The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization meaning that it never endorses or opposes candidates or political parties.

LWV influences public policy through education and advocacy.

We encourage informed and active participation in government.

League Links

We envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge and the confidence to participate.

September 2019

LWVMi President’s Message

The LWV has two missions: advocacy and education.

Education  We are in the midst of sharing with LWVMI local Leagues grant funds received from LWVUS Education Foundation to educate members and our communities about the implementation of the 2020 Census, the Citizens’ Redistricting Commission (Proposal 2) and Voting Rights (Proposal 3).

Almost all of our local Leagues are planning town hall meetings to share the presentations and materials made available. The town hall schedules range from September until March 2020. We ask each member to contact your local League President to find out what you can do to help reach a wide audience with the information on implementing the ballot proposals overwhelmingly supported by Michigan voters last November and to emphasize the importance of a total count.
Advocacy League members are also very interested in issues and would like to know how best to advocate as a League member. Sue Smith, LWVMI Vice President of Advocacy, has carefully outlined in the following article the process for you to take action. Also, we have included the issues the LWVMI board has prioritized to support based on available resources. Yes, we all have a passion for a number of issues we would like to see given attention, but for effectiveness and with resources available, action needs prioritization. The articles in this issue reflect top concerns at this point.

The primary direction of the LWVMI board is the Democracy Agenda (Voting Rights, Redistricting, Campaign Finance Reform and Fair Courts) which was adopted at the LWVUS convention in 2018 and the LWVMI convention in 2019. If your passion is not listed, we encourage you to contact your local League President to become part of the Advocacy Network that is being organized.

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A new feature beginning with this issue of the state newsletter is to feature events, especially centennial related events, held by local Leagues. Please send your selections and include pictures for further issues to: Vice President of Membership, Paula Manley at pjmanley@hotmail.com

Setting Advocacy Priorities: "The Democracy Agenda"

"Empowering Voters, Defending Democracy" is our League Mission. In order to carry out that mission, the "Democracy Agenda" was adopted as a focus for League activities by delegates to the 2016 National LWV Convention. It was reaffirmed at the 2018 National Convention. The "Democracy Agenda" includes four issues:

- Voting Rights
- Redistricting
- Campaign Finance Reform
- Fair Courts

Advocacy Priorities

These four issues form the basis for setting advocacy priorities at both the national and state League level. In Michigan, about 5,000 bills are introduced into the Legislature during the two year legislative session. The state League has limited resources so the state Board has to establish priorities for our advocacy efforts. Of course, the first requirement is that there is a state or national League position that can be applied to the bill. After that, the Board considers how the bill fits into our Advocacy Priorities. At the beginning of each legislative session, the state Board determines its advocacy priorities. The Democracy Agenda issues are our first priority. Additional priorities are established in response to member interest. League members are encouraged to submit priority suggestions to the Board prior to the start of each new legislative session.
During the 2018 Lame Duck Session, the Legislature passed and the Governor signed, what is now PA 608. It adds new restrictions to the process of gathering petition signatures, making it more difficult for citizens to put a ballot proposal on the Michigan ballot.

Those new restrictions include a geographic signature cap, new requirements targeting paid circulators, and penalties for signature signers.

- The new geographic signature cap limits the number of valid signatures that can be collected from each Congressional District to 15% of the total number of valid signatures required.
- On each petition, the circulator must indicate whether he/she is paid or a volunteer. Paid circulators must file an affidavit with the Secretary of State.
- The signatures of all signers on a given petition will be nullified if the circulator makes an error in filling out the affidavit.

Also, it's anticipated that the cost of conducting a petition drive would increase significantly, a further deterrent to getting a proposal on the ballot.

**Ruling by Attorney General Dana Nessel**

At the request of Secretary of State Benson, Attorney General Nessel issued an opinion re PA 608. Nessel ruled that two sections of the legislation are unconstitutional: the 15% geographic cap and the requirement that paid circulators file an affidavit. The opinion governs actions by the Secretary of State until a court decides otherwise.

**LWVMI et al. v. Benson**

On May 16, 2019, the LWVMI Board voted to join the lawsuit as a lead plaintiff. The lawsuit claims PA 608 is unconstitutional under the Michigan Constitution. Both Democrats and Republicans testified against PA 608 during Lame Duck.

The lawsuit was filed in the Michigan Court of Claims on May 28, 2019. Judge Cynthia Stephens heard oral arguments on September 16, 2019. We will try to get a decision as soon as possible because those who want to put a ballot proposal on the 2020 ballot need to know what the rules will be. Whoever loses will appeal to the Michigan Court of Appeals and from there to the Michigan Supreme Court. We probably won't get a decision until January 2020.

-- Sue Smith, VP Advocacy

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*How and where can I advocate on gun violence or PFAS or reproductive rights or*
campaign finance reform or .......? Many League members have asked that question this past year.

