



League Links

April 2024

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Congratulations, Convention, Canvassing and Communication

At the April 13 LWVMI board meeting, we were delighted to vote in favor of the application to become an independent League submitted by LWV of Lenawee County formerly LWV of Lenawee/Tecumseh. LWVLEN President Mindy Dunn, members Shelley Lim and Diana Fallot, along with their LWV Coach, Nancy Schewe, joined the board meeting and made the presentation. The application now goes to the LWVUS Board; we are confident of their approval!

Are you going? Anyone can attend the LWVUS Convention from June 28-30 in Washington D.C. Though local and state Leagues are only allowed a set number of voting delegates, a non-delegate can register as an observer. There's no doubt that in-person attendance has more benefits than participating online, but LWVUS knows that this is not doable for everyone or every League. LWVUS is making the online option available for the reasonable cost of \$125. We hope all Leagues in Michigan will be represented by at least one delegate either in-person or online. Visit the

[convention website](#) to get all the information and let your local President/Leader know if you are interested in attending.

Forty-six counties in Michigan have an election on May 7th. There are a lot of school proposals on the ballot, but also some special elections for school and township boards. We will again be activating our Board of Canvassers program, starting within 48 hours after each election. Our “Sign Up Genius” link will be available next week (gets better with each election!) and we hope that many members will sign up to observe a shift. Information from the reports submitted by the observers is reviewed by LWV leadership, as well as the legal staff of one of our democracy partners. If the report describes something of concern, those comments may even be elevated to the Department of Elections. There are many that depend on our reports and we’re grateful for your help in this important work.

The final Spring workshop in our communications series is this Wednesday, April 24. We will hear from Sue Ellen Christian, a WMU Journalism professor, who will speak to us about mis- and dis-information in the media, especially in the new artificial intelligence space. [Click here to register!](#)

Paula Bowman and Denise Hartsough
LWVMI Co-Presidents



Voter Service Updates

New Resources for Voter Service Activities

We have developed two new resources for local Leagues to use for their voter registration and outreach activities. These include an / *Pledge to Vote* card and a Palm Card with election dates and *Make a Plan to Vote* information from Vote411. Local Leagues will be able to edit these cards to meet their needs. These were distributed to the Voter Service Network this week. Thanks to the Grosse Pointe League for their Palm Card design, including LWVUS graphics.

Vote411 Update

Candidates have until April 23rd to apply for office for the August 6, 2024 Primary Election. New candidates are showing up daily, with many changing their districts due to the required redraw of maps as part of the redistricting process. Administrators are encouraged to continue preparing their guides for the Primary. If you have any questions about setting up your guide, please reach out to Carolyn Vertin, Director, Vote411 at cdvertin1@gmail.com.

Get Ready to Get Out the Vote!

We are finalizing plans for our next GOTV Postcard Campaign and encourage local Leagues to sign up! Details will be announced at the next Voter Service Network meeting. Stay tuned!!

Voter Service Network Meeting

The next Voter Service Network meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 25, 2024 at 7:00 p.m. Those who wish to attend can use the link below to

register.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMsde2oqjgsHdxNvh3CHK7J11MshxLiaAox>

Once registered, you will receive confirmation of the registration and how to join the meeting. An agenda will be sent out the Monday before the meeting.

In the meantime, if you have questions, please contact me.

Judy Florian
VP for Voter Services
jflo@comcast.net

Advocacy Update

Legislators returned from spring break and the special elections for the 13th House District and the 25th House District were held. Two Democrats won their respective elections. Mai Xiong won the 13th House District and Peter Herzberg won the 25th House District. By the end of April, the elections should be certified and the House will have 56 Democrats and 54 Republicans.



Update on Legislation

BRITE Act: On March 14, during Sunshine week, a group of House Democrats held a press conference and introduced 7 bills, HB 5580-HB 5586, known as the BRITE Act, Bringing Reforms in Integrity, Transparency and Ethics. The bills were assigned to the House Ethics and Oversight Committee. LWVMI supports the bills.

