to make voting more accessible and convenient. Other members of the coalition include **ACLU Michigan, Michigan League for Public Policy, NAACP Detroit, NAACP Michigan State Conference** and many non-profits and individuals from across the state.

The Initiative Petition states: "A proposal to amend the Michigan Constitution of 1963 by amending Article II, Section 4." If adopted the proposal would provide citizens qualified to vote in Michigan with the following rights:

- To vote a secret ballot;
- For military and overseas voters to be sent a ballot 45 days before an election;
- To vote straight party on all partisan general election ballots;
- To be automatically registered to vote when obtaining a driver's license or personal identification card from the Secretary of State, unless the person declines;
- To register to vote by mail on or before the 15th day before an election;
- To register to vote in person at any time with proof of residency;
- To vote an absentee ballot, by mail or in person, without giving a reason; and
- To have election results audited to ensure the accuracy of elections."

What should we know about these voting rights? While there is a provision in the Michigan Constitution for the Legislature to enact laws to preserve the secrecy of the ballot, this amendment would put this basic right in the Constitution. Ensuring military service members and overseas voters get their ballots in time for their votes to count is an important issue deserving of a place in the Constitution. There's been voter approval for straight party voting in Michigan twice before, and currently there is a court injunction allowing it. Automatically registering citizens to vote at the Secretary of State's office would increase the number of registered voters in Michigan. Allowing citizens to register to vote by mail for two additional weeks before elections as well as allowing voter registration in person with proof of residency up to and including election day would assure anyone who is eligible to vote is allowed to vote. Providing access to absentee ballots for any reason would encourage more people to vote prior to election day which would improve voter convenience. The auditing provision would require that statewide election results be auditable which expands on the current law that the Secretary of State may audit election precincts. Many states have some or all of these voting rights. By including them in the Michigan Constitution, they will last unless the citizens vote to change them.

Collecting signatures for **Promote the Vote** is just beginning. In order to have enough valid signatures for the initiative to be placed on the November 2018 ballot, **400,000 signatures must be collected from registered voters in Michigan by June 30**. If you are interested in helping with the collection of signatures for Promote the Vote, please contact MerriKay (moburkey30@gmail.com) or Denise Hartsough (denise.hartsough@gmail.com).

## Calendar

### MARCH 2018

#### Women's History Month

- 5 Grand Rapids Unit Social**  
Grand Traverse Pie Co., 28th St. – 7pm
- 8 International Women's Day**
- 12 LWVKA Board Meeting**  
Walden Woods Condominium Clubhouse  
5:30 pm Dine – 6:00 pm Meeting
- Sunshine Week — 13-18**  
Promoting open government
- 18 GR Unit Book Club**  
*The New Jim Crow*  
1:00 p.m. Mary Blauw's Home
- 24 Voter Registration March for our Lives**  
Rosa Parks Circle, Grand Rapids, 12 noon

### APRIL 2018

- 2 Grand Rapids Unit Social**  
Grand Traverse Pie Co., 28th St. – 7pm
- 9 LWVKA Board Meeting**  
Walden Woods Condominium Clubhouse  
5:30 pm Dine – 6:00 pm Meeting
- National Volunteer Week — 15-22**
- 22 Earth Day**
- 28 LWVKA Annual Meeting**  
Park Club

### MAY 2018

- 7 Grand Rapids Unit Social**  
Grand Traverse Pie Co., 28th St. — 7pm
- 8 Election Day**
- 14 LWVKA Board Meeting**  
Walden Woods Condominium Clubhouse  
5:30 pm Dine – 6:00 pm Meeting
- Michigan Week — 14-19**  
Government Day

*Note: Board meets on 2nd Monday. Members are welcome to attend all Board Meetings. Contact (269) 270-3302 and moburkey30@gmail.com*

## Alcott Street Dam Removal

By *Connie Ferguson*



Alcott Street Dam Structure. Credit: USFWS

The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and the City of Kalamazoo hosted a meeting on February 1 to explain plans for removal of the Alcott Street Dam across Portage Creek. Speakers from the US Fish & Wildlife Service, the DEQ and two contractors described why they were undertaking the work, what would be done and when it would be completed.

