



League Links - February 2021

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President's Message:

We have so many great articles in this issue, so this one is short.

Membership Increase

The LWVMI membership numbers have reached an all-time high of over 2600. This indicates a total that is almost double in recent years. Our 24 independent Leagues, 3 Member-At-Large State Units and 6 Geographical Units underline that *the League is needed now more than ever.*

Our membership growth will carry the message of our mission Empowering Voters and Defending Democracy to our communities. Membership growth will continue to be more *Diverse, Equitable and Inclusive* through your efforts to reach out to underserved communities and to work towards the League looking like our population.

Congratulations to League leaders for engaging our membership in activities to support our goals.

Convention

Paula Bowman, Convention Chair, will be opening registration by the end of February. More information will roll out about convention details ongoing now.

This convention will be unique in the fact that it will be virtual.

But the really unique aspect of this is that *all* members have the opportunity to participate by viewing the panel discussions, speaker presentations, workshops, and the plenary sessions. (Until now, only a limited number of non-delegates participated.)

Make note that only delegates will be able to vote on state business items, but all others will be able to share in the information and learn of the LWVMI state business activities.

Mark your calendars for Friday evening, May 21 and all-day Saturday, May 22. What a great opportunity for the over 2600 LWVMI members!

Thank you for the privilege,
Christina Schlitt, LWVMI President

LWVMI Convention 2021 is May 21-22

There is a lot of buzz about the upcoming state convention set for May 21-22. The Nominating, Budget, and Bylaws committees have already presented their work to the board, and other committees are working hard to make this convention as good as it can be during a pandemic.



The registration fee in 2019 was \$190 per person, but in 2021, it will be a mere \$75 for a voting delegate and \$35 for any non-voting member.

Though the platforms will be a little different for the two categories of registrants, they will all provide full access to the plenary sessions, workshops, and panel discussions. It is important to note that ANY League member can attend the convention. We hope a lot of you can join us as we conduct the business of the League and have some learning opportunities along the way.

The on-line registration form will be available on our website by the end of February. Click the Convention link on the [home](#) page and you'll be directed to the page with all the convention information.

The [AWARDS](#) packet is already on the website. Nominations for the League's principal awards and the "Belle Ringer" awards are being accepted through April 15. This is a chance for local Leagues to recognize the hard work that dedicated members have done these past few years.

Paula Bowman, LWVMI VP Program

LWVMI Convention: Silent Auction

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

Part of the donation effort has been through an auction at our in-person state convention.

The 2021 LWVMI convention will offer a silent auction, and we are looking for items to auction off. We already have a bottle of the "Vote" wine, and a South Haven Escape experience.

If you have something to offer, please contact Ken Manley, at 269 330 8579.

Ken Manley, Director Development

LWVMI Advocacy Committee Invites YOU

What kind of advocacy is LWVMI doing on Line 5 and other environmental issues, voting rights, prison reform, education, gun safety? How can you advocate in your own community?

Come join the Advocacy Committee on Zoom, March 23, at 7 p.m. to discuss these issues and more.

If you're interested, contact your local League President for more information.

Update on Election Legislation

The LWVMI Advocacy Committee, Marty Couretas, Tricia Denton, Judy Karandjeff, Carolyn Madden, Christina Schlitt, Karen

Sherwood, Sue Smith, Sandy Sorini Elser, Maria Woloson, Chris Zilke, met on Tuesday, February 9, and took action on the following legislation.

The committee discussed the bills currently being considered by the House Election and Ethics Committee. The committee and LWVMI Board agreed to support some of the bills that were recommended by the Auditor General in 2019 and supported by the Secretary of State.

- HB 4127 (Rep. Hall) Provide procedures to remove certain electors listed on the qualified voter file with unknown dates.
- HB 4128 (Rep. Calley) Provide procedures to remove certain electors listed on the qualified voter file.
- HB 4129 (Rep. Marino) Post list of local clerks who are not current with continuing election education training.

The Advocacy Committee and LWVMI Board agreed to oppose passage of some other bills:

- HB 4132 (Rep. Wendzel) Provide sentencing guidelines for felonies involving voter ballot applications.
- HB 4133 (Rep. Bollin) Provide sentencing guidelines for violations of the absent voter ballot applications.
- HB 4134 (Rep. Bollin) Allow precinct consolidation at certain elections.

Testimony was submitted to the House Elections and Ethics Committee prior to its February 16 meeting. So far, the committee has not voted on any of these bills.

House Speaker Jason Wentworth also testified in support of his resolution to amend the MI Constitution to limit lame duck by requiring 2/3rds vote to pass legislation, HJR A.

