

Calendar

June 2022

1 Voter Registration

Loy Norrix High School Graduates – Wings Stadium

2 Voter Registration

Kalamazoo Central High School Graduates—
Wings Stadium

4 Pride Festival

Arcadia Festival Place. Look for our booth!

8 LWVKA Development Committee Meeting

10am via Zoom, contact Ken Manley @
kenmanley@hotmail.com

9 Virtual Candidate Forum

Judicial Candidates for 8th District Court
and 9th Circuit Court

22 DEI Committee Meeting

6:30 pm via Zoom, contact MerriKay
Oleen- Burkey @moburkey30@gmail.com

22 Calhoun County LWV Unit Meeting

27 7pm via Zoom, contact Sue Rosko
@lwwkacalhouncounty@yahoo.com

23 LWVMI Observer Corps

Zoom Conference, 3 pm

27 LWVKA Board Meeting

6pm, in person at Walden Woods Clubhouse with
potluck for both new and continuing board members.

July 2022

19 LWVKA Book Discussion Group

7pm via Zoom, Book by Nikole Hannah-Jones,
Caitlin Roper, Ilena Silverman and Jake Silverstein,
“The 1619 Project: A New Origin,” contact
Aedin Clements @ aedinclements@gmail.com

27 LWVMI Observer Corps

Zoom Conference, 3:00pm



President's Column

By Barb Dircks

We are fresh off the Annual meeting, and inspired by what our speakers, Dr. Luchara Wallace and Taylor West, emphasized in their presentation as to the best ways to motivate young voters to care, show up and vote. Their theme contained wise advice for everyone, “Do people see themselves in the picture?” Are we framing the issue of voting as a privilege and a right and the responsibility every citizen has access to?

Affirmative! It is what the League does so well! We connect and mentor and provide the resources that advocate for those who are just finding their voices, have a voice but may not know how to use it, along with those who have stood on the shoulders of others –and now share what it means to receive, as well as lead for the benefit and good of all. Connections, consistency and compassion are instrumental ingredients to what LWV does.

Our 2022 -23 local programming summary, presented by Denise Hartsough, was approved; we have our way forward. We will continue outreach and organizing opportunities for everyone to help in big or little ways. We will continue connecting with the spaces and places where each voter has access and can see themselves in the picture. The information, motivation and direction they need via our website, VOTE411, is ready to go. Voters can locate new precincts and verify old ones; research ballot information and read about the many candidates running in local and state elections. The Voter Guide distribution will, as always, enable people to understand issues and remain current before the next round of absentee ballots go out. The efforts of the League Voter Services team, under the leadership of Jules Isenberg-Wedel, makes this possible, and are all recognized and appreciated! It is essential knowledge voters need!

Planning continues and arrangements are underway to make the biannual National Convention a success! The 2022 Convention will be LWVUS's first hybrid Convention. The in-person event will take place at the Sheraton Downtown Denver in Denver, CO, and an integrated virtual event will take place at the same time. LWVUS's bylaws require delegates to meet every two years and vote on a variety of items, including a LWVUS biennial budget, the next LWVUS Board of Directors and Nominating Committee, any bylaw amendments that have been put forth, and the organization's program or focus of work for the next biennium. It promises to be informative and filled with powerful presentations.

The journey of 2022 has been testimony to flexibility, dedication and enthusiastic participation. Our Annual meeting was a hybrid; those who wished to attend virtually, did so. Others who were comfortable, met face-to-face. We approved our new slate of officers; we recognized and thanked those who were making changes, with a very special “thank you” extended to MerriKay Olene Burkey as she moves into the position of past president. Her skilled leadership and constant mentorship has, and will continue to benefit us all! Thank you, MerriKay!



News from
National

LWVUS Update

Paula Manley

The Poor People's Campaign (PPC) and the Low-Wage Workers Assembly are organizing The Moral March on Washington and To The Polls in Washington, DC on June 18th. LWVUS will be participating in this event on June 18th. The PPC is offering ride share opportunities for anyone who wishes to travel to DC to join the march.

LWVUS is offering a webinar on Reproductive Rights: Overview and Advocacy on June 8th at 3pm. The webinar will cover what is happening on the national and state level and opportunities for advocacy. To register, go to League Management at lww.org.

LWVUS joined more than 120 other groups in a letter addressed to the social media platform leaders. The letter urged the leaders to control the spread of disinformation on line especially during the mid-term elections.

Wish to keep abreast of League news and happenings around the country? Subscribe to the LWVUS biweekly update on the League Management website at lww.org. 



LWVMI Updates

Denise Hartsough

With the participation and support of local Leagues and local League members like you, your State League is helping to Make Democracy Work in Michigan!

Promote the Vote (PTV) 2022—League members and others are gathering signatures until early June to put this proposed amendment to the Michigan Constitution on the November ballot. If you need to sign, email denise.hartsough@gmail.com or call 269-599-1801.

Board of Canvassers—Observers in the 4 counties with May special elections for State Representative saw that all went smoothly. You will be able to volunteer to observe here in November!

