

THE BULLETIN

League of Women Voters Kalamazoo Area

July/August 2018 • Vol. 64 N° 10

President's Column

By MerriKay Oleen-Burkey

2017-18 Annual Report

The LWVKA has had an active year of Empowering Voters and Defending Democracy. Many unnamed volunteers made these activities possible. For those of you who are new to the League, consider how you might become involved with one of these activities or suggest an initiative you would like to see us pursue. Highlights from this year are described within our 3-year LWVKA strategic goals:

ISSUE STUDY & ADVOCACY Goal: To advocate on key issues.

Under the leadership of **Alison Parsons**, we participated in Public Advocacy for Voter Protection (PAVP), a 16-state grant project supported by the national LWV Education Fund. Alison partnered with ISAAC and Mt. Zion Baptist Church to bring LWVMI President, **Judy Karandjeff**, to Kalamazoo to improve awareness about the history of voting rights and efforts around the country to undermine these rights.

Presentations on redistricting in Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids featured **Denise Hartsough**, **Hilary Pummill**, **Sara Wick**, **Mary Blauw** (Grand Rapids Unit) and **Fran Eckenrode**. We have also become advocates for the Voters Not Politicians ballot proposal for an independent redistricting commission to draw the legislative and congressional districts. This proposal will appear on the November ballot, pending the resolution of a Michigan Supreme Court lawsuit.

In August, the League joined with the YWCA in presenting a celebration of Women's Equality Day; **Lavonia Perryman**, journalist and political strategist, spoke on "How to win: Women in Politics." In September, LWVKA partnered with the Ladies' Library Association (LLA) to bring the public exhibit "Petticoat Patriots: How Michigan Women Won the Vote" to the LLA's historic building for nine days. In November, LWVKA participated in the LWV of Michigan (LWVMI) program in Kalamazoo on Campaign Finance Reform.

At the Program planning meeting in January, the LWVKA discussed a proposed revision of the state Agricultural/Seasonal Worker Position and 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."

In February the LWVKA hosted a kick-off for the **Promote the Vote** (PTV) petition drive for a ballot proposal that would amend the Michigan Constitution with voting rights allowing no-excuse absentee voting, early voting, and straight ticket voting and voter registration in person up to and on Election Day. Signature gathering has been coordinated by **Denise Hartsough** and 30 LWVKA volunteers have participated to collect over 1,500 signatures in the Kalamazoo area. The Grand Rapids Unit has also actively collected signatures for Promote the Vote.

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Calendar

JULY 2018

- 4 **Grand Rapids Unit with GGR Women's History Council**
Hollyhock Lane Parade
Ottawa Hills
8:30 am
- 7 **Grand Rapids Unit Voter Registration**
Stoked to Vote at Wosah & Outside Coffee
738 Wealthy St.
10 am-5 pm
- 9 **Grand Rapids Unit Social Gathering**
Fountain St. Church
7pm

AUGUST 2018

- 1 **LWVKA Educational presentation**
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute Summer Event
- 4 **Mothers of Hope Voter Registration**
LaCrone Park
- 7 **PRIMARY ELECTION DAY**
- 13 **LWVKA Board Meeting**
Walden Woods Condominium Clubhouse
5:30 pm Dine - 6:00 pm Meeting
- 24 **YWCA Women's Equality Day**
Fetzer Center

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 Updates

By Denise Hartsough

LWVMI Redistricting Case

On June 18 the U.S. Supreme Court dismissed the landmark Wisconsin gerrymandering case, *Gill v. Whitford*, for plaintiffs' lack of standing and remanded the case to the district court for further proceedings. The Supreme Court avoided ruling on the substance of the issue of partisan gerrymandering.

The League of Women Voters of Michigan is lead plaintiff in another landmark partisan gerrymandering case, *LWVMI v. Johnson*. After the Supreme Court announcement on June 18, LWVMI's attorneys issued this statement on behalf of LWVMI:

Today's U.S. Supreme Court decisions in the Maryland and Wisconsin cases strengthen the League of Women Voters of Michigan's lawsuit against the partisan gerrymandering of Michigan's Congressional and legislative districts. Unlike the Wisconsin case, the League has individual members in nearly every Congressional and legislative district who have been injured by the gerrymanders and therefore has standing to challenge them. The case is currently in the discovery phase in which evidence of gerrymandering is being gathered, and we look forward to proving our case at the trial scheduled to begin on February 5, 2019.

