

THE BULLETIN

League of Women Voters Kalamazoo Area

May 2016 • Vol. 61 № 8

President's Column

by Denise Hartsough

Truly competitive elections hinge on redistricting. That is the rather abstract, dry term for a highly-charged process vital to making democracy work.

You will recall that last fall, the League of Women Voters of Michigan hosted over 30 town hall meetings across the state to educate voters about redistricting. We organized three here in the Kalamazoo area and one in Allegan. Speakers detailed how voting district boundaries are drawn in our state, who draws them, and what impact that has on voters.

As the LWV of Michigan explains on its website:

In Michigan the district lines are drawn by the legislature, effectively allowing politicians to choose their voters, rather than the voters choosing their legislators. This system gives the political party in power at the time a tremendous advantage, but is this the best system for the voters?
www.lwvmi.org

The chair of the Michigan Chapter of the Sierra Club, David Holtz, expands on the impact of redistricting:

...[P]artisan politicians manipulate voting maps to keep themselves and their party in power. This reduces political competition and accountability to voters while favoring special interests in Lansing who supply the political money and get favors in return. Too often, because of term limits, political office becomes a revolving door and elected officials are rewarded with corporate jobs from these same special interests when their time in office ends (The Mackinac, Spring/Summer 2016, p. 3).

Stay tuned to find out how we at the local level can participate in efforts to change the way voting district boundaries are drawn in our state. If the word "redistricting" makes you nod off, then get your adrenaline flowing by thinking instead of "politicians choosing their voters, rather than voters choosing their legislators!"

The Arden J. Elsasser Memorial Scholarship Award

by Paula Manley

Each spring the Department of Political Science at Western Michigan University holds an Honors Recognition Luncheon. One of the awards presented is the Arden J. Elsasser Memorial Scholarship Award which is an award for excellence in scholarship and community service. It has been established in memory of Arden J. Elsasser by her Friends and the League of Women Voters. The award statement reads in part: "A superior student of political science, Arden J. Elsasser gave faithful service to the League and contributed to the Kalamazoo community."

A representative of the LWVKA is always invited to attend. I have represented the LWVKA the past three years and have been impressed when meeting and talking with the student honorees. This year's luncheon was held on April 12th and honored recipients for 2016: Graduate Student Kanan Gasimov, who is a Fulbright Fellow from Azerbaijan, and Undergraduate Student Tacy Allen.

Calendar

MAY 2016

- 4 LWVKA Annual Meeting**
The Park Club, 219 W. South St.
5:30 pm Reception
6:00 pm Dine
with special guest Judy Karandjeff, President of League of Women Voters Michigan

JUNE 2016

- 7 LWVKA Board Meeting**
The Park Club, 219 W. South St.
5:30 pm Food available for purchase
6:00 pm Meeting
269-599-1801 or denise.hartsough@gmail.com

- 11 Voter Registration**
PRIDE Festival, 2-8pm

- 16-19 LWVUS National Convention**
Washington, D.C.

JULY 2016

- 5 LWVKA Board Meeting**
The Park Club, 219 W. South St.
5:30 pm Food available for purchase
6:00 pm Meeting
269-599-1801 and denise.hartsough@gmail.com

Note: Board meets on 1st Tuesday. Members are welcome to attend all Board Meetings.

LWVUS Announces Money in Politics Position

by Paula Manley

The LWVUS Board has approved the Money in Politics Position. This position was formulated as a result of the consensus question responses by 336 local leagues (including LWVKA), state leagues and IOLs participating in the Money in Politics study.

LWVUS POSITION ON MONEY IN POLITICS

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the methods of financing political campaigns should:

- Enhance political equality for all citizens;
- Ensure maximum participation by citizens in the political process;
- Protect representative democracy from being distorted by big spending in election campaigns;
- Provide voters sufficient information about candidates and campaign issues to make informed choices;
- Ensure transparency and the public's right to know who is using money to influence elections;
- Enable candidates to compete equitably for public office;
- Ensure that candidates have sufficient funds to communicate their messages to the public; and
- Combat corruption and undue influence in government.

The League believes that political corruption includes the following:

- A candidate or officeholder agrees to vote or work in favor of a donor's interests in exchange for a campaign contribution;
- An officeholder or staff gives greater access to donors;
- An officeholder votes or works to support policies that reflect the preferences of individuals or organizations in order to attract contributions from them;
- A candidate or officeholder seeks political contributions implying that there will be retribution unless a donation is given; and
- The results of the political process consistently favor the interests of significant campaign contributors.

