

President's Column

by MerriKay Oleen-Burkey

Getting Out the Vote

This being an election year, the LWVKA's attention is turning toward mobilizing citizens to vote. The LWV is one of several nonpartisan voter turnout organizations that attempt to motivate potential voters to register and to vote in the belief that failure of an eligible voter to vote in any election is a loss to society.

While there may be some structural hurdles that keep citizens from voting such as lack of transportation or lack of early voting options, most of the reasons given by those who do not vote speak to disengagement from electoral politics or disbelief in government's ability to affect progress. To tackle this disengagement we will need to make it personal. People are more likely to participate in an election when contacted personally by someone they know, especially friends, neighbors, and community-based agencies that are familiar and trusted. Use what you believe to be the core issues in an upcoming election to highlight what's at stake.

Traditional mobilization efforts often are directed at getting citizens to act on intentions. There are numerous examples of best intentions going awry: to exercise more, to eat healthy or to save for retirement. What can we do to make intentions more workable?

In a field experiment conducted among 287,000 would-be voters in Pennsylvania in 2008, researchers wanted to see if voter turnout could be increased by helping people make a concrete plan to implement their intentions. One to three days before the November election these would-be voters, divided into two groups, were contacted: one group was asked only about intentions to vote while a second group was asked about intentions and when, where and how they would accomplish the goal of voting. Voter records showed that making a plan (when to get to the polls, how they would get there and what they would be doing beforehand) was more than twice as effective as simply having intentions to vote.

Using another tactic in a field experiment during the 2006 primary election in Michigan, potential voters received direct mail noting that both they and their neighbors would be informed of who had voted after the election. Surprisingly, this led to an 8.1% increase in turnout, one of the most successful get-out-the-vote tactics studied to date. If most of us vote, then being part of the few who do not feels like we are shirking a social contract. Publicizing voting records may place this social obligation more in the spotlight. Those who follow-through to vote maintain their self-identity as contributing members of society.

Tackling political barriers to voting as the LWV is doing with the Promote the Vote petition drive for a ballot proposal remains critical but improving citizens motivation through personal contacts coupled with behavioral interventions may be important steps in the near term to mobilizing voters to vote. What are your thoughts about ways to get-out-the vote (GOTV)? Share those ideas with any LWVKA board member or plan to join us for a discussion about GOTV at our next board meeting on May 14th.

Calendar

MAY 2018

- 7 Grand Rapids Unit Social**
Grand Traverse Pie Co., 28th St. — 7pm
- 8 Election Day**
- 14 LWVKA Board Meeting**
Walden Woods Condominium Clubhouse
5:30 pm Dine - 6:00 pm Meeting

JUNE 2018

- 4 Grand Rapids Unit Social**
Grand Traverse Pie Co., 28th St. — 7pm
- 9 Pride Voter Registration**
at Arcadia Park
- 11 LWVKA Board Meeting**
Old & new members and board appointments
Walden Woods Condominium Clubhouse
5:30 pm Dine - 6:00 pm Meeting
- 27 Water Focus Day**
LWV Lake Michigan Region — Chicago, IL
- 28-1 LWVUS Convention (Chicago, IL)**

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

Memorial Gifts

In Memory of Ann Perry

from

Jessica Reiser
Paula Aldridge
Diane Worden
Ken & Paula Manley
Terry Hluchyj
Jackie Wylie
MerriKay Oleen-Burkey

LWVMI Updates

by Denise Hartsough

Promote the Vote in May!

May is the month to gather signatures for *Promote the Vote!* If you have been meaning to help, this is the time to take action!

We have one more month for volunteers with the League of Women Voters, ACLU and NAACP to show how many signatures they can gather. LWVKA's 25 volunteers have secured approximately 800 signatures. This ties us with the League in Traverse City and puts us behind Ann Arbor.

Help get more signatures to protect and enhance voting rights in Michigan! Stop by *This is a Bookstore* in the Oakwood Plaza on **Tuesday, May 1** from 3:30-5:30pm. You can pick up blank petitions to circulate, or just sign the petition yourself. If that time does not work for you, please contact Denise at 269-599-1801 or denise.hartsough@gmail.com.

For details about the proposed voting rights amendment to the Michigan Constitution, please see www.lwvmi.org and www.promotethevotemi.com.

Redistricting Ballot Proposal

Remember to support the *Voters Not Politicians* re-districting ballot proposal! LWVMI has endorsed this proposal and urges League members to support the measure in any way they can.

Gerrymandering Lawsuit

LWVMI is lead plaintiff in a federal lawsuit challenging Michigan's Congressional and State Legislative districts as unconstitutional partisan gerrymanders. The defendant, Michigan Secretary of State **Ruth Johnson**, asked the court to dismiss the lawsuit, claiming the League and other plaintiffs lack standing to sue. A decision on that is now pending.

Eight of nine Republican members of Michigan's Congressional delegation — including **Rep. Fred Upton** — are trying to intervene in the case. The court ruled they could not. On April 6 the proposed congressional intervenors filed a notice appealing the court's ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Watch for updates at www.brennancenter.org/blog/state-redistricting-litigation and www.lwvmi.org!

