

THE BULLETIN

League of Women Voters Kalamazoo Area

February 2018 • Vol. 64 No 5

President's Column

by MerriKay Oleen-Burkey

Founders Day – LWV 98th Birthday

On February 17th we will celebrate the 98th birthday of the League of Women Voters with a Founders Day Brunch. Many of you know the League's history but for our newer members, let's review a few of the highlights:

- The League of Women Voters (LWV) was formally organized in Chicago on February 14, 1920, to help 20 million women carry out their new responsibilities as voters and advocates for public policy issues.
- **In the 1920s**, the LWV sponsored its first "Get Out the Vote" campaign.
- **In the 1930s**, LWV members worked successfully for enactment of the Social Security and Food and Drug Acts.
- **In the 1940s** the LWV was invited to serve as a consultant to the US delegation at the United Nations Charter Conference. To this day, the League has continued its presence at the United Nations through its one official and two alternate observers.
- **In the 1950s** the League of Women Voters Education was established to encourage the active and informed participation of citizens in government and to increase understanding of major public policy issues.
- **In the 1960s** in response to the growing civil rights crisis, the LWV directed its energies to support equal access to education and employment.
- **In the 1970s** the LWV adopted broad national positions on water, air, waste management, land use and energy. They also amended the national bylaws to allow men to become full voting members of the League.
- **In the 1980s** the LWV contributed significantly to the passage of the Voting Rights Act Amendments of 1982 and enactment of the historic Tax Reform Act of 1986.
- **In the 1990s** the LWV led a national coalition that ran a grassroots drive to enact the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), known as the "motor voter" bill, allowing citizens to register at motor vehicle agencies and elsewhere.
- **In the 2000s** the LWV focused its legislative work under a "Democracy Agenda" that included redistricting, civil liberties, campaign finance reform, voting rights for the District of Columbia residents, election administration reform, and ethics and lobbying reform.
- **In the 2010s**, the LWV launched "Power the Vote," a campaign opposing measures to restrict access to voting that helped bring cases to court.

From the beginning the League has been an activist, nonpartisan, grassroots organization whose leaders believed that citizens should play a critical role in advocacy. To read more of the LWV history, go to <https://www.lwv.org/about-us/history>

Hope to see you at the Founders Day Brunch!

Calendar

FEBRUARY 2018

Youth Voter Month • Black History Month

- 5 Grand Rapids Unit Social**
Grand Traverse Pie Co., 28th St.
7pm
- 12 LWVKA Board Meeting**
Walden Woods Condominium Clubhouse
5:30 pm Dine
6:00 pm Meeting
- 17 LWV's 98th Birthday Founders' Day Brunch**
Friendship Village
- 19 Presidents' Day**

MARCH 2018

Women's History Month

- 5 Grand Rapids Unit Social**
Grand Traverse Pie Co., 28th St.
7pm
- 8 International Women's Day**
- 12 LWVKA Board Meeting**
Walden Woods Condominium Clubhouse
5:30 pm Dine
6:00 pm Meeting
- 17 LWV's 98th birthday Founders' Day Brunch**
Friendship Village
- 19 Presidents' Day**

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!

Make Democracy Work in Michigan!

by Denise Hartsough

Excitement and energy are surging with the news of two ambitious moves by your State League!

The League of Women Voters of Michigan is lead plaintiff in a federal lawsuit to end unfair, partisan gerrymandering in our state's Congressional, State Senate and State House districts.

The lawsuit asks the federal court to declare the current districts to be unconstitutional partisan gerrymanders and to ensure that the districts are redrawn in a fair fashion. On December 27, 2017, U.S. District Judge Denise Page Hood signed an order allowing a three-judge panel to hear the case.

This case is a companion to the Wisconsin case (*Gill v Whitford*), which the U.S. Supreme Court has heard and not yet decided. The Michigan lawsuit complements the ballot proposal for an independent redistricting commission, a proposal which LWVMI has endorsed.