Redistricting—A team is still observing the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (MICRC) as it figures out how to wind down, secure State funds for legal expenses, handle two remaining lawsuits and issue its final report. Keep an eye on the State Legislature, where a proposed joint resolution--if supported by 2/3 in the House and Senate--would ask voters in November to abolish the Redistricting Commission.

Transparency and Term Limits—LWVMI has endorsed a ballot measure that would require legislators to file a financial disclosure form, as well as allow leg-

islators to serve as long as 12 years in one legislative body (House or Senate). This measure does shorten the term limit from 14 years to 12, but, on balance, LWVMI believes it will improve state government.

Serving Voters with Disabilities—LWVMI urges local clerks to educate poll workers about the rights of voters with disabilities and how best to serve them. Did you know that voters with disabilities may bring someone to the polling place to assist them with voting?

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI)—LWVKA's Co-President **MerriKay Oleen-Burkey** was one of the featured guests for the April Membership Leaders virtual meeting, speaking about our League's DEI efforts. For a recording, contact LWVMI's VP for Membership **Camilla Davis** at cdavis.lwvmi@gmail.com.

Advocacy at the Local Level—If you missed the LWVMI Spring Workshop, materials are available at <https://tinyurl.com/53arejrn>. 

EVENTS Update

By Barb Dircks

The EVENTS committee meets virtually to discuss, brainstorm and advance solutions to questions that arise in any many areas. Membership grows and changes as League members reach out on issues that interest them. All are welcome. Recently, we sought Board approval for the creation of an Instagram account and this in the works. Our Social media members (**Aedin Clements, Kristen Beaver, Skylar Breze**) are busy advertising League initiatives like the Promote The Vote petition signature gatherings, National Convention news and the upcoming Judge Forum on June 9th. They appreciate the contact which supplies approved images and language for instant posts, along with the advancing of messages they regularly add to our Facebook and Twitter feeds. (aedinclements@gmail.com) An informative presentation is in the works to help members understand how and why these platforms differ and can be used. **Regena Nelson** gave an update on the development of our Observer Corps. Two trainings have taken place, volunteers are attending a variety of meetings and a June date will be set for our first quarterly "debriefing" conversation. A major issue we are tackling is how best to advertise and effectively communicate the importance of our VOTE411 website as elections and primaries draw near. Our next meeting to continue this discussion is scheduled for June 17th at 10:30. To attend contact barbdircks@gmail.com. 

President's Column Continued

The Annual meeting closed with an acknowledgment of some of the many areas of action taken throughout the past year, they included:

- Voter registrations and education
- Candidate forums;
- Making Democracy Work Grant activities
- Women's Equality Day luncheon
- Observer Corps start up
- Promote the Vote Petition circulation;
- MICRC work- (Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission)
- Social Media development. (Thank you Aedin Clements, Kristen Beaver, and Skylar Breze)
- DEI committee Forums and involvement and promotion efforts- there were many!
- Natural Resources Committee strategic planning and outreach

We thank the volunteers and lead organizers who have made these activities possible! 🏆

"Collegiality is not about knowing the way forward but about discovering the way together."

Calhoun County Unit News

By Sue Rosko

The Calhoun County Geographical Unit members and partners continue its petition work to get the important Promote the Vote 2022 proposal on the November ballot. With the July 11 deadline, this has been a priority. Our presence will be at many upcoming community events in the county. We urge everyone to sign and support the petition, protecting our elections and voting rights. A SignUp Genius site allows those wishing to circulate petitions to sign up and gives access to signing up for opportunities across the county. A big thank you to our chair and the many volunteers who have already been working hard on this LWVMI effort.

Voter education/registration tables are being planned across the county for the summer activities. During June and the first of July members will be working alongside the petition drive. Work is also continuing with Vote 411 and sharing information around registering, voter rights and information on the August ballot.

The LWVKA Calhoun County Geo Unit Clerk Engagement Chair presented at the Calhoun County Clerks Association meeting in May. The work of the county unit was shared with the clerks and an offer to assist as needed. Marshall High School Honor Society members assisted a local clerk with the November 2020 elections by sanitizing where needed

and helping with any little errands and tasks. It was well received by both the clerk and the school, providing youth a way to begin to take an active part in elections. This service again be used in this precinct and was offered to the clerks throughout the county to the extent that high school volunteers can be gathered.

LWVKA Calhoun County Geo Unit SignUp Genius site is open for all Unit members. It is hoped that each member will check in regularly to see where they might assist in the work of the Unit. Calhoun has also welcomed new members over the past few months. Most of these have taken a very active part in the volunteer work of our Unit. Welcome and thank you! Such teamwork is helping get the important work of the League and for our Democracy done. 🏆

Event to Consider from the DEI Committee:

2022 Civil Rights Summit (In Person in the Lansing Center and Virtual)

Now more than ever, those concerned with eliminating inequality must focus on finding systemic solutions. That is why on June 15th, the Michigan Department of Civil Rights is hosting the 2022 Civil Rights Summit in Lansing Michigan. The summit is an opportunity for activists, funders, policymakers, and public servants to collaborate and strategize around addressing the historical impacts of the structural "isms."

