

THE BULLETIN

League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area

June/July 2013

www.lwvka.org

Vol. 58 No. 9

Co-Presidents: Paula Manley and Michele McGowen

League Phone: 269-544-0303

Year in Review

By Paula Manley

The LWVKA had another busy year. As 2012 was an election year, our main focus was on voter registration and voter education. Under the capable leadership of **Karen Eddy**, 20 LWVKA volunteers assisted 250 people in filling out voter registration applications at 17 sites in Kalamazoo County. Each week throughout the year a League volunteer also answered voter questions and assisted in registration at the local Department of Human Services office. We participated in National Voter Registration Day with voter registration at Borgess Hospital on September 25 and submitted a letter to the *Kalamazoo Gazette* highlighting the importance of National Voter Registration Day.

We began hosting candidate forums in July, 2012 with a Texas Township Candidate Forum arranged by **Barbara Huber** and **KC Miller**. After the primary election in August, KC Miller began arranging for candidate events. A forum was held for Comstock Township candidates in September. Kalamazoo County Commissioners were videotaped in October, and in late October LWVKA and the Bar Association co-sponsored a forum for the prosecuting attorney and county sheriff candidates.

LWVKA members gave a number of presentations on the ballot issues to community and school groups. We also participated in media interviews on WIDR and MLive Chat.

Paula Aldridge and **Georgiann McWilliams** chaired the High School Voter Education project this past fall. They and 14 League volunteers gave voter information to junior and senior high school students in the two Kalamazoo Public high schools as well as Phoenix Alternative School and Young Adult program through KRESA. Forty students who were eligible to vote were able to register. Many students were trained to be poll workers on Election Day. The Kalamazoo City Clerk's office partnered with the League and provided 50 voting machines for 750 students to use when they voted in a mock election.

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Calendar

June 15 Voter Registration at Kalamazoo Pride

Sat. Arcadia Creek Festival Place
1-8 pm Kalamazoo

June 18 LWVKA Board Meeting

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

July 23 LWVKA Board Meeting

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

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

In Memoriam

Mary Lazaraton came to LWVKA in 2008 upon retirement and after long service in Illinois leagues. She found us through our website and took great delight in appreciating and participating in well-organized community projects. May died on April 22, 2013. Her three adult children arranged a lovely memorial service for her at the Fountains of Bronson Place. The positivity that she generously shared with others unfailingly lifted everyone's spirits.

Year in Review continued

Once again **Terry Hluchyj** took charge of preparing the *Voter Guide* for the fall election. League volunteers delivered 28,000 *Guides* to 200 sites throughout the county. Terry also facilitated our participation in the national Vote 411.Org project so that our local candidate information could be accessed on line. Vote 411.Org information was seen on four billboards prior to the election thanks to Terry and partnership with Adams Advertising and her employer Borgess Hospital.

In August, we participated with the YWCA in the annual Women's Equality Day. During September we sponsored the showing of the film *Patriocracy*. We co-sponsored a Community Forum on Transportation Funding in Michigan. Our national president **Elisabeth McNamara** also came to Kalamazoo in late September as part of her national tour to highlight voter suppression concerns. We hosted a reception in her honor at the Park Club.

During January, we held our annual position review meeting to review state and local League positions. In February, over 40 members and guests attended our Founders Day Brunch. Human Trafficking was the topic of our March meeting which we co-sponsored with the Kalamazoo Anti-Human Trafficking coalition.

During April we had our Annual Meeting at the Fetzer Center. **Lori Mercedes** from the Hispanic American Council spoke on "Michigan Blueberries for a Latino Empanada" explaining the effects of immigration on local families.

In May eight LWVKA members were delegates to the State Convention in Lansing. We were proud that several local League members were honored. (See related articles in this *Bulletin*.) LWVKA also was a sponsor of the annual YWCA Women of Achievement Dinner in late May.

As a member of the Kalamazoo Environmental Council, we assisted with the annual legislative breakfast. **Ruth Caputo** is the Michigan alternate to the Lake Michigan League of Women Voters and keeps us informed on issues involving the Great Lakes.

Connie Ferguson and **Kay Perry** have given presentations about the League to visiting delegations from various countries including Lebanon and Russia through Colleagues International this past year.

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!



