

Calendar

July 2022

(No LWVKA Board Meeting or DEI Meeting in July)

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, 3:00 pm

27 Social GatOhering

Bell's Beer Garden, 5pm

August 2022

13 EVENTS Committee Meeting

10:30 via Zoom, contact barbdircks@gmail.com

22 LWVKA Board Meeting

6pm via Zoom, contact ckuthe57@gmail.com

26 Women's Equality Day

September 2022

20 LWVKA Book Discussion Group

7pm via Zoom, Book by Elizabeth Kobert, "The Sixth Extinction," contact AedinClement @ aedinclements@gmail.com

National Voter Registration Days

26 LWVKA Board Meeting

6pm via Zoom, contact ckuthe57@gmail.com

President's Column

2021 – 2022 Year in Review

by MerriKay Oleen-Burkey, Co-President

As we close out this League year, we want to review with you how our organization has Empowered Voters and Defended Democracy. Many of you volunteered to make these actions possible, and we Thank You!!! Highlights from this year are described within our LWVKA strategic goals.

- **CENSUS AND REDISTRICTING Goal:** *To support full representation of Kalamazoo County residents in order to ensure fair distribution of public resources and legislative influence.*

Progress and Success Indicators:

LWVKA volunteers monitored the numerous sessions of the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (MICRC) until they had adopted redrawn districts for state senate and house as well as Congressional districts. Those districts are now being used for the 2022 elections.

LWVKA volunteers also monitored and testified on behalf of the League at the Kalamazoo County redistricting committee. Those newly drawn county commission districts are being used in the 2022 elections.

- **DIVERSITY, EQUITY and INCLUSION Goal:** *To engage in purposeful action to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in the LWVKA.*

Progress and Success Indicators:

The LWVKA board approved the DEI Committee's second 12-month Action Plan. As part of the DEI Action Plan—in follow-up to having persons with expertise review LWVKA public-facing materials with a DEI lens, their recommendations were used in developing the new LWVKA website and also to having a new notecard set designed for LWVKA wares.

A DEI Committee member worked with an art teacher at Linden Grove Middle School to have the students create note card designs.

The designs were incorporated into printed cards with a first rollout to the membership at the May Annual Meeting. They were very well received; a second printing has been ordered.

The DEI Committee provided resources to the Nominating Committee to assist with the identification of candidates for officers and directors in 2022-2023.

In the fall the DEI Committee hosted a presentation by Dr. Cybelle Shattuck, WMU Professor in the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability. Her presentation pointed out that housing stock is the most pressing local environmental justice issue in Kalamazoo County.

Environmental Justice means equal access to safe and healthy housing free of hazards to residents' health such as pollution, flooding.

Through a partnership with the Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition (KCCC),

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News from
National

LWVUS Update

Paula Manley

The LWVUS League Management website which features League resources for members has been redesigned. Go to lww.org and explore the various resources such as the 2020-22 Biennium Impact Report. This report highlights the work the League has done over the past two years.

LWVUS will present a webinar “Advocacy and Litigation FY2022 Wrap Up” on July 20th at 3pm.

Remember to receive the latest information about the League, subscribe to the League Update at lww.org. LWVUS sends members biweekly emails with information from LWVUS and Leagues around the country. 

LWVMI Updates

Denise Hartsough

Take Action!

We all receive many organizations’ requests for us to contact our legislators. If you can respond to a few, please respond to LWVMI’s Action Alerts.

You may think that your representatives in Lansing don’t need another form email in support of or in opposition to a bill that they will support or oppose anyway. Not so! Elected officials note and will cite to their colleagues how much communication they have received on a given bill.

Please—take 30 seconds to click on LWVMI’s Action Alerts!

The LWVMI Advocacy Committee—with the State Board’s blessing—sends Action Alerts when bills are up for a vote or influence on an issue will be timely.

Fewer than 10 LWVKA members responded to the most Action Alert. Thanks to all of you! Now, let’s get our participation numbers up! 

Ballot Proposals—Status

Legislature voted to place on the November ballot to amend the Michigan Constitution: Transparency & Term Limits.

Submitted signatures on June 1 to amend the law: Fair Lending. If the measure has enough valid signatures, it will be on the November ballot.

Signatures not submitted by June 1 and not collecting signatures now: Unlock MI, Michigan United, Audit MI, Raise the Wage, Community Healing, Revive MI Elections.

Signatures not submitted by June 1, will not be on the November ballot, and are still collecting signa-

tures: Secure MI Vote and Let MI Kids Learn (A) and (B). With enough valid signatures, the measures may be adopted by the legislature and cannot be vetoed by the governor.

Signatures due by July 11 to amend the Michigan Constitution: Promote the Vote 2022, Reproductive Freedom for All, and MI Right to Vote (A) & (B).