Thanks very much to LWVKA members who made donations to cover expenses for this lawsuit (for expert witnesses and filing fees, not legal fees). Please, if you can, make a tax-deductible contribution. Make checks out to LWVMI Education Fund and write "Gerrymandering Lawsuit" in the memo line. Send checks to LWVMI Education Fund, 600 W. Saint Joseph Street, Suite 3G, Lansing, MI 48933-2288.

LWVUS Update

By Paula Manley

The 53rd **National Convention** convenes in Chicago **June 28 through July 1, 2018**. It is a great opportunity to network with League members from around the country and learn about the work of the League. Any member may attend as a non-voting delegate at their own expense. If you have an interest, contact LWVKA President **Merrikay Oleen-Burkey** to find out how to be a non-voting delegate from our League.

To read more detail about the following items, go to lwv.org :

- **The U.S. Census** is proposing the addition of a question asking a person's citizenship status. LWVUS and a number of other organizations are opposed as the U. S. Constitution requires a census be taken every ten years to count all persons, not just citizens.
- LWVUS recently sent a letter to the U.S. Senate citing the polices needed to curb **gun violence**. Members of the LWVUS Lobby Corps visited Senators to advocate for our policies.
- Recently LWVUS submitted comments to the U.S. Commission of Civil Rights. The League has an ongoing assessment of the federal enforcement of the **Voting Rights Act (VRA)** and outlined reasons why the VRA is still needed.
- Many states are considering legislation calling for a U.S. Constitution Convention. **LWVUS, along with conservative and progressive groups, scholars, economists, lawmakers, and policy experts are opposed.** Sign up for the LWVUS Webinar "Understanding the Dangers of the Constitutional Convention" on May 2 to learn about this issue.



“ Help get more signatures to protect and enhance voting rights in Michigan! ”



Thank you to the volunteers who registered voters at Kalamazoo and Climax-Scotts High Schools and helped with set-up and voter registration at Earth Day in Bronson Park:

- ★ Jennifer Hill
- ★ Martha Cohen
- ★ MerriKay Oleen-Burkey
- ★ Karen Sanborn
- ★ Lee Fevig
- ★ Steve Ferguson
- ★ Karen Eddy
- ★ Hilary Pummill
- ★ Janet and Keith Jones

thank you

Ann Perry—A Tribute

By Jessica Reiser and Connie Ferguson

Ann Perry, a long-time League member and community activist, died on March 30. We'll miss her as a friend, advocate and inspiration.

Ann was a social worker for many years and carried many of the same concerns into her volunteer work and her personal life. She cared deeply about the well-being of children, poverty reduction and social justice. LWVKA was fortunate to have her on our board for a number of years, part of that time with her sisters **Sue Nelmes** and **Kay Perry**. Ann represented LWVKA on the *Poverty Reduction Initiative*, was a founding member of the *ISAAC Housing Task Force*, and helped found *Housing Matters*. Ann, Sue, and two of their nieces were recognized with a Star Award in 1996 for their work as Big Sisters.

We thank Ann for all she has done to help the people around her. We will miss seeing her at League meetings, and the whole community will feel her absence as we continue to work for justice and opportunity for all who live here.

“Ann was a social worker for many years and carried many of the same concerns into her volunteer work and her personal life.”

Member 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.

Sue Bensinger
1826 Paddington Road
Kalamazoo, MI 49001
269-345-6342
mrhelms@charter.net

Holly Wingard
8450 Tawney Pt.
Mattawan, MI 49071
269-235-2901
hjwingard@comcast.net

WELCOME
New Members!

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.

Meredith Place has a new address:
1914 Forest Dr.
Portage, MI 49002

Patricia Griswold's correct email address:
tishgriswold4@gmail.com

Observer Corps Report

Oakland Drive/Winchell Neighborhood Association (ODWNA) – 2/21/18 and 3/21/18

Purpose: To provide an organization for neighborhood residents to address issues and concerns common to all, to work together for the good of the neighborhood, and to constructively assist Kalamazoo City and County Planning Commission on behalf of the neighborhood.

Meeting Features: Public comments sought in writing

Discussion Issue: February meeting gave 75 residents an opportunity to view maps of the neighborhood and offer comments in writing on the displays as well as ideas for neighborhood improvements. This was the initial step on the ODWNA's submission to the Kalamazoo Planning Commission. A representative of the Kalamazoo Public Services Department presented on planned 2018 street improvement projects for the neighborhood. At the March meeting volunteers were sought for various committee activities relative to the neighborhood plan.

Possible LWVKA Action: Monitor Progress



**MAKING
DEMOCRACY
WORK!**

GR Unit News

By *Elianna Bootzin*



Members and volunteers were available to register voters at several events this month: **Courtney Winell** and **Audrey Quinn** were at a town hall at Fountain Street Church on April 7, **Elianna Bootzin** and **Jeanne Thomas** went to Reset GR's screening of *13th* on April 12, and **Bonnie Biggs**, **Caitlin Boon**, **Laurel Horman**, and others were at the Aquinas College Library on April 16.