The dam was constructed in 1927 as part of the Allied Paper Mill. It no longer serves a useful purpose, and it is deteriorating, interferes with fish movements and impounds 50,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediments. The project will cost about \$5 million and should be completed this spring. About \$2 million is coming from the bankruptcy settlement with Lyondell Chemical Co. through the Natural Resource Damage Trustees and the rest is coming from various other sources identified by DEQ.

Work started in February. It is complicated because the dam and the Alcott Street bridge are physically connected and must be separated before the dam can be removed. In addition to removing the dam, they will modify parts of the stream bed to control water flow and improve fish habitat and then will restore wetland areas. They expect minimal traffic disruption, although trucks will be leaving the site carrying the contaminated sediments to the Waste Management landfill near Three Rivers. The work is being coordinated closely with the overall Kalamazoo River Superfund project overseen by EPA. The project will benefit the public by improving the fish habitat, decreasing downstream flooding, removing contaminants and removing a dam that could potentially fail.

## Environmental Legislative Breakfast

By *Connie Ferguson*

A group of Kalamazoo area environmental organizations invites you to meet with our State and Federal lawmakers to talk about protecting our natural resources for future generations and exploring creative approaches that link economic growth and sustainable practices. We have invited State Senator **Margaret O'Brien**, State Representatives **Beth Griffin**, **Jon Hoadley**, **Brandt Iden**, **David Maturen**, as well as U.S. Representative **Fred Upton**, U.S. Senators **Gary Peters** and **Debbie Stabenow** or their legislative staff.

Please RSVP to [kay.chase@wmich.edu](mailto:kay.chase@wmich.edu) or 388-3777 if you plan to attend so we know how much food to buy. However, you are welcome even if you are unable to make an advance reservation. There is no charge, but we will accept donations at the event to help cover the cost of the breakfast.

**Monday, March 5:** Continental Breakfast: 7:30 am, Discussion: 8:00 – 9:30 am  
Kalamazoo Nature Center, 7000 N. Westnedge Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49009.

## Grand Rapids Unit Updates

By *Elianna Bootzin*

Members Teri Chaplin, Bonnie Biggs and Courtney Winell attended the ACLU's Promote the Vote kickoff meeting at the Wealthy Theatre on February 21st and are actively working to gather signatures.

Monthly Grand Rapids social evenings continue Monday March 5, 2018 at the Grand Traverse Pie Company on 28th Street across from Woodland Mall at 7 pm. Learn about the League and opportunities to get involved, and just have a good time with other engaged citizens!



James Ward

**GRAND RAPIDS MICHIGAN**

Our first book club picks up Sunday March 18 at Mary Blauw's home at 1 pm (email her at [mary.blauw@gmail.com](mailto:mary.blauw@gmail.com) for the address) with discussion on *The New Jim Crow*. In addition to a discussion of the book, we will also be viewing the documentary *13th*.

Anyone needing voter registration training can join the LWV of the Holland Area on March 14 (tentative), 20 and 22 from 2:00-4:00 (probably shorter than 2 hours) at Ottawa County Clerk's office on Fillmore Road. Let Elianna Bootzin know which day you will attend at [ebootzin@yahoo.com](mailto:ebootzin@yahoo.com) and let her know if you need directions.

Our first voter registration session of the year will take place at the March 24th "March for Our Lives" at Rosa Parks Circle at noon. Email Courtney Winell at [courtney@infoplaceusa.com](mailto:courtney@infoplaceusa.com) to sign up to help. Other volunteers can collect Promote the Vote petition signatures.

