

League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area

May 2015
President: Denise Hartsough

www.lwvka.org

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LWVMI Convention in Kalamazoo May 15-17

By Paula Manley

The LWVKA is hosting a reception for the LWVMI State Convention attendees on Friday, May 15 from 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Park Club in downtown Kalamazoo. LWVKA members are invited to come, welcome League members to Kalamazoo, and network with members from around the state. You do not need to be registered for the convention to join us at the reception.

It has been a few years since LWVKA has had the honor of hosting the LWVMI State Convention. The 2015 LWVMI State Convention "Giving Voice to Democracy" will be held May 15-17 at the Four Points by Sheraton, 3600 East Cork Street. Every two years LWVMI holds a state-wide convention with delegates and members from around the state attending. It would not be possible to host such an event without the assistance of our LWVKA volunteers who will greet and help with registration under the capable leadership of **Ruth Caputo**.

Our League will have eight delegates including **Denise Hartsough, Janet Jones, Georgiann McWilliams, Ken Manley, Paula Manley, KC Miller, Merrikay Oleen-Burkey, and Betty Ongley**. If you are interested in seeing the State Convention in action and have not registered to attend, you may still come and observe the plenary sessions Friday evening, May 15 from 8:00-9:00 p.m.; Saturday, May 16 from 9:30-11:45 a.m.; or Sunday, May 17 from 9:45 a.m.-12:00 noon.

Calendar

May 12 YWCA Women of Achievement Awards
Tues. Radisson Plaza Hotel

May 15-17 LWVMI State Convention
Fri.—Sun. Four Points by Sheraton
Cork Street, Kalamazoo

May 19 LWVKA Board Meeting
Tues. The Park Club
219 W. South St, Kalamazoo
5:30 pm Food available for purchase
6:00 pm Meeting
Questions? Call 269-544-0303
or email president@lwvka.org

June 13 Voter Registration
Sat. Kalamazoo Pride 2015
Arcadia Creek Festival Place

June 16 LWVKA Board Meeting
Tues. The Park Club
219 W. South St, Kalamazoo
5:30 pm Food available for purchase
6:00 pm Meeting
Questions? Call 269-544-0303
or email president@lwvka.org

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

LWVUS Resource for Members

By Paula Manley

Do you know about the LWVUS Clearinghouse? It is a great resource that features League studies in more than 50 subject areas. The Clearinghouse provides scope and focus of a topic, research methodology, sources consulted, information about positions, and consensus questions. The Clearinghouse accepts positions without studies, even as multi-position documents, if they are accompanied by a single submission form. The description section could have "Resulting Position" and the position statement or a link to the position. Complete studies are preferred, and Leagues may add study documents at a later date. Share your studies! Share our strength!

Issue Study & Advocacy

Understanding ALICE

ALICE helps us appreciate the consequences of income disparity.

By Denise Hartsough

ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. ALICE could describe the household of your dental hygienist, bank teller, or barista at the local coffee shop. It describes households whose income is above the Federal Poverty Level, but not enough to reach the basic survival threshold in a sustainable manner.

This term comes from the United Way of Northern New Jersey and researchers at Rutgers University. They wanted people to understand the extent of need beyond the official poverty level, and to realize that we all interact with “ALICES” every day. United Ways in Michigan with help from the Consumers Energy Foundation commissioned a study of ALICE households in Michigan.

The 2014 Michigan ALICE study shows the number and percentage of households in every city, town and township that are below the Federal Poverty Level, or in the ALICE zone—above poverty, but below the income needed to cover the basic cost of living in their county.

In Kalamazoo County, the percentage of households struggling financially--below the ALICE threshold-- ranges from a low of 16% in Texas Township to a high of 56% in the City of Kalamazoo. Areas with over 40% of their households struggling include the Cities of Parchment, Galesburg and Oshtemo, and Kalamazoo Township.

To read the ALICE study for Michigan, see www.uwmich.org/alice. It includes information on data sources and the method for calculating the ALICE threshold. Kalamazoo County’s profile is on page 182.

