

THE BULLETIN

League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area

June/July 2012

www.lwvka.org

Co-Presidents: Paula Manley and Michele McGowen

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League Phone: 269-544-0303

LWVUS Convention 2012—Wow!

By Paula Manley and Connie Ferguson

Paula Manley and Connie Ferguson joined more than 800 Leaguers who attended the 50th Biennial National Convention June 8-12 in Washington, D.C. The League celebrated accomplishments on campaign finance reform, the environment and election reform, and discussed important public policy issues.

We elected a new Board, including Michigan's **Pat Donath** as Secretary-Treasurer. About half the Board will be new to that role. In her acceptance speech, the League's reelected president **Elisabeth MacNamara** challenged delegates: "The League is not an end in itself. We are a training ground for democracy. That is what we have always been and that is what we will always be, working together to learn new ways to spread the word and encourage new generations to learn and engage."

The new budget includes a \$1 increase in the per-member payment to \$31. This money helps support the Washington office and the activities of the National Board and committees. It also serves as seed money for additional fund-raising activities.

The League's "Power the Vote" initiative for elections work was the theme of the convention. Speakers, including U.S. Attorney General **Eric Holder**, **Trevor Potter**, President of the Campaign Legal Center, Former Congressman **Mickey Edwards** (R-OK) and political reporter **Eleanor Clift**, urged the League to look closely at the steps needed to fix the broken campaign finance system, to press forward using our community-based power on behalf of all voters, and to work for elections that are determined by the voters. Pollster **John Zogby** and The Capitol Steps comedy team added their perspectives on this and other political topics.

Program discussion was lively. We adopted a concurrence with the Washington, D.C. League position on Sentencing Policy: The LWVUS believes alternatives to imprisonment should be explored and utilized, taking into consideration the circumstances and nature of the crime. The LWVUS opposes mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses.

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Calendar

July 17 LWVKA 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

Aug 4 Mothers of Hope - Ultimate Family Reunion

Sat. LWVKA will be there!

Aug 7 Primary Election Day

Tues.
7 am-8 pm

Aug 20 KCASI Meeting: Status of Social Security & Medicare

Mon.
1-3 pm Coover Center
918 Jasper St, Kalamazoo
Info—Area Agency on Aging
373-5147

Aug 21 LWVKA 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

Aug 26 Women's Equity Day

Sun. Watch for event announcement

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

LWVUS Convention 2012 continued

In addition, we decided to review and update our agriculture position, adopted in 1988. We will look at genetic modification, consolidation in the food industry, money in the regulatory process, and the consumer's right to accurate and comprehensive food labeling.

An adopted resolution on campaign finance reform calls upon the LWVUS Board to advocate strongly for all appropriate duly-considered measures which may include, but are not limited to, a constitutional amendment, and which are consistent with our cur-

rent positions on campaign finance reform and individual liberties; allow Congress and the States to set reasonable regulations on campaign contributions and expenditures; and ensure that elections are determined by the voters.

Five Michigan delegates including Connie and Paula visited Capitol Hill after the Convention was adjourned. We met with staff of Senators Levin and Stabenow to thank them for co-sponsoring the DISCLOSE Act and to ask how we might assist in getting it passed.

Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are needed for voter registration at the Mothers of Hope event at Spring Valley Park on Saturday, August 4 between 12 noon and 5:00 p.m. We need five more volunteers for 2-1/2 hour shifts.

Also volunteers are needed for Bronco Bash at WMU on Friday, September 7 between 2:30 and 5:30 p.m. A total of six volunteers are needed for 1-1/2 hour shifts. Contact **Karen Eddy** at kседdy2@yahoo.com, if you think you can help.

Welcome New Members

Michele Momotiuk
6279 Saddle Ridge Ct
Kalamazoo, MI 49009
269-372-5887
michele_momotiuk

Vicki Martin
4340 Bronson Blvd
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
Home: 269-381-9817
Cell: 269-598-5031
vmartin@seniorservices1.org

Robert J Hill
Marleigh Hill
Brenna Hill
Lindsey Hill
2330 Midvale Terrace
Kalamazoo, MI
269-345-9229

Taxes are a bargain
There is no doubt.
We all pay a little
And we all get a lot.

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editing • indexing • layout • design

Diane Worden **Dale Abbott**
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www.wordsdesign.net

Public Education Focus of Annual Meeting

Members learn of challenges facing public education.

