



Calendar

March 2021

- 1 Grand Rapids Unit Monthly Meeting**
7pm via Zoom, contact Courtney Winell, winell22@hotmail.com
- 6 Girl Scouts Celebration**
Program to celebrate the 19th amendment via Zoom
- 9 Calhoun County Unit Meeting**
7pm via Zoom, contact Sue Rosko, lwwkacalhouncounty@yahoo.com
- 10 LWVKA Development Committee Meeting**
10am via Zoom, contact Ken Manley, kenmanley@hotmail.com
- 20 Lame Duck Study II: Discussion of Issues**
2-3:30pm via Zoom. Contact denise.hartsough@gmail.com for the link
- 22 LWVKA Board Meeting**
6pm via Zoom, contact MerriKay Oleen-Burkey moburkey30@gmail.com
- 23 LWVKA Book Discussion Group**
7pm via Zoom, "American Dirt" by Jeanine Cummins. Discussion led by Paula Aldridge. Contact Aedin Clements aedinclements@gmail.com
- 24 DEI Committee Meeting**
6:30pm via Zoom, contact Millie Lambert, millielambert3922@gmail.com
- 27 Lame Duck III: Discussion & Consensus**
2-3:30pm via Zoom. Contact denise.hartsough@gmail.com for the link.

April 2021

- 5 Grand Rapids Unit Monthly Meeting**
7pm via Zoom, contact Courtney Winell, winell22@hotmail.com
- 13 Calhoun County Unit Meeting**
7pm via Zoom, contact Sue Rosko, lwwkacalhouncounty@yahoo.com
- 14 LWVKA Development Committee Meeting**
10am via Zoom, contact Ken Manley, kenmanley@hotmail.com
- 26 LWVKA Board Meeting**
6pm via Zoom, contact MerriKay Oleen-Burkey moburkey30@gmail.com
- 28 DEI Committee Meeting**
6:30pm via Zoom, contact Millie Lambert, millielambert3922@gmail.com

President's Column

It's Time for Legislative Interviews

MerriKay Oleen-Burkey, Co-President

At the beginning of every new legislative session, the LWVMI Board and its Advocacy Committee ask local leagues to interview State Representatives and State Senators. While LWVMI benefits from what is learned in the interviews, they are a very positive way for our local league to establish relationships with our legislators.

LWVKA has been assigned responsibility for interviewing our Michigan State Senator **Sean McCann** from District 20, and our State Representatives **Julie Rogers**, District 60, State Representative **Christine Morse**, District 61, State Representative **Matt Hall**, District 63, and State Representative **Beth Griffin**, District 66. The Grand Rapids Geographical Unit has identified the legislators that represent them and has plans to conduct those interviews.

For purposes of building relationships, it is best if constituents of the respective legislators conduct the interviews. If you volunteer to conduct an interview, you will receive interview questions, an interview response sheet, and background information prepared for the interview questions. The questions cover the environment, education, revenue, public health and safety, election reform and the legislator's priorities. These interviews are for League use only and will not be published. They are also not being done as lobbying visits. The interviews are intended as listening sessions to better know our legislators.

If COVID allows, there are a variety of formats for these interviews. They can be conducted at the legislator's local office or in his/her Lansing office, or at a local restaurant or library. If COVID doesn't allow an in-person interview, you might suggest a zoom meeting or conference call. It is helpful to conduct the interviews in pairs with one person the designated note taker. If your legislator refuses to participate consider going to one of his/her "coffees" or in-district meetings.

Let MerriKay know if you are interested in conducting an interview with your legislator and she will provide you with the LWVMI information you will need.


Her contact information is moburkey30@gmail.com or 269-270-3302.

Save the Date for LWVMI Virtual Convention: May 21 and 22

The theme for LWVMI's 2021 biennial convention is "Defending Democracy."

It will run from 6:30 pm on Friday, May 21st, through 5:00 pm on Saturday, May 22nd. Plans for the convention include plenaries, workshops, awards, panel discussions and even a silent auction. All are features you would see at an in-person convention. LWVKA is able to sponsor 16 voting delegates with convention registration, and they will need to become familiar with the business that will be addressed at convention. If you would like to be considered for one of the voting delegate positions, contact MerriKay (moburkey30@gmail.com; 269-270-3302).