In order to achieve the goals for campaign finance regulation, the League supports:

- Public financing of elections, either voluntary or mandatory, in which candidates must abide by reasonable spending limits;
- Enhanced enforcement of campaign finance laws that includes changes to ensure that regulatory agencies are properly funded, staffed, and structured to avoid partisan deadlock in the decision-making process;
- Abolishing Super PACs and abolishing spending coordinated or directed by candidates (other than a candidate's own campaign committee); and
- Restrictions on direct donations and bundling by lobbyists, which may include monetary limits as well as other regulations.

Until full public financing of elections is enacted, limits on election spending are needed in order to meet the League's goals for protecting democratic processes. Among the different entities that spend money to influence elections, the League supports the following comparative limits:

- Higher spending limits for political parties, genuinely non-partisan voter registration and get-out-the-vote organizations and activities, and candidates spending money raised from contributors;
- Mid-level spending limits for individual citizens (including wealthy individuals), Political Action Committees (with funds contributed by individuals associated with the sponsoring organization, such as employees, stockholders, members and volunteers), and candidates spending their own money;
- Lower spending limits for trade associations, labor unions and non-profit organizations from their general treasury funds;
- Severely restricted spending by for-profit organizations spending from their corporate treasury funds; and
- No limits on spending by bona fide newspapers, television, and other media, including the Internet, except to address partisan abuse or use of the media to evade campaign finance regulations.

AS ANNOUNCED BY THE NATIONAL BOARD APRIL 2016

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH LWVKA!

Please contact Chris Kuthe at ckuthe57@yahoo.com if you need to update your address, phone number or email.

Voter Registration Updates

by MerriKay Oleen-Burkey and Jennifer Hill

The LWVKA has been asked to help with voter registration events at some new venues this month. St. Joseph County, which does not have an active LWV, asked for help with an event at Glen Oaks Community College on April 20th. Local volunteers who organized the event asked us to review their processes so they can hold more voter registration events in St. Joseph County in coming weeks. A thank you goes to Kay Anderson for joining MerriKay and the local volunteers at Glen Oaks CC in registering 19 new voters!

We appreciate the willingness of LWVKA volunteers who helped with voter registration events on April 26th at Evergreen North, a senior living facility, and on April 29th at Interfaith Apartments in Kalamazoo. The latter event focused on voter registration for the youth who live in that complex. On May 6th, LWVKA volunteers will register voters at a street fair and Art Hop event sponsored by the non-partisan 60th District Services Office in collaboration with Rickman House.

Volunteers Needed for Pride

We will have a booth at Pride 2016 at Festival Park in downtown Kalamazoo on **Saturday, June 11th from 2PM to 8PM**. Two volunteers are needed for each of three shifts: 2PM to 4PM, 4PM to 6PM, and 6PM to 8PM. If you are available to take one of these shifts, please contact MerriKay at moburkey30@gmail.com or call (269) 270-3302.

Welcome!

Please welcome a new LWVKA member:

Elizabeth and Mark Wilkinson

4305 Roxbury Lane
 Kalamazoo, MI 49008
 312-533-9463
lizz.newell@gmail.com

Elizabeth and her husband Mark have recently moved to Kalamazoo from Chicago. Elizabeth was employed in the Chicago area with the Corps of Engineers. Her job focused on Construction Management and Contracting. She is currently staying home with their two-year-old son. She loves to be active through jogging, hiking, yoga and strength training. Elizabeth's interests in the LWV include working on environmental issues, women's rights and the Voter guide.

Millage Information Meeting

By Fran Eckenrode

LWVKA hosted a meeting at the Kalamazoo Public Library on March 29 to provide information on the two millage proposals on the May 3 ballot. The millages are the Law Enforcement Millage to support law enforcement functions at the county level for six years, and the Public Transit Millage to support the Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority. Three well-qualified speakers were on hand. Speaking on the Law Enforcement Millage were Kalamazoo County Sheriff Richard Fuller and Kalamazoo County Prosecuting Attorney Jeff Getting. Kalamazoo Metro Transit System Executive Director Sean McBride spoke on the Transit Millage. The interactive audience included three county commissioners and was covered by Public Media Network.



Left to Right: Kalamazoo Metro Transit System Executive Director, Sean McBride; Kalamazoo County Prosecutor, Jeff Getting; and Kalamazoo Country Sheriff, Richard Fuller

Gifts in Honor

In Honor of
Kara Van Allen's 18th Birthday
from Valerie Goss

In Memory of
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from Tamara Carpenter



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