Local League members may advocate on:

Local issues by contacting their local elected officials, such as their Mayor, Township Supervisor, or County Commissioner, if:

1. They have the permission of their local League Board and
2. There is an appropriate local, state, or national position that can be applied to the issue.

State Legislation or Regulations by contacting their state Representative or Senator, if:

1. LWVMI has asked them to do so in an Action Alert or
2. They have received permission to do so from the state League Board. To get permission, submit a completed Support/Oppose form (available on the state League website, lwvmi.org, under “Member Resources: Other Resources”). The Support/Form will be considered by the LWVMI Advocacy Committee who will forward it to the state Board with their recommendation. The state Board must approve all League advocacy efforts that involve state Representatives or Senators, or other state government officials.

Federal Legislation or Regulations by contacting their U.S. Representative or Senator, if

1. LWVUS has asked them to do so in an Action Alert or
2. They have received permission to do so from LWVMI and LWVUS. To get permission, contact LWVMI Vice President for Advocacy, Sue Smith, susanprakkensmith@comcast.net.

State Board

How does the state Board decide what action to take on Advocacy?

The LWVMI Board receives recommendations from its Advocacy Committee on what action to take on specific proposed bills. The state Board considers several questions:

1. Is there a state or national League position that could be applied to this bill?
2. Does the bill fall within our state Advocacy Priorities as established by the state Board?

Those priorities include the League’s Democracy Agenda (Voting Rights, Redistricting, Campaign Finance Reform, and Fair Courts) as well as other priorities determined by the state Board.

Advocacy Network

LWVMI is in the process of forming an Advocacy Network which will provide an opportunity for local Leagues to share their advocacy interests and information with other interested local Leagues. If you are interested in participating in the Advocacy Network, please contact your local League President.

Exciting Times in Voter Services
There are two major Voter Services initiatives this fall which every Local League and unit may participate in (or have already committed to):

- First, Michigan's New Voting Rights Town Halls, part of the Making Democracy Work grants.
- Second is the Clerk Engagement Project with the ACLU - Michigan.

Both initiatives aim to assist our communities with the implementation of Proposal 3 of 2018. And both will help prepare our communities for what we expect to be a huge voter turnout in 2020.

**Clerk Engagement Project**

In response to the major wonderful changes being implemented by the passage of Proposal 3 (and the legislature's online voter registration to be implemented before the end of the year), the Clerk Engagement Project, spearheaded by the ACLU Michigan is assisting many clerks in the 1,600 plus municipal clerk offices across the State of Michigan. Despite the mandates for weekend hours before elections and other changes, many clerk offices are experiencing financial and staff cuts.

Last spring, Sharon Dolente and the Michigan ACLU spearheaded the Clerk Engagement Project along with the LWV-MI, VNP, Campus Vote, NextGen-America, NAACP and may be adding additional groups. Resource materials can be found on the Michigan ACLU website [https://www.aclumich.org/en/know-your-rights/implementing-proposal-3-your-clerk](https://www.aclumich.org/en/know-your-rights/implementing-proposal-3-your-clerk). The 3 webinars on this website are also part of the training: [https://www.aclumich.org/en/know-your-rights/voting](https://www.aclumich.org/en/know-your-rights/voting). There is also some coordination with the DOS (Department of State).

Priority municipalities have been identified by the ACLU, and assignments are being worked out. In some cases, several organizations are working together to reach out to their clerks. Several local Leagues have already "signed up" (looks like Ann Arbor, Leelanau, Kalamazoo, Northwest Wayne, Dearborn/DH, and Holland).

The ACLU named a new primary contact for this project, Josh Ronnebaum, and he is organizing "Clerk Engagement Coaching Calls" for the local contacts for each municipality involved. The first call will be held Thursday, September 26 at 7:30 PM, and will continue from there on a bi-weekly basis. There are reporting sheets as well. If your League wants to be involved (and I hope you will), please contact Christina Schlitt at BCSchlitt@aol.com or me at betsy.cushman@gmail.com.

**Making Democracy Work - Voting Rights Section**

Michigan's New Voting Rights are explained in a PowerPoint presentation with an accompanying script. There are also 3 handouts which local Leagues may use with the presentation (and at other times as well). They contain the same basic information, so you can choose which to copy and distribute.

On the LWVMI website, there are several resources under Member Resources/Current Projects.

- One is a color trifold with photos. [click here](https://www.aclumich.org/en/know-your-rights/implementing-proposal-3-your-clerk). If you want to personalize it for your League, [click here](https://www.aclumich.org/en/know-your-rights/implementing-proposal-3-your-clerk).
- One is a b&w list of new voting rights. [click here](https://www.aclumich.org/en/know-your-rights/implementing-proposal-3-your-clerk).
- The 3rd is a 1-sided handout from the Secretary of State [click here](https://www.aclumich.org/en/know-your-rights/implementing-proposal-3-your-clerk).
Updates to the implementation of voting changes are ongoing. For example, automatic voter registration when one conducts business with the Secretary of State offices, for example, just went into effect throughout the State on September 10. Keep checking the LWVMI and ACLU websites for updates. We will notify you as soon as possible.

