

Calendar

November 2021

- 9 Calhoun County LWV 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
- 22 LWVKA Board Meeting**
6pm via Zoom, contact MerriKay Oleen-Burkey
moburkey30@gmail.com
- 24 DEI Committee Meeting**
6:30pm via Zoom, contact MerriKay
Oleen- Burkey @moburkey30@gmail.com
- 30 Giving Tuesday**

December 2021

- 8 LWVKA Development Committee Meeting**
10am via Zoom, contact Ken Manley @
kenmanley@hotmail.com
- 14 Calhoun County LWV Unit Meeting**
7pm via Zoom, contact Sue Rosko,
lwwkacalhouncounty@yahoo.com
- 22 DEI Committee Meeting**
6:30pm via Zoom, contact MerriKay
Oleen- Burkey @moburkey30@gmail.com
- 27 LWVKA Board Meeting**
6pm via Zoom, contact MerriKay Oleen-Burkey
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President's Column

By Barb Dirks

October was a very busy month and several significant events moved forward! The importance of the League Of Women Voter's mission to Empower Voters and Defend Democracy dominated! Throughout history and continuing today, we have, and do operate to give voices to those who might not otherwise understand they are entitled to have one. And, we advocate for others who have nowhere to turn. Empowering and educating voters, we reach out to register voters and work within communities to promote political responsibility that supports an informed citizenry. The LWV, at all levels, intends to speak as one voice. It is not uncommon to hear the following: "What does the League do?," "Who are we?," "Tell me about the LWV.," "Oh, I know who you are – you give out the Voter Guides, and I can't wait to get them each year!"

These are all questions and comments taken from Voter Registration tabling events. As such, the service and significance of what the League of Women's does, cannot be understated, especially when experienced first-hand! It is a wonderful chance to meet and listen to first time voters as well as, "life-long" voters. If you have never volunteered, it couldn't be easier! Pick a month and find out how to join others who are volunteering to register voters. It is one thing any member can do in the coming year. Get involved with the EVENTS committee as each Voter Registration date is being planned. Encouraging eligible voters to cast a ballot in every election to make their voices heard, means our election system will continue to be free, fair and accessible to everyone!

In small ways, in large ways, it is these dependable actions that lead to our shared commitment. Every member is relevant and helping. Modeling, engaging and asking questions of those who are not aware of the services the League provides, is what helps inform the wider citizenry, and makes a difference.

The past four weeks meant pro-active work in the following areas:

- County Apportionment Commission advocacy
- MICRI Voting Rights Act and Town Halls participation
- National Voter's Registration Day events
- Successful creation and distribution of Voter Guides
- Candidate Forums
- Consideration and study of local issues around Housing efforts
- Calendar updates in anticipation of November
- Making Democracy Work Grant

The current newsletter will assist in defining and elaborating and informing members about all these directions. Readers will see where opportunities to engage are possible. November 2nd may seem like a marker, or ending, as the election date draws close, but continual efforts follow. Giving Tuesday is right around the corner, as are many post-election efforts that will mark the beginning, not the ending of a busy year! It is the ongoing study, adoption of positions and advocacy which are always essential operational activities. It is also the non-partisan mandate of what we do, which make it relevant to all.

Wanting every eligible voter to have equal access to the ballot box **is not partisan**. Wanting a robust democracy in which everyone has an equal voice and equal representation **is not partisan**, wanting to see more elected officials that reflect the diverse makeup of our country **is not partisan. It is American.** LWV 





News from
National

LWVUS Update

Paula Manley

The LWVUS has the following Talking Points for Local Leagues to use to speak as one voice about voting rights and messaging to counter voter suppression.

Talking Points: Talking About Voting Rights

LEAD WITH VALUES ABOUT VOTING RIGHTS:

- The right to vote is a critical principle of our democracy.
- Our democracy is stronger when every eligible voter can cast a vote and have it count.
- We should encourage every eligible voter to cast a ballot in every election to make their voices heard.
- We want our election system to be free, fair, and accessible to all eligible voters.

DISCREDIT VOTER SUPPRESSORS WITH THE TRUTH:

False claims of 'widespread voter fraud' have been used to unlawfully purge eligible voters from the rolls.

These claims are an intimidation tactic, designed to suppress certain populations from participating in our elections, including African Americans and Hispanic voters.

PIVOT TO TALKING ABOUT THE REAL VOTING ISSUES AND THE SOLUTIONS THAT YOUR LEAGUE IS WORKING ON:

Democracy works best when all eligible voters participate. The REAL problems with our election system are the polling place closures, cuts to early voting, onerous voter ID laws, and the illegal purge of registered voters. The League is dedicated to ensuring that all eligible voters – particularly those from traditionally under-represented or underserved communities, including first-time voters, non-college youth, new citizens, communities of color, the elderly, and low-income Americans – have the opportunity and the information to exercise their right to vote.

FINALLY, REINFORCE THE POSITIVES ABOUT VOTING:

Voting brings us together as Americans – it is the one time when we are all equal.

Voting is your opportunity to support your community and have a say in America's future.

Encouraging all eligible voters to participate in our elections should be the intention of all politicians. 

LWVMI Updates

Denise Hartsough

Voter Suppression Ballot Initiative

The inaptly named Secure MI Vote initiative is collecting signatures now to enact a proposal to suppress the vote in Michigan.

The ballot proposal would take away Election Day voting options, make absentee voting less accessible, gut funding for election administration in Michigan—and prohibit LWV from registering voters!

LWVMI opposes the Secure MI Vote proposal and supports Michigan's current voter validation system, which has worked for decades.

