

## League Links - April 2020

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

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## President's Message



And you thought the COVID19 restrictions would render League members powerless! The state board has been busy developing ways to conduct business through virtual means in voter services, election protection, Vote411, monitoring the ICRC, and program planning by working on the Lame Duck study question. Membership has added a new geographical unit in Calhoun County (LWVKA) that so far has only been able to meet virtually.

Local Leagues, as reported by their presidents, are making best practice decisions to hold the annual meeting requirements of voting for the slate, approve the budget and other items required at annual meetings. They are carrying on in a very creative and thoughtful manner. The social aspect of annual meetings will be postponed in many cases to a later date.

The 2019 Make Democracy Work grant projects have wrapped-up.

Congratulations to all of the successful town-hall presentations by the participating local Leagues. Your service to your communities has been successful in education for the 2020 Census, the new Michigan voting laws and the Independent Citizens' Redistricting Commission while enhancing the project through the DEI lens.

Towards the end of March, the Leagues that still had in-person events scheduled had to change their method of presentations to virtual forms of communication.

Our work continues in all of these projects.

A special recognition goes to LWV Ann Arbor Area's Margaret Leary for the sheer volume of 2020 Census presentations that she organized. Margaret formed an army of presenters that reached multitudes of people through numerous events. These events included 140 presentations or in-person handout opportunities including 150 different groups, and distribution of information to 3200 people. The outcome of this effort seems to be influencing the higher percentage of self-reporting in their communities. In the process, they built potential new partnerships for future education efforts, per Margaret. Thank you!

Thank you, Michigan League of Women Voters, for the hard and challenging work that you do. This will remain a busy year. The state board and national remain committed to providing assistance when and where we can. Good information from LWVUS can be found at this [link](#)

A good news item occurred this week when it was announced that a Federal Appeals Court voted unanimously to support the new redistricting commission (ICRC). The LWVMI had filed an Amicus brief in this case. For more information, go to this [link](#)

The National Convention is being switched to a virtual convention. See this [link](#).

Be safe, be well.  
Christina

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## It's Not Too Late to Respond to the Census

COVID 19 has impacted the 2020 Census in the following ways:

- Deadline for responding to the Census, either online, by phone, or by mail has been postponed until October 31, 2020.
- However, in filling out the Census Questionnaire, Heads of Households still must answer questions based on where household members were living on April 1, 2020. That April 1 date has not changed.
- Census Bureau in-person follow up with those who haven't responded to Census has been delayed until August.



Michigan's response rate as of April 12 was 54.7%, third in the nation. Minnesota was first and Wisconsin second. The U.S. response rate was 48.1%.

We need to encourage everyone to participate in the census.

Remember the 3 "Cs": the Census is confidential, convenient and crucial.

Confidential:

- Census workers take an oath not to divulge census information under

penalty of law which would impose large fines and jail time for unlawful disclosure

- The Census Bureau is prohibited by law from sharing individual census information with anyone, including any other government agency

Convenient:

- There are only 9 questions on the Census questionnaire.
- Response can be returned online, by phone or by U.S. mail.
- Help in filling out the census is available by phone in English and 37 other languages

Crucial: Census data is used:

- To determine the amount of money and services sent to state and local governments by the federal government
- In drawing redistricting maps for the state legislature and the U.S. Congress for the next 10 years, beginning in 2021.

-- Sue Smith, VP Advocacy

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## Voter Services



### State Voter Guides

Thanks to members from 10 Leagues, a set of questions for every office, Congressional, State Legislative, Education Boards, Supreme and Appeals Judicial, were sent to the State LWV Board for final approval.

And Hats off to Megan Chenoweth for her leadership, dedication, persistence and belief in the importance of the League's online Voter Guide. Those of you who are administrators – and hats off to you! – will appreciate what I'm writing.

Candidate affidavits containing emails, we hope, should be available before the end of the month. Otherwise we have to track down candidates for emails, but we are hopeful that candidates will be especially eager this year to be included in Vote411.org. State Voter Guides are provided free to Local Leagues, thanks to gifts to the LWVMI-Ed Fund.

[MichiganVoting.org](https://michiganvoting.org) is sponsored by many Election Protection organizations, including the LWVMI. They are an excellent resource for information about elections and voting rights, including the Know Your Voting Rights booklets, available in 3 languages, Spanish, Arabic, English.

Each booklet is specific to its election, so the next one will be for the August 4 Primary. If your League does not already have access to them (they came out for the March 10 election), please let me know if you would like to distribute copies in your community, and how many [betsy.cushman@gmail.com](mailto:betsy.cushman@gmail.com)

If you're not already on the mailing list to receive the KYR Digital Digest, please write to Lynna Kauchek at [lynna@progressmichigan.org](mailto:lynna@progressmichigan.org). It has

important election updates, themes for the week, sample talking points and excellent social media memes for each popular media. Just add #michiganvoting.org to recognize the source, our coalition.

**Clerk Engagement Project** Thank you to the Local Leagues who have volunteered to participate in the Election Protection Coalition Project to work with local city and township clerks to ensure that every eligible Michigan resident can vote. The project has been updated.

-- [Betsy Cushman](#), VP Voter Services

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## Program Updates: Lame Duck Study, 2021 LWVMI Convention

### Lame Duck Study

Delegates at the 2019 LWVMI convention approved a study of lame duck sessions in Michigan. Since then, a group of 10 League members from all over the state have been meeting by Zoom calls (even before Covid-19).



