

President's Column

2018-2019 Annual Report

By MerriKay Oleen-Burkey

Empowering Voters and Defending Democracy has been the focus of the LWVKA's activity this year. Many unnamed volunteers participated in these activities and made them 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 pursue. Highlights from this year are described below:

ISSUE STUDY & ADVOCACY

Although no new issues were selected for study this year, members of the LWVKA were very involved in advocacy for two important ballot proposals: 1) Promote the Vote that would expand voting rights in Michigan and 2) Redistricting that would create an independent commission to redraw the congressional and legislative districts. League volunteers assisted with phone banking and canvassing in support of these proposals. On November 6th voters supported them overwhelmingly!

The LWVKA continued its advocacy for the Kalamazoo County ID program. Assisting county residents who do not have a photo ID to do banking, rent an apartment, and many other activities of daily life, this program is consistent with the League's positions. Local businesses offer incentives to Local ID holders making the ID beneficial for all county residents.

In August, the League joined with the YWCA in sponsoring a celebration of Women's Equality Day. The keynote speaker was Khalilah Spencer, Voter Rights Advocate and Representative of the Detroit Branch of the NAACP. She spoke about the disparity between the number of women in our population versus the number of women serving in government locally, statewide and nationally. Ms. Spencer also talked in support of the Promote the Vote ballot initiative that would reduce barriers for voters.

Local LWVKA members, **Denise Hartsough** and **Jessica Reiser** made depositions in the LWVMI vs. Benson landmark partisan gerrymandering lawsuit. The case was heard on February 5, 2019 and was decided in April in favor of the LWVMI. New district lines are to be drawn and implemented for the 2020 election.

The Grand Rapids Unit (GRU) initiated a visit with Representative Amash's staff to advocate for HR1, the For the People Act, introduced in the US House of Representatives to provide comprehensive democracy reforms. Biennial legislative interviews with incoming members of the State House and Senate were initiated by LWVKA members in Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo.

VOTER OUTREACH & EDUCATION

In October, a LWVKA-sponsored educational forum was led by **Judy Karandjeff**, LWVMI President; she provided details about the three ballot proposals: 1) legalizing recreational marijuana (Proposal 1); 2) creating a citizen redistricting commission (Proposal 2); and 3) enhancing voting rights (Proposal 3). El Concilio hosted the event and was one of seven LWVKA co-sponsors.

Leading up to the November election, LWVKA members **Denise Hartsough** and **Paula Manley** made several educational presentations on the ballot proposals to community groups including the Berrien County Chapter of MI Retired School Personnel, The River Country Solidarity Group, WMU Student Association, a 'Front Page' Event at the Parchment Community Library and events at the Byron Center Library and Aquinas College.

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Calendar

JULY 2019

- 1 Grand Rapids Unit Monthly Meeting**
Fountain Street Church, 24 Fountain St NE 7pm
- 8 LWVKA Board Meeting CANCELLED**
- 10 LWVKA Fundraising Committee Meeting**
10am, Biggby Coffee, Stadium Dr.

AUGUST 2019

- 5 Grand Rapids Unit Monthly Meeting**
Fountain Street Church, 24 Fountain St NE 7pm
- 12 LWVKA Board Meeting**
Walden Woods Condominium Clubhouse, 6pm
- 14 LWVKA Fundraising Committee Meeting**
10am, Biggby Coffee, Stadium Dr.
- 19 LWVKA DEI Committee Meeting**
6:30-8:30pm, St. Martin's Church, Nichols Rd.
- 23 Women's Equality Day Luncheon**
11:30 am-1:30 pm, Fetzer Center, WMU
- 27 Voter Registration**
WMU Bronco Bash

SEPTEMBER 2019

- 9 Grand Rapids Unit Monthly Meeting**
Fountain Street Church, 24 Fountain St NE 7pm
- LWVKA Board Meeting**
Walden Woods Condominium Clubhouse, 6pm
- 11 LWVKA Fundraising Committee Meeting**
10am, Biggby Coffee, Stadium Dr.
- 21 LWVKA DEI Committee Meeting**
6:30-8:30pm, St. Martin's Church, Nichols Rd.
- 24 National Voter Registration Day**

SCOTUS Ruling On Redistricting

"Today's U.S. Supreme Court decision is disappointing and will allow those who rigged Michigan's elections based on partisanship off the hook in federal courts. However, with the new independent redistricting proposal in Michigan that the majority of voters supported in 2018, we look forward to a new system being used in 2021 to draw districts for the next decade." —LWVMI

Read more @ <https://www.lwv.org/newsroom/press-releases/supreme-court-declines-set-standard-rein-partisan-gerrymandering>

President's Column: Annual Report continued

Thank
you

Two new factors expanded the reach of Vote411 this year: 1) LWVMI developed an agreement with MLive to use Vote411 content in its publications across the state; and 2) local promotion of Vote411 was significantly expanded. Our 2018 Vote411 / Voter Guide team — **Jules Isenberg-Wedel, Debbie Phillips** and **Terry Hluchyj** — managed the production, design and promotion of Vote411 and a print Voter Guide. With the assistance of many volunteers, 22,000 print Voter Guides were delivered to more than 200 locations across Kalamazoo County and demand exceeded supply!

