



League Links

January 2026

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President's Message

Because this issue comes out on MLK Day 2026, we want to take a moment away from the noise of our current times, and remember one of our great leaders from the recent past, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. We reflect on his unwavering commitment to justice, equality, and the power of collective action. Dr. King reminded us that democracy is strongest when every voice is heard and every vote is valued. His legacy challenges us to continue the work of building a more inclusive, equitable society—one grounded in nonviolence, civic participation, and hope. With these values as our guide, we can build a more perfect union. It will take courage, dedication, patience, and sacrifice, but future generations are counting on us. The League has dedicated itself to these values for 105 years, and we will not be deterred.

As we begin our work this election year, let's reflect on our nation's history, challenges, and progress to help strengthen our resolve to persevere in our work.

We hope you are all rested, recharged and ready to defend our democracy and empower voters.

In League,
Lynne Kochmanski and Denise Hartsough
LWVMI Co-Presidents



Voter Service Updates

Project Manager Opportunity

LWVMI is seeking a Project Manager to coordinate the Board of Canvassers Observation Program for the 2026 election cycle, building on the successful model used since 2022.

The Project Manager coordinates all aspects of the program: training, materials, scheduling, communication with local clerks, communication with League leads and volunteers, data collection, shift report monitoring, and final reporting.

The Project Manager will also serve as liaison with the VOTE411 Director and the printer to edit/finalize the print Voter Guide. The Project Manager is an independent contractor paid from May-December 2026. For more information, please contact Judy Florian, VP for Voter Service.



Accessibility Audit Help Needed

Detroit Disability Power (DDP) is seeking volunteers to support accessibility audits in preparation for the 2026 elections. Audits will be conducted in both August and

November, with the goal of completing as many audits as possible statewide. DDP will provide instruction that includes:

- Auditor training
- An overview of the rights and responsibilities of election challengers (including credentials that allow access to designated areas within polling locations)
- Training on completing the audit survey

The training takes approximately two hours and is required to ensure auditors are well prepared to provide accurate, reliable information. DDP will also supply audit-day materials and support so auditors can have their questions and concerns addressed during the process. If you're interested, please contact Judy Florian or Lynne Kochmanski.

Know What You Sign Presentations

To date, 14 local Leagues have delivered presentations in their communities—thank you for helping spread the word! There is still time to participate; the deadline for presentations is February 28.

To receive reimbursement, all local Leagues must complete the KWYS Report Form (at this [link](#)) for each presentation. Payments will be sent to local Leagues in March.

Please be sure you are using the current version of the presentation and script. These were both revised due to the pause in petition signature gathering for Rank MI Vote. If you don't have the updated materials, please be sure to contact Judy Florian.

New US Postal Service Postmark Rule

Some of you may have heard about the new United States Postal Service (USPS) rule and its potential impact on ballots. Under this new rule, which took effect December 24, 2025, mail might not receive a postmark on the day the postal service takes possession of the mail.

*According to the USPS, the rule **does not change any existing postal operations or postmarking practices but is instead intended to improve public understanding of postmarks and their relationship to the date of mailing.***

In Michigan, Absentee Voter Ballots (AVB) must be received by the clerk by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day and therefore are not dependent on postmarks. This postmark rule will not affect most Michigan voters. It is always a best practice for voters to mail their AVB well in advance of the election (we emphasize no later than two weeks prior to Election Day) to ensure timely receipt and counting of the AVB. If there is concern that there is not enough time to mail an AVB before the election, voters are encouraged to return their ballot at a local drop box, deliver their ballot in person to their early voting site (if available), their polling place on Election Day, or to their clerk's office.

While [news stories](#) covering the issue have indicated that there will be an impact on voting, the **only** potential impact in Michigan will be for ballots under the Military and Overseas Voters Empowerment (MOVE) Act. MOVE ballots must be postmarked by Election Day and received by the clerk by 6 days after the election.

MOVE ballots and also mailed voter registration forms are areas where we are continuing to seek guidance. Stay tuned!



Voter Service Network Meeting

Mark your calendars! Our next Voter Service Network meeting will be held on January 22 at 7:00 p.m. You can register for the meeting at this [link](#). An agenda will be sent out the week of January 19.