“ The dam was constructed in 1927 as part of the Allied Paper Mill. ”



# LWVMI Updates & Opportunities

By Denise Hartsough

**UPDATE:** The **League of Women Voters of Michigan** (LWVMI) has endorsed the ballot proposal initiated by **Voters Not Politicians** to end gerrymandering. The proposal calls for redistricting to be done not by the State Legislature, but by an independent commission. This measure will be on the ballot in November. If adopted, it would affect how Michigan does redistricting after the 2020 Census.

**OPPORTUNITY:** Support the redistricting ballot proposal! Many volunteers, including many League members, worked very hard to gather signatures and will continue to work to get voters to approve this proposal. League members are urged to support the measure in any way they can.

**UPDATE:** LWVMI is lead plaintiff in a federal lawsuit challenging Michigan's Congressional and State Legislative districts as unconstitutional partisan gerrymanders. In other words, the way the districts are drawn violates voters' constitutional rights. The State of Michigan contends that the federal court should grant a stay — wait until the US Supreme Court decides two other gerrymandering cases. The State of Michigan also says that if the court does not grant a stay, then the court should rule that LWVMI has no standing to sue on this issue. On March 20 the federal court in Detroit will hear arguments about the stay and standing. If this lawsuit is successful, it would mandate changes in current district lines.

**OPPORTUNITY:** Donations are needed to cover expenses such as expert witnesses and filing fees. The two law firms involved are doing the case pro bono but there are other expenses. Please, if you can, make a tax-deductible contribution to help this important case. Make out checks to the LWVMI Education Fund and write "Gerrymandering Lawsuit" in the memo line. Send checks to LWVMI Education Fund, 600 W. Saint Joseph Street, Suite 3G, Lansing, MI 48933-2288. You can find more information at [www.lwvmi.org](http://www.lwvmi.org).

**UPDATE:** LWVMI is partnering on **Promote the Vote**. Read all about this campaign for a Voting Rights amendment to the Michigan Constitution in the President's column on page 1 of this Bulletin. The proposed changes would bring Michigan closer to 40 other states, which make voting more accessible than it currently is in our state.

**OPPORTUNITY:** To get this measure on the November ballot, Promote the Vote aims to collect 316,000 signatures by June. Kickoffs for signature gathering

took place all over the state on February 21. You can still get involved! Once you are oriented by **MerriKay Oleen-Burkey** or me, you can gather signatures. To see activities around the state and to register for updates, check out [www.promotethevotemi.com](http://www.promotethevotemi.com).

Please help with any and all of these efforts — we need all three of these reforms to Make Democracy Work better in Michigan!

## LWVUS NEWS

By Paula Manley

**The LWVUS Board has set priorities for 2018:**

- 1** Campaign for **Making Democracy Work**, with special emphasis on voting rights
- 2** Watchdog: Respond strategically on issues with LWV positions when needed, but focus on the Campaign Making Democracy Work

**There is still time to comment on the proposal to allow offshore drilling.** The LWVUS Climate Change Task Force has background and message points at [lwv.org](http://lwv.org) to consider when framing your response. The deadline to offer comments on the Department of the Interior Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) website is March 9.

**The deadline to comment on the rollback of the Clean Power Plan has been extended to April 26.** LWVUS submitted comments to the Environmental Protection Agency in regard to the Agency's plan to repeal the Clean Power Plan. Leaguers are urged to submit comments and may review LWVUS talking points and background information at [lwv.org](http://lwv.org).

### LWVUS recently:

- ★ Sent a letter to Congress outlining provisions that should be included in any immigration bill. The LWVUS Lobby Crops will be visiting offices on Capitol Hill in the coming weeks to discuss the immigration issue.
- ★ Joined coalition partners in sending a letter to EPA Administrator Pruitt urging US Environmental Protection Agency to prioritize protection of public health and finalize science based "designations" for 2015 ozone standard.
- ★ Sent a letter to the US Senate Judiciary Committee supporting the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2017.

For further information on these and other actions, visit [lwv.org](http://lwv.org).