On April 18, the House Ethics and Oversight Committee began taking testimony on HB 5583 to give the Secretary of State the authority to seek a court order to stop violations of the law, and HB 5586 to require legislators to wait one year from leaving office to become a lobbyist. Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson and Attorney General Dana Nessel testified in support. No vote was taken. More hearings will be held. Other bills would require any 501c4 or 527 organization affiliated with state officials and candidates to register those accounts with the Secretary of State's Office, include legislative staff under lobbying guidelines, and add disclosure of more gifts received by elected officials.

Recount Legislation: On April 18, the Senate moved SB 603 and SB 604, modifying the recount process, to third reading in the Senate. LWVMI supports these bills.

Freedom of Information Act: We are awaiting action in the full Senate on passage of SB 669 and SB 670 that would put the Legislature and the Governor's Office under the Freedom of Information Act. These bills will greatly increase transparency in government.

MI Voting Rights Act: We anticipate hearings in the Senate Elections and Ethics Committee sometime in May on the MI Voting Rights Act, SB 401-404.

Financial Disclosure: On April 15, information on elected officials' personal finances was made available on the Secretary of State's new [portal](#). Candidates must file similar information by May 15.

A complete list of the almost 250 bills LWVMI is following is available on the [LWVMI website](#).

Judy Karandjeff
LWVMI Vice President for Advocacy

Pillars of Civility

Journalists Nolan Finley and Stephen Henderson on March 22nd shared with over 50 League members the keys to civility they have identified after 17 years of conducting the Civility Project. Holding differing political views, the two editors often found themselves paired by the media with the expectation that they would disagree.



They did and still do disagree. And, they have formed a deep friendship and an understanding of how people can disagree without hating or trying to destroy each other.

1. **Dropping assumptions** about why someone votes or thinks as they do.
2. **Setting honest goals for the conversation.** It's not a competition.
3. **Active listening.** Reflect what you have heard to check your comprehension. Ask questions to deepen your understanding.
4. **Keep coming back to the conversation.** Commit to staying in the challenging relationship. It's worth it, because civility strengthens societal institutions.

For a recording of the March 22 session go to:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jpwtLGkY53s>

Observer Corps News Light is Shone on Local Government

Deb Tyler, a League observer for the Genoa Township board of trustees, in Livingston County, certainly took this to heart recently. Her reporting informed the LWV of Livingston County of a situation with the Genoa Township Clerk regarding removal of voters from voter rolls. The removal resulted in a New York Times article, intervention by the ACLU, and notice from the Michigan Secretary of State. It also brought to light a group, Stand Up Livingston, whose purpose was to request that clerks remove voters from the Qualified

Voter File.

What follows is an unbiased observer corps summary of several meetings Deb observed....

I observed the Genoa Twp. Board meeting on March 18, 2024 and learned that township clerk Polly Skolarus had removed voters from the Qualified Voter File as requested by the group Stand Up Livingston. She said she did so per a 1954 law, and that she now had 500 challenged voters. She said she has to mail Return Receipt Requested notices to each voter at a cost of \$9 each. Clerk Skolarus brought this up at the end of the meeting under "Member Discussion."

At the April 1 township board meeting, Supervisor Rogers had added to the agenda "Review of ACLU press release and letter to the Township Clerk regarding improper removal of voters" and displayed the letter from the ACLU for all to see. Clerk Skolarus mentioned that she had a binder full of information from the ACLU, Secretary of State, Stand Up Livingston, allegations of voter fraud, articles from the New York Times, etc. She stated that she has complied with the requests from the ACLU, although Stand Up Livingston advised the board that the ACLU was out of line and that the clerk did not have to comply. Clerk Skolarus stated that no voter was denied the right to vote in February.

