

THE BULLETIN

League of Women Voters Kalamazoo Area

November 2017 • Vol. 64 No 3

President's Column

by MerriKay Oleen-Burkey

Campaign Finance Reform: What Can We Do?

In addition to its work on protecting voting rights, the League of Women Voters continues its long history of advocacy for comprehensive campaign finance reform that began in 1974. Let's review our position:

The League of Women Voters of the United State believes that the methods of financing political campaigns should ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and allow maximum citizen participation in the political process.

This position is applicable for all federal campaigns for public office and also may be applied to state and local campaigns. At the national and state level the League's advocacy has taken the form of lobbying, testimony, grassroots action and work with the media.

“...the bill went further, specifically allowing candidates to solicit unlimited contributions to supposedly “independent” Super PACs.”

In September, here in Michigan, representatives of the League of Women Voters of Michigan, the Michigan Campaign Finance Network, among others, testified against a bill nearing a vote in the Senate that would set state regulations for independent expenditure committees, more commonly known as Super PACs. While supporters argued the bill codifies the Supreme Court's 2010 Citizens United court decision, the bill went further, specifically allowing candidates to solicit unlimited contributions to supposedly “independent” Super PACs.

So, for example, an individual donor can give up to \$1,000 to a state House candidate's campaign. The candidate can then ask the same donor or a corporate entity to give a much larger check to a Super PAC that is also going to support the candidate. Super PACs accept corporate contributions, making the original sources of their money very difficult to trace. The League's representatives testified that the language in the bill that allows candidates to coordinate their fundraising goes beyond the Citizens United decision and calls into question the true independence of the spending. Although not all of our local Representatives and Senators voted for this bill, it passed both houses of the legislature and was signed by the Governor, making it state law.

If you are interested in learning more about the grassroots efforts to stop the domination of big money in our elections, and what you can do, come to the program, “Keeping the American Promise — Kalamazoo” being held at the WMU Bernhard Center on **Thursday, November 16** from 7-9 pm. Panel members for this public forum will include **Ben Gubits**, Associate Director of American Promise, **Judy Karandjeff**, President of LWVMI, and **Craig Mauger** from the nonpartisan, nonprofit, Michigan Campaign Finance Network. See more information about the presentations on page 3. **Join us!**

Calendar

NOVEMBER 2017

- 6 Grand Rapids Unit**
Social Gathering
Grand Traverse Pie Company
28th Street, 7 pm
- 7 Election Day**
- 13 LWVKA Board Meeting**
Walden Woods Condominium Clubhouse
5:30 pm Dine
6:00 pm Meeting
- 16 Keeping the Promise — Kalamazoo**
WMU Bernhard Center
7-9 pm

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



Find upcoming events, alerts and other announcements!

LWVMI Historical Note

by Paula Manley

Clara Bryant Ford, Henry Ford's wife, was inducted into the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame as an historical inductee on October 18, 2017. Judy Karandjeff, LWVMI President, reports it was noted in the biographical information that in 1921 Clara Ford served on the Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Michigan.

LWVUS Supports We The People Democracy Reform Act

by Paula Manley

The League of Women Voters of the U.S. is one of several organizations supporting **We The People Democracy Act**, which was recently introduced in the House and Senate by Senator **Tom Udall** (D-NM) and Representative **David Price** (D-NC). The Act is a number of democracy reform proposals to address issues, such as campaign finance, voting and redistricting.

LWVUS President Chris Carson stated:

“At a time when our politics appear divided, Senator Udall and Representative Price offer a clear path forward for improving our democracy. This legislation will elevate the voices of the American people so we can be heard over the special interests and partisan bickering. This bill will strengthen our elections with automatic and online registration, enabling more voters to participate in our great democracy. This is a step forward all elected officials should support on behalf of the American people.”

Thanks to Voter Guide Volunteers

From Debbie Phillips, Jules-Isenberg-Wedel, Elizabeth Barney & Terry Hluchyj

Thank you volunteers! This year’s LWVKA Voter Guide team would like to thank **Mary Baggerman, Ruth Caputo, Martha Cohen, Connie & Steve Ferguson, Rochelle Habeck, Jennie Hill, Janet & Keith Jones, Chris Kuthe, Cheryl Lyon-Jenness, Connie Micklin, KC Miller, Betty Ongley, Meredith Place, Tanya Potter, Janet Scarrow, Elizabeth Seiwert, Mabel & Jochanan Stenesh, Renee Szostek, Gail Walter,**

Leilani Way, Sara Wick, and Diane Worden for their assistance in distributing printed copies of the 2017 General Election Voter Guide to various businesses and organizations in Kalamazoo and Portage. The distribution of Voter Guides is a massive undertaking and we couldn’t have done it without the generous donation of your time and effort.

Protect the Vote Project

by Alison Parsons

On Monday, October 16, LWVKA paired up with Mt. Zion Baptist Church, and ISAAC (Interfaith Strategy for Advocacy and Action in the Community), to bring a presentation on voting rights to the citizens of Kalamazoo. LWVKA represented Michigan in a 16-state, *Public Advocacy for Voter Protection Project* (PAVP) supported by the national League of Women Voters Education Fund. Our event was introduced by LWVKA president, **MerriKay Oleen-Burkey** and led by LWVMI President, **Judy Karadjeff**. Attendees at the event consisted of LWVKA members as well as leaders from the community, including a pastor, the President of ISAAC, **Doug King**, members of the NAACP, and **Adrian Vazquez**, Interim Executive Director of El Concilio (formerly the Hispanic American Counsel).

The intent of this educational evening was to raise awareness regarding the history of voting rights and efforts underway in the country to undermine these rights. We are seeing our “right to vote” become our “fight to vote,” in this state and across the country through purging of voter lists, eliminating polling places, increasing wait times, requiring photo IDs, and demanding documentary proof of citizenship. These efforts have denied thousands their right to vote, and in turn have threatened our democracy.