**PROMOTE**  
the **VOTE**

Let's have a voting system that works for all Americans

[www.promotethevotemi.com](http://www.promotethevotemi.com)

“ Promote the Vote aims to collect 316,000 signatures by June. Kickoffs for signature gathering took place all over the state on February 21. You can still get involved! ”

**MAKING  
DEMOCRACY  
WORK!**

# New Members

By Chris Kuthe

Please welcome new members to the LWVKA. These members have joined in the last month and are anxious to be involved. If you have a project that you need help with, call or email to invite them.

**Cheri L. Bell**  
3711 N 2nd Street  
Kalamazoo, MI 49009  
(269) 217-1716  
cheri.bell3@gmail.com

**Marlene Camacho-Ochoa**  
9526 Oakview Dr. Portage, MI 49024  
(269) 329-4379

**Karen Ford**  
6137 Peregrine Trail  
Kalamazoo, MI 49009  
(269) 929-7329  
karenfford@hotmail.com

**Karen Matson**  
7920 Canter Glen  
Kalamazoo, MI 49009  
(269) 598-6978  
karen@karenmatson.com

**Carol A Mattens**  
4238 Persianwood Dr.  
Kalamazoo, MI 49006  
(269) 344-5224  
y2n2ana@charter.net

**Jennifer Mitts**  
3801 Winchell Ave Apt. P303  
Kalamazoo, MI 49008  
(269) 568-8577  
jenniferamitts@outlook.com

**Sarah Somers**  
4173 Lake Terrace Dr.  
Kalamazoo, MI 49008  
(269) 808-4436  
sarahksomers@gmail.com

**Jofrid Stavig**  
15418 South 27th St.  
Vicksburg, MI 49097  
(269) 568-7974  
jofridstavig@gmail.com

**Gail Stults**  
1920 S Westnedge Ave. Apt. 3  
Kalamazoo, MI 49008  
(850) 210-2479  
gail.stults@gmail.com

**Sarah Watts Whitford**  
4489 Burton Forest Ct SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546  
(616) 450-8202  
sarah.w.whitford@gmail.com

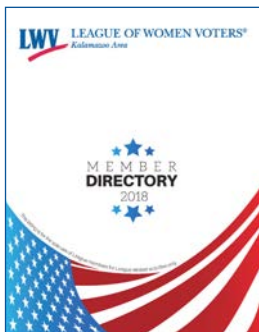
# Directory Updates


By Chris Kuthe

Please make the following additions/edits to your LWVKA member directory. If you have a change in home address, phone or email, please contact me at ckuthe57@yahoo.com or call 269-501-3305.

**Sherry Higgins** has a new address:  
491 Montego Bay St.  
Portage, MI 49002

**Charlotte Russell** has a new address:  
1400 N Drake Road Apt #241  
Kalamazoo, MI 49006



	
<b>BUDGET PROPOSAL – GENERAL FUND</b> <b>PROPOSED BUDGET YEAR JULY 2018-JUNE 2019</b>	
<b>REVENUES</b>	
Individual, Business Contributions	3,000.00
Membership Dues	10,000.00
Meetings Income	3,700.00
Wares Sales	300.00
Advertising in Bulletin	50.00
Interest Income	120.00
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	<b>\$17,170.00</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>	
Website	130.00
Office Supplies	100.00
Postage, PO Box	100.00
Printing and copying	60.00
Telephone	480.00
Bulletin Expenses	1,200.00
Donations	200.00
National PMP	5,460.00
Michigan PMP	4,020.00
PayPal fees	100.00
Memberships and dues	50.00
Membership Recruitment	200.00
Insurance (Directors & Officers)	100.00
Meetings costs	3,870.00
Grand Rapids Unit	100.00
National/State Convention	1,000.00
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$17,170.00</b>
<b>NET INCOME</b>	<b>-</b>

# Founders Day Brunch

By Fran Eckenrode

The annual Founders Day Brunch was held at Friendship Village on Saturday, February 17. An enthusiastic crowd of 85 League members and prospective member-guests enjoyed the opportunity to connect with old friends and make new acquaintances. The agenda for the morning focused on identifying opportunities to become involved in furthering the League’s program goals. To this end, involved members provided overviews of the many ongoing League activities and volunteer opportunities:

- |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Candidate Forums                                | <b>KC Miller</b>                      |
| Voter Registration and Observer Corps           | <b>MerriKay Oleen-Burkey</b>          |
| Vote 411& Voter Guide                           | <b>Debbie Phillips and Liz Barney</b> |
| Young Adult Voter Education Program             | <b>Jennie Hill</b>                    |
| Public Advocacy for Voter Protection            | <b>Debbie Phillips</b>                |
| Redistricting Lawsuit & Voting Rights Amendment | <b>Denise Hartsough</b>               |
| Election Administration                         | <b>Connie Ferguson</b>                |
| Candidate Diversity                             | <b>Karen Thomas</b>                   |
| Grand Rapids Unit                               | <b>Elianna Bootzin</b>                |
| Member Dues Assistance Policy                   | <b>Paula Aldridge</b>                 |
| LWV Lake MI Region                              | <b>Georgiann McWilliams</b>           |



Many attendees took the opportunity to mark a form indicating their areas of interest. The collected information has been distributed to activity leaders. A big THANKS to all who participated in the brunch!

# 2018 Nominating Committee Slate

The following LWVKA members have accepted nominations for Officers, Directors and Nominating Committee. Members will vote on the slate at the 2018 Annual Meeting on April 30, 2018.

- President (1yr) **Merrikay Oleen-Burkey**
- V.P. Organization (1yr) **Fran Eckenrode**
- V.P. Program (2yr) **Georgiann McWilliams**
- Treasurer (2yr) **Paula Aldridge**
- Board Member (2yr) **KC Miller**  
**Karen Thomas**  
**Millie Lambert**  
**Connie Micklin**
- Nominating (1yr) **Kay Anderson**  
**Chris Kuthe**  
**Jackie Wylie**



The current Nominating Committee consists of **Kay Anderson** (269-649-2461) or kander314@aol.com), off-board members **Paula Presler**, **Jackie Wylie**, and Board members **KC Miller** and **Chris Kuthe**.



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

*Kalamazoo Area*

P.O. Box 2106

Kalamazoo, MI 49003-2106

## LWVKA Education Fund Board of Directors

**Jessica Reiser**, *Chairperson*  
jcreiser@comcast.net

**Paula Aldridge**, *Treasurer*  
paula.mae.aldridge@gmail.com

**Rebekah Fennell**, *Secretary*  
rsfennell@sbcglobal.net

**Susan Atkinson**, *Director*  
sls.atkinson@gmail.com

**Yolanda Mitts**, *Director*  
ymitts@yahoo.com

**Dennis Elmer**, *Director*  
dgelmer@comcast.net

**Eileen Schoenfield**, *Director*  
Benziedoc1@gmail.com

---

## LWVKA Board for 2017-2018

### Officers:

**MerriKay Oleen-Burkey**  
*President*  
moburkey30@gmail.com

**Fran Eckenrode**  
*VP Programming*  
eckenr@gmail.com

**Paula Aldridge**  
*Treasurer*  
paula.mae.aldridge@gmail.com

**Aedin Clements**  
*Secretary*  
aedinclements@gmail.com

**Denise Hartsough**  
*Past President*  
denise.hartsough@gmail.com

### Board Members:

**Jennifer Hill**  
jahill231@yahoo.com

**Chris Kuthe**  
ckuthe57@yahoo.com

**Millie Lambert**  
millielambert3922@gmail.com

**Georgiann McWilliams**  
georgiann@charter.net

**KC Miller**  
aakcmiller@yahoo.com

**Alison Parsons**  
alisonparsonsmi@gmail.com

**Sabrina Pritchett-Evans**  
sabrina.pritchett-Evans.ghik@statefarm.com

**Karen Thomas**  
karen.thomas@wmich.edu

---

*The Bulletin is published monthly by the League of Women Voters  
Kalamazoo Area*