By Connie Ferguson & Paula Manley

On April 17, 2012, LWVKA members and friends gathered at the Park Club in Kalamazoo for the Annual Meeting. After social time and dinner, keynote speaker **Ron Fuller** offered an address on “The Future of Public Education in Kalamazoo County.” Fuller, who has served for 38 years in public education, is currently the superintendent of Kalamazoo RESA, the intermediate school district.

Fuller believes that education, like police and fire protection, is a public service that government should sustain and not privatize. He shared a graph that contrasts the 15% rise in inflation since 2005 with the decrease of 1% in per pupil funding since 2005. The gap of 16 percentage points is exacerbated by the 27% increase since 2000 in the contribution for retirement that school districts must pay.

The major cost for school districts is staffing, but not because teachers are making high salaries. A beginning teacher in our geographic area earns \$34,000/year. If the teacher has two children and a spouse at home, the children qualify for free/reduced lunch.

Fuller sees great potential for advancement in public education, given new and varied approaches that include online learning and other technology. He also noted the merits of consolidated services. Kalamazoo RESA, for example, performs “back office” functions for six school districts, handles common bids for buses and fuel, and provides technical services for districts from Indiana to Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.

Fuller is concerned, however, that the State of Michigan is increasingly allowing entities other than public school districts to obtain public per-pupil funding. Charter schools, many of which are for-profit, spend less on teachers and more on administration than do traditional public schools. Yet, according to a Stanford study of sixteen states, charter school students perform the same as or worse than do traditional schools’ students. Online schools that match several hundred students to one teacher offer even more opportunity for profit-making that may come at the expense of sound education. Vouchers that families could use in any public or private school, in Fuller’s view, would result in segregation by income and race.

Following Fuller’s address, the LWVKA conducted its Annual Business Meeting. Members reviewed and accepted minutes, budgets and reports on the local program and bylaws. Members also nominated and elected candidates for positions as officers, directors and Board members.

Co-President **Paula Manley** recognized **Connie Ferguson** for selection as a Ruth S. Shur Fellow by the LWVUS, and several members in attendance for membership of fifty years or more. Manley highlighted LWVKA accomplishments of the previous year and opportunities for participation during the coming year. Opportunities include support for candidate forums, voter guides, voter registration and the student voting project.

Memorial
 Jackie Wylie in memory of Julia Costello

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 Allegan, Michigan 49010
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News From National and State

LWVUS: Big Win for Voting Rights!

The April 17 landmark 9-2 decision by the Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in the case *Gonzalez v. Arizona*, ruling Arizona's Proof-of-Citizenship requirement violates the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), is a huge win for voting rights. The Ninth Circuit dealt a blow to attempts to add requirements to the voting process that are unnecessary and will disenfranchise eligible voters. At stake was Arizona's Proposition 200 which required voters to produce proof of citizenship when registering to vote using the federal mail-in registration form. The League was a plaintiff in the case.

Voter Protection Debate Nationwide & in the Halls of Congress

The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) announced in April that it is discontinuing its Public Safety and Elections Task Force, which is responsible for the promotion of 'model' voter identification and stand-your-ground legislation. This came after many organizations pressured corporations to withdraw their support from ALEC. Also, the League weighed in at the House Committee on the Judiciary April hearing examining the Department of Justice's record on voting rights enforcement. We asked why the Judiciary committee held this hearing rather than taking on the anti-voter laws that were hastily passed in so many states around the country.

Campaign Finance Task Force

A new League *Campaign Finance Task Force* is now hard at work. It includes nine knowledgeable and committed League members, including Michigan's **Pat Donath**. The Task Force will serve as a resource to the LWVUS Board and will provide information and input on campaign finance issues, including short- and long-term strategies for reform. They have just completed two informational papers for League members: "[LWVUS in Action on Campaign Finance](#)," a

brief history of LWVUS action on campaign finance, and a "[Review of Constitutional Amendments Proposed in Response to Citizens' United](#)," which includes a useful table of the proposed amendments and what they address.

Opposition to S. 1100: The League joined other civic organizations in a [letter to Senators Collins and Lieberman](#) voicing solid opposition to the "Keeping Politics Out of Federal Contracting Act." This bill would block public disclosure of campaign contributions and spending by government contractors. Contractor campaign spending would be kept in the shadows, and the public would have no way to find out if contracts are being awarded based on money rather than merit.