Judy Florian
VP for Voter Service
voterservice@lwvwm.org
313-402-6786

Unite and Rise 8.5 Mobilization Network Updates

We hope local Leagues are working on building partnerships as part of Unite and Rise 8.5, Playbook 3. There have been two excellent webinars so far. If you have not had a chance to view these, here are the links:

November 18, 2025 Recording:

[Session 1: Laying the Groundwork: Building Sustainable Partnership](#)

(Passcode: v0%3i=S3)

December 16, 2025 Recording:

[Session 2: National Partnerships for Local Engagement](#)

(Passcode: #?t8wTLc)

Important upcoming date and registration link:

January 20, 2026 (3pm ET)

[Session 3: Partnering for Voter Engagement Ahead of 2026 Elections](#)

Next Unite and Rise 8.5 Network Meeting is February 4 on Zoom at 7pm

Registration link: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/lw3XW_LsTSqFm05-oYx9Qg We will talk about Playbook 4, which will be released the end of January.

Unite and Rise!

LWVUS Program Planning

LWVUS Program is the education and advocacy platform that League membership adopts at each biennial LWV National Convention. As shared in the [Leaders Guide to LWVUS Program 2026-28](#), the goal of the LWVUS Program Planning process is to achieve a collective agreement around how LWV will move our mission forward over a two-year period.

During January and February 2026, local leagues have been asked to schedule Program Planning meetings within their membership or board meetings and respond to the LWVUS online survey. Read the pdf of the [Program Planning Survey](#).

Local leagues will be asked to consider whether to adopt the New, Proposed Campaign – Women Defend Democracy: Democracy Under Siege. The campaign has six prongs:

- Voting Rights
- Election Protection
- Redistricting
- Individual Liberties
- Immigration
- The Presidency

Leagues will also be asked to consider suggested additions to the LWVUS public policy positions in [Impact on Issues](#). These proposals could take the form of a suggested study or concurrence with an existing position from a local or state league.

LWV Colorado and LWV Washington are asking local and state Leagues to recommend and adopt their positions by concurrence when completing the survey.

The two positions proposed for concurrence are:

- Concurrence with the LWV Colorado position on [Religious Freedom Study](#)
- Concurrence with the LWV Washington position on Protecting Immigrant Rights

To read more about the LWVUS program/campaign, including guidance on the timeline, background and resources, refer to the [Leaders Guide to LWVUS Program 2026-2028](#). The survey is open now and must be completed by March 10, 2026.

Ellen Lafferty
LWVMI VP of Program

LWVMI Advocacy Committee Report

In January the League of Women Voters of Michigan Advocacy Committee recommended, and the Board approved, the following actions:

JANUARY 11, 2026 - SUPPORT FOR DATA CENTER WATER RESTRICTIONS

LWVMI supports SB 761, 762 and 763, which would limit water withdrawals by data centers, require the MPSC to report on energy and water usage by data centers, and bar water utilities from passing on the infrastructure costs to accommodate data centers to residential customers.

JANUARY 11, 2026 - SUPPORT FOR FAIR CHANCE ACCESS TO HOUSING

The League supports HB 5355 and SB 738 which would prohibit landlords from requiring rental applicants to disclose criminal records on an application, require landlords to first evaluate rental applicants without information on criminal record, and require landlords to conduct an individualized assessment to withdraw an applicant's approval due to a serious felony conviction.

JANUARY 11, 2026 - "DPOC" PROPOSALS ARE BAD FOR VOTERS AND CLERKS

LWVMI joined other pro-voter groups urging Michigan local and county governments to resolve to oppose the Documentary Proof of Citizenship (DPOC) ballot proposals that would add unnecessary red tape and suppress citizens' right to vote. Read the letter [here](#).

Update January 14, 2026: On December 14, 2025, LWVMI DENOUNCED HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE VOTE TO DISAPPROVE \$645 MILLION IN FUNDING FOR VITAL STATE PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

Update as of 1.14.26: Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel issued a formal opinion concluding that a "disapproval" mechanism allowing one legislative committee to unilaterally terminate funding previously appropriated by the full Legislature and the Governor is unconstitutional. A video from Attorney General Nessel discussing the opinion can be found [here](#) and is available for public use. Attorney general opinions are binding on state agencies unless overturned in court. House Republicans have asked for a ruling that the action was constitutional. The matter is pending.