Please consider making a donation to LWVMI (www.lwvmi.org) to help pay for expert testimony in connection with LWVMI's redistricting case. Donations are needed most urgently by August 24, when all the materials for the case must be filed. Expert testimony is critical. Thanks!

Promote the Vote Proposal

LWVKA members and friends have worked hard since February 21 to put a voting rights amendment on the November 6 ballot. Huge thanks to all the volunteers who have gathered petition signatures to protect and enhance our voting rights in Michigan: **Kay Anderson, Diane Boley, John Boley, Don Brown, Mary Brown, Margaret Bruder, Martha Cohen, Angela Erdman, Connie Ferguson, Lee Fevig, Denise Hartsough, Jennie Hill, Terry Hluchyj, Barb Huber, Cheryl Lyon-Jenness, Amy Sue Manley, Paula Manley, Jill Manske, Karen Matson, Shaina McLain, KC Miller, Yolanda Mitts, Sue Nelmes, MerriKay Oleen-Burkey, Alison Parsons, Debbie Phillips, Silvia Roederer, Judy Sivak, John Speier, Mabel Stenesh, Karl Westra, Sara Wick, and Diane Worden.** Together we have contributed over 1,500 signatures toward the 316,000 needed to place this measure on the ballot!

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WORK!**

“On June 18 the U.S. Supreme Court dismissed the landmark Wisconsin gerrymandering case, *Gill v. Whitford*, for plaintiffs' lack of standing...”

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Redistricting Ballot Proposal

On June 7, 2018, the Michigan Court of Appeals ruled that The Voters Not Politicians redistricting proposal is not an impermissible redrafting of the Constitution and “does not modify or interfere with the fundamental operation of government.” The Court of Appeals denied a request to block the proposal from the ballot by the group that filed the challenge, Citizens Protecting Michigan's Constitution. The group challenging the ballot proposal has appealed to the Michigan Supreme Court. As of the Bulletin's publication, the proposal is still on the ballot for the November 6 election.

LWVUS Update

By Paula Manley

LWVUS is encouraging state and local leagues to focus on activities for voters such as holding voter registration events, meeting with local election officials to discuss challenges and solutions, hosting candidate forums, highlighting Vote4u.org and working on Get Out the Vote.

Watch for reports from the 53rd LWVUS National Convention held in Chicago June 28-July 1.

Recent court actions include:

- Monday June 18 a judge struck down the Kansas law requiring documentary proof of U.S. citizenship to vote. The Kansas League had worked on this issue for several years and was a plaintiff in the case.
- The U.S. Supreme Court issued procedural rulings in two redistricting cases *Gill v. Whitford* and *Benisek v. Lamone*. Both cases were sent back to lower courts which means the situations in Wisconsin and Maryland are still unresolved. The Supreme Court will decide by the end of June whether to hear two redistricting cases in North Carolina.
- The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Ohio voter purge in the *Husted v. A. Philip Randolph Institute* case.

For additional information on these and other issues, go to lwv.org.

Barry County Presentation

Paula Manley recently gave a presentation on June 13th at the Barry County Women's Progressive meeting. The discussion highlighted the League theme of Making Democracy Work as Paula discussed League activities locally, statewide and nationally.

Annual Report, continued

The LWVKA Observer Corps was restarted with the help of volunteers. They attend local public governmental meetings and file brief reports on the proceedings with special attention to issues that match those identified by local, state or national LWV positions.

VOTER OUTREACH & EDUCATION
Goal: To increase voter registration and education to improve turnout of informed voters.

During September and October, **KC Miller** organized Candidate Forums for the Kalamazoo Mayor and City Commission at the Edison Neighborhood Association and Portage Mayor and City Council at the Portage Senior Center. In June 2018, she partnered with six community organizations for a US Congress 6th District Candidate Forum at El Consilio / Hispanic American Council, and over 100 citizens were in attendance. Public Media Network recorded the forums for viewing on their website and also for broadcast on a local cable channel.