2011 LWVUS Annual Report Available Online

The [2011 Annual Report](#) for the League of Women Voters of the U.S. and the League of Women Voters Education Fund is now available. The Report highlights our programmatic activities throughout the calendar year, while the Financial Report covers our fiscal year from July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011. We produce the Report to highlight League activities and accomplishments for the national League's current and prospective funders, friends and partner groups.

LWVMI League Links—Are you receiving this LWVMI monthly summary of activities? If not, get in touch with the [LWVMI office](#) to make sure they have your email address.

New LWVMI Advocacy Guide—

"Taking Action in the League," an advocacy guide for members, is posted on the Members page of [lwvmi.org](#) under "Other Resources."

League Year in Review

LWVKA had an active, successful year.

By Paula Manley

The LWVKA had a busy year from July, 2011 to June, 2012. Our biggest effort is voter registration under the capable leadership of **Karen Eddy**.

Throughout the year a League volunteer was at the local Department of Human Services office each week. We had voter registration tables at community events such as Kalamazoo Pride Festival, Mothers of Hope, Bronco Bash, and Kalamazoo Valley Community College.

August 26 was the annual Women's Equality Day luncheon program at the YWCA. In September we held our first fall meeting at the Ladies' Library Association. **Terry Hluchyi** led us in learning about Civil Discourse using the topic of privatization of government services. Also in September our *Bulletin* was offered via email to members.

During October we were busy with voter service activities under the leadership of **Terry Hluchyi** and **KC Miller**. We held a Kalamazoo City Commission Candidates Forum and posted the two-minute candidate introductions on our website. We responded to a request from citizens of the City of Allegan to hold a candidates forum as they have no League in their community. We offered our *Voter Guide* information both online and in print.

During the year, we conducted two national studies and one state study. **Denise Hart-sough** led the national study on the "Role of Government in Federal Education" with a consensus meeting in November. **Michele McGowen** led the national study on "Privatization of Government Services" and held the consensus meeting in April. The state study on redistricting was completed at the end of May, and **Paula Manley** led us at that consensus meeting.

Our Annual Meeting was April 17 and featured KRESA Superintendent **Ron Fuller** as the keynote speaker. He gave us his view of the future of education in Kalamazoo County.

In early June, the League assisted *MLive/Gazette* and WMUK with the 6th District House of Representatives primary race debate between candidates **Fred Upton** and **Jack Hogendyk**.

The League submitted letters to the editor and a viewpoint article to the *Kalamazoo Gazette* during the year. **Carol Urban** wrote about elections and civility, **Michele McGowen** submitted one about contraception issues. **Connie Ferguson** and **Paula Manley** submitted an article about climate change and clean air, with the assistance of **Jessica Reiser** and LWVMI Natural Resources Chair **Suzanne Dixon**.

Connie Ferguson was selected by the National League as a Ruth Shur Fellow. She will be working with other Shur Fellows on building League leadership and best practices with local and state Leagues around the country.

As members of the Kalamazoo Environmental Council, we assisted with a series of education forums, as well as the annual legislative breakfast. **Ruth Caputo** continues to serve as the Michigan alternate to the Lake Michigan League of Women Voters. We worked with the LWVMI to publicize the Clean Air Promise.

The Tax Attitude Group still meets faithfully each month. They are meeting with groups to explore ways to get the message out about the benefits we citizens receive from our tax dollars.

We could not accomplish all of the above without the support and hard work of many League volunteers. Thank you to all who helped to make this another successful League year!

Find us on Facebook!

If you have a Facebook page, be sure to "like" the [League of Women Voters/Kalamazoo Area](#). It's a simple way to stay connected between *Bulletin* issues.

New Members Bio

By Sabrina Pritchett-Evans

Stuart Eddy - Stu is a retired structural engineer. He became familiar with the League of Women Voters through his wife, Karen Eddy. He enjoys working with the Red Cross and helping Karen with voter registration. In his recreational time, he enjoys walking, biking, and woodworking.