Voter registration/education events were ongoing throughout the year in Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids. Art Prize afforded the GRU an opportunity to register over 400 people between September 17 and October 7. National Voter Registration Day was celebrated at three locations: YMCA Kalamazoo, Ministry with Community and the Galesburg Library. In October, HopCat Beer Bar invited teams from Kalamazoo and Grand Rapids to offer voter registration at locations in both cities. Participation with HopCat offered a fundraising opportunity for the League during November; \$2736 was raised and will be shared equally. Other voter registration venues included Senior Field Day in Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo High School graduation practices in Kalamazoo.

Voter Education and mock elections at the Kalamazoo High Schools were capably organized by **Jennie Hill** and **Chris Kuthe** in cooperation with the Kalamazoo City Clerk's office.

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The LWVKA board initiated a goal of monitoring the implementation of newly passed Ballot Measures #2 (Redistricting) and #3 (Voting Rights). Members of the Election Administration Committee — **Connie Ferguson, Angela Erdman, Chris Kuthe**, have held meetings with the County Clerk, Tim Snow, as well as the Associate City Clerk, Shelby Moss. Their meeting reports have been invaluable in helping our membership know the status of the new Measures.

ADMINISTRATION & GOVERNANCE

Diversity Equity and Inclusion: LWVKA member Millie Lambert organized members with an interest in diversity, equity and inclusion for the purpose of increasing our awareness of inherent biases that may be impacting our interactions with individuals and organizations in the community. In order to be successful at our mission of empowering voters and defending democracy we need to reach all areas of our community, and this DEI group is going to identify ways of reaching out and engaging with individuals and organizations that share our interest in protecting voting rights.

Fundraising: In celebration of the end of a 3-year fundraising campaign that pledged and raised over \$25,000 to support the LWV mission, a donor appreciation event was held in September. *The Julia Costello Legacy*

Circle program was presented. Legacy Circle members have made LWVKA part of their planned giving or have donated \$5000 or more in one calendar year.

Promotion Committee: The Promotion Committee led by **Fran Eckenrode** and **Debbie Phillips** has expanded its focus beyond Vote411 to include raising awareness of LWVKA through methods like social media, and tabling. A subcommittee, LWVKA 100th Anniversary Committee, is beginning to plan for 2020.

Natural Resources Committee: LWVKA member **Ruth Caputo** organized members with an interest in natural resource (NR) issues to examine and respond to issues at the local, state and national level. Issues have been prioritized. Six members of the group met with State Representative Hoadley and Senator Sean McCann's chief of staff to discuss environmental protections provided in Governor Whitmer's proposed budget.

Book Discussion Groups: The GRU began a quarterly Book Discussion Group in 2018, and Kalamazoo initiated a Group in March of 2019 that meets every two months.

Leadership: LWVKA member **Connie Ferguson** and GRU member **Elianna Bootzin** were appointed Ruth S. Shur Fellows. The LWVUS Shur Fellows work with states on engaging members. Currently the program is focused on the DEI vision for the League. LWVKA members **Denise Hartsough, Paula Manley, and Ken Manley** were re-elected to the LWVMI board at the State Convention in May.

Book Discussion

The LWVKA Book Discussion Group will have its third meeting on Tuesday, July 30, at 7 p.m., at Kazoo Books on Parkview.

Our book for this discussion is *Americanah* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and copies may be purchased at Kazoo Books. The discussion will be led by **Kym Mulhern**.

If you would like to join us, please come along. It is helpful but not essential to let us know if you plan to come. Contact **Aedin Clements**, aedinclements@gmail.com

Donor Appreciation

Save the date for the LWVKA Donor Appreciation Event. The LWVKA Development Committee invites members to the Donor Appreciation Event on Thursday September 12th from 4:30-6:00pm at the Park Club. If you are a donor to the LWVKA, we hope you will attend.



Thank you Volunteers

Thanks to League member **Jennie Hill** who contacted the Principals at the Kalamazoo High Schools about offering voter registration at graduation practices on June 5th and 6th, and Principals Christopher Aguinaga, Loy Norrix High School, and Valerie Boggan, Kalamazoo Central High School who supported our service events and encouraged their students to participate. Our voter registration volunteers **Sara Wick, Judy Sivak, Merri-Kay Oleen-Burkey, Linda Pell, Marie Rogers, Moira Macleod, Melanie Manis, and Louise Robeck** registered 85 students over the two mornings!

Well Done!!

Member Updates

By *Kym Mulhern, Membership Chair*

The following members have joined in the last month. Please welcome them to the LWVKA!

Janet Henderson
Jeanne Hess
Peggy Rice
Lisa Salay
Jan Wheelock (Grand Rapids Unit)

Women's Equality Day

Women's Equality Day will be celebrated Friday, August 23rd at the Fetzer Center beginning at 11:30am.

Each year the LWVKA and the YWCA co-host this community celebration of the passage of the 19th Amendment. The key note speaker will be Fadwa Hammoud, Michigan's Solicitor General, and the first Arab American Muslim Solicitor General in the U.S. Watch for an invitation coming to your mailbox soon and plan to join the Women's Equality Day celebration August 23rd!