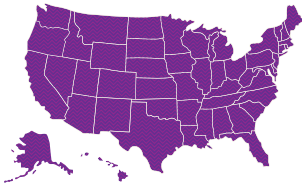
Even if you are not interested in being a voting delegate but would like to experience the convention, you are invited to do so. The registration fee will be \$35 payable by the attendee.

In the next couple of months the convention registration will open and more information will be available about workshop choices and speakers. Check the website LWVMI.org for details. 

LWVUS Update

By Paula Manley

The *For the People Act HRI* has been reintroduced. The LWVUS urges support of this comprehensive package of democracy reforms. To read more about this bill and the League Talking Points, go to lww.org League Management site.



Juliana v. US Climate Change case involves 21 young people who have filed a constitutional challenge against the US government for its role in causing the climate crisis. The LWVUS and LWV Oregon filed amicus briefs in support of the plaintiffs. Recently the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals denied the plaintiffs motion for a rehearing with the entire circuit court. LWVUS remains committed in supporting challenges against climate change and young plaintiffs. Read more in the Climate Change Toolkit at lww.org League Management site.

LWVUS gave a rare vote recommendation to senators asking them to protect immigrant rights in the COVID stimulus talks. This was successful and citizen spouses and children in mixed-status families may receive COVID relief.

LWVUS opposed means testing for COVID-19 survival checks and means testing was not included in the House COVID package.

For the most current LWVUS news update, subscribe to the *League Update* which is emailed to members biweekly. [🔗](#)

National Popular Vote Compact

By Connie Ferguson and Denise Hartsough

LWVUS has a position in support of the National Popular Vote Compact, an agreement among states to commit their presidential electors for the winner of the popular vote, no matter which candidate won in a particular state. The compact would circumvent the Electoral College without changing the US Constitution. Michigan has not joined the compact.

On February 18, ten LWVKA members recommended to the LWVKA Board that it include in the Program Planning response to the State League: LWVKA is exploring interest among local Leagues in Michigan in working for our state's adoption of the National Popular Vote Compact. That will determine if there is support for our requesting that LWVMI advocate for Michigan's joining the Compact, using the existing LWVUS position in favor of the NPVC. The board approved this statement and submitted it to LWVMI. [🔗](#)



Lame Duck Study

Voice your views on the Lame Duck sessions of the Michigan Legislature!

By Denise Hartsough, VP Program

You are invited to two Saturday sessions to discuss the characteristics of Lame Duck and to respond to the State League's consensus questions:

March 20, 2-3pm Lame Duck II: Discussion of the Issues
March 27, 2-3pm Lame Duck III: Discussion and Consensus

Watch your email for Zoom links, or email denise.hartsough@gmail.com for the links.

A helpful study guide and PowerPoint are at: lwwmi.org/member/mem_studies.html

If you do not have access to the internet and need print copies of the study guide and/or PowerPoint, please call Ruth Caputo at 269-207-2815.

The Lame Duck Study Team of **Ruth Caputo, Barb Dircks, Lisa Fuller, Allison Hammond, Janet Jones** and **Linda McDonald** anticipates an interesting discussion!

If you have questions, please contact me at 269-599-1801. [🔗](#)

Redistricting Updates

By Denise Hartsough, ICRC Monitoring Team

A challenge facing Michigan's Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (ICRC) is the newly announced further delay of the delivery of Census data to states — from March to July to September 30, 2021.

The ICRC is obligated by the Michigan Constitution to deliver maps by November 1 and to hold hearings on them for 45 days beforehand. The Commission cannot hold hearings before it receives Census data for the maps. Permission for a delay may be sought from the Michigan Supreme Court.

The ICRC must take into account Communities of Interest (COIs). A Community of Interest is a geographically clustered group with common legislative and community concerns that desires cohesive representation in the legislature or Congress. For example, a COI might be residents of a single school district or a state's coastal communities.