The Township attorney explained the laws and regulations for removing voters from the voter files, including proper mailings, and that he was concerned that these laws had not been followed. Clerk Skolarus was pointedly asked if she had sent out the proper mailings, and she said she hadn't because she doesn't want to spend the money.

The clerk mentioned that there was one person who voted twice in the February election. She said that the person had voted by absentee ballot, and then again at the polls in person. She said that the poll worker over-rode the poll book entry so the person could vote in person. She also said this happened 5 or 6 times in the State of Michigan. (This is still under investigation.)

I also attended the April 15 board meeting. During member discussion, the clerk was asked if she had met all the deadlines from the ACLU, and she stated she had not.

Deb's report is a noteworthy example of why the League needs an Observer Corps. Local governments should have a light shone on them, so the public is informed of what is being enacted in their communities. The League also needs to be aware, in case something arises which warrants additional action, as in the Genoa Township example.

When asked about her observer experience, Deb stated, 'I originally decided to observe Genoa Township because I live there. I almost didn't go to the March 18 meeting because nothing usually happens! I'm glad I decided to go anyway.'

Lynne Kochmanski
Observer Corps Director

National Popular Vote: 61 More Votes Needed

Last week, Maine became the 18th state to join the National Popular Vote (NPV) Compact. With Maine's four electoral votes, the combined electoral votes of those 18 states, totals 209.

The Electoral College has a total of 538 electoral votes. We need only 61 more to have 270, which is a majority of the Electoral College votes.

The League supports the National Popular Vote Compact because it ensures that each person's vote counts equally. The Presidential candidate who gets the most votes, nationwide, wins the election.

We support getting rid of the Electoral College for the same reason. Since abolishing the Electoral College requires passing an amendment to the U.S. Constitution, we can use the National Popular Vote Compact until that occurs.

When the Michigan Legislature passes the NPV bills, which are currently in House and Senate Committees, Michigan will add its 15 Electoral College votes to the Compact.

We know we have enough votes to pass the bills in both the House and Senate. We need the Leadership to bring them to the floor for a vote.

Later this month, LWVMI will send an Action Alert to all our members and supporters, asking them to contact their legislators and tell them we support these bills.

Please respond to the Action Alert. It's easy to do and takes only a few minutes.

The candidate who wins the majority of the popular vote nationwide, should win the Presidential election. That how democracy works!

Susan Smith
LWVMI Lead, National Popular Vote

The logo features the text "National Popular Vote!" in a bold, red, sans-serif font. A large, blue checkmark is positioned to the right of the word "Vote!".

National Popular Vote!

Court Approves MICRC House Map

Court Approves MICRC Final House Map

The Federal District Court approved the MICRC's final House map, Motown Sound, on the advice of the Reviewing Special Master. The Court did not consider the House map submitted by the Drawing Special Master.

This was a real victory for the Commission and for the people of Michigan

who passed a ballot amendment giving the right to draw the redistricting maps to the citizens of Michigan.

The Motown Sound map can be viewed on the Commission's website, www.michigan.gov/MICRC.

Court Ordered Redrawing of Senate Maps

As part of their December 2023 ruling, the Federal District Court found the Senate maps for Districts 1, 3, 6, 8, 10 and 11 unconstitutional under the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution because race was too big a factor when the MICRC drew the maps for those districts.

Court Approved Senate Remedial Plan

On April 15, 2024, the Court approved the Senate Remedial Plan that had been submitted jointly by both parties. The Court ordered the following timeline:

- May 22, Draft Proposed Maps due to the Court
- June 21, Public Comment on Draft Proposed Maps ends
- June 27, MICRC Final map due to Court
- July 5, Plaintiffs file objections to Court
- July 12, MICRC files response to objections with the Court
- July 12, Reviewing Special Master submits his report on Commission's work
- July 19, Parties may file briefs commenting on Report
- July 26, Court will adopt a remedial Senate district plan

Ordered MICRC to hold at least one Public Hearing in Detroit.
Agreed to delay decision on whether to appoint Special Drawing Master for Remedial Senate Districting Plan, as requested by the Commission.

