



League Links

December 2020

In this issue

- President's Message: Empowering Voters, Defending Democracy
- Voter Services: Thousands Make a Difference
- ICRC Meeting, Hiring Staff
- Monitoring the MI Lame Duck session
- Program Planning: Two Winter Tasks
- May 2021 LWVMI Convention Will Be Virtual
- Response to Demographic Survey
- Membership Rosters Affect PMP
- Local League Spotlight: Grosse Pointe, Calhoun County GEO Unit

President's Message

Empowering Voters-Defending Democracy

Voter education is part of the League mantra and mission. This election period challenged us to meet the goal, and we did so on many levels of activity in spite of COVID-19 restrictions (see Betsy Cushman's Voter Services article.) We will continue through the new year with new opportunities to educate voters about the election process. We all learned more as we worked on the Board of Canvassers observer project and are willing to share insights with fellow members and our communities. And don't forget, this year will be local elections with impact that we can observe first hand. (Consider developing an Observer Corps in your League.) Remember, "all voting is local."

Another challenge for the new year in defending democracy will be our Communities of Interest Project. As you probably know, respecting Communities of Interest is one of the criteria the Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission must follow in drawing maps for the Michigan state Legislature and U.S.

Congress. Trained members of our League ICRC Monitoring Team will work with Local Leagues, GEO Units and MALs to identify, educate and support Communities of Interest throughout the state.

Our League members invested a great deal of time educating voters this past decade about gerrymandering and its effects on Michigan's Legislative and Congressional district maps. We invested a great deal of time advocating for fair maps first through the courts and then through a ballot proposal campaign. Now we have an Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission and we need to continue the work by helping to ensure that Communities of Interest participate in the Commission's public hearings next Spring and Summer. (See Sue Smith's article for more information about the ICRC.)

There is a bright future for the League with many opportunities in 2021 to empower voters and defend democracy. LWVMI is in position to carry out the mission with advocacy (see Judy Karandjeff's article), a strong membership structure and exceptional state board members to lead. The League is needed now more than ever.

Hopefully, the pandemic will be in our rearview mirror soon, but in the meantime be safe, stay well and have a peaceful holiday season to the best of your ability.

In League,
Christina
LWVMI President

Thousands Made a Difference

The League of Women Voters of Michigan is proud of the literally thousands of people who worked tirelessly to ensure that every eligible voter had both access to and information about voting in Michigan and that every vote legally cast in Michigan was counted. The League of Women Voters in communities across the State, as well as the State League, with assistance from the National League, made a difference to Voter Education and Voter Services this year.

Our effectiveness was enhanced and enriched by our coalitions, partnerships, and communications with hundreds of organizations who shared our goals and values to empower voters and defend democracy, all in the name of good government. We worked closely with the Secretary of State's Office, the Voting Rights / Election Protection Coalition led by the ACLU, NAACP, APIA, LWV, and many additional and important organizations with our

platform michiganvoting.org. We worked with local clerks to recruit poll workers and provide offers of additional assistance, if welcome.

The League's nonpartisan view is our strength during these unusually partisan times. Whenever someone asks me to talk about something positive, I turn to Michigan's Elections this year, the most participatory and secure in our history. But they assume I'm talking about who won, and I have to continually remind myself that most of the world thinks that way. But I've been in the League more than 50 years, and my brain is tracked to think "Did people register to vote?" "Did people vote?" "Did people know how to get information before they voted?" "Do they know Michigan's new Voting Rights?" and so on.

Despite the pandemic and the noise of accusations arising out of ignorance or malice, Michigan provided safe and secure elections, and we stand proud of our State, our election officials and workers, countless organizations, individuals, and voters who dedicated themselves to this task. Well done!

Speaking of Good Government, many Local Leagues participated in the Observer Program of the County Boards of Canvassers, and I already heard from one League interested in re-starting their Observer Program. There's an excellent handbook on the LWVUS website, *Observing Your Government in Action: Protecting Your Right to Know*, for those interested. In early January, we will contact Local Leagues about a related need, educating ourselves and our communities about *How Elections Work in Michigan*, a timely subject.

Betsy Cushman
LWVMI VP, Voter Services

Betsy Cushman Honored in Dearborn

In October, Patch.com initiated a "Patch Local Heroes" series. The first person profiled was our own member **Betsy Cushman** who was nominated by Board member Laura Dudgeon. Betsy was honored for all her work on behalf of voters in Dearborn and in Michigan. Congratulations Betsy!!



ICRC Hires Staff and Looks Towards Communities of Interest

Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (ICRC)

Rebecca Szetela (U) from Canton Michigan was sworn in on November 10, 2020 to replace Glen Shaw (U) who had resigned on October 16, 2020. Ms. Szetela was chosen in a random draw from the remaining pool of unaffiliated applicants as prescribed by the Constitutional Amendment.