**Michigan Secretary of State Town Halls**

The Secretary of State has identified 100 "high population density/low voter turnout" precincts in areas such as Flint, Warren, Jackson, Kalamazoo, and Muskegon Heights, and wants to conduct outreach and conversations with local leaders, including local clerks, to identify barriers to voting and how to meet these challenges.

Loida Tapia, Director of Public Engagement, and her team are already making contacts and reaching out on this project. When the Local Leagues conduct MDW (Making Democracy Work) Town Halls, especially in these areas, they should consider reaching out to the SOS for possible speakers - either Jocelyn Benson or Loida Tapia would attract attendance.

**Speaking of Town Halls**

One of the primary audiences in every community for Voter Education, such as these Town Halls, should be those who might not otherwise learn about it, often young people, people in underserved communities, low income neighborhoods, etc. Please consider reaching out to community organizations, neighborhood associations, school and church organizations, other faith communities, Tribal Councils, and so on. If they are nonpartisan, they could be helpful partnerships.

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**Climate Change Resolution for Local Leagues**

The LWVMI Board passed a Climate Emergency Resolution that you may consider using at your local League. The language is largely based on other state Leagues (Oregon, Illinois, Colorado, Florida, California, and Arkansas) that have done something similar. In 2016, LWVUS filed an amicus brief in Juliana et al v United States, supporting 21 young people from across the United States, who had filed a climate change lawsuit against the federal government. This action is based on LWVUS's 2019 Climate Change position.

**Climate Emergency Resolution**

Whereas on October 8, 2018, the United Nations released a special report that projected that limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius this century will require an unprecedented transformation of every sector of the global economy over the next 12 years; and

Whereas on November 23, 2018, the U.S. Fourth National Climate Assessment was issued, which detailed the massive threat that climate change poses to the American economy and underscored the need for emergency climate action at all levels of government; and

Whereas the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification include increasingly devastating wildfires, communities overwhelmed by smoke, drinking water compromised by algal blooms, a rise in sea levels resulting in flooding and the displacement of thousands of coastal businesses and residences, damage to marine ecosystems and food sources, extreme weather events, severe harm to this state's agriculture, forestry and tourism industries, and introduction of new vectors for infectious disease, increased asthma and other human health-related problems; and

Whereas climate change has a disproportionate effect on fish and wildlife populations, many of which require specific habitat conditions and are therefore particularly vulnerable to warmer temperatures, modified precipitation patterns, diminished snowpack, ocean acidification and other effects of climate change; and

Whereas climate change and the global economy's overshoot of ecological limits are driving the sixth mass extinction of species, causing a 60 percent decline in global wildlife populations since 1970, could devastate much of life on Earth for the next 10 million years and pose as great a risk to humanity as climate change, according to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services; and

Whereas one million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction according to a sweeping new United Nations report(May 6 2019); and

Whereas the death and destruction already wrought by global warming of approximately 1.1 degrees...
Celsius above late 19th century levels demonstrates that Earth is already too hot for safety and justice; and

Whereas climate change has a disproportionate effect on impacted communities, such as indigenous tribes, rural communities, coastal communities, workers, low-income households and people of color, who typically have fewer resources for adapting to climate change and are therefore the most vulnerable to displacement, adverse health effects, job loss, property damage and other effects of climate change; and

Whereas the world's leading climate scientists, including those in the Great Lakes Integrated Sciences and Assessments Center, predict that these serious impacts of climate change will worsen if prompt action is not taken to curb emissions; and

Whereas Our Children's Trust May 9, 2019 press release, "Groundbreaking Report Shows the United States Can Lead the Way Toward Climate Recovery Without Economic Hardship - The Report Details the Technically and Economically Feasible Pathways for a U.S. Transition Off of Fossil Fuels.... is the first analysis completed in the United States to provide a detailed roadmap for placing all sectors of the U.S. energy system on an emissions path consistent with returning global atmospheric CO2 to 350 ppm by 2100, which means global heating of 1 degree Celsius, not 2;" and

Whereas restoring a safe and stable climate requires a "climate mobilization" at all levels of government on a scale not seen since World War II to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions; and

Whereas in the absence of effective federal engagement, it is the responsibility of the individual states, counties and cities deemed to be the laboratories of progress, to take immediate leadership actions to address climate change;

Therefore, be it resolved, we as members of the (local unit of government) will adopt our own climate goals and policies based on the best available climate science to combat this climate emergency.