Ashlyn Kuersten - Ashlyn was a member of the League of Women Voters for about ten years before taking a leave for five years. Wel-

come back! She is a professor of Political Science at Western Michigan University. She volunteers with the ACLU and has worked with League member Sue Nelmes on ACLU issues. As a political science professor, she is passionate about almost anything related to government, social policy and politics. She has helped coordinate voter registration on the WMU campus as well as other Michigan college campuses. She loves riding horses and her favorite place to visit is her home state of Alaska.

Thank You Volunteers for Voter Registration

A huge thanks to **Margo Light, Martha Cohen, Sara Wick, Janet Jones and Louise Robeck** for representing the LWV at the GLBT Pride event on Saturday, June 9. In the heat of the day we registered 21 (mostly young) future voters, and assisted many others with questions. Thanks to laptops and WiFi connection, we also clarified people's voting status. It was a fun afternoon.

REMEMBER—EVEN IF YOU HAVEN'T THE TIME FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION, YOUR MEMBERSHIP ALONE WILL STRENGTHEN OUR VOICE.

- Yes! I want to Take Back the System. Please sign me up!
- I'm enclosing a check for \$60 for individual membership.
- I'm enclosing a check for \$30 for student membership.
- I'm enclosing a check for \$90 for household membership.

NAME OF SECOND HOUSEHOLD MEMBER _____

- In addition to my membership, I'd like to make a contribution of \$_____
- Please send me more information on the League of Women Voters.
- I can't join right now, but I'm enclosing \$_____ to support League activities.

Because we lobby at the local, state and national levels, membership dues and other contributions to the League of Women Voters are not tax-deductible.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

PHONE HOME _____



PHONE OFFICE _____

Make check payable and mail to:
 The League of Women Voters
 Paula Aldridge, Treasurer
 8035 Glenwynd Drive
 Kalamazoo, MI 49009

Project Connect

By Karen Eddy

In mid May, League volunteers were **Louise Robeck, Suzanne Cook, Martha Cohen** and **Karen Eddy** participated in voter registration at Project Connect. Between 12:00 and 4:00 p.m, League volunteers received 16 voter registration applications, and sent three more applications

home for family members. Volunteers also conducted 9 or 10 computer searches to check on voter registration status for participants. League volunteers encouraged those requesting a voter registration check to learn the process. Having computer access on site was very helpful.

LWVMI Redistricting Study

By Paula Manley

Five local League members met on the evening of May 23 for the Consensus Meeting on Redistricting. The results of our consensus were submitted to LWVMI.

Once the LWVMI Board reviews the local Leagues submissions, they will develop a position statement on redistricting in the State of Michigan. This will allow us to take action in the event of any proposed changes in the process in the future.

Advertise in the *Bulletin!*

Interested in reaching a discerning local audience with your advertising message? For only \$50, your business card-sized announcement will appear in the *Bulletin* for at least 6 times in one year. The *Bulletin* reaches approximately 150 highly engaged, community-oriented League members in the Kalamazoo area. For more information please contact **Cheryl Lyon-Jenness** at 269-344-6523 or cheryl.lyon-jenness@wmich.edu.

Got Any News?

LWVKA Board members and active committee members do their best to keep current on local government developments. Help is always appreciated. If you are aware of activities that may be of interest to other League members or if there are developments that you feel the League should be monitoring, let us know. Share that information with the League by calling 544-0303 or emailing president@lwvka.org.

"The League of Women Voters is where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement. Join us in making democracy work!"



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
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Voter Service Update

**LWVKA
gears up
for fall
elections.**

By KC Miller

LWVKA assisted the *Kalamazoo Gazette* and WMUK with a Candidate Forum for the 6th District Congressional Representative primary race on June 10 at WMU. Two hundred people attended the forum with **Jack Hoogendyk** and **Fred Upton**. There may be another 6th Congressional District forum prior to the November general election.

The Kalamazoo County Advocates for Senior Issues (KCASI) and LWVKA are planning to partner for forums this fall. An educational

offering about the Michigan Supreme Court Justice election is one possibility.

The *Voter Guide* for the primary will be online July 2, 2012 and in print no later than July 8, 2012. The contested races are US Senate, US House of Representatives, Kalamazoo County Sheriff, and four County Commission districts. This election will reflect the redistricting for the state and counties. Check the Kalamazoo County web site for the district map or the [Kalamazoo County Candidate Instructional Manual](#).

**Primary Election *Voter Guide* on lwvka.org available on 7/3/12
Primary Election *Voter Guide* print edition available on 7/8/12**