Co-Presidents Paula Manley and Michele McGowen during State Convention Roll Call talking about our highly successful High School Voter Education & Mock Election Project.

Annual Meeting

By Amy Sue Manley

The Kalamazoo League of Women Voters Annual Meeting was held on Monday, April 29, 2013 at the Fetzer Center on the WMU campus. Sixty-one members and guests attended. Our guest speaker, **Lori Mercedes** of the Hispanic American Council, spoke on “Michigan Blueberries for a Latino Empanada.” She described experiences of migrant workers in this area.

LWVKA members adopted the 2013-2014 budget and retained the local programs on

Social Policy, Natural Resources, and Government. Members also elected the following slate of officers: Co-Presidents - **Paula Manley** and **Michele McGowen**; Vice President for Organization - **Sabrina Pritchett-Evans**; Secretary - **Denise Hartsough**; Treasurer - **Dawn Haley** and Board Members - **KC Miller**, **Janet Jones**, **Ruth Caputo**, and **Terry Hluchyj**. One remaining Board Position will be appointed by the Board. Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to make this Annual Meeting a success!

New Member—Welcome!

By Frances Eckenrode

Please welcome new member **Amy Smendik** to LWVKA. Amy grew up in the Hickory Corners area and now lives in Middleville with her husband and three sons. Amy is a graduate of Ferris State University and practices pharmacy at Borgess Pipp Hospital in a long term acute care setting.

She was influenced to join the League by Borgess colleague **Ken Manley**. Amy is

very active in her professional life. She is a board member on the Michigan Pharmacist Association Executive Board and the Consultant Pharmacist Society of Michigan Executive Board. She is a past president of the Gun Lake Area Chapter of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs and a member of the Gun Lake area Toastmasters Club. In addition to family, work, and professional commitments, Amy also enjoys gardening.

Welcome New Member

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Certified Public Accountants

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News From National and State

LWVUS

Voices of the League

Our blog, [Voices of the League](#), covers a variety of topics from our work at all levels of the League, emphasizing accomplishments in local communities across the country on our priority issues, marking important national developments, highlighting the work being done to grow and strengthen the League, and so much more. Recent topics include early voting, campaign finance reform, honoring Superstorm Sandy's voting heroes, immigration, election participation, 20th anniversary of the National Voter Registration Act, registering graduates to vote, and redistricting.

President Obama Fails to Mention Climate Change in New Jersey Visit

The League expressed disappointment and concern that **President Obama** failed to mention climate change as one of the causes of extreme weather. The President went to hurricane-ravaged New Jersey in late May to see the rebuilding and economic recovery still taking place after Superstorm Sandy struck last November.

League asks U.S. Senators to Maintain Funding for the EPA

The League joined other environmental organizations in a letter sent to U.S. Senators encouraging them to support the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) funding at levels needed for the agency to carry out its core missions.

League Offers Comments to EPA Science Advisory Board

On May 7, 2013 the [League offered comments](#) to the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Science Advisory Board on the study of the potential impacts of hydraulic fracturing on drinking water resources. The comments were delivered on behalf of LWVUS and 18 different state Leagues.