Ordered MICRC to pay Drawing Special Master \$40,000 for his work in preparing the Remedial House Districting Plan.

Two Sets of Public Hearings

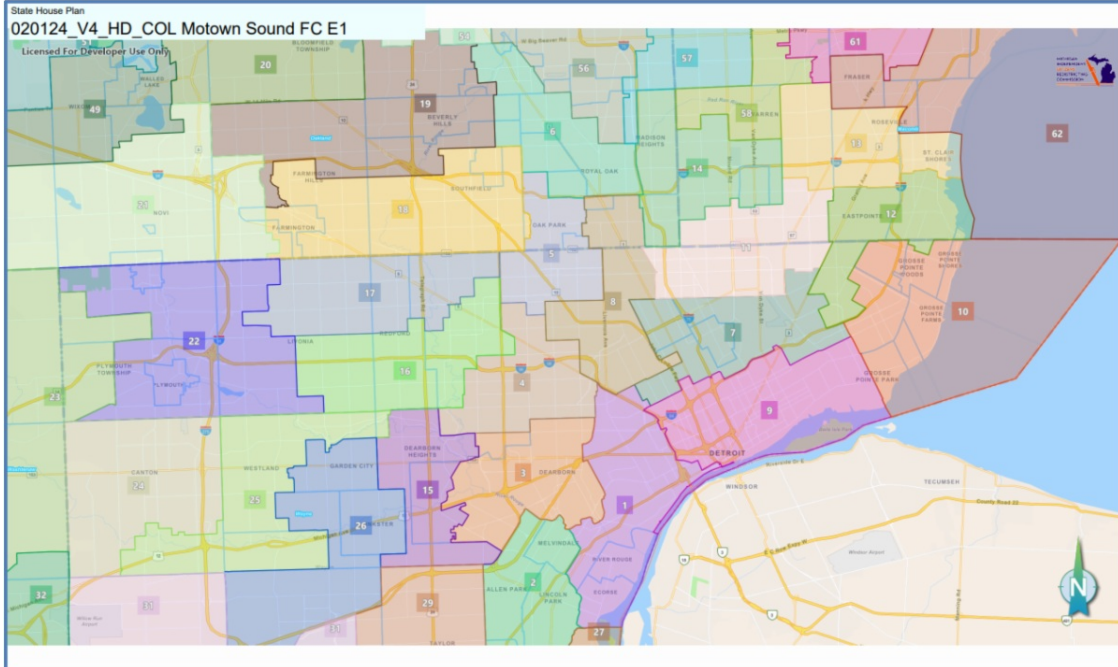
The Commission has scheduled the following Hybrid Public Hearings, 10:00 am -3:00 pm and 4:00-7:00 pm, to receive public input on drawing maps:

- May 7 in Macomb County
- May 8 in Oakland County
- May 9 at Wayne State University

The Commission has scheduled the following Hybrid Public Hearings in Detroit to receive public input on draft proposed maps:

- June 11, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm and 4:00 – 7:00 pm
- June 12, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm and 4:00 – 7:00 pm
- June 13, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm and 4:00 – 7:00 pm

Susan Smith
LWVMI Redistricting Chair



Membership Leaders Network

The Membership Leaders' Network on April 10th heard a presentation by JoAnne Cook, an active member of the Grand Traverse Band of the Ottawa / Chippewa Indians, on how to be an effective ally with the indigenous community. Her advice included the following:

1. Educate yourself about the history, culture, and issues indigenous peoples face.
2. Actively listen and amplify indigenous voices, share their work, and promote their initiatives.
3. Respect indigenous protocols and spaces: ask permission to participate.
4. Support indigenous-owned businesses and artists fostering economic empowerment.
5. Advocate for indigenous rights including land rights, clean water, access to quality healthcare and education.
6. Engage in reconciliation initiatives: attend workshops, cultural events, and volunteer with indigenous organizations.