LWVKA members from Calhoun, Kent and Kalamazoo Counties have volunteered to:

- learn about COIs, a free mapping tool (Representable) and testifying to a redistricting commission;
- reach out to area COIs that are not already well organized to represent their interests to the ICRC;
- offer to help such COIs to learn how to testify before the ICRC (April-July) about their existence and wanting to be considered when ICRC draws maps;
- offer to help such COIs to testify before the ICRC about the proposed maps.

Are you from Kalamazoo or Kent County and interested in helping Communities of Interest? Please contact me at 269-599-1801 or denise.hartsough@gmail.com. [🔗](#)



Calhoun County Unit Updates

By Sue Rosko


The Calhoun County Unit is learning what an extremely busy and active organization the League of Women Voters is, even outside of the national election itself! Perhaps it's all of the issues present in the nation since we became a unit in February! As was noted by several at the Founder's Day gathering, the League is needed now more than ever. **Jocelyn Benson's** speech at the Founder's Day gathering provided strong goals and direction to keep our democracy strong. Her gratitude for the League's work, her vision, and the need to keep the momentum going serves to push us forward.

Our unit will be presenting our SWOT analysis at the March Kalamazoo leaders meeting. Two members are researching for the Lame Duck and will be presenting that to the Unit at the March 9 membership meeting. They will then share the consensus reached locally with the LWVKA's Lame Duck committee. Four Calhoun County members have volunteered to work on the LWVMI project for Communities of Interest. Our Unit feels strongly about the need to have the 2018 amendment to Michigan's constitution carried out as per citizens' votes and wishes. With some in the state wanting to hinder the carrying out of this amendment it is important for us to do our part in our county, making sure all communities of interest are given a voice. We will be working in partnership with the strong **Voters Not Politicians** group in Calhoun County. Advocacy seems to be at the forefront of several members' minds.

An article was published in newspapers across our county sharing the work of our local Unit and inviting others to join the League. Member recruitment continues through this, social media and word of mouth. We are trying to reach out to others who can broaden our scope of diversity in age, race, gender and beliefs. This will be ongoing, along with building more partnerships through our projects, COI exposure and members. Members have reached out to Albion, Marshall, and Battle Creek thus far to begin building relationships and partnerships.

Two members are beginning climate studies/action and advocacy. One has joined the LWVKA Environmental Justice committee to explore the work that Kalamazoo is doing with the intent to begin carry over of environmental projects to Calhoun County while building partnerships locally.


Voter Education and Outreach continues. The committee chair has begun to reach out to local high

schools again. We are trying to find the key person or people in the local districts to work through and with. One large district felt they already have a robust voter registration system in place for their students. Another scheduled an in-person presentation (Covid allowing) for March 23 and 25 with our Unit. Other avenues for voter education and registration are being explored as well. 

Grand Rapids Unit Updates

By Courtney Winell


The Grand Rapids Unit kicked off our 2021 educational series on February 11. The inaugural presentation was presented by **Rhonda Craig**, President of the League of Women Voters of Detroit. Ms. Craig presented her research on "African Americans in the Suffrage Movement." This was a great opportunity for LWV members and community partners to learn more about the contributions made by African American women and men in the women's suffrage movement. There are five remaining educational presentations that will take place throughout the remainder of 2021. Event details will be shared as events are finalized.

Grand Rapids LWV members will be assisting LWVMI with the Communities of Interest (COI) project as part of the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission process. If you are interested in assisting with this project please contact Teri Chaplin (chaplin.teri@yahoo.com) or Courtney Winell (winell22@hotmail.com) for additional details and to discuss how you can assist. 

Nominating Committee Slate

The following LWVKA members have accepted nominations for Officers, Directors and Nominating Committee for the 2021-2022 LWVKA Board. Voting occurs during the Annual Meeting.

| | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Co-President (1yr) | Merrikay Oleen-Burkey |
| Co-President (1yr) | Barbara Dircks |
| VP Organization (2yr) | Chris Kuthe |
| Secretary (2yr) | Deb Freiman |
| Board Members (2yr) | Rick Freiman |
| | Aedin Clements |
| | Angela Erdman |
| Nominating (1yr) | Kay Anderson |
| | KC Miller |
| | Regena Nelson |

Current Nominating Committee members are **Kay Anderson** 269-649-2461 or kander314@aol.com, off-board members **KC Miller** and **Regena Nelson** and Board member **Fran Eckenrode**. 



