

THE BULLETIN

League of Women Voters Kalamazoo Area

April 2018 • Vol. 64 № 7

President's Column

by MerriKay Oleen-Burkey

Plans to reinvigorate our observer corps were announced earlier this year. We want to thank the LWVKA members who have volunteered to monitor our local elected and appointed organizations to date. They are Betty Lee Ongley, Mabel Stenesh, Yolanda Mitts, Karl Westra, Scott Tillman, and Deborah Werner.

“The primary reason for creating and maintaining an observer corps is to promote and ensure a healthy democracy.”

Among the organizations that have been observed are the County Commission, a City Council, a Township Board, and a Neighborhood Association, a broad breadth of our community government. Later in this issue of the Bulletin you will find highlights from the observations of these organizations.

The primary reason for creating and maintaining an observer corps is to promote and ensure a healthy democracy. Since our founding in 1920, the League has been a champion of government transparency. Through the efforts of our observers we can reinforce our reputation of fairness, non-

partisanship and trust. These observer volunteers attend these meetings to learn what the organizations are doing and to monitor whether the meetings are conducted in an open and transparent way. They are present to watch and learn but also to take action when necessary.

Given LWVKA's positions on **Social Policy** (*housing, education*), **Natural Resources** (*land use planning, parks and recreation, management of the Kalamazoo River, preservation of natural areas*) and **Government** (*providing Kalamazoo County government services, library services and governance, financing local government services, and the local government election process*), are there community related issues in early stages of discussion and/or action that could, over time, be positively impacted by LWVKA? What office or agency has jurisdiction and will need to find solutions? If you have answers to these questions, join our observer corps. You will be increasing the League's community ties and expanding our visibility.

Thank you again to our current observer corps members! We appreciate your service!!

Annual Meeting April 30!

by Fran Eckenrode

Please plan to attend the LWVKA Annual Meeting on Monday, April 30, at the Park Club in Kalamazoo. We will gather at 5:30 and dine at 6. Our guest speaker **Judy Karandjeff**, president of LWVMI, will speak about *LWVMI v Johnson*, a federal lawsuit challenging Michigan's Congressional and State Legislative districts as unconstitutional partisan gerrymanders. Watch for your invitation to the meeting, which will be sent in early April by email and US Postal Service.

Calendar

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**
- 21 Front Page: Donuts & Discussion**
“*Making Democracy Work*”
Parchment Library, 401 Riverview Dr. — 10:30 am
- 22 Earth Day**
- 28 LWVMI Regional Workshop**
Ann Arbor — 9:30am-3pm
- 30 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

JUNE 2018

- 4 Grand Rapids Unit Social**
Grand Traverse Pie Co., 28th St. — 7pm
- 9 Pride Voter Registration**
at Arcadia Park
- 11 LWVKA Board Meeting**
Old & new members and board appointments
Walden Woods Condominium Clubhouse
5:30 pm Dine – 6:00 pm Meeting
- 27 Water Focus Day**
LWV Lake Michigan Region — Chicago, IL
- 28-1 LWVUS Convention (Chicago, IL)**

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

LWVMI Updates & Opportunities

by Denise Hartsough

“ The League of Women Voters of Michigan invites all League members — new and experienced — to learn more about the League and its current efforts... ”

LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

The League of Women Voters of Michigan (LWVMI) invites all League members — new and experienced — to learn more about the League and its current efforts by participating in a **regional workshop**. The workshop nearby for LWVKA members will be **Saturday, April 28 in Ann Arbor** from 9:30am to 3pm. Location: S.I. Company Office, Columbia Center Industrial Park, 5111 Venture Drive, Ste. 3, Ann Arbor, MI 48108. For carpooling, please contact **MerriKay Oleen-Burkey** (moburkey30@gmail.com). The other workshop will be on May 5 in Grayling.

MORNING SESSIONS:

Democracy Agenda: Promote the Vote, the LWVMI Gerrymandering lawsuit and other legislative updates pertinent to the Democracy Agenda

League Basics: LWVMI's new membership program, treasurers' best practices, engaging new and current members, programming — positions and how it works, fundraising & development

AFTERNOON SESSIONS:

Democracy Agenda: Promote the Vote, the LWVMI Gerrymandering lawsuit and other legislative updates pertinent to the Democracy Agenda

Voter Service: voter registration (“Pop Ups” and school programs), Get Out the Vote ideas, 2018 voter service calendar

Cost of \$20 includes lunch. Register by April 15 at www.lwvmi.org.

ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITY

Many LWVKA members are gathering signatures for a Voting Rights amendment to the Michigan Constitution. This effort, called **Promote the Vote**, would enhance and protect our voting rights by placing them in the Constitution. Enhancements include: no-excuse absentee voting, early voting, straight ticket voting, and voter registration in person up to and on Election Day. For details, please see www.lwvmi.org and www.promotethevotemi.com.

If you would like to sign the petition, or if you would like to collect signatures, please contact **Denise Hartsough** (denise.hartsough@gmail.com or 269-599-1801).

ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITY

Remember to support the **Voters Not Politicians** redistricting ballot proposal! LWVMI has endorsed this proposal and urges League members to support the measure in any way they can.

LAWSUIT UPDATE

LWVMI is lead plaintiff in a federal lawsuit challenging Michigan's Congressional and State Legislative districts as unconstitutional partisan gerrymanders. On March 14, the court ruled not to stay (delay) the proceedings, as the State had requested. Now the court is deciding if LWVMI and the other plaintiffs have standing to sue. Watch for updates at www.lwvmi.org!

DONATION OPPORTUNITY

Donations are needed to cover expenses for the gerrymandering lawsuit (for expert witnesses and filing fees, not legal fees). Please, if you can, make a tax-deductible contribution. Make checks out to 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.

Advertise in the Bulletin!

Are you or someone you know interested in reaching a discerning local audience with your advertising message? For only \$50, your business card-sized ad will appear in six issues of the Bulletin during the year. Not only will you reach over 150 highly engaged, community-oriented League members in the Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids area, your advertising dollars also help support the League's important work!



LWVUS NEWS

By Paula Manley

Around the nation, LWV is actively “*Defending Democracy and Empowering Voters*” as evidenced by the following:

On **March 20** the US Supreme Court declined to block redrawn Pennsylvania congressional districts from moving forward. The LWV of Pennsylvania had initiated the lawsuit in the summer of 2017 to redraw the district lines. With this decision, the recently redrawn lines remain, and are in effect for the upcoming May primary election. This is a victory for redistricting and ensuring votes count!

The State of Washington legislature passed, and the governor signed bills on **March 19** which include: WA voting rights act, automatic voter registration, same day voting registration, DISCLOSE act, preregistration for 16 and 17-year-olds and post-election audits. Another victory for ensuring voters’ rights!

League members in Kansas recently testified in the federal lawsuit *Fish v. Kobach*, which is challenging the 2013 Kansas state law requiring proof of citizenship when registering to vote. The American Civil Liberties Union filed the lawsuit on behalf of the League of Women Voters and individual Kansans **February 18**. The suit claims that the Kansas law violates the National Voter Registration Act. It is seeking to make the US Court of Appeals preliminary ruling which blocked the law in October 2016 permanent.

Environmental Update:

LWVUS has joined the Environmental Defense Fund and other organizations to launch and promote the US Clean Energy Progress Map. This map shows the economic impact of clean energy growth across the country. It is a non-partisan, free-to-use public resource which details investments and jobs in the US wind, solar and energy efficient industries. Go to cleanenergyprogress.com to view the map.

For the latest update on LWV issues and actions, go to lwv.org.

**MAKING
DEMOCRACY
WORK!**

Grand Rapids Unit Updates:

By Eliana Bootzin

Members and volunteers **Bonnie Biggs, Caitlin Boon, Elianna Bootzin, Teri Chaplin, Laurel Horman, Audrey Quinn, Soo Schab, Chris VanEyl, and Courtney Winell** registered 51 voters at the *March for Our Lives* event in Grand Rapids on **March 24**. Karen Joseph stopped by the table with her son, and the ACLU collected lots of *Promote the Vote* signatures at the next table.

Monthly Grand Rapids social evenings continue **Monday April 2, 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!