To engage with indigenous peoples about voting, identify a member of the band that regularly communicates through a newsletter and offer to contribute an article on the topic. Start simply and expect that it will take time to build trust and interest that can lead to higher voter turnout.

This program was organized by Patty O'Donnell a member of the LWV of Leelanau County and the LWVMI DEI Team. There were several handouts including a Native American History Timeline, and a book list with the indigenous perspective that were shared with the recording that was sent to the Membership Leaders' Network. If you did not receive it or would like to be included in future meetings, contact MerriKay (moburkey30@gmail.com).

Our May 8th Membership Leaders' Network will include a discussion with Linda Mahan, a former LWV Shur Fellow and coach, who communicates with

membership chairs from across the country from her home state of Colorado. A link will be sent a week before the meeting.

MerriKay Oleen-Burkey
LWVMI Membership VP

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

There will be two more opportunities to attend Detroit Disability Power (DDP) Workshops on conducting polling location accessibility audits:

On May 21st at 3PM, DDP will be repeating its virtual training “Equitable Poll Access: All About the Questionnaire Used to Conduct Accessibility Audits.” To RSVP, please visit bit.ly/MayPollAuditWS and secure your virtual spot.

On June 14th at 3PM, DDP will be holding their final virtual training on the full auditing process, “Equitable Poll Access: Conducting Poll Accessibility Audits in Your Community” RSVP for that at bit.ly/JunePollAuditWS.

If your League has conducted polling location accessibility audits or is planning to at an election later this year, please contact MerriKay (moburkey30@gmail.com) so we can tell DDP about your work.

MerriKay Oleen-Burkey
LWVMI Membership VP

Support League Capacity!

A 2023 LWVUS survey of the capacity of State Leagues concluded that we are doing incredible mission-focused work with a very thin infrastructure. Most of us League volunteers regard that as an amazing feat!



To bolster the basis for our ambitious work, please consider making a donation to LWVMI rather than or in addition to the LWVMI Education Fund.

The difference is that LWVMI is a 501c4 nonprofit, so donations to it are not tax deductible. Donations to the LWVMI Education Fund, a 501c3 nonprofit, are tax deductible. The LWVMI Education Fund typically garners more donations than does LWVMI.

LWVMI fosters a strong network of local Leagues in areas including membership, leadership, communication, finances, insurance, governance and advocacy. Only with a thriving network of local Leagues can we successfully offer voter service, education and protection under the auspices of the LWVMI Education Fund.

You may have recently done your taxes and realized that it was not prudent to itemize deductions. If that is your situation, please consider supporting LWVMI!

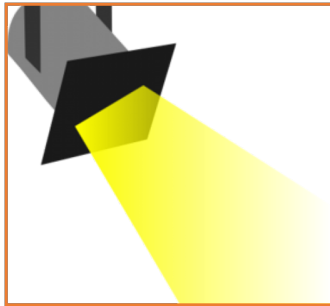
To donate online, visit <https://lwvmi.org/donate-support-the-league-and-our-mission/>.

Checks may be sent to LWVMI, 600 W. Saint Joseph Street, Ste. 3G, Lansing, MI 48933-2288.

To make a gift through direct transfer of IRA or 401(k) assets or a transfer of stock, please contact LWVMI at 517-484-5383.

For information on planned giving, see <https://lwvmi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/BelleBrothertonPamphlet2015.pdf>

Thank you for your support!



Local League Spotlights

The LWV of Eastern Upper Peninsula hosted the Michigan Deputy Secretary of State, Aghogho Edevbie, on March 25th for a captivating public meeting at Lake Superior State University. He addressed topics pertaining to voting and actively responded to audience queries, offering insightful perspectives on the democratic process.