Voter Registration events in Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids were ongoing throughout the year. Venues ranged from community events like Mothers of Hope in Kalamazoo coordinated by **Jules Isenberg-Wedel**, and Art Prize in Grand Rapids, coordinated by the Grand Rapids Unit, high schools, community colleges and the university organized by **Connie Micklin, Martha Cohen and MerriKay Oleen-Burkey** and the Grand Rapids Unit. We were also invited to provide voter registration and education at various community events (e.g., March for Our Lives (GR Unit), Kalamazoo Moms Against Gun Violence, Senior Center).

For the fall 2017 city elections, the LWVKA produced a voter guide that was available through Vote411.org as well as a paper guide distributed countywide. In order to increase the use of Vote411.org, in 2018, the LWVKA initiated a promotional plan for Vote411.org. **Millie Lambert** began the process. Social media coverage was expanded by **Debbie Phillips** including election-specific press releases. **Lee Fevig** is contacting local organizations about including the Vote411.org logo and link on their websites. Mounted Vote411.org logo posters are now available for use at events and venues.

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION PROCESSES
Goal: To support full participation in our elections.

In July 2017, members of the LWVKA were invited to the initial demonstrations of the new voting equipment for Kalamazoo County.

ADMINISTRATION & GOVERNANCE
Goal: To maximize volunteer time, skills and energy in pursuit of our strategic goals.

NONPARTISANSHIP: A LWVKA committee including **Terry Hluchyj, Jennie Hill, Alison Parson, Georgiann McWilliams** and **MerriKay Oleen-Burkey** reviewed the nonpartisanship policy and recommended updates. The revised policy was presented to the LWVKA board in April and was accepted. The revised nonpartisanship policy has been incorporated into the LWVKA Handbook.

FUNDRAISING: The 3-year fundraising campaign is coming to a close on June 30, 2018.

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY: A response rate of 65% was achieved with the April survey! Respondents shared their interest areas and the skills they would offer to our League.

DUES ASSISTANCE: A LWVKA Member Dues Assistance Policy was approved by the board at the January 2018 meeting. It provides assistance to cover all or part of dues for LWV membership for those who are unable to afford the \$60 cost. To apply for this assistance, a person must contact the LWVKA president. Following the LWVUS and LWVMI decisions to eliminate dues for students, the LWVKA board approved a reduced student membership fee of \$10 at its May 2018 meeting.

LEADERSHIP: Members of the LWVKA (**Paula Manley, Denise Hartsough, Ken Manley**) led the League Basics course at the LWVMI Regional Workshops. Several League members have been invited to make presentations in our local area on “*Making Democracy Work.*”

“The LWVKA has had an active year of Empowering Voters and Defending Democracy. Many unnamed volunteers made these activities possible. For those of you who are new to the League, consider how you might become involved with one of these activities or suggest an initiative you would like to see us pursue.”



Kalamazoo County ID Update

By Janet Jones



Last year the LWVKA participated in a Task Force to advise the Kalamazoo County Commission as to the feasibility/advisability of establishing a local ID program. Since nearly 12% of County residents do not have a photo ID, the League decided to endorse the proposal to the Commission as consistent with League policy to “Support equal access to education, employment and housing,” and to “Support programs and policies to prevent or reduce poverty and to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families.”

A County Advisory Board was established and on May 3, 2018, the program was launched in Kalamazoo County with the issuance of 158 IDs. That number has now grown to more than 400 IDs issued.

Who benefits? Those previously without an ID can now do banking, rent an apartment, and check out a book from the library as well as many other activities of daily life. Those who already have an ID, can by obtaining a Local ID, declare themselves residents of Kalamazoo County. AND, everyone can benefit from the many businesses offering incentives to Local ID holders.

For more information about office hours, businesses and organizations supporting the ID and to register your own business, go online to the clerk’s website at: www.kalcounty.com/clerk/id/

Thank you June Voter Registration Volunteers!