Promotion Training

Interested in learning how to set up and operate a promotion table for our League? Here is an upcoming opportunity to train with **Debbie Phillips** and learn about the information available in the new Tabling Kits assembled by the Promotion Committee. Come to the Kalamazoo Farmer's Market on Saturday, July 13, 2019, where Debbie will have a LWVKA Education/Voter Registration Table set up. Stop by between 10 am and 2 pm and she will explain her best practice ideas on Promotion Tabling and review the information items included in the custom LWVKA Tabling Kits. If you plan to attend, please contact Debbie and let her know you are coming: dphillips@siriusco.com.

LWVUS UPDATE

By *Paula Manley*

Recently the Supreme Court ruled in *Bethune-Hill v. Virginia State Board of Elections* that racial gerrymandering had affected voters. At press deadline on June 24th, we have not yet heard the Supreme Court rulings for the partisan gerrymandering cases *Rucho v. League of Women Voters of North Carolina* and *Lamone v. Benisok*. We are also awaiting the decision on the census citizenship question in *New York v. Department of Commerce*.

LWVUS and LWV District of Columbia filed an amicus brief with civil rights groups in D.C. on a voting rights case *Castanon v. U.S.* The complaint alleges D.C. residents have been denied voting rights and political equity as guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Webinars are offered the fourth Thursday of each month. Go to the lwv.org website and sign up in the League Management section.

Keep informed about LWVUS and League activities around the country with LWVUS League Update which is emailed to members every two weeks. To subscribe, go to the lwv.org website, click on the League Management site and then click on "Sign up for League Update".



LWVMI Updates

By *Denise Hartsough*

For all things LWVMI, check these great resources!

- www.facebook.com/lwvmichigan for daily photos and newflashes
- *League Links* e-newsletter for comprehensive updates on court cases, advocacy, membership, voter service and more (emailed to all LWV members in Michigan)
- LWVMI Action Alerts to weigh in quickly on pending legislation
- www.lwvmi.org for in-depth document collections



Grand Rapids Unit

The Grand Rapids Unit of LWV will be joining the Greater Grand Rapids Womens History Council at the Hollyhock Lane Parade on the 4th of July. Parade lineup begins at 8:00 am at the corner of Calvin and Alexander. We will be handing out LWV materials during the parade and would love to have members and friends join in this fun event. Please contact Courtney at 616.430.6445 with any questions.

Members of the LWVGR have started planning to support Census efforts in the community. Members met with representatives from the United Way, which is the Census



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Grand Rapids Unit, continued

hub for Kent County, to discuss collaboration to ensure all members of the community are counted.

Join us for our next meeting Monday, July 1 at 7:00pm at Fountain St. Church to discuss upcoming events and volunteer opportunities. The next couple of years will be very busy, and we need a lot of volunteer support to ensure we can achieve the League's goal of 'Empowering Voters and Defending Democracy' right here in our community.

DEI Events to Consider:

The Diversity Equity Inclusion (DEI) Committee will be looking for community events that may be of interest to the LWVKA membership and will share them in this new Bulletin column. If you learn of an event that should be included here, send the information to Millie Lambert at millielambert3922@gmail.com.

Society for History and Racial Equity (S.H.A.R.E) and the Kalamazoo Public Library's Antiracism Transformation Team co-sponsors a book group that focuses on race and racism in American society. The Reading Race Book Group will discuss the book, "Little Fires Everywhere" by Celeste Ng on Tuesday, July 9, 2019, 6:30 to 7:30 pm at the Kalamazoo Public Library Central Location, CEN/Van Deusen Room, 315 S. Rose Street, Kalamazoo.

First United Methodist Church (FUMC) of Kalamazoo's Reconciling Committee is sponsoring a free video session, "The Best of Enemies"

with discussion to follow on Thursday, July 18, 2019 at 6:30 pm in the Youth Tribe Theater of FUMC.

Disability Network of Southwest Michigan (DNSWM) is sponsoring, *Access for All: Americans with Disabilities Act Anniversary Celebration*, Friday, July 26, 2019, 11:30 am to 1:30 pm at DNSWM, 517 E. Crosstown Pkwy, Kalamazoo. RSVP: (269) 345-1516, Ext. 119 or pottsk@dnswm.org

First United Methodist Church (FUMC) of Kalamazoo's Reconciling Committee is sponsoring a free video session, "A Talk by the Dr. Rev. William Barber II" with discussion to follow on Thursday, August 15, 2019 at 6:30 pm in the Youth Tribe Theater of FUMC.

Society for History and Racial Equity (S.H.A.R.E) in collaboration with the Kalamazoo Public Library will discuss the book, "White Fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism," by Robin DiAngelo facilitated by Gail Griffin. — Friday, November 22nd, 6-8pm at the Kalamazoo Public Library Central Location, 315 S. Rose Street, Kalamazoo.

The next meeting of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee will be held at 6:30 pm on August 19, 2019, at St. Martin of Tours Church on Nichols Road, Kalamazoo. Anyone who is interested is welcome to join us.