From a statewide perspective, the Michigan Association of United Ways points out:

- ALICE is men and women, young and old, of all races, closely mirroring our state's basic demographic make-up. More than **77 percent of the ALICE population is white** and **42 percent are within their prime wage-earning years** of 45 to 64 years old.
- Nearly **three-quarters of Michigan's 1,529 municipalities have 30 percent or more households unable to make ends meet**. The average income needed in order to survive in Michigan depends on local conditions and ranges from \$47,000 to \$62,000 annually for a family of four, **more than double the official U.S. poverty rate**.
- Despite the combination of ALICE's wages and some public assistance, ALICE households still face an average **14 percent income gap in order to reach financial stability**.
- More than **60 percent of all jobs in Michigan pay less than \$40,000 a year** and low-income jobs are projected to dominate the state's economy for the foreseeable future.

Understanding ALICE helps us appreciate the dimensions, nature and consequences of income disparity in our communities and in our state.

Issue Study & Advocacy

President's Column—Vote May 5!

The State League has prepared materials to clarify Proposal 15-1.

By Denise Hartsough

Wondering why flyers about potholes and crumbling bridges have recently come to your mailbox? On May 5 you have the opportunity to vote on Proposal 15-1, a proposed constitutional amendment.

The proposed amendment would:

- Eliminate sales/use taxes on gasoline/diesel fuel for vehicles on public roads.
- Increase the portion of the use tax dedicated to the School Aid Fund.
- Expand use of the School Aid Fund to community colleges and career/technical education, and prohibit use for 4-year colleges/universities.
- Give effect to laws, including those that:
 - ◇ Increase sales/use tax to 7%, as authorized by constitutional amendment.
 - ◇ Increase gasoline/diesel fuel tax and adjust annually for inflation, increase vehicle registration fees, and dedicate revenue for roads and other transportation purposes.
 - ◇ Expand competitive bidding and warranties for road projects.
 - ◇ Increase earned income tax credit.

Local Leagues do not take positions on state issues. The League of Women Voters of Michigan has decided to take no position on the ballot proposal. The State League has prepared a variety of materials to help voters understand Proposal 15-1. Available at www.lwvmi.org are:

- exact language of the ballot proposal
- one-page descriptive handout
- brief pro and con statements
- list of organizations supporting or opposing the proposal
- informative PowerPoint slide presentation
- video of a presentation and discussion led by LWVMI President Sue Smith

Please take the time to understand Proposal 15-1, and then be sure to vote.

NOTE: If you live within the boundaries of the Kalamazoo Regional Educational Service Agency (KRESA), you will also find on the ballot a six-year, 1.5 mill property tax that would pay part of the cost of special education borne by local school districts. For information on that proposal, please see www.kresa.org/Page/1751.

Help make democracy work--vote on May 5!


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Issue Study & Advocacy

Public Meeting on Food Safety

Attendees learned about food hazards and the food safety modernization act.

By Ruth Caputo

Dr. Julia Bradsher from the International Food Protection Training Institute in Battle Creek provided an informational meeting on Food Safety for 15 LWVKA members and guests on March 31. Those in attendance learned about common hazards associated with food production and processing, what can be expected from the recently-passed Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), and what voters should know about food safety.



This is the first action taken under LWVKA's recently-approved strategic plan for Issue Study and Advocacy to have at least one action item taken in the areas of Social Policy, Natural Resources, and Government this year.

Constitutional Amendment LWVUS Study Committee Recommended Reading

Useful information is available.

By Paula Manley

The Constitutional Amendment study will explore what constitutes an appropriate and well-crafted constitutional amendment. For local Leagues that want to begin to prepare for the study, the paper published by The Century Foundation in 1999 entitled "Great and Extraordinary Occasions: Developing Guidelines for Constitutional Change" will be help-

ful. This paper, developed by a long list of eminent lawyers and scholars, presents eight guidelines for constitutional amendments. It analyzes historical amendments and contemporary proposals (those discussed during the 104th and 105th Congresses, 1995 - 1999) against these guidelines.