Awards at State Convention

Would you like to recognize the hard work of a dedicated League member? Each year members are recognized at the state convention through competitive awards including:

- The Belle Brotherton Award Honoring Exemplary Leadership
- The Helen Milliken Leadership in Civic Empowerment Award
- The Maryann Mahaffey Community Service Award

In addition to these competitive awards, up to four local League members may receive non-competitive "Belle Ringer" awards. Belle Ringers are acknowledged and recognized for their support of League priorities. The award categories are Advocacy, Voter Service, Member Recruitment & Engagement, and Strategic Planning.

The AWARDS packet is now available on the LWVMI website and includes criteria for the awards. Please consider nominating a colleague. Contact Fran Eckenrode (269.903.9372 feckenr@gmail.com) to suggest award nominations for our Kalamazoo Area League. Nominations for League awards are due April 1. [🔗](#)

Founders Day Celebration

By Chris Kuthe

We were unable to physically gather together for our Founders Day Celebration, but we did get to hear Secretary of State **Jocelyn Benson** speak and eat chocolate! Eighty-eight members gathered via zoom at 10:00am on Saturday, February 20th.

The highlight of the gathering was Secretary Benson's speech entitled "Protecting the Vote, Advancing Democracy." She started by thanking the League members for our work in helping pass Proposal 2 and 3 in 2018. The expanded voting rights provided by Proposal 3 proved essential for the election during the Covid-19 crisis. She reported that more people voted in the 2020 Presidential election than any other point in our history. Five and a half million Michigan citizens voted, 3.3 million of those by absentee ballots. Thirty-thousand voters registered and voted on election day.

Secretary Benson and her office want to push forward to engage more voters and protect their votes. The Secretary of State's office has three focuses. The first is a new initiative, "Voting Matters." Besides having record turn out, two million eligible voters did not come to the polls. Her office wants to investigate who and where these voters are and how to get them engaged in the political process. They intend to meet with these poten-

tial voters and discuss how to make democracy more relevant to their lives. This is a way our League could be involved— being a part of these community discussions to increase voter turn out.

The second focus for Secretary Benson is a legislative package she has introduced to strengthen infrastructure, increase access to the vote and protect the security of our democracy. Highlights of this legislative package include: required absentee ballot applications for all registered voters before each Federal election, expanded early in person voting, making election day a holiday, providing extra time for clerks to process absentee ballots, consolidating the May and August elections, protections at the polls including banning fire arms and prohibiting lying to voters.

Secretary Benson's third focus is on the Independent Citizens Redistricting Committee. Thirteen citizens are already engaged in ending gerrymandering in our state. Our help is needed by giving feedback at public meetings on this issue to make sure our voices continue to be heard. She encouraged us to visit redistricting-michigan.org to stay informed on this issue.

After Secretary Benson's speech we split up into breakout sessions to hear information on LWVKA committees:

Advocacy, Candidate Forums, Voter Registration, Vote 411 and Voter Guides, High School Mock Election, Election Administration, Diversity Equity and Inclusion, LWVKA Promotion, Natural Resources and Book Club. If you are interested in becoming involved in any of these areas, contact information for each of these committees is on the first page of our new member directory. Getting involved in one of these areas is a good way to protect the vote and advance democracy. [🔗](#)

Membership Updates

At the end of January each year, we audit and report our membership numbers to the national League. We're pleased to report that the LWVKA now has 292 members, including 49 in the Grand Rapids area and 24 in Calhoun County! Last month, we welcomed:

| | |
|--------------------|------------------|
| Karen DeVries | Ruth Stevens |
| MJ Harting-Minkwic | Stephanie Weaver |
| Susan Robinaugh | Sandra Zukowski |

The 2021 LWVKA Membership Directory was emailed to members on February 19. Please contact Membership Chair **Jennifer Snyder**, jsyndergaard-snyder@gmail.com, with corrections or updates. [🔗](#)

WELCOME
New Members!



