



Calendar

June 2023

Pride Month

1 Voter Registration

Kalamazoo Central, Contact Aimee Bedard
aimeebedard@att.net

2 Voter Registration

Phoenix High School, Contact Aimee Bedard aimee-
bedard@att.net

3 Voter Registration

Kalamazoo Pride Festival, Contact Aimee Bedard
aimeebedard@att.net

5 Wear Orange 2023

5:00 - 7:00 pm Bronson Park, Kalamazoo. Sup-
port the community efforts to end gun violence
contact kazoomomsdemandaction@gmail.com for
more information, Volunteers are needed for voter
registration at this event, Contact Aimee Bedard
aimeebedard@att.net to volunteer

9 Presentation on National Popular Vote Compact

Friendship Village, (Denise Hartsough & Angela
Erdman amerdman@sbcglobal.net)

14 LWVKA Development Committee Meeting

10am via Zoom, contact Paula Manley @
pjmanley@hotmail.com

17 Juneteenth Events

Battle Creek & Albion

19 Juneteenth

Voter Registration event, Contact Aimee Bedard
aimeebedard@att.net

20 LWVKA Book Group

7 pm, Kazoo Books, 2413 Parkview Ave. The book for
discussion is *Ida B. the Queen*:
The Extraordinary Life and Legacy of Ida B. Wells, by
Michelle Duster (2021). For more information,
please contact Aedin Clements
aedincllements@gmail.com.

26 LWVKA Board Meeting

6pm via zoom, Contact Barb Dircks @
barbdircks@gmail.com

28 Calhoun County Unit Board Meeting

6:30 pm via Zoom. Contact Sue Rosko @
lwvkacalhouncounty@yahoo.com

President's Column

By Chris Kuthe

LWVMI Convention Summary

The LWVMI convention was held May 19-21 at Kellogg Conference Center in East Lansing. Convention attendees for the LWVKA were **Barb Dircks**, **Rick Freiman**, **Aimee Bedard**, **Sue Rosko**, **MerriKay Oleen-Burkey**, **Kayla Boonstra** (summer intern), **Chris Kuthe**, **Connie Ferguson** (as official parliamentarian for the event) and **Denise Hartsough** (as candidate for co-president of LWVMI.)

The business of the State League was conducted. The budget was passed, PMP for the LWVMI remains \$23, all current positions of the LWVMI were confirmed.

Election of LWVMI officers, directors and nominating committee occurred. Our own **Denise Hartsough** was elected Co-President. **MerriKay Oleen-Burkey** was elected Vice-President of Membership. **Regena Nelson** was elected to the nominating committee. Congratulations and appreciation to all who were elected!

There was a by-laws change approved– Article VI, Section 2 addition:
In executing the duties of their office, board members are expected to carry out applicable laws and regulations as well as League bylaws, mission, policies, principles, positions, standards, and procedures. Board Members who do not shall be counseled. If violations persist they may be removed from office by a two-thirds vote of the Board of Directors.

It is recommended that all local Leagues add a similarly worded change to their by-laws to provide a method to remove elected board members who act in inappropriate, unprofessional or harmful ways. We will take this bylaw change up at our next annual meeting in 2024.

A Recommended Concurrence was approved:

The League supports full service public library systems.

1. *Public libraries support our First Amendment right to intellectual freedom and expression by playing an important role in facilitating free and open access to information.*
2. *Individuals should be trusted to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. Removing and banning books from public libraries is a slippery slope to government censorship and the erosion of our country's commitment to freedom of expression.*
3. *Library staff, operating within the standards of the American Library Association, should make professional decisions about selection, organization, preservation, and dissemination of resources, services and technologies without political interference.*

A non-recommended two year study of the "Right to Die" was voted down due to concerns about spreading resources too thin during the 2024 election year.

Belle Ringer awards were given to **Denise Hartsough** for her work with Advocacy, **Paula and Ken Manley** for their work with Fundraising, **Jennifer Snyder** for her work with Membership and **MerriKay Oleen-Burkey** for her work with Voter Services.

The LWVKA representatives attended workshops on Gun Safety, LWV Engage

LWVUS Update

Paula Manley

June is Pride Month


June 5—World Environment Day

June 19—Juneteenth



News from
National

On May 20th LWVUS celebrated the 30th anniversary of the passage of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA). The NVRA increased accessibility to the electoral process and reformed voter registration. Also known as the “motor voter bill”, it allowed citizens to register to vote at motor vehicle agencies, as well as by mail and through other agencies that serve the public. The League led the campaign for its passage in the 1980s and 1990s with a national grassroots campaign. At the signing of the bill, President Clinton called the League “fighters for freedom”.

The LWVUS continues to urge Congress to support the ERA. At the end of April, the Senate voted on a resolution to affirm the validity of the ERA. A bipartisan majority of senators supported it, but a 60-vote threshold was needed to overcome a filibuster and failed. Senator Schumer filed a motion to reconsider, which will allow him to bring it up later in this Congress. LWVUS reports that since February, 15,000 supporters have urged Congress to support ERA. If you have not yet done so, contact your Congressional delegates to urge support. 