The LWV of Leelanau County held its 2024 book read discussion on April 17th with the book, *The Bill of Obligations – The Ten Habits of Good Citizens*. The author, Richard Haass, is an experienced diplomat and currently president emeritus of the nonpartisan Council of Foreign Relations. He puts forward these 10 Habits as important for the future of US democracy.

The LWV of Grand Traverse Area celebrated “March is National Reading Month” with a program on “From Publication to the Public: A Library Book’s Path to the Reader.” Presenters included Michele Howard, Director of Traverse Area District Library, Stephie Luyt, Elementary Library Coordinator for Traverse City Area Public Schools, and Karrie Zeits, a governmental law attorney. Discussion included the process of publication, library selection, censorship and book banning.

Local Leagues

Berrien/Cass Counties

Copper Country ([with Gogebic County Geographic Unit](#))

Dearborn/Dearborn Heights

Delta County

Detroit

Eastern UP MAL State Unit

Flint Area

Grand Haven Area

Greater Grand Rapids Area

Grand Traverse Area ([with Crawford County Geographic Unit](#))

Grosse Pointe

Holland Area
Jackson Area
Kalamazoo Area (with Calhoun County Geographic Unit)
Lansing Area
Leelanau County
Lenawee County
Livingston County
Macomb County MAL State Unit
Manistee County
Marquette County
Midland Area
Mt. Pleasant
Northeast Michigan (formerly Alpena County)
Northern Lower Michigan
Northwest Wayne County
Oakland Area
Saginaw County
Troy
Washtenaw County

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

LWVMI Leadership 2023-2024

Co-President: Paula Bowman (NW Wayne County)
Co-President: Denise Hartsough (Kalamazoo Area)
VP Voter Services: Judy Florian (Grosse Pointe)
VP Advocacy: Judy Karandjeff (Lansing Area)
VP Program: Maria Woloson (Oakland Area)
VP Membership: MerriKay Oleen-Burkey (Kalamazoo Area)
Secretary: Carla Barrows-Wiggins (Oakland Area)
Treasurer: Tom Wells (Grosse Pointe)

Directors

Voter Services: Carolyn Vertin (Tecumseh/Lenawee)
Advocacy: Connie Mitchell (Dearborn/Dearborn Heights)
Membership/DEI: Shirley Madden (Manistee County)
Observer Corps: Lynne Kochmanski (Washtenaw County)
Membership/DEI: Cathy McAdam (Grosse Pointe)
League Links: Courtney Winell (Greater Grand Rapids Area)
Director at Large: Charles Thomas Jr. (Detroit)

Calendar

April 2024

[Arab American Heritage Month](#)

National Volunteer Month

April 22: Earth Day

April 24: [Media Literacy to Navigate AI Workshop](#) | 7:00 pm

April 25: [Voter Service Network Meeting](#) | 7:00 pm



May 2024

Asian American Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Heritage Month

Jewish American Heritage Month

Mental Health Awareness Month

May 8: Membership Leaders Network Meeting | 7:00 pm

May 11: LWVMI Board Meeting

May 12: Mother's Day

May 14: Firearm Safety Network Meeting | 7:00 pm

May 16: Environmental Network Meeting | 11:00 am

May 16: Local and State Presidents Monthly Meeting | 7:00 pm

May 20: 31st Anniversary of the [National Voter Registration Act](#)

May 23: Voter Service Network Meeting | 7:00 pm

May 27: Memorial Day

All LWVMI meetings are posted on [LWV Only page](#) of our website with links added when available.

Connect with us!

League of Women Voters of Michigan

Phone: 517-484-5383

Email: office@lwvmi.org

Website: lwvmi.org

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

Instagram: [#lwvmich](https://www.instagram.com/lwvmich)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/LWVMichigan>

League of Women Voters of Michigan | 600 W. St. Joseph Street 3G, Lansing, MI 48933

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