If you care about social justice, then you likely already know that analyzing the surface of issues often fails to result in real solutions. That is why the summit is focused on taking a systematic approach to the structural "isms" that affect marginalized communities. Seminar topics include education, health, housing, economics, and voting rights & democracy. The day ends with a call to action around systems change.

More information and updates are available by following the Michigan Department of Civil Rights on social media or at www.michigan.gov/mdcr. Registration begins May 15th.



WELCOME
New Members!

In April, LWVKA was pleased to welcome new members Lana Escamilla of Kalamazoo and Frances Pierce of Marshall.



Annual Meeting Recap

By *Chris Kuthe*

Our 2022 Annual Meeting was held on Monday, May 23rd at the Kiva room in Friendship Village. Approximately 40 people were in attendance with 8 joining us via Zoom. A slide show honoring Mary Brown was presented. Our speakers were **Dr. Luchara Wallace** and **Taylor West** from WMU's Lewis Walker Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnic Relations. Their professional, enthusiastic and informative presentation was entitled, "*The Art of a Revolutionary: A Voter's Motivation*." The presentation highlighted the history of voting rights, displayed data of the peaks and valleys of voter turnout over the decades, and encouraged the League to focus on and motivate the next generation of voters. The minutes from the 2021 Annual Meeting, the 2022-2023 budget, and the Local Program were voted on and adopted. The Slate of Officers and Directors was elected and is listed below. Our Co-Presidents, MerriKay Oleen-Burkey and Barb Dircks summarized a long list of accomplishments from the past year, including candidate forums for Kalamazoo Mayor and Commission, hundreds of Voter Guides delivered, an increase in use of Vote411 and many voter registration events. Lisa Fuller won the door prize of a Women's Suffrage jigsaw puzzle.

Slate of Officers and Directors that were elected:

Co-President (1yr) Barbara Dircks

Co-President (1yr) Chris Kuthe

VP Organization (1yr) Kristen Kern-Beaver

VP Program (2yr) Denise Hartsough

Treasurer (2yr) Tanya Potter

Board Members (2yr)

Jules Isenberg-Wedel

Jennifer Snyder

Lisa Fuller

Shardae Chambers

Nominating (1yr)

Kay Anderson

Regena Nelson

Teresa Johnson

Continuing Board Members

(elected for 2 years in 2021)

Deb Frieman

Rick Frieman

Aedin Clements

Angela Erdman

MerriKay Oleen-Burkey

(will serve a one year term as past-President)

Budget Committee

Tanya Potter

Rick Frieman

Chris Kuthe

Barb Dircks

Paul Aldridge

Nominating Committee 2022

Kay Anderson (chair)

Off-board members KC Miller and Regena Nelson
and **Board members** Angela Erdman and Lisa Fuller



Dr. Luchara Wallace



Taylor West

Judicial Candidate Forum

Denise Hartsough, VP Program

Hear from up to ten judicial candidates on Thursday, June 9, 6-8pm in a live streamed forum. Please watch for an email stating how to access the live stream of the forum. A recording will be posted online for later viewing, as well.

Judicial races typically attract a large number of candidates only when there is no incumbent, as incumbent judges are nearly always re-elected. Kalamazoo County has 3 openings for judges this year—one in 8th District Court and two in 9th Circuit Court. The judges elected in 2022 will likely serve for many terms.

District Court hears all minor criminal cases, including traffic violations, civil cases involving up to \$25,000, landlord-tenant matters and all misdemeanor criminal cases. Circuit Court hears all civil cases involving over \$25,000 and all felony criminal cases, such as burglary, assault, robbery, serious drugs, sexual assault, murder, rape, aggravated sexual assault, treason and piracy.

Three candidates are running for the one position in District Court. The two with the most votes in the August primary will on the ballot for the general election in November, and one will be elected. Seven candidates are running for two positions in Circuit Court. The four with the most votes in the primary will be on the ballot for the general election and two will be elected.

Watch the forum to get acquainted with the candidates! Sponsors to date include: Douglass Community Association, ISAAC (Interfaith Strategy for Advocacy and Action in the Community), K Votes, and YWCA of Kalamazoo.

High School Voter Registration

Voter registration is returning to in-person events. Our first is event it coming up June 1.

Where: Graduation Practice at Wings Stadium

When: Wednesday, June 1st
Loy Norrix 10:30 to Noon

Thursday, June 2nd
Kalamazoo Central 10:30 to Noon

If you would like to volunteer, contact moburkey30@gmail.com



Volunteers Register voters last month at K-College.

Thank you volunteers!!!

LWVKA Education Fund Board of Directors

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

Vice-Chair - Open

Jessica Reiser, *Secretary*
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Dennis Elmer, *Director*
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Rick Freiman, *Director*
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Join us monthly for
informative programs
and legislative
updates on issues
facing older adults in
our community.

Visit our website or Facebook page for
meeting details and membership information:
www.kcasi.net



facebook.com/KalamazooCountyAdvocatesForSeniorIssues

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