After this initial PAVP presentation, LWVKA plans to continue sharing this information with interested groups around the community. If you know of a group that would like to learn more about protecting the vote, please email alisonparsonsmi@gmail.com or call (808) 457-6661.

Special thanks to League members who attended and helped to make this a successful event, including **MerriKay Oleen-Burkey, Denise Hartsough, Fran Eckenrode, Debbie Phillips, Debbie Werner** and **Nancy Owens**.

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK!

“This legislation will elevate the voices of the American people so we can be heard over the special interests and partisan bickering”



New Members & Updates

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.

Patricia Griswold
41 Maryland NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-644-4257
tisggriswold4@gmail.com

Colleen Gurczynski
2564 Seymour Drive
Shelbyville, MI 49344
616-824-8085
cetuokkola@gmail.com



Updates

Please make the following 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.

Carolyn Sturgis' email should be: ckvvs519@gmail.com

Tanya Potter has a new address:
2639 Hunters Woods
Kalamazoo, MI 49048

Yolanda Mitts has new contact information:
5045 Green Meadow Road
Kalamazoo, MI 49009
269-290-2164
ygmitts@gmail.com

50 Year Members

By Chris Kuthe

Have you been a member of the League of Women Voters for 50 years or more? (This could be a member of any League not just LWVKA.) Did you join the League in 1967 or before? As a 50 year member you no longer have to pay dues and you will still be a voting member of the LWVKA. Please contact Chris Kuthe at 269-501-3305 or ckuthe57@yahoo.com to be recognized as a 50 year member of the League.



LWVKA Member

Grand Rapids Unit

by Elianna Bootzin

Our volunteers **registered 82 voters** at the Ford Museum during ArtPrize. We are so grateful to all who came out to share their valuable time. Volunteers also sent applications home with visitors who requested them for friends and relatives and answered lots of questions about the registration and voting process. Kudos to all for a job well done!

Thanks also to LWVKA member and LWVMI Treasurer **Denise Hartsough** for driving up on a very soggy evening to give a second Redistricting Presentation at the Comstock Park Library on October 23rd. The small but lively crowd had much to add to the discussion.

We are looking forward to our next social gathering at the Grand Traverse Pie Company on 28th Street across from Woodland Mall at **7 pm on Monday November 6th**. We'll review the highlights from the voter rights presentations that took place on October 16.



GRAND RAPIDS MICHIGAN



Keeping the American Promise Event

by Paula Manley

Concerned about the influence of money in our political races? The League of Women Voters of Michigan is co-hosting **"Keeping the American Promise"** in Kalamazoo on Thursday, **November 16, 2017** at the WMU Bernhard Center 1903 W. Michigan Avenue from 7-9 pm. **Judy Karandjeff**, LWVMI President, will present the League's perspective on money in politics and campaign finance reform. **Craig Munger**, Director of Michigan Campaign Finance Network, will give information about money spent on political campaigns in Michigan. **Jeff Clements** from *The American Promise* organization will discuss why his group supports a 28th constitutional amendment for campaign finance reform. While the League does not support the proposed 28th Amendment, it believes it is important to offer an educational forum regarding concerns for the influence of money in our political races.

“ While the League does not support the proposed 28th Amendment, it believes it is important to offer an educational forum regarding concerns for the influence of money in our political races ”

What You Should Know About Per-Member Payment (PMP)

by Jessica Reiser



Currently the dues for an individual member of the League of Women Voters of Kalamazoo are **\$60 per year**. Of this amount \$32 are paid to LWVUS, \$23 are paid to LWVMI and **\$5 remain with LWVKA**. If dues are paid online using PayPal, which assesses 2.2% plus \$.30 per transaction totaling \$1.62, only \$3.38 remains with LWVKA. Please keep this in mind if you choose to pay on-line. Donations, grants and sale of our wares are the other sources of our funding.

When you join the League of Women Voters of Kalamazoo, you become a member of the National

League (LWVUS) and the State League (LWVMI) as well. The structure of the League parallels the representative system of government. Our local, state and national governments are dependent one upon the other; the base is the individual citizen. The League levels are also interdependent.

The Per-Member Payment (PMP) is the way Leagues satisfy the requirement to support the national and state level of the three-level organization. The PMP is a major source of income for LWVUS and LWVMI, providing partial support for advocacy, membership and organizational activities, convention and council, and board and committee meetings.

PMP is only a quarter of LWVUS/EF funds, but it provides the seed money that allows LWVUS/EF Board and staff to raise the other 75%. A significant amount of the funds raised externally are returned to individual state and local Leagues in the form of pass-through grant funds, membership and leadership programs and advocacy and other technology tools.

“ If dues are paid online using PayPal, which assesses 2.2% plus \$.30 per transaction totaling \$1.62, only \$3.38 remains with LWVKA ”



Advertise in the Bulletin!

Are you or someone you know interested in reaching a discerning local audience with your advertising message? For only \$50, your business card-sized ad will appear in six issues of the Bulletin during the year. Not only will you reach over 150 highly engaged, community-oriented League members in the Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids area, your advertising dollars also help support the League's important work!





LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

Kalamazoo Area

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MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK!

City of Portage Mayoral Forum



Photo's from the Portage Mayoral forum on September 28. To watch a video of the Forum go to: <https://vimeo.com/236955461>. The Portage City Council forum video can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/236950653>. There is also a video of the Kalamazoo City Commission forum. It is available here: <https://vimeo.com/236467355>.

Links to these forums are also at www.lwvka.org.

Thanks to Public Media Network for recording and posting these important events!

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