Thanks to volunteers Paula Aldridge, Martha Cohen, Denise Hartsough, Connie Micklin and Paula Presler for registering voters and providing voter information at Moms Against Gun Violence, Loy Norrix High School Graduation Practice, the “Make a Difference Now!!! Voting Awareness and Voter Registration” event at the Galilee Baptist Church and the Senior Companion/Foster Grandparents Programs at the Senior Center.



Vote411.org Mounted Poster Boards Available

We now have three mounted 18x 24” Vote411.org logo posters available for use at events and venues. We also have two tabletop and one floor stand for use with the posters. Please contact **Debbie Phillips** (269.657.7737) to make arrangements.

Vote411.org primary information is now available to voters. As we will not be publishing a print guide for the primary we encourage all members to share the www.Vote411 logo, link and poster whenever possible.

Thank you for helping us to get the word out!



SPREAD THE WORD!

ELECTION INFORMATION YOU NEED



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

Candidate Forum

By KC Miller

The League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area organized a Democratic primary candidate forum for the US 6th congressional district, on June 14. All four Candidates participated, and over 100 people attended.

Our partners were: El Concilio, the Douglas Community Association, Edison Neighborhood Association, Kalamazoo Advocates of Senior Issues, Public Media Network, and the YWCA.

League members who assisted with the forum were: **Connie Ferguson, Denise Hartsough, Janet Jones, Veronica MacDonald, KC Miller, Kym Mulhern, Alison Parsons, Kay Perry, and Paula Presler.**

For those who could not attend, the recording is available at our web site (lwvka.org), Vote 411 and Public Media Network. It is also playing on cable channel 190 Mondays at 9am, Wednesdays at 9:30am, Thursdays at 10:00 am and Fridays at 11:30am. Check it out!

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.

Gina Barkovich
137 Dreamfield
Battle Creek, MI 49014
269-808-1600
gserr33@gmail.com

Betty Cohen
903 Pinehurst Blvd
Kalamazoo, MI 49006
btcohen@charter.net

Linda Davis
3570 Tuscany SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
616-550-4048
lindacsDavis@gmail.com

Debby & Rick Freiman
3218 Bennington Ct.
Portage, MI 49024
815-871-7424
richard.freiman@gmail.com

Jill Thompson
3218 Coachlite Ave
Portage, MI 49024
thompjil@bronsonhg.org



Grand Rapids Unit Updates:

Members **Caitlin Boon, Elianna Bootzin, and Courtney Winnell** met at Caitlin's home on the west side to discuss *A City Within A City* on Sunday June 24th, noting the history of redlining within the Grand Rapids, the differences between the approaches of the local NAACP and Urban League chapters in seeking reforms, and the similarities between the documented local contention over young men's right to wear facial hair and current nationwide dress code conversations around natural hairstyles. We acknowledged the City of Grand Rapids' recent efforts around racial equity and its Police Policy and Procedure Review Task Force; we are hopeful that Grand Rapids will continue to work towards being a welcoming city where all can succeed. Our third quarter book will be *Equal Means Equal*, by Jessica Neuwirth.

We'll be joining the Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council to march in the **Hollyhock Lane Parade** on the **4th of July** at 8:30 am in the Ottawa Hills neighborhood. Feel free to don suffrage era costumes, or simply come as you are. Watch GGRWHC's website, www.ggrwhc.org, for more details.

We've been invited to provide voter registration at Woosah & Outside Coffee's Saturday, **July 7 "Stoked to Vote"** event (738 Wealthy St.) from 10 am to 5 pm. Feel free to RSVP at <https://www.facebook.com/events/226695304599382/>.

State League Board Member **Paula Manley** will be presenting information on poll watching at our next "social gathering" on at 7 pm on Monday **July 9th** at Fountain Street Church (124 Fountain NE). As always, we'll be happy to share basic League information and just get to know each other!

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.

Annie Brown has a new phone number:
269-637-6499



James Ward

GRAND RAPIDS MICHIGAN

“We acknowledged the City of Grand Rapids' recent efforts around racial equity and its Police Policy and Procedure Review Task Force; we are hopeful that Grand Rapids will continue to work towards being a welcoming city where all can succeed.”





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