Other events of interest:

Representative **David LaGrand** is holding a Criminal Justice town hall at the GRPS Rev. Lyman W. Parks Administration Building (1331 Franklin Ave. SE) from 6:30-8:00 p.m. on Monday **April 9**.

Kent District Library is offering a free series on civility and respect for all at its Wyoming Branch (3350 Michael Ave. SW, Wyoming) from 6:30-7:30 p.m. on Tuesdays **April 10, 17 and 24**. The titles are: “*Searching for a Reconfigured ‘We the People’: Embracing Counter Narratives for Just and Civil Discourse*”, “*The Loss of American Consensus: Were We Better Off with the Cold War and Without the Internet?*”, and “*Portraits of American Muslims: Civility in a Pluralistic Community*”.

GVSU’s Hauenstein Center is hosting a Progressive/Conservative Summit to pursue meaningful interaction across philosophical and political difference on the downtown campus on Friday **April 13** from 5-8:15 pm and Saturday **April 14** from 9 am-5 pm. You can register for each day separately at www.gvsu.edu/hc.

The Center for Michigan is bringing the *Michigan Truth Tour* to Calvin College’s Prince Conference Center on Tuesday **April 17** from 5:30-6:30 for an evening town hall meeting on issues that can make Michigan a great place to live. Also included is a screening of the **Bridge Magazine** documentary *Michigan Divided*, with a follow up discussion moderated by the Center for Michigan from 7-8:30 pm. Both events take place in the Great Hall Theater. You can register at: <https://www.bridgemi.com/public-Sector/michigans-2018-infrastructure-report-card-d>.



James Ward

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.

Roberta Allen

2509 Rosset Drive
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269-615-4514
roberta.allen@charter.net

Kathleen Stryker-Clark and Jeff Clark

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Lee Fevig

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Delton, MI 49046
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Carole Spight-Greene

7130 Arbor Valley Ave
Kalamazoo, MI 49009
269-372-2712
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Ellen Winter

7280 Leawood Street
Portage, MI 49024
269-352-5882
ellenfwinter@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.

Ruth Graham has a new address:

620 Phillips St #206
Kalamazoo, MI 49001



Member Survey Coming Soon

By Chris Kuthe

Coming to your email inbox or mailbox in the next few weeks will be a LWVKA member survey. This survey is very short, just 10 questions, and will take you less than 5 minutes to complete. The League board will use the information to create future programming. Your input is very important to us, so thank you in advance for completing the survey.

Front Page: Donuts and Discussion – Making Democracy Work

By Paul Manley

LWVKA members are invited to attend *Front Page: Donuts and Discussion — Making Democracy Work* on **Saturday April 21 at 10:30 am** at the Parchment Community Library, 401 S. Riverview Drive. **Paula Manley**, LWVKA member, will be leading the discussion about redistricting and voter rights.

Each month Parchment Community Library hosts Front Page to discuss and inform interested community members about current events. LWVKA members are encouraged to come and be a part of the discussion on April 21. It will be an opportunity to showcase what the League is doing as we are “**Defending Democracy. Empowering Voters!**”

50 Year Members

By Chris Kuthe

Have you been a member of the League of Women Voters for 50 years or more? (This could be a member of any League not just LWVKA.) Did you join the League in 1968 or before? As a 50 year member you no longer have to pay dues and you will still be a voting member of the LWVKA. Please contact Chris Kuthe at 269-501-3305 or ckuthe57@yahoo.com to be recognized as a 50 year member of the League.



Observer Corps Reports

LWVKA Observers and MerriKay Oleen-Burkey

Portage City Council — Regularly scheduled meeting — 10/24/17

Purpose: To conduct business for the City of Portage

Meeting Features: Two public comment periods; Uses Consent Agenda

Discussion Issue: Proliferation of liquor and beer stores

Possible LWVKA Action: Land Use Planning

Oakland Drive/Winchell Neighborhood Association

(ODWNA) — 11/15/17

Purpose: To address issues of the neighborhood common to all residents; to work for the good of the neighborhood; and to constructively assist Kalamazoo City and County Planning Commissions on behalf of the neighborhood

Meeting Features: Public comment time; background information available through website

Discussion Issue: ODWNA intends to participate with the other 21 City neighborhoods in development of the Kalamazoo City Master Plan. ODWNA to begin work on its submission to the Kalamazoo Planning Commission in February. Process will be about a year long.