LWVMI points out: *"This proposal eliminates options that make voting more accessible to all, especially for Black and brown communities, seniors, people with disabilities and rural voters."*

In 2018, Michigan voters overwhelmingly voted to amend the constitution to help voters, not to take rights away.

For specifics, see www.lwvmi.org, "League Denounces Ballot Proposal."

If the initiative collects enough signatures, the legislature may adopt the proposal without putting it on the ballot for a vote by the citizens of Michigan.

The proposal includes an appropriation that, if approved by the Michigan Legislature, would prevent a vote of the people from overturning the law, further denying the voters of Michigan a voice on the issue.

Protect voters' rights! DECLINE TO SIGN!

Voting Rights Act & Redistricting

The Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (MICRC) and its consultants have come under criticism for their interpretation and application of the federal Voting Rights Act.

The Voting Rights Act prohibits practices that result in the dilution of a minority group's vote such that minority voters lack an equal opportunity to elect their preferred representatives.

The MICRC's experts have advised that to comply with the Voting Rights Act, districts with concentrations of Black voters should have a Black Voting Age Population of 35 to 50%, depending on the analysis of the racial bloc voting in each district. The experts say these percentages make it likely Black voters can elect their candidate of choice.

Critics are concerned that the percentages should be higher. Voters in those areas are used to having districts with a Black Voting Age Population of up to 90%.

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The MICRC's consultants have pointed out that a district with a Black Voting Age Population over 60% is likely a violation of the Voting Rights Act. Black voters packed into one district can certainly elect their candidate of choice, but a portion of the votes are not needed to accomplish that—in a 2-way race, a candidate wins with just over 50% of the votes. In other words, those extra votes are wasted in that district, when they could be making a difference if they were in a different district.

However, MSU researchers have raised the issue of whether a candidate of choice can prevail in a primary election in a district with less than 50% Black Voting Age Population. Very little of the MICRC's racial bloc voting analysis included primaries.

You can check maps to see if the MICRC adjusts districts to have higher percentages of Black Voting Age Population at michigan.gov/micrc or michigan-mapping.org

11/5 From among its many draft maps, MICRC votes for one or more sets of PROPOSED maps. Public may comment for 45 days but only yes or no for an entire map (for ex., Birch for Congressional districts).

12/30 First date MICRC may vote on FINAL maps.

County Commission Districts

LWVKA and many others urged the Kalamazoo County Apportionment Commission to reconsider its decision to reduce the number of County Commission districts from 11 to 9.

The fewer the districts, the less racial and linguistic minorities will be represented by candidates of their choice due to dilution of their votes.

Despite strong public input to the contrary, our local Apportionment Commission approved a map with 9 districts.

Thank You Volunteers!

Jules Isenberg-Wedel & Terry Hluchyj

This year's LWVKA Voter Guide team would like to thank Bob Brown, Ruth Caputo, Madeline Cimini, Karen & Stu Eddy, Connie & Steve Ferguson, Marti & Warren Fritz, Karen Gustafson, Janet Hanson, Denise Hartsough, Janet & Keith Jones, Judy Kepler, Chris Kuthe. Cheryl Lyon-Jenness, Laura Latiolais, Linda Mah, Amy Sue Manley, Paula & Ken Manley, Betty Ongley, Tanya Potter, Gail Walter, Karl Westra, Sara Wick, Holly Wingard, Diane Worden, Jackie Wylie, and Moira Macleod for all of their

assistance in the distribution of printed copies of the 2021 General Election Voter Guide to various businesses and organizations in Kalamazoo, Parchment, and Portage. The distribution of Voter Guides is a massive undertaking and we couldn't have done it without the generous donation of your time and effort! Special THANKS also to Tamara Carpenter for her design layout expertise and skill and Aedin Clements for coordinating distribution and again hosting our pick-up location. Bravo, everyone!!



Giving Tuesday

Paul Manley

#GivingTuesday 2021 is November 30th. Retail stores come together to offer deals on Black Friday and Cyber Monday. #GivingTuesday brings the nonprofit community together on a universal platform to raise awareness about the importance of supporting our valuable missions and work.

In this time of heightened partisanship, gridlock and increased frustration among the public, there has never been a more urgent need for the reasoned, factual and civil voice that the LWVKA brings to our community. Consider giving your support to the LWVKA on Tuesday November 30th. You may donate on the lwvka.org website or send your check to LWVKA PO Box 2106 Kalamazoo, MI 49003-2106.



DEI Events & Resources

"Grasping Change at the Root: Growing the Beloved Community"

Dr. Michael Eric Dyson, Keynote Speaker at 'ISAAC Virtual Banquet' November 11, 6pm. Register at isaackalamazoo.org

Workplace Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Resources. Crescendo DEI Digest. Sign-up for free at crescendowork.com. Crescendo DEI helps organizations of all sizes foster inclusive workplaces.

"The Awakening: A Climate Justice Story" Short Video on Zoom. Monday, November 29. Registration Required at Kalamazoo Public Library website: OnePlace@KPL Adult Events



Membership

Jennifer Snyder

We are pleased to welcome Patricia Hollahan and Jennifer Strebs of Kalamazoo, Mary Hanley of Sturgis, and Diane Cloutier of Ceresco as our most recent new members!



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The LWVKA arranged two consecutive weeks for advertising and viewing for drivers traveling north down Westnedge into Kalamazoo in the month of October.



LWVKA registered voters at the Women's Health Expo at Family Health Center Oct. 16. It was an event that allowed for great networking! Many thanks to MerriKay, Jennifer Snyder and Shardae Chambers for volunteering their time!

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