Monthly Grand Rapids social evenings continue at a new location **Monday May 7, 2018** at Fountain Street Church (24 Fountain St NE) at 7 pm. Learn about the League and opportunities to get involved, and just have a good time with other engaged citizens.

Save the date for our next book club, Sunday **June 24** at 1 pm at Caitlin Boon's home (we will send the address when you RSVP at www.facebook.com/events/207583123162034/). 'A City Within a City' is a case study of the civil rights era as it happened in smaller cities, focusing specifically on the struggles involving school integration and bureaucratic reforms in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Join and Donate at www.lwvka.org!



It's easier than ever to join the League, pay membership dues and make donations conveniently online from your computer, tablet or smartphone just by visiting our website. Your membership — and every gift you make to LWVKA helps support our efforts to **Make Democracy Work** in our community. You can join and donate with a credit card or Pay Pal account and choose the General Fund (not tax-deductible), Education Fund or Endowment Fund (both are tax-deductible).

Arden J. Elsasser Memorial Award

By *Denise Hartsough*

At its honors recognition luncheon, April 10, WMU Political Science Department presented the Arden J. Elsasser Memorial Award for community service. In 1968 **Arden Elsasser** graduated summa cum laude with a major in Political Science from WMU while also raising two sons. Vice President of LWVKA, Ms. Elsasser also served as precinct delegate to the Kalamazoo County Republican convention and co-chair of the Resolutions Committee. Ms. Elsasser received a grant from the American Association of University Women to pursue her Masters in Political Science, but died before she could pursue that goal. LWVKA established the award to honor Ms. Elsasser's memory.

Denise Hartsough enjoyed representing LWVKA and meeting the 2018 award winners. **Jen Strebs** is a non-traditional undergraduate with a double major in Psychology and Political Science. She has completed her degree while working in the mental health field and serving as a Kalamazoo Township Trustee. **Kalyn Hoffman** earned her Masters in International Development Administration while doing program development for the Jericho Foundation, a local organization helping youth in Bosnia through education and advocacy.

Thanks to WMU's Rebecca Huntley for gathering information about Arden Elsasser.



Award winner Jen Strebs with LWVKA's Denise Hartsough

Front Page Presentation

By Paula Manley

Each month the Parchment Community Library hosts a Saturday community forum called *Front Page: Donuts and Discussion* which addresses an issue or current event. LWVKA was invited to present at the April 21 meeting on “Making Democracy Work”. **Paula Manley** led a lively discussion as sixteen interested community and League members gathered to talk about the League’s efforts to protect voter rights in Michigan and around the country.



League of Women Voters Lake Michigan Region Annual Meeting

By Georgiann McWilliams

Did you know you are automatically a member of the LWVLMR with your local LWVKA membership?

And on Wednesday, June 27th, before the National Convention in Chicago (June 28–July 1), we are joining with the League of Women Voters Upper Mississippi Region for a day of all issues related to water. There will be information from 50 leagues on water related projects, solutions, or ideas. This is a great opportunity to learn about environmental issues involving a number of meetings on water advocacy workshops, discussions, speakers, exhibits, lunch and dinner.

Events will be held at The Standard Club, 320 S. Plymouth Court, Chicago IL, a 3-block walking distance from the Hilton convention site. Parking is also available. You can find more information at: <https://www.lwvlmr.org/workshop-dinner--annual-meetings.html>.

Hope to see you there!





LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

Kalamazoo Area

P.O. Box 2106

Kalamazoo, MI 49003-2106

LWVKA Education Fund Board of Directors

Jessica Reiser, *Chairperson*
jcreiser@comcast.net

Yolanda Mitts, *Vice Chair*
ygmitts@gmail.com

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

Rebekah Fennell, *Secretary*
rsfennell@sbcglobal.net

Susan Atkinson, *Director*
sls.atkinson@gmail.com

Dennis Elmer, *Director*
dgelmer@comcast.net

Eileen Schoenfeld, *Director*
Benziedoc1@gmail.com

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!



LWVKA Board for 2017-2018

Officers:

MerriKay Oleen-Burkey
President
moburkey30@gmail.com

Fran Eckenrode
VP Programming
feckenr@gmail.com

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

Aedin Clements
Secretary
aedinclements@gmail.com

Denise Hartsough
Past President
denise.hartsough@gmail.com

Board Members:

Jennifer Hill
jahill231@yahoo.com

Chris Kuthe
ckuthe57@yahoo.com

Millie Lambert
millielambert3922@gmail.com

Georgiann McWilliams
georgiann@charter.net

KC Miller
aakcmiller@yahoo.com

Alison Parsons
alisonparsonsmi@gmail.com

Sabrina Pritchett-Evans
sabrina.pritchett-Evans.ghik@statefarm.com

Karen Thomas
karen.thomas@wmich.edu

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