Sandra Sorini Elser
LWVMI VP for Advocacy
advocacy@lwvmi.org

Let Voters Vote!

LWVMI is hosting a panel discussion on **January 21 at 7pm** via Zoom to advocate for and educate the public about **LET VOTERS VOTE! Why Proposed Documentary Proof of Citizenship is Needless Voter Suppression.**

Hear experts address:

- Security and Integrity of Voting
- Unnecessary Red Tape of documentary proof of citizenship
- Impact on Voters in Michigan and across the US

Our panelists include:

- Christopher Thomas, former Michigan Director of Elections, who will focus on the Michigan perspective on citizen voting.
- Melanie Macey, Policy and Government Affairs Director at Promote the Vote, who will focus on ballot proposals in Michigan that would require documentary proof of citizenship.
- Valencia Richardson, Voting Rights attorney at the Campaign Legal Center, who will focus on the federal SAVE Act and the federal perspective.

All are welcome. Please share with others.

Register Here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/ZfQFdcF4R32HB7MpzfaA5w>




Let Voters Vote!

**Wednesday
January 21, 2026
7pm on Zoom**



To Register:



Or at www.lwvmi.org

**Why Proposed Documentary Proof of Citizenship (DPOC)
Is Needless Voter Suppression**


Presented by
The League of Women Voters of Michigan

All Are Welcome!


Hear experts address:

- * **Security and Integrity of Voting**
- * **Unnecessary Red Tape of DPOC**
- * **Impact on Voters in Michigan & across the US**


Panelists



Christopher Thomas
Former Michigan
Director of Elections



Melanie Macey
Policy & Government Affairs
Director at Promote the Vote



Valencia Richardson
Campaign Legal Center,
Voting Rights Attorney

Questions? Contact Advocacy@LWVMI.org

Thank You for Your Donation

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you! While I have yet to review the final donation numbers, you clearly responded to our fall appeal for donations in high numbers. As usual the LWVMI Education Fund received more donations than did LWVMI, which includes operations, but both showed an increase in donations. When the final figures are in, I will give you a more detailed breakdown.



The State League only does an appeal twice a year, once in the fall and once in the spring. We do not constantly hammer you with donation requests, so it is particularly gratifying when the work that LWVMI is doing is recognized. As we go forward, rest assured that your donations will be put to good use defending democracy in the State of Michigan. Thank you once again.

Carrie Moon-Dupree
LWVMI Development Director

Youth Engagement Pass Through Grants for Local Leagues

LWVMI is providing an opportunity for local Leagues to encourage youth engagement in League voter service activities for the 2026 election year. Grant funds are available to offer honoraria to local youth (ages 16-25) who are interested in working with local Leagues.



We are asking local Leagues to submit a proposal on how they plan to engage youth. Proposals must be submitted **no later than April 30, 2026**. We will provide funds not to exceed \$1500*, so your proposal cannot exceed that amount. The proposal should contain specifics on what area(s) your League will focus for youth engagement and potential costs. The time period covered will be from May-November 2026. Your local League may determine other areas of youth engagement that are not covered in the above. We are open to any ideas that include voter service activities.

During this very important and critical election year, we encourage local Leagues to apply for this funding and actively engage youth in their communities. With the passage of MI PA 258 (requiring provision of voter pre-registration and registration information to students ages 16 and older in high schools), schools will be looking for ways to comply.

Questions can be directed to Lynne Kochmanski,
copresidentkochmanski@lwvmi.org or Judy Florian, voterservice@lwvmi.org.

Observer Corps

2026 will be an important year in politics. Having observers attend local municipal meetings and report on actions taken at those meetings will allow voters to stay current on decisions their local politicians are making. The Michigan League currently has 14 local leagues with Observer Corps. All groups could use help covering various local meetings: everything from the local city council or county/township board meetings to meetings of local school, library and hospital boards.