The Commission will continue to meet virtually until at least January 31, 2020. The Legislature extended the exception to the Open Meetings Act, allowing public bodies to meet virtually until March 31.

Staff

The Commission has hired an Executive Director, Suann Courtwright Hammersmith. On December 17, they selected their General Counsel from the field of four candidates whom they had interviewed on December 10. After January 1, 2021, the Commission will interview seven candidates for the position of Communication and Outreach Director. The Open Meetings Act requires that all interviews be conducted in public. Recordings of all interviews will continue to be available at RedistrictingMichigan.org.

Webinars and Presentation to the ICRC

On December 3, the ICRC heard a presentation on the Census. This was followed up with a Webinar on December 4, which explained in more detail how Michigan will receive and use the 2020 Census data. The Census data will be sent to the ICRC to use in drawing the district maps for the Michigan Legislature and the U.S. Congress. Accurate data is important because of the Supreme Court decision requiring that districts be of equal population. Census data will be the building blocks for the maps. Recordings of the meetings which included the presentation and webinar are available at RedistrictingMichigan.org.

Communities of Interest

Beginning in January, the ICRC will enter its second phase of work, Community Outreach and Communities of Interest. They have asked for a Webinar on Communities of Interest to be scheduled when they start meeting again in January.

The state League is developing a plan for reaching out to Communities of Interest across the state. The 12 member League Monitoring Team will play a key role. Local Leagues will also have an opportunity to participate. More information will be sent to local League Presidents after the first of the year. Respecting Communities of Interest is one criterion for drawing the maps.

Upcoming Meeting Schedule

On December 17, the ICRC adopted its meeting schedule for January 2021. The Schedule is posted at RedistrictingMichigan.org.

Sue Smith, LWVMI VP Advocacy

Advocacy Committee Monitoring Lame Duck Session

By the end of this two-year legislative session on December 31, 2020, the Legislature will have met approximately 20 times since the November 3 election. Unlike some "lame duck" sessions, not many bills are being considered since the Governor and the majorities in the Legislature represent different political parties.

Approximately 2500 House Bills and 1300 Senate Bills have been introduced during our two-year session. As of December 16, 427 bills have been signed into law by Governor Whitmer.

The LWVMI's Advocacy Committee has met monthly or as needed to monitor legislative activities. Members are Marty Couretas, Tricia Denton, Judy Karandjeff (Chair), Carolyn Madden, Christina Schlitt, Karen Sherwood, Sue Smith, Sandy Sorini Elser, Maria Woloson, and Chris Zilke. We have recommended that the LWVMI support/oppose approximately 125 bills, sent in testimony to the House and Senate, prepared Action Alerts for the memberships and participated in coalitions.

During the lame-duck session, LWVMI supported the passage of a package of bills, SBs 1046-1051, to implement changes in the criminal procedures as recommended by the MI Joint Task Force on Jail and Pretrial Incarceration; SB 241, to ban water shut-offs; and SB 830-831, to provide services in prisons for pregnant postpartum women. We opposed passage of SBs 431 to modify mining laws in certain places and HB 4342 to change requirements for substitute teachers. To date, SB 1046-1051, SB 241 passed, and SB 431 and HB 4342 did not.

As you are probably aware, the MI House and Senate have the Oversight Committees investigating the integrity of the 2020 General Election. To date, there have been over 20 hours of hearings that I have monitored. The committees have also issued subpoenas. At this time, it is hard to know what the outcome will be, but LWVMI will keep you informed if action is needed.

When the new two-year legislative session begins in January, there will be 58 Republicans/ 52 Democrats in the MI House of Representatives with 28 new members and 42 women. The MI Senate will remain the same with 22 Republicans/16 Democrats and 11 women.

Judy Karandjeff, LWVMI Advocacy Committee Chair

Program Planning: Two Winter Tasks

As Leagues plan their 2021 schedule, please keep in mind these two chances to be part of the state League's program planning process that should be on each League's agenda:

The state-wide Lame Duck study materials were sent to local League presidents on December 1, and they're also posted on the website (under [Member Resources](#)). All local Leagues are urged to participate so that a new position can be a result of input from all Michigan League members. Plus – participants will learn a LOT about how Michigan's legislature works!
Responses to the consensus questions are due by March 31, 2021.

Local Leagues will be given the opportunity to suggest a new study or an update of a current position during LWVMI's biennial program planning. Materials for 2021 program planning will be sent to local Leagues in January. Leagues will be asked to review our [current positions](#) (can be found on the website) and decide whether they are adequate for our advocacy needs. Reports from local Leagues are due by March 1, 2021. Any new study or update proposals will be voted on at the 2021 LWVMI convention.