The Advocacy Committee and LWVMI Board also voted to support proposed bills that regulate guns in the State Capitol. The Senate bills are in the Senate Operations Committee and the House bills are in the House Operations Committee. No hearing has been scheduled.

- SB 34 (Bayer) Prohibit firearms in State Capitol
- SB 35 (Polehanki) Prohibit concealed weapons in State Capitol
- HB 4023 (Brixie) Expand gun-free zone in all state-owned or leased buildings
- HB 4024 (Carter,T) Make weapon-free zones in all state-owned or leased buildings.

The committee and LWVMI Board also supported joining the Voting Access for All Collaborative, and Carolyn Madden will be our representative. We also worked on an Action Alert on Line 5.

MI Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission News

Impact of Census Delay on Commission's Approval of District Maps

The U.S. Census Bureau has announced a further delay in the release of Redistricting Census Data to the states. The state population totals, which will determine the number of Congressional seats that will be apportioned to each state, will still be released in April 2021. Michigan is expected to lose one seat, giving us 13 Congressional Districts instead of the current 14.

However, the detailed Census Data, which will be needed to draw district lines for the state House and the state Senate, won't be released until the end of September 2021.

The Michigan Constitution requires the Commission to:

- Publish at least one map for each type of District: Congressional, State House, and State Senate by September 17, 2021 (45 days prior to final approval of the maps)
- Hold at least 5 Public Hearings on the published maps
- Approve the final maps by November 1, 2021

Given the new date when the Census Bureau will release the Redistricting Census Data, the MICRC will not be able to meet its constitutional requirement to approve the maps by November 1, 2021. Several groups, including the MICRC are considering various options for resolving this issue. Any changes to the Michigan Constitution would require a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote by the state legislature or a decision by the courts.

MICRC Public Hearings in May 2021

The Michigan Constitution requires the Commission to hold at least 10 public hearings before starting to draw the maps. The Commission plans to hold in-person hearings in various parts of the state in May and early June. Dates and places for the hearings will be posted at RedistrictingMichigan.org. The public will also be able to watch the hearings via the internet. If in-person hearings are not feasible, they will be held virtually.

Testimony from the General Public and COI

The general public and Communities of Interest (COI) will be invited to submit testimony concerning the maps at the public hearings. Over 100 local League team members are taking training in how to identify and support COI in their communities. COI are a group of people who share a common bond which could be economic, ethnic, cultural, or environmental. Examples of possible COI are cherry farmers, school districts, lake shore residents, Native American Tribes, and neighborhoods. The COI

must be contiguous and members must live in a compact area that could be included in a specific legislative or congressional district. If the members of the COI don't want to be split up among several legislative or congressional districts, they will have an opportunity to make that request by testifying at the public hearings.

Local League Town Halls

Pass-through grants will be available to local Leagues for hosting Town Halls in their communities in March or April 2021. The purpose of the Town Hall will be to educate the public on

- Redistricting in Michigan
- The MICRC and its work
- Upcoming Public Hearings
- Communities of Interest

Sue Smith, LWVMI VP Advocacy

Voter Services

In recognition of the awesome power of Michigan's Local Leagues to inform and mobilize the voters in their communities, the State Voter Services Team is holding a series of 4 Zoom gatherings on Tuesdays in February.

The goal is to support and inspire Local Leagues to plan for an exciting Local Election Year. This is a special challenge, as many eligible voters do not vote in Local Elections.

Several ideas emerged from the "Sexy Local Elections" program, and maybe your League will try one or two of them. Here are the topics:

1. Voter Services for the Times We Live in
2. Sexy Local Elections
3. The Election Process and Countering Mis/Dis Information
4. Are Voter Registration Campaigns Still Needed?

The Michigan Department of State enthusiastically offered to support this series by providing excellent and knowledgeable presenters for 3 of the 4 programs:

- Zaineb Hussein, Deputy Chief of Staff to Jocelyn Benson,
- Bilal Hammoud, Public Engagement Associate,
- Sally Marsh, Director of Special Projects,
- and Shelly Belton, Automatic Voter Registration & Education Specialist.

Feedback and turnout have been great. We even had a National LWV staff member, Grant Administrator Morgan Murray, join us for two of the meetings.

Sources of inspiration

The LWVUS Making Democracy Work grants to support Local League Voter Services 2020-2021 resulted in final reports that are inspiring. Leagues are stretching and growing and accomplishing their goals to empower voters. Building on existing relationships with Local and County Clerks in innovative ways, reaching out to partner with organizations who reflect the wide diversity of our communities – it has been wonderful to read. I hope to finish a summary of the reports soon.

Report on the November 2020 Election

Judy Karandjeff, Chair of the LWVMI Advocacy Committee, has prepared a great report on the November 2020 election, including information on the major changes as a result of our 2018 Promote the Vote efforts, voter turnout, voter registration, absentee voting, election lawsuits, and the Secretary of State's legislative agenda.