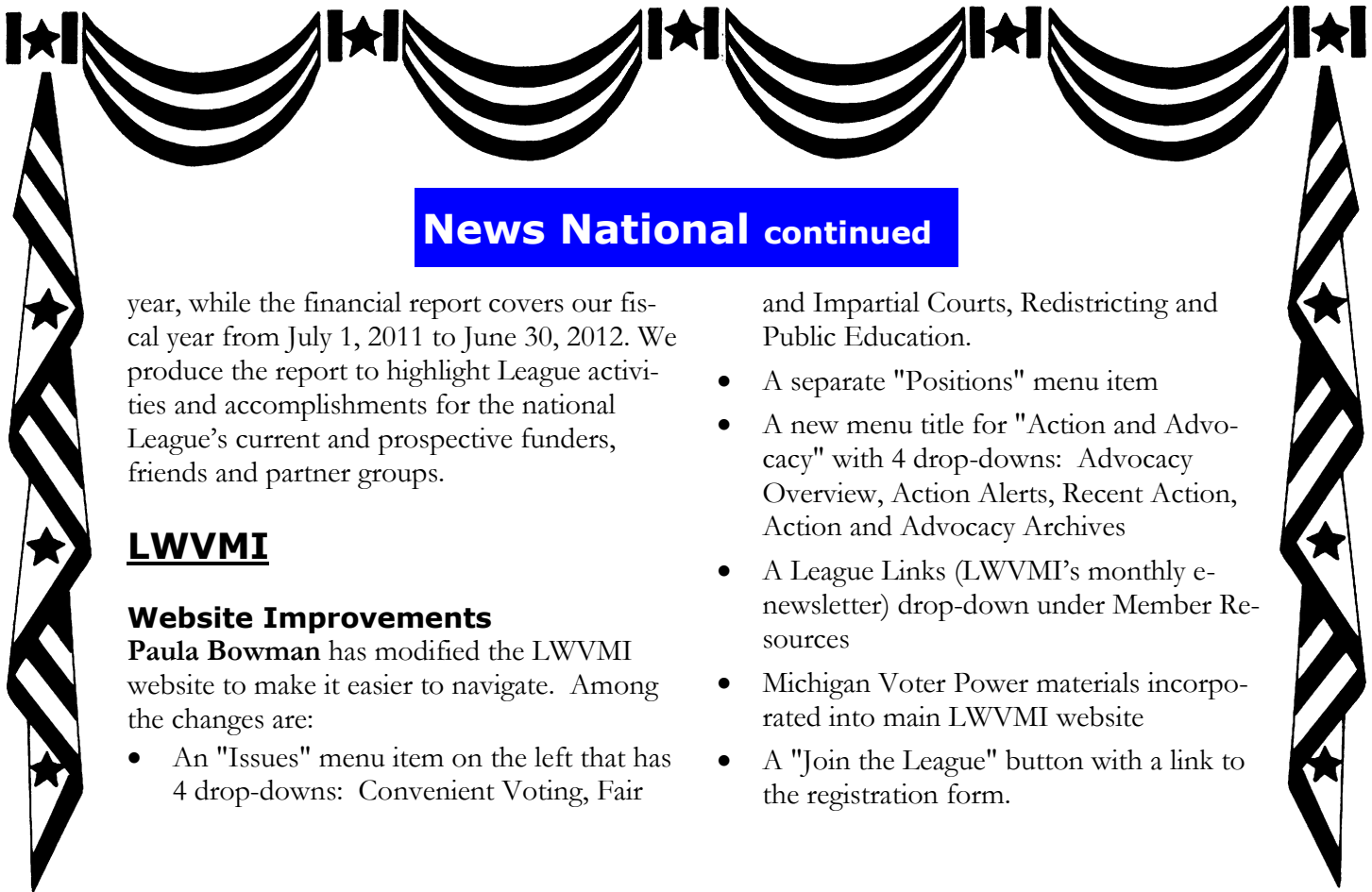
League Watching IRS Situation Closely

There has been extensive coverage of an alleged 'scandal' at the IRS involving determinations of tax-exempt status for conservative groups. As the facts continue to emerge, the LWVUS is resisting the temptation to offer an opinion or propose a solution. The situation at the IRS concerning tax exemptions for groups engaging in electioneering has serious implications both for the League as a 501c4 organization and for the ongoing battle to control campaign spending. It remains to be seen whether the swift condemnation of IRS workers by politicians on both sides of the aisle will render the IRS helpless to enforce its legitimate rules or to promulgate rules that more clearly define what it means to be a social welfare organization. We are watching the situation closely. In the best tradition of the League, when we have the facts, we will be in the best position to act, if action is required.

2012 Annual Report Available Online

The 2012 Annual Report for the League of Women Voters of the U.S. and the [League of Women Voters Education Fund](#) is now available online. The report highlights our programmatic activities throughout the calendar

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News National continued

year, while the financial report covers our fiscal year from July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012. We produce the report to highlight League activities and accomplishments for the national League's current and prospective funders, friends and partner groups.

LWVMI

Website Improvements

Paula Bowman has modified the LWVMI website to make it easier to navigate. Among the changes are:

- An "Issues" menu item on the left that has 4 drop-downs: Convenient Voting, Fair

and Impartial Courts, Redistricting and Public Education.