DEI Meetings & Events:

By Millie Lambert

The DEI Committee invites members to explore resources from the LWVUS: lwv.org/league-management/diversity-equity-inclusion.

The Feb. DEI Committee updated the DEI Action Plan and did an initial look at the DEI Lens reviews of LWVKA materials, communications, etc. We had an informative discussion about the US League webinar Covering.

Our next meeting is **March 24**, at 6:30 pm via Zoom. Want to join this committee? Notify MerriKay Oleen-Burkey or Millie Lambert.

March Events to Consider:

Have an event or resource that should be included? Email: millielambert3922@gmail.com.

Due to current COVID restrictions, many events have been cancelled or postponed. Check with the event sponsors.

There are several DEI initiatives in the area for public participation. Often event information is not available in time to include here. Please subscribe to your selected organizations online and consider liking them on social media.

Unveiling American Genius: Open now, Kalamazoo Institute of Arts (KIA). The exhibition explores key stories that women, African Americans, Latinx and other artists have told about our culture, art and history.

Kalamazoo Valley Museum Exhibits and Online Exclusives

Contact Kalamazoo Valley Museum: kalamazoomuseum.org

Beatrice Menase Kwe Jackson, Water Walker Native American Connections to the Water
Digital program by Anishinaabe water walker Beatrice Menase Kwe Jackson

Filling in the Gaps: The Art of Murphy Darden.
Kalamazoo resident and nonagenarian Murphy Darden explores local history, civil rights, the enduring legacy of hate, and America's forgotten black cowboys.

Close to Home—The Walker Brothers. Learn about The Walker Brothers and their lasting impact on family, friends and civil rights in Kalamazoo.

Dr. Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins: Say Their Names! Carrying on the Legacy of History Making Women. Untold stories and unknown heroes, with a challenge to move forward. March 16 7pm. Register on the Howell Carnegie Library's website.

Ableism 101—Everything You Know about Disability is (probably) Wrong! 3-3-21, 1-4pm or 3-12-21, 9am-noon. Basic concepts around ableism. Contact Disability Network Southwest Michigan (DNSW) to register 269-345-1516 ext. 120 or www.dnswm.org

Ableism 102 —Next Steps in Dismantling Ableism. Must complete Ableism 101

Builds on learning in Ableism 101 with a deeper examination of the causes and impacts of ableism and what it means to be truly inclusive. Two parts. must sign up for both: 3-18-21 9am-noon and 3-25-21, 9am-noon. Contact DNSW: 269-345-1516 ext.120 or www.dnswm.org

Web Movie: Peanut Butter Falcon:

3-23-21, 2021, 1-3pm. A story of a man who has Down syndrome and runs away from a residential nursing home to pursue his dream of becoming a pro wrestler and befriends an outlaw who becomes his coach and ally. Contact DNSW to register 269-345-1516 ext. 120.

Online Introduction to Systemic Racism

June and July are FULL. Spots available for or Sept. 1-2, 1-4pm. Cost sliding scale. eracce.org

Online Understanding and Analyzing Systemic Racism Workshop Six days: Mar. 17-25 (by invitation only); Mar. 17, 18,19, 24, 25, 26 1-4pm each day. Registration required. Must attend ALL six sessions. Cost \$425. eracce.org

Page Turner's Book Club: Caste the Origins of Our Discontents. 3-1-21, 6:30-7:30pm Registration required. Kalamazoo Public Library (KPL) events@kpl.gov

Reading Race Book Club: The Black Kids. 3-9-21, 6:30-8pm Registration required. KPL events@kpl.gov

Classics Revisited Book Club: Things Fall Apart 3-18-21, 7-8:45pm. Registration required. KPL events@kpl.gov

African American Genealogy: Overview of Online Resources,3-22-21, 4:30-5:30pm. Registration required. KPL events@kpl.gov

For Colored Girls Book Club: Their Eyes Were Watching God. 3-26-21, 7-8pm. Registration required. KPL events@kpl.gov