The committee is still in the research phase of the study. We are reviewing articles, opinions, constitutional arguments, and are also conducting personal interviews with legislators,

We anticipate that consensus questions will be ready for local Leagues in late fall, 2020. League boards are asked to plan for a study meeting(s) in early 2021. Once the responses to consensus questions are compiled, we hope to have a LWVMI Board-approved position ready for the 2021 Convention.

### 2021 and 2023 State Convention

Covid-19 conveniently struck on a non-LWVMI convention year. We sincerely hope that by the time our next state convention rolls around in 2021, we can meet without wearing masks or worrying about social distancing.

LWVMI's 2021 convention is set for May 21-23 at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing. No plans have been made for the 2023 convention yet - we are seeking a location and a host League.

This is a fun opportunity to welcome your League colleagues from all over Michigan to your community. The host League helps with local arrangements including finding a venue, and provides (non-financial) support to the LWVMI Convention committee.

If your League is considering being a host for the 2023 convention, please contact me or the LWVMI office.

-- Paula Bowman, VP Program

## Local League Spotlight: Grand Rapids Area Geographical Unit



The LWVKA Grand Rapids Area Geographical Unit is offering an innovative, virtual way for high school students to learn how to register to vote since League members cannot visit the schools in person this spring.

Government teachers are asked to encourage students to register to vote online as part of the new distance learning.

- All registering students need to send a screenshot to GGRA mailbox to prove success.
- LWVKAGRA will then email a personalized certificate to students who successfully register.
- The SOS will mail newly registered voters a request for an absentee ballot.
- If a student is too young to register (not 17.5 years or older), they can send a screenshot of the message indicating they are too young. Then they will be added to an email list reminding them to register when old enough.

In addition, students who prove they have successfully registered or attempted to do so, will be entered in a drawing for a \$10 Biggby gift card. If a student successfully registers and votes in the May 5th election, sending a photo of themselves mailing in the ballot or at a polling location, will receive a second entry in the drawing.

Members are volunteering through Sign-up Genius to reach out to principals in 28 high schools in Kent County, plus the 9 schools in Grand Rapids.

Each League volunteer has an introductory letter with instructions to email to each principal. It is hoped that students will participate and learn more about the voting process. Since they are learning at home, their parents may also become aware of the process to request an absentee ballot.

-- Paula Manley, VP Membership

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## Welcome Calhoun County Geographical Unit

We welcome a new Geographical Unit in Calhoun County as part of the League of Women Voters of Kalamazoo Area!

On March 23, LWVKA co-presidents MerriKay Oleen- Burkey and Fran Eckenrode, Paula Manley, LWVMI VP Membership, Christina Schlitt, LWVMI President, and seven Calhoun County residents met via Zoom to discuss formalizing the Calhoun County Geographical Unit as part of the LWVKA.

Already we have sixteen LWVKA members who live in Calhoun County –

some have been members for several years and doing voter registration in Calhoun County, and others have joined recently.

Interestingly, the process to establish this Geographical Unit has been accomplished entirely via Zoom due to the Covid-19 restrictions. Despite not being able to meet face-to-face, members are looking at ways to use social media to inform their community about League issues such as the 2020 Census and absentee ballot requirements.



## Calendar

Due to the current Coronavirus crisis, leagues have had to cancel meetings, programs, etc. With such uncertainty, various events, such as Equal Pay Day, have been suspended and will be rescheduled.

The Calendar feature will return in the future.

## Local Leagues

Ann Arbor Area (with the Brighton Howell Geographical Unit)  
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, and Calhoun County Geographical Unit)  
Lansing Area  
Leelanau County (with Emmet/Charlevoix County Geographical Unit)  
Macomb State (MAL) Unit  
Manistee County  
Marquette County  
Midland Area  
Mt. Pleasant  
Northeast Michigan (formerly Alpena County)  
Northwest Wayne County (with Belleville Geographical Unit)  
Oakland Area  
Saginaw County  
Tecumseh/Lenawee County (MAL)  
Troy

For more information go to [www.lwvmi.org](http://www.lwvmi.org) or check out Facebook pages for state and local LWVs

Christina Schlitt (Grand Traverse Area) - President  
Paula Manley (Kalamazoo) - Vice President for Membership  
Betsy Cushman (Dearborn/Dearborn Heights) - Vice President for Voter Services  
Sue Smith (Ann Arbor) - Vice President for Advocacy  
Paula Bowman (NW Wayne County) - Vice President for Program  
Denise Hartsough (Kalamazoo) - Treasurer  
Leah Bectel (Kalamazoo/Grand Rapids Geo) - Secretary  
Darlene Allen (Marquette MAL) - Director-at-Large  
Deborah Bunkley (Detroit) - Voter Service Director  
Megan Chenoweth (Northwest Wayne County) - Voter Services Director  
Vicki Granger (Grosse Pointe) - Communications Director  
Ken Manley (Kalamazoo) - Local League Development Director  
Tera Moon (Oakland) - Membership/Leadership Director  
Diana Neering (Ann Arbor) - LWVMI Development Director  
Maria Rivera (Macomb State MAL) - Director-at-Large

Lynda Harwood - Administrative Professional

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Connect with us



[www.lwvmi.org](http://www.lwvmi.org)