- A separate "Positions" menu item
- A new menu title for "Action and Advocacy" with 4 drop-downs: Advocacy Overview, Action Alerts, Recent Action, Action and Advocacy Archives
- A League Links (LWVMI's monthly e-newsletter) drop-down under Member Resources
- Michigan Voter Power materials incorporated into main LWVMI website
- A "Join the League" button with a link to the registration form.

Belle Brotherton Award

Mary Brown has demonstrated that becoming involved in the democratic process can make a difference.

By Paula Manley

Mary Brown received the Belle Brotherton Award at the LWVMI State Convention. The Belle Brotherton Award honors an individual whose outstanding leadership and significant accomplishments have benefited the citizens of Michigan, inspired others, and fostered greater public participation in the democratic process.

Mary Brown's life has exemplified all of these attributes. She served on the LWVKA Board for many years and served as president from 1969-73. During this period, LWVKA was one of the organizations leading the effort to desegregate the Kalamazoo Public Schools. On July 31, 1972, representing LWVKA, Mary testified be-

fore the US House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor in opposition to a bill that would have limited busing of public school students for racial integration. She stated that this legislation could harm Kalamazoo's school integration efforts. Under Mary's leadership, the League was an *amicus curiae* in a successful suit supporting school desegregation in Kalamazoo. The case was heard by the Supreme Court in 1973, with Mary delivering the brief to Washington.

Mary also served on the LWVMI Board, as Natural Resources Director from 1973-75. She has continued to be involved in League, serving as a mentor and alerting us to upcoming issues.

Belle Brotherton Award continued

Following her high-profile work with the League, Mary ran for public office and represented the 46th District, later the 60th District, in the Michigan House of Representatives from 1977-1994. Her expertise on a broad range of issues, including gender equity, insurance, social justice, and air quality, earned the respect of her colleagues.

After she left the Legislature, Mary became active in several organizations with missions consistent with that of the League. She worked closely with Planned Parenthood Advocates of Michigan, serving as their board chair and organizing fund-raising efforts. She also has been involved with environmental organizations, particularly the Michigan Environmental Council (MEC), serving on their board for a number of years. In 2007, MEC presented Mary with the Helen & William Milliken Distinguished Service Award, which “recognizes individuals who show outstanding leadership, enduring commitment and extraordinary public service in protecting natural resources at the local, state and national levels.” She also served on the Michigan Natural Resources Commission, completing her term in December 2011.

Mary’s predecessor in the Michigan House had established a District Service Office in downtown Kalamazoo, a non-partisan service to assist residents in a variety of ways. It was funded through donations and volunteer efforts. Mary maintained this office during her term and has since assisted with fund-raising and in other ways. This office has greatly increased the access of local citizens to their government.

Recognizing a need for environmentalists, economic development people, and government officials to talk together about redevelopment of brownfield areas, Mary was instrumental in organizing the Coalition for Urban Redevelopment in the Kalamazoo area. As a consequence, Kalamazoo was well positioned to take advantage of fund-



Mary Brown receiving her award.

ing for brownfield redevelopment when it became available. She also was a co-founder of the Kalamazoo Environmental Council, a coalition of environmental organizations active in the Kalamazoo County area.

Mary has inspired others, both within League and elsewhere, by example and by mentoring women and men of all ages. Following her time in the Legislature, she worked with the Girl Scouts, leading troops in a low-income neighborhood. In addition to working directly with the girls, she worked with their families and friends, with the goal of helping young women to succeed.

In 2007, Mary was inducted into the Michigan Women’s Hall of Fame. Her areas of achievement were listed as Environment, Politics, and Women’s Rights. She received the Lifetime Women of Achievement award from the YWCA in Kalamazoo in 1993.

Through her work in the League, in political office and as a volunteer with many organizations, Mary has demonstrated that becoming involved in the democratic process can make a difference. She has helped people speak up about issues and learn the importance of being prepared, of persistence, and of civility.

LWVKA Belle Ringer Awards

LWVKA members honored for their contributions.