The Arden J. Elsasser Memorial Scholarship Award

By Paula Manley

Each spring the Department of Political Science at Western Michigan University holds an Honors Recognition Luncheon. One of the awards presented is the Arden J. Elsasser Memorial Scholarship Award which is an award for excellence in scholarship and community service. It has been established in memory of **Arden J. Elsasser** by her friends and the League of Women Voters. The award statement reads in part: "A superior student of political science, Arden J. Elsasser gave faithful service to the League and contributed to the Kalamazoo community."

A representative of the LWVKA is always invited to attend. I have represented the LWVKA the past two years and have been impressed when meeting and talking with the student honorees. This year's luncheon was held on April 14. Recipients for 2015 included graduate student **Rob Prose** and undergraduate student **Marcus Richardson**.

LWVKA to Study Addition to Education Position

Please consider joining this important study.

By Paula Manley

In January, LWVKA members reviewed the local League positions, and felt there should be an addition to the local education position regarding safety in our schools for students as well as staff. The next step was for the Board to approve this suggestion to recommend to our membership at the Annual Meeting. At April 22 Annual Meeting, members approved re-opening the education position to study the issue of safety in our schools.

Next a committee will be formed to re-search the issue and provide information to our members on suggestions for the wording of this addition on safety. At the 2016 Annual Meeting, the findings and suggested wording will be presented to members for approval. If you have an interest in working on this issue, please contact

Janet Jones at

janetmjones848@gmail.com.

Voter Outreach & Education

Voter Registration for the KRESA Young Adult Program

Newly registered voters are eager to vote.

By MerriKay Oleen-Burkey and Jenny Hill

Deborah Wild, Principal of the Young Adult Program (YAP), Kalamazoo RESA West, invited the LWVKA to do a voter registration drive this spring. On March 27, we helped 11 students complete voter registration forms. Some were changing their addresses but most were registering to vote for the first time. Were they excited!! Their enthusiasm for chances to vote this spring and summer were palpable. We appreciated the invitation to do a voter reg-

istration event for the YAP, the first in a couple of years. We hope other LWVKA members can experience the enthusiasm of these students about voting when we conduct another event at Kalamazoo RESA in the future.

Look for emailed invitations to participate in voter registration drives this summer from **Jen Richardson!**

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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
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Returned Service Requested

The LWVKA Annual Meeting Recap

By Frances Eckenrode

The LWVKA Annual Meeting was April 21, at the Park Club in downtown Kalamazoo. Guest speakers **Bruce Merchant**, Consultant to the City of Kalamazoo, and **Marc Hatton**, Development Manager, City of Kalamazoo, presented “An Update on the Allied Site Clean-Up.” They described a creative plan, and the challenges associated with returning the waste site to varied public uses.

Members approved minutes of the 2014 Annual Meeting and budgets for the General and Education Funds. **Ken Manley** announced plans for a fund raising campaign to support the LWVKA voter education activities. Members adopted local programs regarding Social Policy, Natural Resources, and Government with no changes. The Education Position was reopened for study to include a section on safety as proposed by **Janet Jones**.

Nominations were approved as presented by Kay Anderson, chair of the Nominating Committee:

- Co-President: (one-year term) **Denise Hartsough**/open position
- Vice President for Organization: (two-year term) **Sabrina Pritchett-Evans**
- Secretary: (two-year term) **Janet Jones**
- Board Members (2-year terms): **Ruth Caputo, Jennie Hill** and **Terry Hluchyj**
- Nominating Committee (1-year term): **Kay Anderson, Chair; Yolanda Mitts** and **Paula Presler**

President **Denise Hartsough** highlighted upcoming opportunities to be involved in LWVKA via the Strategic Plan, which includes Voter Outreach and Education, Candidate Diversity, Issue Study and Advocacy, and Election Administration/Government. Members are encouraged to become involved in these vital League activities. Point persons are needed for Candidate Diversity and Election Administration/Government.