LWVMI supports: Fair Lending, Promote the Vote 2022, Reproductive Freedom for All, Transparency & Term Limits. More information at lwwmi.org. 

Did You Know?

Michigan now has 25 local Leagues! Northern Lower Michigan, serving Charlevoix and Emmet Counties, was just recognized by LWVUS as a new League.

In addition to the local Leagues, Michigan has 5 Member at Large (MAL) Units, which are under the legal and financial umbrella of LWVMI. Several local Leagues are mentoring Geographic Units, as LWVKA is for the thriving Calhoun County Unit.

LWVKA is in good company! 

EVENTS Update

By Barb Dircks

The EVENTS committee met on June 17th and discussed the importance of continuing communications that are positive, pro-active and accurate. We know as elections and primaries get closer there will be this need to provide a dependable counter to the spread of disinformation. A second goal will be to work towards increasing the League connection to younger voters in area colleges now that the ability to meet in person is increasing. The social media inroad into Instagram is developing and the Observer Corps will be meeting for its first debriefing meeting. We set August 13th as our next meeting and look forward to hearing from anyone who is interested in joining. We will continue to brainstorm and investigate ways to spread the word about the VOTE411 website and other election and voter services education opportunities. 



President's Column Continued

the DEI Committee began to plan a forum on this topic for the community.

Crossing three LWVKA strategic goals: DEI, Housing and Environmental Justice, a subgroup of the Natural Resources Committee, a virtual forum was held on April 21st. "Environmental Justice and Housing in Kalamazoo County" was moderated by **Denise Keele**, (KCCC) and **Regena Nelson** (LWVKA). The panelists were **Mary Balkema**, County Housing Director, and **Matt Hollander**, managing principal of Hollander Development that creates low-income housing. A link to the Forum is available from Public Media Network.

HOUSING Goal: *To contribute to local efforts designed to increase affordable housing and eliminate homelessness.*

Progress and Success Indicators:

See collaborative project above.

CLIMATE CHANGE Goal: *To contribute to local efforts that align with global climate strategies and goals.*

Progress and Success Indicators:

The Committee drafted a Climate Change Resolution that has been sent to the LWVKA board for discussion and possible adoption in June 2022.

EXPANDED VOTER SERVICE Goal: *To expand outreach and impact of voter services to more of Kalamazoo County*

Progress and Success Indicators:

Voter education tables were hosted at Project Connect, National Voter Registration Day, the Women's Health Expo, the Free Store at Sunnyside Methodist Church, Loy Norrix High School, and the Pride Festival.

A *Making Democracy Work* grant from LWVUS Education Fund was used to hold several voter education forums with community groups. In December a panel of county, city and township clerks participated in a Q&A.

Promote the Vote 2022, a constitutional amendment ballot initiative to expand voting rights in Michigan, was launched with a petition drive in April. Twenty-seven members and friends have circulated petitions for LWVKA and will finish on July 4th.

On June 9th, LWVKA sponsored a virtual Candidate Forum for ten judicial candidates running in the August Primary for positions on the 8th District Court and 9th Circuit Court. Partners for the Forum included Douglass Community Association, Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation, Kalamazoo County Associates for Senior Issues, K Votes (Kalamazoo College), YWCA, N.A.A.C.P. Metropolitan Kalamazoo Branch, ISAAC and El Concilio. The Forum was live-streamed by Public Media Network and is available on Vote411. 

Calhoun County Unit News

By Sue Rosko

In June the Calhoun County LWVKA members and partners were very active procuring signatures for *Promote the Vote 2022*. Besides approaching friends, family, organizations, farmer's markets and entertainment venues the PTV group had tables at Albion Juneteenth (where we provided information while NAACP gathered signatures), Battle Creek's two-day Juneteenth celebration, a drive through signature gathering, and several larger events across the county. As we petitioned, many of us witnessed the misunderstanding of the state's election process, procedures and safety. It was a great opportunity to share information. Most signed when they understood. A huge thank you to our petition chair and all the members who have worked so hard to get the petition on the ballot.

Building strong relationships with the Calhoun County clerks has been a focus during this time as well. The Clerk Engagement director and president again attended the county clerk association monthly meeting to better understand and support the needs of our clerks in this challenging times. We have been trying to get more election inspectors for those precincts who are in significant need for workers. Our Vote411 co-director is working hard on preparing the Calhoun County information for the digital guide, a big task with new county lines and numerous proposals as a new system is also learned. Thank you to these directors and their valued work.

Currently the Calhoun County Unit is filling positions, working to build committees and further our capacity for action in the coming months. We wish to thank our new members who have stepped into actively volunteering with projects alongside our other members. July will have no board meeting but will be a time of "rest", committee planning and sharing of information from the LWVUS convention as we look toward a busy fall. 