Anyone interested in finding out more about Observer Corps should contact their local league president or myself, Tina Pawlak, Observer Corps Director at directorpawlak@lwvmi.org and I am happy to answer any questions you may have about Observer Corps. Training and resources are provided to

people who wish to be observers. Anyone interested is invited to attend the next state-wide meeting of Observer Corps, which will take place on **Wednesday, January 28 at 3 pm** via Zoom. Click [here](#) for the link for the meeting.

Tina Pawlak
LWVMI Observer Corps Director
directorpawlak@lwvmi.org



Membership Network Notes

January Meeting:

At the January 14 meeting we talked about what to store on our Google Drive, the concerns about membership, the upcoming February 11 program on immigration featuring Marcelo Betti of Immigration Law & Justice Michigan, and local League highlights. Michigan membership is down since last January, and Membership leaders highlighted a number of concerns with retaining members and noted ways to counter the downward trend.

Local League Highlights:

As usual, there is a lot going on around the state.

- Jackson Area League is working with the Girl Scouts of America (GSA) and other youth groups to collaborate on activities, such as the Friendship Tea, and to mentor youth.
- Saginaw County League is partnering with other groups and working on a youth project to get more youth involved with community government. In addition, they donate books to the county jail, especially for children of incarcerated women.
- Lansing Area League held a Pasta & Politics event with a speaker from a lobbying firm talking about state politics. It's held at a restaurant in a separate room with a limited menu, and many members enjoyed attending. They also have an upcoming meeting with a women's suffrage group, a planned volunteer fair, observer corps activities, and collaboration with groups in rural areas.

- Lenawee County League holds an annual White Elephant party for membership. They've recently moved the event from December to January since December is frequently too chaotic for many people. It's a great opportunity for fun and laughs.
- Leelanau County League holds new member meet & greets every other month to welcome new members and suggested it would be good to give books to disadvantaged families.
- Berrien/Cass Counties League held a holiday celebration at a local college with wine sampling & hors d'oeuvres.
- Flint Area League has been working on Observer Corps in the 4 counties they serve. They're also educating people on VOTE411, doing high school voter registration, and have planned a trip to a musical because we all need some fun things.
- Detroit League is holding a fund raiser at the Detroit Repertory Theatre, March 1, 2026, at 2pm; they're starting a new advocacy group; and in December they had a game night at a member's home.
- Copper County just finished their annual program planning. Their top issue is the jail that needs to be replaced. They are also looking at land use for data centers, death with dignity, and flock security cameras.

Finishing Up:

Please join us at the February meeting, a program on immigration challenges, and if you have questions or would like more information, please contact me at the email below. If you would like to receive minutes from the meetings, let me know and I can add you to the Membership Leaders Network roster.

Carla Barrows-Wiggins
VP for Membership
Membership@lwvmi.org

February Special Event on Immigration Challenges ALL Members Welcome

The Membership Leaders Network meeting on February 11 at 7:00 pm will feature Marcelo Betti, Legal Director for Immigration Law & Justice Michigan, talking about immigration challenges and the impact on Michigan. You can send questions you would like addressed during the event to the email address below.

Please register [here](#) for this event. An email with the Zoom link for the meeting will be sent to all registrants closer to the meeting.

If you encounter any problems registering, or would like to submit questions, please email Carla Barrows-Wiggins at Membership@LWVMI.org.

LWVMI Covers Insurance Costs

Heads up, Budget Committees! As you plan for 2026-27, please know that LWVMI will cover insurance costs for local Leagues in 2026-27.

This includes General Liability, for which you have been paying 90 cents per member with your Per Member Payment (PMP or LWVMI dues) invoices, as well

as the optional Directors and Officers Liability coverage, for which each League paid \$100/year.

This is one of the ways that LWVMI supports the capacity of local Leagues!

Please contact Denise or Lynne with questions.

Communications Network Returns!

Are you your League's webmaster? Or Voter Editor? Or social media person? Good news! LWVMI's Communications Network is making another GO of it, brought to you by Paula Bowman (NW Wayne County) and Laura Sabo (Marquette County). We welcome anyone who has anything to do with LWV communications, and those who want to learn more. Please fill out the attached [short form](#) (only 5 questions) by January 26 so we can send you an invitation to the first Network meeting.