LWVMI 2021 Convention Will Be Virtual

LWVMI has made the difficult decision to hold our 2021 biennial convention virtually on May 21 and 22. We are currently soliciting bids for tech support. If you or someone you know would like to help us navigate a virtual convention, please contact convention chair, Paula Bowman at paulabowman9000@gmail.com

Outstanding Response to Member Demographic Survey

Thank you to everyone who filled out the Survey of Member Demographics. Over 1,300 of you responded! That is fantastic.

The data collected will give LWVMI a baseline snapshot of certain key demographics. This baseline will be used to gauge efforts to building a more diverse League - one that is reflective of the population of the state of Michigan. The results will be used internally by LWVMI only - they will not be shared outside the LWVMI.

I thank you for the feedback you provided. Know that this was a first attempt at collecting this information. There are more questions to ask, such as if members have a disability; those questions will be asked in future surveys. This survey has resulted in a lot of learning. The committee learned as we authored and piloted it; the board learned as they reviewed it; hopefully, you learned as you answered the questions. We are not finished learning about diversity, equity, and inclusion. We have been launched on a journey toward learning even more. This work doesn't have an end; it just keeps bringing us closer to becoming "perfectly adequate human beings".

Stay tuned for more updates on this effort.

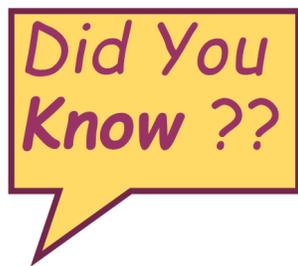
Tera Moon, LWVMI Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coordinator

Membership Roster: Reminder

This is the time of year many Local Leagues send renewal notices to members. At the same time, Local League Membership Chairs should be checking their membership rosters and making certain all is up to date.

Remember that the number of members listed on your roster on January 31, 2021, determines your Per Member Payments to LWVUS and LWVMI for the coming year.

Did You Know?



--- that the history of the League of Michigan Voters can be found on our website? As part of the LWVMI's 100th birthday celebration in 2019, we gathered histories from 26 local Leagues and Member-At-Large units. This compilation of local League histories is accompanied by the state League's history, all of which can be found under the "[About Us/History](#)" section. We also have a list of all of the state League presidents back to Belle Brotherton in 1919. Recently, we received a thank you note from a supporter for this historical record. Their family was trying to substantiate a family legend that a long-deceased aunt was a LWVMI president. They found her on our list and were thrilled to have confirmation.

Local League Spotlight: Holiday Fun!



LWV Grosse Pointe

The LWV Grosse Pointe held a virtual holiday gathering, via Zoom, on December 15. We utilized the “chat” function for games, such as holiday preferences for colored vs. clear lights, cookies vs. cake, etc. We even matched our personalities with the nine reindeer on Santa’s sleigh! The group learned about other holiday celebrations, including Hanukah and Kwanzaa. Members also shared holiday traditions, including family recipes and decorations. We don’t usually have the time to share personal stories and our Program Committee provided an excellent way to share in a very festive and spirited way!



LWVKA Calhoun County Geo Unit

The LWVKA Calhoun County Geographical Unit participated in the Marshall community holiday parade on November 30. Lori Kline-Closson, Voter Services Chair, and her husband were in a decorated antique red truck with a LWVKA Calhoun County sign advertising the new League presence in the county. The truck was featured in a newspaper article describing the event. Due to COVID-19, the parade this year was a stationary one called the Holiday Swerve Christmas Parade at the Merry Mile. Floats and decorated vehicles lined up at the Calhoun County Fairgrounds while 1500 carloads of area residents drove past.

Keep Making Democracy Work

LWVMI has had great success this past year, but our mission to empower voters continues. Please consider a year-end donation to help fund these ongoing efforts to Make Democracy Work.

DONATE NOW

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 (with Bay County Geographical Unit)

Mt. Pleasant

Northeast Michigan (formerly Alpena County)

Northwest Wayne County

Oakland Area

Saginaw County

Tecumseh/Lenawee County (MAL)

Troy

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

League Leadership 2019-2021

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

Calendar



January 2021

- Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission begins Community Outreach Phase of their work
- LWVMI Board meets January 9
- Bylaws, Budget, Nominations Committees meet, present recommendations in March
- Review Membership Rosters for PMP by Jan. 31
- First Call for LWVMI Biennial Convention

February 2021

- LWVMI Board meets February 13
- LWV is 101 on February 14

March 2021

- Local Leagues Lame Duck study due to LWVMI
- LWVMI Board meets March 13

May 2021

- LWVMI Convention (Virtual) May 21-22
-

Connect with us! League of Women Voters of Michigan
517-484-5383

[email](#)

Website: lwvmi.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/lwvmichigan/>

Twitter @MiVoterPower

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