OnePlace Webinar: What to do when an Employee Discloses a Disability. 3-9-21, 10-11:30am. Registration required. KPL (269) 553-7800 or events@kpl.gov or ONEplace@kpl.gov

OnePlace Webinar: So your Leadership Wants to be Antiracist? 3-17-21, 10am-noon. Registration required. Contact oneplace@kpl.gov

Online Video Series: How to Lead Tough Conversations. 3-22-21. Open hours. KPL Contact ONEplace@kpl.gov

Truth Talk: Women's History Month. 3-4-21, 4- 5:30pm. Facebook Live & YouTube Live,

Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) Kalamazoo

2021 Virtual Youth Summit: 3-14-3-16-21, afternoons and evenings. For adult educators, middle school and high school students. Contact OutFront Kalamazoo to register 349-4234.

SHARE 2020 Youth Summit: Zoom Video on Racism. sharekazoo.org to view.

SHARE Organizational Racial Healing Program: Five Phases - Pre-assessment, Healing/making connections, Facing history, Taking action, Evaluation and assessment. sharekazoo.org

Kalamazoo Community Foundation Equity Series: Policies Impacting Immigrants During Covid-19 and Immigration Services in Kalamazoo. Contact Kalamazoo Community Foundation.

Page Turner's Book Club: Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent, 3-1-21, 6:30-7:30pm. Registration required. KPL: 269-553-7800

Race in America: The 400 Year Journey History Workshop Series - A Virtual Five Part On Demand Series. Contact the Society for History and Racial Equity (SHARE) 269-381-9775.

Resources


ERACCE Eliminating Racism & Creating/Celebrating Equity: Facebook page lists numerous resources including videos, film lists, articles, book lists, etc.

Kalamazoo Community Foundation Anti-racism and Racial Equity Resources: Provides links to a variety of organizations as well as reading resources, etc.

League of Women Voters US (LWVUS)

A variety of resources are available at this site including many LWV Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Webinars which are available from March 2019 and continue to be expanded monthly. In addition a DEI Guide is available and *What to Ask When Examining your Work through a DEI Lens*.

Society for History and Racial Equity

(SHARE): Resources are extensive and include lists of organizations, books, articles, videos, and websites. 





What is Ranked Choice Voting?

By Tamara L. Carpenter

Have you heard this term recently? Or maybe you saw volunteers at the Kalamazoo Farmer's Market this past fall talking with people about this simpler way of voting.

Ranked Choice Voting gives the power to the people to choose the candidate they prefer without worrying about "wasting" their vote. Instead of choosing only one candidate, it allows you to "rank" the candidates in order of preference — your first choice, second choice, third choice and so on. If your first choice is eliminated at the first tabulation as the candidate with the least number of votes, your vote goes to your second choice and votes are re-tabulated. The process continues in this way until one candidate has 51% of the vote. With a ranked choice voting system we can:

- **Ensure Majority Support**
The winning candidate must obtain over 50% of the vote unlike the current system where a candidate can win with a simple plurality
- **Minimize Strategic Voting**
Allow voters to choose their favorite, without settling for the "lesser of two evils" and eliminates the spoiler effect.
- **Promote Diverse Candidates**
Encourage more candidates to run for office, without the worry

that voters might refrain from voting for them out of the perceived need to "vote strategically." Consequently, candidates reflect more closely the populations they serve..

- **Curb Negative Campaigning**
Reward candidates who reach beyond their base to find common ground with more voters. Candidates campaign not only for first-choice support, but also the second-choice support of other candidates. Consequently, candidates need to appeal to a broader range of voters in order to win.
- **Strengthen Party Unity**
Temper intra-party tensions during contested primaries and choosing nominees with a mandate from party voters.

Sound good? Want to know more? The Kalamazoo Chapter of Rank MI Vote is giving presentations to groups and organizations across the SW Michigan region. If you would like them to present to your group, or if you'd like to volunteer to help bring ranked choice voting to Michigan, contact Nancy at nancy@rankmivote.org. You can also find more information at www.rankmivote.org.

And, be sure to Watch your email for an invitation to join LWVKA's community forum on RCV later this summer! 

RANK MI VOTE 