Background:


Climate Change in the Great Lakes Region http://glisa.umich.edu/media/files/GLISA%20%20Pager%202019.pdf

Synthesis of the Third National Climate Assessment for the Great Lakes Region http://glisa.umich.edu/media/files/Great_Lakes_NCA_Synthesis.pdf


LWVMI Board Approves DEI Action Plan

The LWVMI Board approved a LWVMI-LWVM-EF DEI Action Plan at our September Board meeting. We will be looking at all we do through the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) lens.

The DEI Policy, modeled after the LWVUS DEI Policy, as well as DEI definitions are all on the LWVMI website.

Next, we will be reviewing all printed and digital marketing materials through a DEI lens.

Many local leagues have begun their own DEI committees and discussion groups to look at their activities. We are interested in hearing what local Leagues are doing. Contact Paula Manley VP Membership at pjmanley@hotmail.com to share your DEI activities.

Remember that LWVUS offers webinars the last Thursday of each month on various DEI topics. Local leagues may wish to schedule a webinar viewing get together. To register for monthly webinars, click here. Past webinars are archived and may be viewed at any time.
Autumn is here and the Michigan Legislature is in session. The state budget is top of the agenda. Of course, how the budget is shaped dictates priorities, and the Governor and the Legislature are sparring over those priorities. Where the Citizens Redistricting Commission lands as a result, is unclear as of this writing, as the legislature works to reduce the Secretary of State of funding for what the citizens of our state voted for.

The reason I joined LWVMI as your Executive Director is because the work you are doing is of the utmost importance to me and I wanted to be part of it. The League's agenda is in perfect lockstep with my personal mission, and I want to do what I can to assist you in achieving your goals, because they are also my goals. What we are all fighting for is to make our world a better place. The Citizens Redistricting Commission is one step toward fair representation which, in turn, allows the real voices of the people to be heard, and I am pleased to be with you on this journey.

As a student of history and a lifelong proponent of women's rights, the League, with its roots in the women's suffrage movement, leaves me awestruck. Our mothers, aunts, grandmothers, great-grandmothers (etc.) fought for us to have a voice, and the League carries on that tradition by amplifying our voices.

I was thrilled over Labor Day weekend to portray one of those long-ago voices, Anna Howard Shaw, when my local League, LWV Flint Area, hosted a reenactment of the 1913 Woman Suffrage Procession. "As suffragists," she said "we have but one belief, but one principle, but one theory and that is the right of a human being to have a voice in the government, under which he or she lives."

The League of Women Voters continues to fight for the right of everyone to have a voice. Keep fighting the good fight.

Yours in League,
Shelly L. Hoffman

Local League Spotlight: LWV Flint Celebrates 19th Amendment

LWV Flint celebrated the 99th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, granting women the right to vote, on August 31 at Crossroads Village in the Flint area. Nearly 100 women, and some men, dressed in period costume. The women all wore white dresses and hats, and purple sashes, the historical color of the suffragist movement. The event included re-enactments by local actors, and concluded with a march around the village. The event was featured in the East Village Magazine. Photos below courtesy of East Village Magazine/Paul Rozycki.
Special Request of Local Leagues

The state office would like to keep up with what you are doing locally. If you haven't already, please add our Executive Director Shelly Hoffman and President Christina Schlitt to your email distribution lists for your newsletters and events.
Christina Schlitt President@lwvmi.org
Shelly Hoffman Execdir@lwvmi.org

Thank you.

Calendar

**September** - Voter Registration Month
September 21 - Absentee Ballots Available for General Election
September 24 - National Voter Registration Day

**October** - Voter Education Month
October 12 - LWVMI Board Meeting
October 24 - United Nations Day
October 25-26 - LWV of Lake Michigan Region Annual Meeting
Check Out What is Happening in Local Leagues in Michigan

Alpena County
Ann Arbor Area (with Tecumseh & Brighton/Howell Geographical Units)
Berrien/Cass Counties
Copper Country
Dearborn/Dearborn Heights
Delta County
Detroit
Eastern UP State (MAL) Unit
Flint Area
Grand Haven Area
Grand Traverse Area (with Crawford County Geographical Unit)
Grosse Pointe
Holland Area
Jackson Area
Kalamazoo Area (with Grand Rapids Geographical Unit)
Lansing Area
Leelanau County
Macomb State (MAL) Unit
Manistee County
Marquette County State (MAL) Unit
Midland Area
Mt. Pleasant
Northwest Wayne County (with Belleville Geographical Unit)
Oakland Area
Saginaw County
Troy

For more information go to www.lwvmi.org
or check out Facebook pages for state and local LWVs

LWVMI Board of Directors - 2019-2021

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Betsy Cushman (Dearborn/Dearborn Heights) - Vice President for Voter Services
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