By Paula Manley

This year at the LWVMI State Convention, each local League was invited to select members for recognition in Advocacy, Voter Service and Member Recruitment & Engagement to acknowledge their support of critical League Priorities. The following LWVKA members were honored at the Convention:

ADVOCACY

Name of League Member: **Kay Perry**

Kay Perry is a constant advocate for those underserved by government. She regularly brings concerns to the attention of the League, raises awareness, and takes action. At the local level, Kay has been a strong activist for the Tax Action Group (TAG), increasing citizen awareness of the benefits that come from paying taxes. She conceived and championed a different way for the State of Michigan to measure the prosperity for the state and its citizens, and this proposal has been sent to the State League. Kay organized and led the preparation and publication of the 2009-10 "Report Card: Citizen Access to Government in Michigan". Her advocacy is also demonstrated in her ongoing involvement in the Sentencing Project promoting sentencing reforms and alternatives to incarceration. Kay heads the Michigan chapter of CURE (Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants.)

VOTER SERVICE

Name of League Member: **Karen Eddy**

Karen Eddy has a passion for voter registration and ensuring that people who may be marginalized by society have access to registration and to accurate information about the voting process. For example, Karen coordinates weekly voter registration efforts at the Department of Human Services (DHS) office in Kalamazoo. She ensures the League is present to register vot-

ers and answer questions at Project Connect, a twice yearly community event for low income and homeless families, and the Mothers of Hope annual summer event that supports women struggling with addiction. Last year through Karen's leadership, 20 LWVKA volunteers assisted 250 people at 17 sites to fill out voter registration applications.

MEMBER RECRUITMENT & ENGAGEMENT

Name of League Member: **Diane Worden**

Diane Worden recruits new members through her practice of "relentless wooing." Diane is quick to invite non-League members and new League members to events or to work with her on projects she has volunteered to do for the League. In this way, people get connected to projects they personally are passionate about and Diane uses those opportunities to connect people to the work of the League. Two current LWVKA Board members are serving in leadership positions because Diane has "wooded" and mentored them in recent years.



Michele McGowen and Denise Hartsough tour the Capitol.

Powering Our Vote: 2013 LWMI State Convention

State Convention provides delegates with a rich experience.

By Paula Manley

The LWVMI State Convention was held in Lansing on May 17-19. Eight LWVKA members (**Paula Aldridge, Connie Ferguson, Denise Hartsough, Georgiann McWilliams, Michele McGowen, Ken Manley, Paula Manley and Jessica Reiser**) attended.

On Friday there were two pre-convention workshops: Taking Action in the League: Issues Briefing at the Capitol and Membership and Leadership Development. The Issues Briefing workshop featured presentations by experts on issues important to League positions and advocacy. Presenters included **Brett Williams** on the Affordable Care Act; **Peter Rudell** on Governor Snyder's education agenda; **Kathleen Straus** on the State Board of Education; and **James Clift** on fracking. LWVMI Vice President for Advocacy **Judy Karandjeff** hosted the session and provided a tour of the State Capitol.

Kelly McFarland, LWVUS Director of Membership/Field Support, presented the Membership workshop and focused on the Membership and Leadership Development program (MLD) that offers training, tools, and coaches to help local Leagues use their current activities to attract members, gain publicity, and develop leaders. Michigan is restarting the MLD and plans to make this a major focus. Leagues like its flexible approach, because it can be adapted for each League and its community. Participants had an opportunity to interact using some of the tools and received manuals containing useful suggestions.

Friday afternoon the Lansing League hosted a reception at the Women's Historical Center and Hall of Fame. That evening we had the opportunity to dine with members from other Leagues at various restaurants. The first plenary session began on Friday evening.

Saturday morning delegates could breakfast with other League members who had similar positions or interests. The plenary session reconvened for the morning. **Phil Powers** of the Center for Michigan, was the keynote speaker at the luncheon, and presented a talk entitled "The Public's Agenda for Public Education."

Workshops were offered in the afternoon included: Power the Vote: Candidate Forums, Growing Your League, Fundraising 101, Power Up Your Voice—Effective LWV Communication, Program and Advocacy, and Power the Vote: *Voter Guides*. Our delegates split up and covered all the workshops. We learned best practices for holding candidate forums; ways to develop effective membership recruitment; basic approaches to raising money; effective use of media—both electronic and print; basic LWVMI and LWVUS positions and how to use them to advocate at the local, state and national level; and guidelines for producing online and print voter guides using Vote411. Our own **Terry Hluchyj** was a co-presenter for the *Voter Guide* workshop.