Possible LWVKA Action: None at this time. Monitor progress.

(ODWNA) — 1/17/18

Discussion Issue: Neighborhood plan to be discussed with the residents at the next meeting, a neighborhood open house

Possible LWVKA Action: None at this time. Monitor progress.

Kalamazoo County Board— Regularly scheduled meeting 1/9/18

Purpose: The legislative policy making branch of Kalamazoo County Government

Meeting Features: Public comment after the meeting business

Meeting Business: Election of Leadership for 2018 — Chairperson Stephanie Moore and Vice Chairperson: Dale Sugars

Possible LWVKA Action: None at this time. Monitor Progress.

Oshtemo Charter Township Joint Work Session with Planning Commission — 1/25/18

Purpose: To conduct business of Oshtemo Charter Township

Meeting Features: Public comment was offered at every step of the process

Meeting Discussion: Planning Commission presentation to Township Board regarding revisions of the Master Plan required every 5 years.

Issue: Balancing commercial growth with preservation of green space and original rural character of the Township

Possible LWVKA Action: Observe Township Board which has responsibility for implementing the Master Plan.

Overall: Our observers have found that decisions sometimes seem to be made ahead of regularly scheduled council/board meetings. It then appears there is no opportunity for input to those decisions. The earlier observers detect potential issues to monitor, making it more likely for the LWVKA to have an impact on the issues.

Proposed By-Law Changes

To see the proposed changes in the context of the full LWVKA By-Laws, please see www.lwvka.org/members.html

Article V — Officers

Section 1. Enumeration and Election of Officers. The Officers of the League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area shall be a President, a First Vice-President (**Vice President/Organization**), a Second Vice-President (**Vice President/Program**) [to clarify the order of VPs], a Secretary, and a Treasurer. The President shall be elected for a term of one year while all other officers shall be elected for a term of two years by the general membership at an Annual Meeting and take office on June 1 following their election. The First Vice-President and the Secretary shall be elected in odd numbered years. The Second Vice-President and the Treasurer shall be elected in even numbered years. No officer shall serve in the same office more than three (3) consecutive terms or six (6) years, whichever is longer.

Section 5. The Treasurer. The Treasurer shall collect and receive all monies due. The Treasurer shall be the custodian of these monies, shall deposit them in a bank designated by the Board of Directors, and shall disburse same only upon the order of the Board. The Treasurer shall present statements to the Board at their regular meetings and an annual report at the Annual Meeting. The books shall be audited annually. The Treasurer **or designee** [to allow the Membership Chair to do this task] shall notify each member at least two weeks before the first of the month in which the dues are payable.

Article VI — Financial Administration

Section 2. Dues. Annual dues shall be payable on the first day of the anniversary month of the member's joining the League. Associate members' dues shall be assessed the same as members' dues. Full-time students **and citizens of 60 years and older** [scholarship available for those in need] may pay dues of one-half that amount. Any member who fails to pay dues within three months after they become payable shall be dropped from the membership rolls.

Article VII — Meetings

Section 3. Quorum. **At any business meeting of the League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area,** twenty-five (25) voting members shall constitute a quorum **at all business meetings of the League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area.** [emphasizes that quorum applies only to business meetings, not all membership meetings]

Article X — National Convention, and State Convention and Council [obsolete]

Section 3. State Council. The Board of Directors at the meeting before the date on which the names of delegates must be sent to the state office shall select delegates to that council in the number allotted to the League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area under the provisions of the By-Laws of the League of Women Voters of Michigan. [obsolete]



LWVKA Education Fund Board of Directors

Jessica Reiser, *Chairperson*
jcreiser@comcast.net

Yolanda Mitts, *Vice Chair*
ygmitts@gmail.com

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

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

Eileen Schoenfeld, *Director*
Benziedoc1@gmail.com

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) **Merrickay 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**.

LWVKA Board for 2017-2018

Officers:

MerriKay Oleen-Burkey
President
moburkey30@gmail.com

Fran Eckenrode
VP Programming
feckenr@gmail.com

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