WELCOME
New Members!

In May, LWVKA was pleased to welcome new members **Linda Fox** of Kalamazoo and **Rebecca D'Angelo** of Mattawan.

Pride Day 2022 Participation

Barb Dircks

The League participated in the Pride Day event on June 4th 2022. We successfully registered over 20 voters, engaging in great dialogue on many issues of interest to prospective voters! The enthusiasm for having current and accurate information and getting out the vote was important to everyone we spoke to. It was great to see and hear that the work of the League is deemed an invaluable resource! 🗳️



Inspired Brewing®



Volunteers Needed

We need non-partial observers during the upcoming August and November elections. Our local county has been selected to witness the work of our Board of Canvassers count votes. For more information or to sign-up, contact Barb Dircks, barbdircks@gmail.com or Chris Kuthe, ckuthe57@gmail.com. 🗳️

Save the Date!

LWKA is planning an in-person social gathering at Bell's Brewery on July 27th at 5pm. All League members are invited to the meet and greet. Please join us! Partners welcome. Bring a friend who may be interested in the League. 🗳️

Board of Canvassers

Watch your email this month for a call for volunteers for the Board of Canvassers observers for the August 2 Primary. 🗳️

Special Tributes

In Memory of **Julia Costello**

Jackie Wylie



LWVUS Convention: Early Highlights

By LWVKA Delegates

Five LWVKA delegates are attending LWVUS convention virtually as this Voter is going to press. Your delegates are Barb Dircks, Chris Kuthe, Sue Rosko, Paula Manley and MerriKay Oleen-Burkey. Highlights from the first couple of days include:

There are themes running through the convention meetings, keynote speeches and panel discussions. Forming partnerships and allying with organizations that share similar values, even though missions happen to be different, will support the strength and effectiveness of League initiatives. While our goal to educate voters and strengthen democracy is a powerful link, our positions from in-depth study (e.g., housing) also lend themselves to common values with other local organizations.

One delegate attended workshops on Federal Advocacy with LWVUS, and National Popular Vote. The LWVUS volunteer Lobby Corps educates representatives and/or their staff persons about the League and explains League positions on priority issues such as the voting rights bills. The National Popular Vote LWVUS Task Force members and LWV Colorado President discussed the importance of the National Popular Vote as a way to ensure every vote counts in presidential elections. LWV CO was instrumental in passing the initiative in their state. Just 8-10 more states are needed to make this a reality.

Another delegate heard creative ideas from a session on "Building Civic Capacity in a Time of Misinformation and Disruption" where it was suggested to work with college journalism classes to interview candidates and create podcasts to involve more young voters. They also proposed to discourage disinformation in Candidate Forums by using junkipedia.org/tips/clc to help with fact checking. A session on "Youth Engagement for Democracy" presented by the Leagues in Maine, Ohio and Arizona described the Youth Councils within their high schools and colleges that focus on voter registration, civics education and the opportunity to have a dialogue about democracy.

Some local and state Leagues are bringing their positions on issues such as election security (Colorado), health care (New York), and digital equity (Connecticut) to LWVUS for possible concurrence (adoption without study), and some of our delegates attended the information sessions. States, like Arizona, have tried to use the LWVUS election position, and they find it inadequate when making a case for greater

election security in today's political environment. Colorado has an election security position that might help by expanding the LWVUS election position. In the case of health care, New York is advocating for an update to the LWVUS health care position; they pointed out how much has changed in health care since the position was last updated. Each of these topics will be up for debate at the final business session on League program. We will provide our LWVKA membership with an update on LWVUS convention business in the September Voter.

DEI Events

By MerriKay Oleen-Burkey

Chris Downey: Design with the Blind in Mind
TED Talk (*influential video from an expert speaker. Enter the title in your search engine. Free.*)

Black History, Black Freedom and Black Love
Masterclass: www.masterclass.com/black/history

Learn about American history with seven thought leaders on MasterClass. Seven leading Black intellectuals teach you about American history. Offline Download. PDF Workbook. Student Community. Get Feedback on Your Work. Interactive Exercises. Cost: \$15/month.

A Class Apart: Hernandex vs. Texas

A Mexican American Civil Rights Story – Watch via YouTube

A Class Apart is a new documentary by award-winning filmmakers Carlos Sandoval (Farmingville) and Peter Miller (Sacco and Vanzetti, Passin' It On). The first major film to bring to life the heroic post-World War II struggles of Mexican Americans against the Jim Crow-style discrimination targeted against them, A Class Apart is built around the landmark 1951 legal case Hernandez v. Texas, in which an underdog band of Mexican Americans from Texas bring a case all the way to the Supreme Court – and win.

Book— Ruchika Tulshyan: Inclusion on Purpose: An Intersectional Approach to Creating a Culture of Belonging at Work.



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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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