

THE BULLETIN

League of Women Voters Kalamazoo Area

April 2017 • Vol. 63 № 7

President's Column

by Denise Hartsough

Gerrymandering, redistricting, politicians selecting their voters...interest is growing in changing Michigan's approach to redrawing the districts from which candidates run for office. This process occurs once every ten years based on figures generated by the Census. As 2020 and the next Census get closer, attention to redistricting will continue to increase.

Some of you will recall that in 2015 the League of Women Voters of Michigan (LWVMI) organized presentations on redistricting at community town hall and civic group meetings. Many of you may have noticed that a group called Count MI Vote in late February this year announced its intention to mount a petition drive to end gerrymandering. Here is an update from the LWVMI about that announcement:

The League supports an independent commission as a solution to the problems with Michigan's current redistricting process. LWVMI is aware that other groups are thinking about a ballot proposal campaign. At this time [2.24.17], the League has not endorsed a ballot proposal or joined a coalition to do so. The LWVMI Board will evaluate the possibility of joining a ballot campaign based on the proposal and the probability of the campaign's success.

LWVMI has already set up additional training on redistricting. Soon more League members will be prepared to raise awareness of just what redistricting is, and how deeply it affects the quality of representative government. Watch the Bulletin for upcoming opportunities to learn more!

Congrats to GR Liaison on New Job!

Elianna Bootzin has been selected as the new Executive Director of Neighbors of Belknap Lookout, a neighborhood association on the northeast side of Grand Rapids. The organization provides public safety and civic leadership development as a City of Grand Rapids Community Development funded Program; the monies originate from the Federal Community Development Block Grant.

Annual Meeting

By Fran Eckenrode

The Annual Meeting will be held at the Park Club on May 1. We will meet at 5:30 and dine at 6pm. Invitations will be arriving via snail mail next week.

Our speakers will be **Christina Wolbrecht**, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Notre Dame, and **J. Kevin Corder**, Professor of Political Science at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. Corder and Wolbrecht are the authors of "Counting Women's Ballots, a Comprehensive Assessment of Women's Voting in the 1920s and 1930s".

Calendar

APRIL 2017

- 10 Rain Gardens**
Kalamazoo Public Library
6:30pm-8:00pm
- 15 Equal Pay Day**
Capitol, Lansing
- 18 LWVKA Board Meeting**
The Park Club, 219 W. South St.
5:30 pm Dine
6:00 pm Meeting

MAY 2017

- 1 LWVKA Annual Meeting**
The Park Club, 219 W. South St.
5:30 pm
- 6 Meet & Greet**
Ford Museum, Grand Rapids
- 10 Infant Mortality Program**
Kalamazoo Public Library
6:30pm-8pm
- 11 Women of Achievement Awards**
Radisson Hotel
5:30pm
- 19-20 LWV State Convention**
Lansing

JUNE 2017

- 6 LWVKA Board Meeting**
The Park Club, 219 W. South St.
5:30 pm Dine
6:00 pm Meeting

Note: Board meets on 1st Tuesday. Members are welcome to attend all Board Meetings. Contact 269-599-1801 and denise.hartsough@gmail.com



Find upcoming events, alerts and other announcements! Plus, when you "like" and "share," you help promote LWVKA's work and introduce us to a new audience!

Call for LWVMI Convention Delegates

by Paula Manley

“ This is a great opportunity to meet people from other Leagues around the state, learn more about League activities and conduct important business. ”

The League of Women Voters of Michigan 2017 Convention will be held May 19-21 at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing. This is a great opportunity to meet people from other Leagues around the state, learn more about League activities and conduct important business. Consider joining the LWVKA delegation and be a part of an exciting, educational weekend. We have two openings for delegates.

A pre-convention workshop will be offered on Friday afternoon May 19 from 1-4pm. The Convention formally begins that evening and runs until Sunday May 21 at noon. Speakers include **Chris Hackbarth** from the Michigan Municipal League who will discuss revenue distribution from the state and **Zoe Clark**, Program Director for Michigan Radio and co-host of *It's Just Politics*. **Sue Smith**, LWVMI Vice President of Program and a member of the LWVUS Nominating Committee, will present a transformation of the LWVUS.

Even if you can't get away for a Friday afternoon workshop, you can still be a delegate and come to Lansing Friday evening. There is a workshop and networking opportunities Friday afternoon and early evening, but the convention does not formally convene until 8pm. Considering joining the LWVKA delegation? Contact Denise Hartsough at denise.hartsough@gmail.com.