How can you help? Financial donations are needed. Go to www.LWVMI.org to donate, as well as to read more about the lawsuit and the wording of the complaint filed in federal court.

The second bold effort to make democracy work in Michigan is **Promote the Vote!**

A coalition including LWVMI seeks to gather enough signatures to put a Voting Rights Amendment on the November ballot. The amendment would allow registered voters to vote absentee, vote early, and vote a straight party ticket. The amendment would protect the secret ballot and ensure the accuracy and integrity of elections by requiring audits of results. You can find more details about the proposed amendment at www.lwvmi.org.

Coalition partners include the American Civil Liberties Union, NAACP of Michigan, NAACP of Detroit and the Michigan League for Public Policy.

How can you help? Volunteers are needed to gather signatures on petitions. Training starts February 18th and signature gathering begins March 3rd. Watch your email and future editions of the Bulletin for details!

GR Unit Updates

by Elianna Bootzin

Sunday, January 14th saw a cozy gathering of seven at the home of **Mary Blauw**.

These intrepid ladies outlined goals for the year to include increasing our visibility in the community, growing our membership, increasing our knowledge of Grand Rapids specific elected roles, and focusing on voter registration and preparing for the November election. Stay tuned for more details!



James Ward

GRAND RAPIDS MICHIGAN

Social gatherings resume Monday, February 5th at the Grand Traverse Pie Company on 28th Street across from Woodland Mall. See you there at 7 pm!

LWVUS NEWS

by Paula Manley

Wylecia Wiggs Harris, LWVUS CEO, recently announced her resignation. She has been the CEO since 2015 and is taking a position as CEO of American Health Information Management Association in Chicago in February. She stated: "While this news is bittersweet, I look forward to continuing to see the League do incredible work on behalf of voters and communities in the lead-up to our 100th year and the critical elections to come. Leading this storied organization has been the opportunity of a lifetime, and I am particularly grateful for the strong bonds I built with our network of dedicated state leaders nationwide." The LWVUS board is conducting a search committee for a new CEO.

LWVUS staff and League members stood on the Supreme Court steps recently to support the right to vote — use it or lose it. The *Husted v. APRI* (A. Philip Randolph Institute) case addresses Ohio voter roll purge. LWVUS filed an amicus brief last year.

You can receive the latest news from LWVUS by requesting the League Update which is emailed to members biweekly. Simply email database@lwv.org to be added to the League Update mailing list.

PROMOTE the **VOTE**

Let's have a voting system that works for all Americans

www.promotethevote.org

“Volunteers are needed to gather signatures on petitions. Training starts February 18th & signature gathering begins March 3rd.”

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK!

Program Planning

by Frances Eckenrode

The annual Program Planning meeting took place on Saturday, January 20 at the Parchment Library. Participants included **Ruth Caputo, Courtney Winell, Alison Parsons, Denise Hartsough, MerriKay Oleen-Burkey, KC Miller, Connie Ferguson, Kym Mulhern, Francine Bruder, Angela Erdman, Connie Micklin, Judy Sivak, Sue Roskom, Aedin Clements, Terry Hluchyj, and Fran Eckenrode.** Potential new member **Marlene Camacho-Ochoa** also participated. This year Local League and US League positions were reviewed. Two additional issues were addressed: a proposed revision of the state Agricultural/Seasonal Worker Position using the concurrence process, and a request from the Illinois LWV to support elevating the existing LWVUS position abolishing the Electoral College to a national program focus for the 2018-2020 biennium.

Outcomes:

For local LWVKA positions, there were no recommended actions on Government and Social Policy. Discussion of LWVKA Natural Resources policy led **Ruth Caputo** to question the level of planning and preparedness in the event of natural disasters. The group thought that the best place for disaster planning might be in the Intergovernmental Cooperation Position. Ruth agreed to investigate disaster planning policy at the US and state League levels and provide feedback to the board.

