

THE BULLETIN

League of Women Voters Kalamazoo Area

October 2017 • Vol. 64 No 2

President's Column

by MerriKay Oleen-Burkey

STAND UP: PROTECT THE VOTE

The League of Women Voters has always been about voting rights. Our history began with the ratification of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote. While millions of women achieved voting rights with that Amendment, millions more continued to be disenfranchised. Women of color were subjected to the same voter suppression measures men of color had endured for years like poll taxes, literacy tests and grandfather clauses. It took another 45 years of organizing and protests against the voter suppression measures before a semblance of full enfranchisement came with the legislative milestone, the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

However, the struggle did not end there as Spanish-speaking and other non-English speaking minorities fought and gained access to bilingual ballots in polling places as enacted in the 1975 extension of the Voting Rights Act. Each of these milestones was a marker in voting rights but not the end of the journey.

Today we are in an era of a voter fraud commission that is working to undermine confidence in elections, claiming millions voted illegally in 2016. Despite no proof, the activities of the commission as well as that of state legislators who continue to target voting rights, are causing more citizens to be disenfranchised. Minority voting is being suppressed through state voter ID laws: reducing early voting, purging voter lists, eliminating polling places and increasing wait times, and even requiring proof of citizenship to register to vote. Voting is a basic building block of democracy and we need to protect it

On **October 16th**, our League is participating in a statewide action to bring together disenfranchised citizens in our community at a forum called, "Stand up: Protect the Vote." Our speaker, **Joan Hunault** from LWVMI, will cover voting rights, voter suppression that lowers turnout, and ways to protect the vote. Local league member, **Alison Parsons**, is organizing this event but she needs volunteers to help make the forum a success. If you can help, please contact Alison by email: alisonparsonsmi@gmail.com.

Calendar

OCTOBER 2017

- 9 LWVKA Board Meeting**
Walden Woods Condominium Clubhouse
5:30 pm Dine
6:00 pm Meeting
- 11 Voter Registration**
Project Connect, Kalamazoo Expo
- 21 Redistricting Presentation**
Friendship Village
2:00 pm

NOVEMBER 2017

- 7 Election Day**
- 13 LWVKA Board Meeting**
Walden Woods Condominium Clubhouse
5:30 pm Dine
6:00 pm Meeting

DECEMBER 2017

- 11 LWVKA Board Meeting**
Walden Woods Condominium Clubhouse
5:30 pm Dine
6:00 pm Meeting

Note: Board meets on 2nd Monday. Members are welcome to attend all Board Meetings. Contact (269) 270-3302 and moburkey30@gmail.com

Thank You Voter Registration Volunteers

by Voter Registration Team

Many thanks to all of those who volunteered at Voter Registration events during Voter Registration Month in September. **Beth Amidon, Sue Kovats, Paula Aldridge, Kay Anderson, Norma Stancati and Deb Dunstone** registered voters at the KVCC Texas Township campus. **Karen Eddy, Fran Eckenrode, Barb Dircks, and Martha Cohen** staffed the event at the KVCC Arcadia Campus. Bronco Bash volunteers included **Mary Baggerman, Marie Rogers, Denise Hartsough, Elizabeth Seiwert, and MerriKay Oleen-Burkey**. National Voter Registration Day was organized by **Connie Micklin** at Ministry with Community and her other volunteers included **Marti Fritz, MerriKay Oleen-Burkey, and Marie Rogers and Silvia Rogederer**. The League was very visible in the community this month thanks to you, and we received many words of appreciation from the community for holding these voter registration events. Well done!



Marie Rogers and Silvia Rogederer

LWVMI Update: Redistricting

The LWVMI Board has been asked why we are not working with **Voters Not Politicians** (VNP). We hope the following information is useful.

Across the country, other state Leagues have been involved in redistricting ballot proposal campaigns. Each successful campaign was supported by a coalition of organizations that represented the diversity of their state.

Therefore, LWVMI worked for many months with representatives from VNP, NAACP, ACLU and Michigan League for Public Policy (MLPP) to try and form a coalition that could support a redistricting ballot proposal.

On July 17, 2017 the LWVMI Board approved our joining the proposed coalition.

VNP's Leadership Team has not approved its joining the proposed coalition.

Here's what happened as we tried to form the coalition:

- As a part of those meetings, the groups (LWVMI, VNP, NAACP, ACLU and MLPP) negotiated a Memo of Understanding (MOU) that described how the coalition would function. It included criteria for determining which organizations would be represented on the Steering Committee, the responsibilities of the Steering Committee, how decisions would be made, etc.
- Each of the groups' representatives agreed to take the MOU back to our respective organizations for approval so that we could each sign it at our next meeting on July 25, 2017.
- On July 17, 2017, the LWVMI Board authorized President Judy Karandjeff to sign the Memo of Understanding (MOU) which had been negotiated over many weeks by members of the proposed coalition, including VNP.
- On July 25, the groups met to sign the MOU, but VNP didn't have enough votes from their leadership team to sign. At the meeting, Sue Smith and Katie Fahey, President/Treasurer of VNP, agreed to meet on July 28 to discuss what transition steps would need to be taken if the MOU were implemented. It was hoped this transition plan would help to answer some of the VNP Leadership Team's questions.
- On July 28, Sue, Katie and others met to develop a transition plan. During the meeting, Katie agreed to send the proposed coalition members a revised

MOU that the VNP leadership team could agree to, before the groups' next meeting on August 4.