Equal Pay Day

By Paula Manley

“ It is the day that women's wages catch up with what men earned the previous week ”

Celebrate the 54th year of the Equal Pay Day Act of 1963 on the State Capitol steps in Lansing Tuesday, April 25, 2017 from 12:30m to 1:30 pm. The Equal Pay Act is the federal law amending the Fair Labor Standard. It is the day that women's wages catch up with what men earned the previous week. Red is worn as a symbol of how far women and minorities are “in the red” with their pay. According to 2016 Census data, full time working women in 2015 earned about 80% of the earnings of full time working men.

LWVMI is one of the co-sponsors of this event. The rally on the Capitol steps is free and does not require any prior registration, but the legislative briefing in the morning has a charge and requires pre-registration. For further information, check out the link on the LWVMI website at lwvmi.org.

Voter Registration at the Kalamazoo High Schools

by MerriKay Oleen-Burkey

With coordination assistance from **Terri Aman** of the Kalamazoo Public Schools, the LWVKA held voter registration events at Loy Norrix High School, Phoenix High School, Kalamazoo Central High School and the Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center in March. Terri arranged for us to register students who would be eligible to vote in the May 2 election. That gave the voter registration volunteers the opportunity to ask for student commitment to vote. We'll follow-up with reminders in April.

Thank you to the volunteers who assisted with voter registration this month:

Beth Amidon, Mary Baggerman, Martha Cohen, Karen Eddy, Denise Hartsough, Sara Wick, and Cyndee Wilson!

BUDGET PROPOSAL LWVKA GENERAL FUND Budget Year July 2017-June 2018	
REVENUES	
Individual, Business Contributions	3,000.00
Membership Dues	8,500.00
Meetings Income	3,100.00
Wares Sales	180.00
Advertising in Bulletin	50.00
Interest Income	120.00
TOTAL REVENUES	\$ 14,950.00
EXPENDITURES	
Website	130.00
Office Supplies	100.00
Postage, PO Box	100.00
Printing and copying	60.00
Telephone	480.00
Bulletin Expenses	1,200.00
Donations	360.00
National PMP	4,464.00
Michigan PMP	3,351.00
PayPal fees	65.00
Memberships and dues	50.00
Membership Recruitment	1,200.00
Advocacy	60.00
Meetings costs	2,230.00
Grand Rapids Unit	100.00
National/State Convention	1,000.00
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$ 14,950.00
NET INCOME	0.00

Directory Updates

By Chris Kuthe

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.

Karel Fulton's phone number is 269-200-3019.

Moira Macleod's phone number is 269-626-5409.

Diane Rice's phone number should be 269-615-4589.

Cynthia Smith's phone number is 269-377-4261.

Karen Eddy's email address should be

kareneddy525@fastmail.com

Eileen Schoenfeld's email address should be

benziedoc1@gmail.com

Karl Westra's email address should be

westrakarl@gmail.com

New Members

By Chris Kuthe

Please welcome these new members to the LWVKA. They have all 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.

Elizabeth Barney

1211 Merrill St
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
269-744-1658
liz_barney@yahoo.com

Laurel Horman

6000 Cascade Road
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
lhorman@comcast.net

Linda & Fritz MacDonald

24884 Front Ave
Mattawan, MI 49071
269-808-1190 (Fritz)
269-808-3329 (Linda)
linda_cookmacd@inbox.com

Sue Kovats

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Sue Kovats-Bell

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Jean Runge

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269-626-8523
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Mary Sedlock

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Sandra Steele

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home: 269-220-5186
cell: 517-604-0040
steele24001@yahoo.com



New Members!

Volunteer Opportunities

Please note the opportunities listed below and the contact person and info for each:

- **Register voters**
MerriKay Oleen-Burkey, moburkey30@gmail.com
- **Review LWVKA's website and provide input for its update**
Tamara Carpenter, infinity_productions@mac.com
- **Interview elected officials**
- **Serve as a delegate to the LWV State Convention, May 19-20**
- **Mailing for Women's Equality Day**
- **Host the August 25 Women's Equality Day luncheon**
- **Serve as a guide for September exhibit on women gaining the vote in Michigan**
Denise Hartsough: 269-599-1801
- **Help organize a forum on candidate diversity**
- **Submit a book review to the Bulletin**
Karen Thomas
269-344-5320
- **Take photos at LWVKA events**
- **Help plan events**
- **Help coordinate review of League position**
Fran Eckenrode
269-903-9372
- **Sign up for and respond to alerts from LWVMI and LWVUS to contact elected officials**
www.lwvmi.org and www.lwv.org
- **Recruit a new LWVKA member**
- **Bring a friend to an LWVKA event**
All members



Legislative Interviews

By Paula Manley

Every two years at the beginning of the new Michigan Legislative session, local Leagues interview their senators and representatives. This is an opportunity to discover what issues are important to the legislator and may be addressed in the coming year. It is also a time to get to know your local legislators.