This year, LWVUS recommends continuation of the Campaign for **Making Democracy Work** with Leagues working on Voting Rights, Improving Elections, Campaign Finance/Money in Politics, and Redistricting. LWVUS requested that we not add new national studies or reviews to the agenda for the 2018-2020 biennium. In light of the request, the group did not recommend new actions. The group also did not support elevating the existing LWVUS position on abolishing the Electoral College to a national program focus at this time as requested by the Illinois LWV. It was agreed that abolishing the Electoral College is important to Making Democracy Work and LWVKA will include a comment in our report to this effect, requesting that the position be elevated to a secondary level and receive more focus in the future.

Regarding the proposed revision of the state Agricultural/Seasonal Worker Position, the LWVKA agreed to concur with the revised wording: "A person should be allowed to apply for or secure and renew a driver's license or obtain an identification card regardless of immigration status." However, there was much discussion about the use of the term "driver's license"

without any qualifier such as "alternative" or "restricted" or the use of the term "driving privilege card" in place of "driver's license" which more accurately describes what undocumented persons would receive. The information from the discussion is being submitted to the LWVMI Vice-President for Program along with our response about concurrence.

Founders Day Brunch

by Frances Eckenrode

The annual Founders Day Brunch will be held on February 17, 2018 at Friendship Village, 1400 N Drake St in Kalamazoo, from 10 am to noon. The charge is \$16.50 for League Members. There is no charge for potential members or new members who joined the League in 2017. Members are encouraged to bring guests who might be interested in joining the League. Make checks payable to LWVKA and mail to: Fran Eckenrode at 148 Bulkley St., Kalamazoo, MI 49008, or contact Fran Eckenrode at feckenr@gmail.com. Kindly RSVP by February 6, 2018. Friendship Village Staff will be available to provide Village tours after the Brunch.

LWVKA Annual Meeting

Save the date! The 2018 LWVKA Annual Meeting will be held April 30 at the Park Club in Kalamazoo. **Judy Karandjeff** will speak about redistricting and the related lawsuit initiated by LWVMI.

Betty Lee Ongley Honored

by Paula Manley



Betty Lee Ongley

Long time LWVKA member Betty Lee Ongley has received many honors through the years for her community involvement. Most recently, a Portage City councilwoman and her husband donated land to the city of Portage for a 11.1-acre nature preserve to be named for Betty Lee. As the first female mayor of the city of Portage from 1973-79, Betty Lee helped establish the Portage Creek Bicentennial Park. She was quoted in the Kalamazoo Gazette as saying "Land is very important to me" and that she was honored to have the preserve named after her.



“ This year, LWVUS recommends continuation of the campaign for *Making Democracy Work* with Leagues working on Voting Rights, Improving Elections, Campaign Finance and Redistricting. ”



Member Directory Updates

By *Chris Kuthe*

New Member Directories for 2018 were emailed or mailed to all current members in January. If you did not receive a new directory, please contact me. After a new directory goes out we often receive several address corrections and they are listed below. 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.

Cyndy Keesler and Robert Weir's address should be:
713 Regency Sq Apt #205
Kalamazoo, MI 49008

Sue Kovats' email should be:
wdkovats@chartermi.net

Veronica MacDonald's email should be:
vsmacdonald@gmail.com

Lyda Stillwell has a new address:
4236 Persian Wood Drive
Kalamazoo, MI 49006

Jessica Grant has moved out of state

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.

Bonnie Biggs
912 Arlington St. NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49505
616-481-5221
biggs.bonnie@gmail.com

Fran Bruder
6130 Rothbury St
Portage, MI 49024
269-599-1174
mkazoocrew@aol.com

Theresa Chaplin
721 Scottview Drive NE
Comstock Park, MI 49321
248-535-1134
theresa.chaplin@yahoo.com

Thank You Voter Registration Volunteers

By *MerriKay Oleen-Burkey*

Voter Registration at the KVCC Semester Kick-off was made possible with volunteers: **Martha Cohen, Paula Aldridge, and Moira Macleod.**