Local League Advocacy Network January 27, 2026, at 3pm via Zoom

The next LWVMI Local League Advocacy Network meeting will be on January 27, 2026, at 3pm via Zoom.

All League members are welcome. You can access the meeting link [here](#).

Scott Allison of Promote the Vote will discuss safe and easy techniques for interrupting signature gatherers spreading disinformation about the voter suppression ballot petitions requiring documentary proof of citizenship.

We will follow with a round robin discussion of your Advocacy questions and what is happening in your League on Advocacy.

For questions contact Sandy at advocacy@LWVMI.org

Hope you will join us.

Sandra Sorini Elser, LWVMI VP of Advocacy

LWVMI Environmental Network January 2026 Report

The next LWVMI Environmental Network meeting will be on **January 22 at 11am** via zoom. We will have a general round robin discussion of what our local Leagues are doing on environmental protection and climate change. The meeting link can be found [here](#).

All League members are welcome! For questions contact Sandy at Advocacy@LWVMI.org.

We are excited about our upcoming Educational Presentation on Data Centers planned for early March. All League members and the general public are invited. Date, time and Zoom link will follow soon. Panelists will include Charlotte Jameson of the Michigan Environmental Council. Topics will include:

- Tax incentives that draw data centers to Michigan
- The benefits to Michigan of data centers
- How to ensure residential water and power rates don't increase due to the cost of data center infrastructure
- How to ensure data center water usage does not affect Michigan's surface and ground water
- How to ensure data center energy use complies with Michigan's clean energy law

More information will follow soon.

Sandra Sorini Elser
LWVMI VP of Advocacy

Local League Treasurers Meeting

All local League treasurers are invited to join their peers for LWVMI updates and to exchange tips on **Wednesday, February 25 at 7pm on Zoom**.

Please check the calendar at www.lwvmi.org for the meeting link closer to the meeting date.

Tom Wells
LWVMI Treasurer

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 2025-2027

Co-President: [Denise Hartsough](#) (Kalamazoo Area)
Co-President: [Lynne Kochmanski](#) (Washtenaw County)
VP Voter Service: [Judy Florian](#) (Grosse Pointe)
VP Advocacy: [Sandra Sorini Elser](#) (Washtenaw County)
VP Program: [Ellen Lafferty](#) (Livingston County)
VP Membership: [Carla Barrows-Wiggins](#) (Oakland Area)
Secretary: [Maria McCarville](#) (Saginaw County)
Treasurer: [Tom Wells](#) (Grosse Pointe)

Directors

VOTE411: [Anne Jackson](#) (Washtenaw County)
Advocacy: [Connie Mitchell](#) (Dearborn/Dearborn Heights)
Observer Corps: [Tina Pawlak](#) (Holland Area)
League Links: [Courtney Winell](#) (Greater Grand Rapids Area)
DEI Team: [Sheryl Theriot](#) (Detroit)
Development: [Carrie Moon-Dupree](#) (Northwest Wayne County)
Director at Large: [Charles Thomas Jr.](#) (Detroit)

Calendar

January 2026

January 19: Martin Luther King Jr. Day
January 21: [Let Voters Vote! Virtual Presentation](#) | 7:00 pm
January 21: 16th Anniversary of Citizens United Decision
January 22: Environmental Network Meeting | 11:00 am
January 22: [Voter Service Network Meeting](#) | 7:00 pm
January 22: 53rd Anniversary of Roe v. Wade Decision
January 27: Local League Advocacy Meeting | 3:00 pm
January 28: Observer Corps Network | 3:00 pm



February 2026

[Black History Month](#)

February 4: Unite and Rise 8.5 Network Meeting | 7:00 pm
February 10: Advocacy Committee Meeting | 2:00 pm
February 11: Immigration Challenges and How Michigan is Impacted | 7:00 pm
February 14: LWV Turns 106!
February 14: LWVMI Board Meeting | 9:30 am
February 17: President's Day
February 26: Anniversary of SCOTUS Upholding 19th Amendment

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/>

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

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