LWVKA has one Senate district and four Representative districts in our area. We typically have two Leaguers schedule an appointment to interview a legislator. LWVMI has provided us with the materials. These interviews are off the record and nothing will be published.

If you are new to the League, we will pair you with an experienced Leaguer. The deadline for completing the interview is June 1, 2017. Wish to volunteer for this opportunity to get to know your legislator? Please contact Denise Hartsough at denise.hartsough@gmail.com.

Philanthropy & Public Services

by Denise Hartsough

The Kalamazoo area enjoys two philanthropic phenomena that have different relationships to State funding. The Kalamazoo Promise does not protect the Kalamazoo Public Schools District from decreasing (in real dollars) funding from the State of Michigan. The City of Kalamazoo's Foundation for Excellence, on the other hand, may help the City cope with decreases (actual and real) in local revenue sharing funds from the State.

As an outgrowth of the LWVKA's study of Government Finance in Michigan for the LWV of Michigan, the local study committee organized a forum on the unique use of philanthropic funds for public services in the Kalamazoo area. On March 13, a panel of experts moderated by **Sabrina Pritchett-Evans** explained the differences between the Kalamazoo Promise and Foundation for Excellence to an audience of 25 at the Kalamazoo Public Library.

First, the audience learned about trends in State revenue and expenditures from **Robert Kleine**, Interim Director of the Michigan State University Center for Local Government & Policy. Kleine served as Treasurer for the State of Michigan from 2006-11. He also served the State of Michigan for ten years as Director of the Office of Revenue and Tax Analysis, where he was responsible for state economic and revenue forecasts and development of state tax policy.

Kleine observed that revenue for the State's General Fund and School Aid Fund has increased by 10.6% since 2000; however, over the same period, the inflation rate was 30%. Business taxes as a percentage of all state taxes have dropped since 2000 from 11.5% to 7.6% in 2017. Michigan's business taxes rank among the lowest of the 50 states: 46th as a share of the Gross State Product, and 48th in state and local taxes as a percentage of total taxes for businesses in the state. Michigan's state and local taxes on personal income put our state at 34th of 50 states, below the national average and below the rates of other Midwestern states (2013 figures).

On the expenditure side, Kleine showed the deep cuts the State has made over the period 2001-15 (figures adjusted for inflation): -9.8% in corrections, -10.7% in health and human services, -17.6% in the School Aid Fund, -41.1% in local revenue sharing, and -48.5% in higher education. An additional stress on funding to K-12 school districts has been the State's recent use of School Aid Fund dollars for higher education. With regard to municipalities, the drop in property values during 2008-12 was so steep that most cities will never fully recover their lost tax base. This is because a cap on taxable value increases prevents taxable value from rising rapidly.

Dr. Michael Rice, KPS Superintendent, explained how the Kalamazoo Promise cannot protect the school district from the State's declining real investment in K-12 education. The Promise pays tuition for post-secondary education of KPS graduates who attend Michigan institutions. This prospect attracts students to the district. KPS, like other school districts, receives State funding based on the number of students enrolled. More students means more State funding.

However, nearly two thirds of the KPS student population lives with low income or in poverty. It takes more funding to educate students from lower-income families than the State provides. The Promise does not give the school district extra funding. Rice reported that since he came to KPS in 2007, the buying power of the district has decreased by 20%, and the district has made \$10 million in cuts.

Laura Lam, Director of Community Planning & Development for the City of Kalamazoo, described the Foundation for Excellence as one tool among several that the City has deployed to deal with decreases in revenue. Prior to receiving the gifts that constitute the Foundation for Excellence, the City issued bonds to control the costs of pensions, and implemented priority-based budgeting to ensure funding of only the most effective efforts. A panel exploring options for increasing revenue made five recommendations to the City Commission, but even if the Commission had adopted all five, the revenue generated would not have been sufficient to cover expenses.

Philanthropists have given \$70 million to the City, which it will use over the next three years to stabilize the City's budget, reduce the property tax rate for City residents, and to address the aspirations of City residents. The City is conducting a process called "Imagine Kalamazoo" to understand the aspirations of residents. Those aspirations include such things as building sidewalks and removal of lead water pipes, basic items that may not immediately come to mind when one hears the term "aspirations." The City's plan for revenue subsequent to the three-year period is to collect donations for an endowment. An endowment will generate revenue indefinitely. The City welcomes donations of any size for the endowment. Some residents will donate the amount they would have paid in property tax, were it not for the Foundation for Excellence.