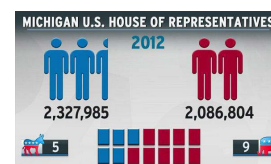
- On August 4, Katie emailed a proposed work plan instead of a revised MOU. The work plan included working on an MOU in the future.
- Meanwhile, VNP had submitted six changes to the ballot proposal they had originally submitted to the Secretary of State on June 24. The June 24 proposal had been prepared by volunteer lawyers based on the ideas of many groups including VNP and the League. The other groups in the proposed coalition were not consulted on any of the subsequent changes.
- On August 4, the other groups concluded that since VNP was not ready to sign an MOU that it would be best to postpone trying to form a coalition. VNP announced its intention to move forward.
- Thus, LWVMI decided to join the proposed coalition, but VNP did not. As Katie stated on the Off the Record TV program, VNP is a "coalition of people."
- LWVMI continues to be committed to forming a coalition that represents the diversity of our state.
- In February 2018, after the ballot proposal petitions are certified, the state Board will decide whether to support the proposal.

“ Across the country, other state Leagues have been involved in redistricting ballot proposal campaigns. Each successful campaign was supported by a coalition of organizations that represented the diversity of their state. ”

Pending Action by US Supreme Court on Gerrymandering

by Paula Manley

The U.S. Supreme Court will hear *Gil v. Whitford* which deals with gerrymandering in Wisconsin on October 3rd. LWVUS has submitted an amicus brief in this important case which may have impact on other states with gerrymandering issues.



An example of gerrymandering —one party wins 52.7% of the votes yet still only has 5 of the 14 seats in the U.S. Congress

Kalamazoo City Commission and Mayor Candidate Forum

By KC Miller

The League along with the Eastside Neighborhood Association, the Edison Neighborhood Association, Kalamazoo County Advocates for Senior Issues (KCAI), and the Vine Neighborhood Association sponsored a Candidate Forum for the City of Kalamazoo Commission and Mayor. It was held at the Edison Neighborhood Association venue on Thursday, September 14, 2017, 6-7:30pm. There was 100% Candidate participation and over 60 people in attendance. Public Media Network recorded it so that it will be available for on line viewing. MLive also covered it online that Friday morning and in print the following Sunday.



Moderator
Sabrina Pritchett-Evans



Between 40-50 people attended the forum

Thank you to everyone who assisted with this. Specially thanks to **Sabrina Pritchett-Evans** for moderating, **Janet Jones** for keeping time, and **Connie Ferguson, Denise Hartsough** and **Paula Manley** for screening audience questions.

The next Candidate forum is Thursday, September 28, 2017, 6-7:30 pm at the Portage Senior Center for the Portage City Council and Mayor.



Candidates (left to right) Leona Carter, Charley Coss, Eric Cunningham, Erin Knott, and Jack Urban

New Members

By Chris Kuthe

Please welcome new members to the LWVKA. These members have joined in the last month and are anxious to be involved. If you have a project that you need help with, call or email to invite them.

Keshia Dickason
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Carolyn Sturgis
2580 Northville Dr. NE
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Directory Updates

Please make the following additions/edits to your LWVKA member directory. If you have a change in home address, phone or email, please contact me at ckuthe57@yahoo.com or call 269-501-3305.

Tamara Carpenter has a new phone number:
269-251-9076

Lisa Fuller has a new address:
7582 3rd Street
Mattawan, MI 49071

GR Unit Update

By Elianna Bootzin

We've had a productive first week of voter registration at the Gerald R. Ford Museum during ArtPrize. We'll be there **through October 8th**, so stop by and say "hi" while you are out viewing art in Grand Rapids!

We are looking forward to our next social gathering at 7 pm on Monday **October 2nd** at the Grand Traverse Pie Company (28th Street across from Woodland Mall). We'll compare our experiences from voter registration with existing national, state and Kalamazoo League positions on election administration.

If you missed last spring's redistricting presentation, or would like a refresher, come to the Kent District Library's Comstock Park branch on Monday **October 23rd** at 6:30 pm. LWVMI President **Judy Karandjeff** returns to the greater Grand Rapids area to provide information on this timely topic.





LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

Kalamazoo Area

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MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK!

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Find upcoming events, alerts and other announcements!

The Bulletin is published monthly by the League of Women Voters Kalamazoo Area