At the Saturday evening banquet, **Lynn Rivers**, former Michigan State Representative, discussed her concerns about how citizens usually have not read or understand the US Constitution, and expressed her concern about the impact of that lack of knowledge. LWVKA delegates were proud that two of our - **Mary Brown** and **Terry Hluchyj** received special awards. (See related articles).

At the Sunday morning breakfast, **Rich Robinson**, executive director of the non-partisan Michigan Campaign Finance Network, spoke about the "Dark Money in Politics." We finished the morning with the last part of the plenary session during which we approved the state budget and elected officers and board members. Connie Ferguson served as Nominating Chair for the LWVMI State Board. LWVKA member Paula Aldridge was elected Treasurer.

Also during the Convention, Georgiann McWilliams, Jessica Reiser and Paula Aldridge took care of selling LWVKA wares. Our post-cards and note cards were ever popular as were the "Vote" yard signs.

The next LWVMI State Convention will convene in 2015. If you would like an opportunity to learn more about the League and meet interesting Leaguers from around the state, consider being a delegate in 2015.

Helen Milliken Leadership in Civic Empowerment Award

Terry's work with the Voter Guide exemplifies a commitment to informing Citizens.

Terry Hluchyj was the recipient of the 2013 Helen Milliken Leadership in Civic Empowerment Award at the LWVMI State Convention. The award honors individuals who have led the way in providing citizens with information and who encourage informed voters through League works at the state and/or local level.

Terry has been the *Voter Guide* editor for a number of years. Her attention to detail, her ability to work well with candidates, and her skill in laying out content has made the *Voter Guide* a trusted asset for both primary and general elections.

Terry often includes other League members as she asks for input on thoughtful candidate questions. She has perfected the distribution system so that 2012 Leaguers delivered 28,000 *Guides* as soon as they were available throughout Kalamazoo County. Citizens look for the *Voters Guide* and the local League began receiving phone calls several weeks prior to distribution from those wishing to obtain a copy.

Terry has also overseen the addition of the *Voter Guide* information on our local website in the past several years. When we were offered the Vote 411 format, Terry learned to utilize that tool in order to provide additional access to voter information.

Terry keeps her eye on upcoming local issues which may be on the ballot so that the LWVKA can consider whether to take a position or how to best inform voters about issues.

Terry has assisted at many candidate forums, helping craft the questions and vetting the audience questions. Terry arranged



Terry Hluchyj receiving her Helen Milliken Leadership in Civic Empowerment Award.

for voter registration at her workplace, Borgess Hospital, on National Voter Registration Day last fall. Borgess Hospital also made arrangements with Adams Advertising Company to place information about Vote 411 with the LWVKA name and logo on four billboards in the Kalamazoo area. Thus, thousands of citizens had the opportunity over several weeks prior to the election to view the advertising about Vote 411. Org. Terry's work with the *Voter Guide*, candidate forums, National Voter Registration project, and the billboards demonstrate her commitment to informing citizens and engaging them in the democratic process.



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Returned Service

Representative McCann Holds Press Conference

**McCann
promotes
legislation
on
redistricting.**

By Jessica Reiser

On June 6, at the District Service Office in Kalamazoo, Representative **Sean McCann** held a press conference to announce the bill he was introducing to the legislature to change the way Michigan does redistricting. **Barb Byrum**, former state representative and current Ingham County Clerk, spoke in favor of the bill and explained that the timing is right to get the bill passed. **Jessica Reiser**, LWVKA member, attended the meeting where the following statement from LWVMI was distributed to the media.

“The League of Women Voters of Michigan strongly supports the need for changes in the redistricting process. We applaud the introduction of legislation by Representative Sean McCann to address the serious problems with the current flawed process.

The League of Women Voters of Michigan supports the formation of an independent redistricting commission in lieu of the legislature as the primary redistricting body. Such a commission should afford equal representation to the major parties and provide for independent and diverse representation. The commission should be established through legislation and/or a constitutional amendment. Population should be the primary criteria, not preferential treatment for any party and there should be no protection for incumbents.

We look forward to working with Representative McCann, the Legislature and others to educate the public about the need for changing this process and to look at alternatives to the current system.”