Attendees left with a greater understanding of the dynamic and different relationships between state government finance and two local philanthropic efforts — the Kalamazoo Promise and the Foundation for Excellence. Thanks to Government Finance Study committee chair **Paula Manley** and members **Ruth Caputo**, **Alison Parsons**, **Kay Perry** and **Diane Worden** for their help with the forum.



Attendees listen to panelists Robert Kleine, Laura Lam and Dr. Michael Rice

Grand Rapids Unit is Ready to Grow after Redistricting Presentation

by Elianna Bootzin

Our March 15 Redistricting event at the Cascade Library was a great success with over 100 people in attendance to hear LWVMI President **Judy Karandjeff's** presentation. She shared the following information with us. Every 10 years Michigan districts are redrawn by the legislature. Whichever political party is in the majority would like to retain power and therefore redistricts to maintain this power. This is like putting the fox in charge of the henhouse; it is a conflict of interest. This gerrymandering results in most districts not being competitive, and policies as well as elections are affected. Where the Michigan public would like to see more money spent on education and roads, funding in these areas have actually decreased between 2003 and 2013 after inflation. The League supports changing the process so that it is fair, transparent, and impartial. There is a broad range of policy options, and Karandjeff recommended the Brennan Center's publication: *A Citizen's Guide to Redistricting*.



“ Over 100 people attended to hear LWVMI President Judy Karandjeff's presentation ”

Upcoming volunteer opportunities in Grand Rapids include voter registration, voter education (Vote411) and legislative interviews. Contact vote411@grlww.org, www.facebook.com/grlww or 616-536-1920 for more details.

School Groups Challenge \$2.5 Million for Private Schools

by Paula Manley

LWVMI is a member of the Council of Organizations and Others for Education about Parochialism. This group is one of ten organizations, including Kalamazoo Public Schools, which are challenging in the Court of Claims recent action by lawmakers to give \$2.5 million to private schools to reimburse for state-required activities like immunizations, background checks and about 40 other activities. The lawsuit claims it is unconstitutional for any taxpayer money to go toward any private school for any purpose. The plaintiffs also claim the reimbursement goes beyond the School Aid Fund provision that allows for reimbursement for “health, safety and welfare” of private school children. Keep your eye on the news for further developments.

*Rain Gardens:
Nature's Water Treatment Plants*

Learn to control the impact of run off from your roof and other impermeable surfaces with a rain garden!

Kalamazoo County Master Gardener and Wild Ones member Ruth Caputo will give a talk on rain gardens sponsored by LWV Lake Michigan Region. Ruth will provide information on how rain gardens work to reduce water pollution. She will also provide “how to” information for making a rain garden.

April 10, 2017
6:30pm
Kalamazoo Public Library

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
Lake Michigan Region

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Interested in reaching a discerning local audience with your advertising message? For **only \$50**, your business card-sized announcement will appear in the Bulletin for at least **6 times** in one year. The Bulletin reaches over 150 highly engaged, community-oriented League members in the Kalamazoo area.



2017 Nominating Committee Slate

by Kay Anderson

The following LWVKA members have accepted nominations for Officers, Directors and Nominating Committee. Members will vote on the slate at the 2017 Annual Meeting on May 1, 2017.

President (1Yr) Merrikay Oleen-Burkey

V.P. Organization (2Yr) open

Secretary (2Yr) Aedin Clements

Board Member (2Yr) Jennie Hill
Sabrina Pritchett-Evans
Alison Parsons

Board Member (1Yr) Millie Lambert

Nominating (1Yr) Kay Anderson
Paula Presler
Jackie Wylie

The current Nominating Committee consists of chair **Kay Anderson**, off-board members **Paula Presler** and **Jackie Wylie**, and Board members **KC Miller** and **Chris Kuthe**.

**Are you politically motivated? Activated? Energized?
Ready to do more? Consider attending LWVKA Board
meetings and being part of the action!**

LWVKA Board for 2016-2017

Officers:

Denise Hartsough,
President
denise.hartsough@gmail.com

Sabrina Pritchett-Evans,
VP Organization
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Fran Eckenrode,
VP Program
feckenr@gmail.com

Paula Aldridge, Treasurer
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Janet Jones, Secretary
janetmjones848@gmail.com

Chris Kuthe,
Membership Chair
ckuthe57@yahoo.com

Paula Manley,
Past President
pjmanley@hotmail.com

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THE BULLETIN is published monthly by the League of Women Voters Kalamazoo Area