- [Read the Fact Sheet on the November 2020 Election](#)

Betsy Cushman, LWVMI VP Voter Services

Program Planning Reports Due March 1

Besides approving a budget, amending bylaws, and electing new officers, delegates at the LWVMI Convention will also be voting on League program.

- Are our current positions usable for our advocacy purposes?
- Is any position so outdated that it needs to be eliminated or updated?
- Is there a new topic that we should study in order to establish a new position?

All of these decisions will stem from the program planning reports that local Leagues must turn in by March 1. Don't be left out of the process!

Lame Duck Study: Local League Responses Due March 31

In mid-January, a Joint Resolution was introduced by Michigan House of Representatives Speaker Jason Wentworth that would require 2/3 of the members to approve certain bills during a lame duck legislative session in Michigan.

Because we do not have a position yet, we cannot support or oppose this resolution.

As you know, local Leagues around Michigan are currently working on the LWVMI state study on lame duck sessions, and if we

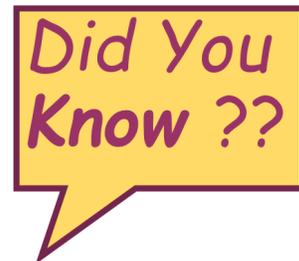
receive consensus, we may have a position by the end of April.

All of the lame duck materials, including a Bridge Magazine article that details the January Joint Resolution, can be found in the "[Studies](#)" section of our website (under Member Resources). Responses to the consensus questions are due by March 31.

Did You Know?

..... that the [Media page](#) on our state's website includes 3 key bits of information?

- Contact information for the League (Address, phone and email)
- Names and email addresses of all the state board members
- Copies of press releases that tell a story about many of our advocacy efforts, especially during 2020 and 2021.



LWVMI has over 425 pages or links on our website. We hope that these little reminders of what is available to you help you navigate this content-rich resource.

Local League Bylaws

Many Local Leagues are reviewing their bylaws in preparation for their Annual Meetings. Remember that all Leagues must have the same first three articles in the LWVUS Bylaws:

- Article I—Name
- Article II –Purpose and Policy
- Article III—Membership

Leagues must also include nonpartisan and DEI policies as outlined in Article II.

Where to find the LWVUS Bylaws? Go to the [League Management](#) section of lwv.org to view the LWVUS Bylaws as well as a template for Local League bylaws.

Paula Manley, LWVMI VP Membership

**Local League Spotlights:
Northeast Michigan, Holland, Eastern
UP, Leelanau/Emmett Charlevoix**

Restrictions with the pandemic have not stopped Local Leagues from offering educational programs to their members and local communities, often partnering with local organizations to provide these opportunities via Zoom. Here are a few examples:

LWV of Northeast Michigan recently partnered with the Association of Lifelong Learners to offer “A Conversation with Educational Leaders”. Local superintendents and educators discussed issues of racial justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion during a Facebook Live event on January 19.

LWV of Holland is joining Hope College’s Green Team, Macatawa Care and Citizens Climate Lobby—Holland Area, to sponsor the Winter 2021 Sustainability Film Series. Two free films are being offered in February with the opportunity for a virtual Q and A reflection panel. The first film *Honeyland* was shown February 9 and the second film *Kiss the Ground* was shown February 23. For further information on the film series, go to [LWV of Holland’s](#) Facebook page.

LWVMI Eastern Upper Peninsula State Unit is offering a monthly noontime lunch and learn series via Zoom beginning February 26 entitled *Women Lead*. This is an opportunity to hear from women who lead in government. The February speaker is Dr. Shaffer-O’Connell, Political Scientist and Professor at Lake Superior State University.

LWV Leelanau County Charlevoix/Emmet Counties Geographical Unit hosted “A Booster Shot for the Climate: How Federal Carbon Fee and Dividend Legislation Can Protect Human Health” on February 10. The speaker was Dr. Elizabeth DelBuono from the Citizens Climate Lobby, a nonpartisan grassroots advocacy group.

They will be partnering with LWVMI Eastern Upper Peninsula State Unit to host a Zoom program on “Ranked Choice Voting” on March 18. The presenter will be Kevin Deegan Karuse, Associate Professor of Political Science at Wayne State University. For further information on the presentation, go to the [LWV EUP](#) Facebook page.

Paula Manley, LWVMI VP Membership

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

March 2021

- Program Planning Responses due March 1
- LWVMI Board meets March 13
- Local Leagues Lame Duck study due to LWVMI by March 31



April 2021

- LWVMI Board meets April 10
- Convention awards nominations due by April 15

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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