Memorials

by *Paula Aldridge*

In Memory of
Lola Dodge

A donation was made to LWVKA
from *Michael Dodge*

In Memory of
Jeff Burkey

About 10 individuals made donations to
Ministry with Community

In Memoriam

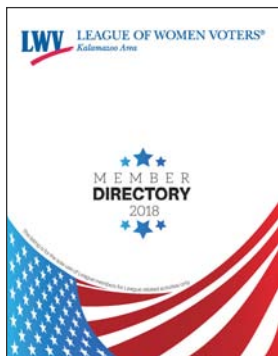
Ed LaForge, a member of the LWVKA, and a long time public servant died on Friday, January 19th. Ed was a former 10-year Kalamazoo City Commissioner and a state representative, 60th District, for 6 years. While a legislator, Ed co-authored the state's Early Education Childhood Education bill. For his entire life, Ed fought for social justice and human rights. We send our condolences to Ed's wife, Ann, and their family.

Thank You

On behalf of the Burkey family, I want to thank the League of Women Voters for the memorial gift given to Ministry with Community for my husband, **Jeff Burkey**. He supported their mission of empowering people to make positive life changes, and we are pleased that some of their work will be done in Jeff's memory.

Thank you again.

—*MerriKay Oleen-Burkey*



Welcome

NEW MEMBERS!

Nominating Committee Seeks Future Board Members!

The Nominating Committee invites members who have an interest in serving on the LWVKA Board to contact **Kay Anderson** at kan-der314@aol.com or 269-649-2461 for more information. Board members can be elected or appointed, be members-at-large, or be responsible for specific areas of interest to the League. LWVKA welcomes and encourages your involvement!

LWVKA Member Dues Assistance Policy

LWVKA Member Dues Assistance Policy was approved by the board at their January 2018 meeting.

Purpose:

The purpose of providing assistance is to cover all or part of dues for League of Women Voters membership for those who are unable to afford the \$60 cost, and to provide the dues to those donating through LWVUS believing they were joining the local League. We will cover the first year dues of new members in this situation.

Participation:

There will be an expectation of participation in League activities during the year for members receiving this assistance.

Description:

A description of the assistance program will be included in renewal notices to members, announced at Founders Day and the annual meeting, and be included in the next printing of the League brochure and contribution envelopes, as soon as practical.

The description will read as follows:

LWVKA offers a Member Assistance Policy to cover all or part of dues for individuals unable to afford the annual fee. To apply for this assistance, please contact us at president@lwwka.org.

Online Renewal & Donation Funds

We have recently made changes to our online membership renewal by increasing the membership dues to cover our PayPal fees. For the convenience of paying online you will pay \$2-\$3 extra when renewing your membership. We hope you find this a reasonable amount for this convenience.

If you prefer to renew by mail without the added fees, you can download the Membership Form from the website and send it with your check to:

LWVKA
PO Box 2160
Kalamazoo, MI 49003-2160

We have also made changes to our donation page. When making a donation online, you must now designate a fund. It is important for our accounting purposes that you designate a fund — and important for your tax records as well, as the General Fund is not tax deductible.

General Fund allows the LWVKA to cover basic operating costs, including the monthly Bulletin, program flyers, office supplies, telephone and postage; and may be used for issue advocacy. *Contributions are not tax deductible.*

Education Fund supports the Voter Guide, candidate and issue forums, voter registration and educational programs. Contributions are tax-deductible.

Endowment Fund, also tax-deductible, assures continued LWVKA educational programs.



Happy Birthday

98

Leagues of Women Voters!

02.14.1920-02.14.2018



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

Kalamazoo Area

P.O. Box 2106

Kalamazoo, MI 49003-2106

LWVKA Board for 2017-2018

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moburkey30@gmail.com

Fran Eckenrode
VP Programming
eckenr@gmail.com

Paula Aldridge
Treasurer
paula.mae.aldridge@gmail.com

Aedin Clements
Secretary
aedinclements@gmail.com

Denise Hartsough
Past President
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jahill231@yahoo.com

Chris Kuthe
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Millie Lambert
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Karen Thomas
karen.thomas@wmich.edu

LWVKA Education Fund Board of Directors

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