LWVMI Advocacy

Denise Hartsough

Your State League in Action


Among the ways LWV of Michigan and its Education Fund serve local Leagues:

- LWV of Michigan advocates with state officials about state-level issues based on League positions.
- Recent advocacy includes support for measures in the legislature to:
- Fund local clerks' offices
- Allow military personnel to vote electronically
- Allow immigrants to obtain a driver's license and State ID
- Provide parolees with a driver's license and State ID
- Repeal outdated anti-abortion laws

For a complete list of LWVMI advocacy actions, go to <https://lwvmi.org/advocacy-2023/>

When you receive LWVMI Action Alerts via email, asking you to advocate with your State Representative or State Senator on a particular bill, please respond! It matters!


If you do not receive Action Alerts, go to lwvmi.org

and click on the gold “Take Action” button in the upper right-hand corner. On the Take Action page, scroll down to current alerts. Click on the red “Take Action” button beneath the alert to contact your officials. 

Annual Meeting Recap

By Kristen Kern-Beaver

Monday, April 24th the LWVKA hosted the annual meeting at the KNAC downtown Kalamazoo. Our guest speaker was **Dr. Brandy Brown**, Chief Innovation Officer for Walker-Miller Energy Services. Dr. Brown spoke about the importance of local innovations in response to the climate emergency. Dr. Brown explained that the federal government's response to the climate emergency is focused on national issues, for example, defense. Dr. Brown maintains that, at the local level, we need to be prepared to rehouse people displaced due to climate change.

The event was catered by **Kitchen House** and, after dinner and our guest speaker, we had a successful annual meeting led by **Barb Dircks** and **Chris Kuthe**. 

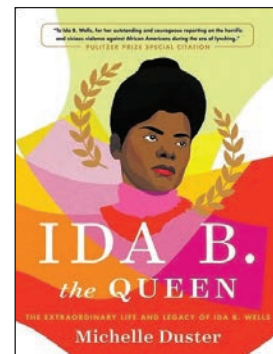
LWVKA Book Discussion Group

The group meets on the third Tuesday of alternating months, at 7 p.m. Our usual meeting place is Kazoo Book on Parkview. It is a welcoming group, and the discussion is free-flowing.

Ida B. the Queen: the Extraordinary Life and Legacy of Ida B. Wells, written by Michelle Duster, great granddaughter of Ida B. Wells, will be the basis for an informative and exciting discussion at Kazoo Books on June 20th.

Kazoo Books offers a discounted price for our book group members. This book is also available at public libraries. The audiobook, also available at libraries, is read by the author.

Contact Aedín Clements aedinclements@gmail.com with questions or suggestions.



President's Column, continued from page 1

ment with Communities of Color, Leaders Boot Camp, National Popular Vote, Creating a Campus LWV, and Censorship.

We all felt that this was a worthwhile and rejuvenating convention and we were grateful for attending. Here is a collection of comments from those who attended.

Sue Rosko: Thank you for the great opportunity to attend the LWWMI convention! As a member of the LWWMI Credentials Committee charged with helping to count the delegates prior to any plenary votes and through attending sessions and events, I was able to meet and network with many members from around the state. That all was a gift! What an opportunity the convention was to share resources and ideas. The speakers were great, inspiring and calling us to continued action. The Engagement in

convention was that the terms we use to advocate and discuss an issue are important. Firearm safety is the term we should be using vs the term gun safety/violence which only highlights one aspect of this issue. A graph was shown that highlighted how automobile deaths decreased over time as safety measures were put in place and research



was funded to address issues. Firearm deaths have not been addressed in a similar manner.

Rick Freiman: I am glad I went to the convention. The leaders, presenters, and resources provided were very motivational. I attended the "Leaders Bootcamp" and "Creating a Campus Unit" Workshops. I was also impressed by the dedication of the Michigan leaders. They all seemed to be passionate and knowledgeable, and were volunteers just like us in LWVKA, and I believe they are trying hard to be a resource for us. Finally, it was a great networking experience to be able to mingle with so many professional and talented people from all areas of the State. I met people from the U.P. that can help me get closer to legislators up there for Climate advocacy.

Barb Dircks: Censorship and the demand to remove books from the shelves is becoming an issue for many local leagues and libraries. This issue was one presentation at the State Convention as local leagues work to counter these initiatives and continue the mission of educating voters. Participants, in groups, shared perspectives that raised the issues of parent groups, political party agendas and community Library Board power struggles as a few of the underlying grievance issues. It was expected that Censorship will continue to be an issue as we move into the 2024 election cycle. ✓

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Minority Communities and the Censorship workshops provided much insight into the importance of understanding and working with DEI to provide voting opportunities and advocacy for rights for all. Valuable ideas for reaching other populations were shared.

Kayla Boonstra: Throughout the convention each speaker provided relevant and thoughtful dialogue while engaging the audience, as well as, a plethora of valuable information. I am excited to take my new found wisdom gained at the convention and apply it to our League's work.

Aimee Bedard: My most important take away from



Election Action Update

Shardae Chambers & Barb Dircks

Preparations are being made in anticipation of Proposal II requirements. The state legislature is hoping to resolve many of the adjustments and funding issues before the July recess. The Governor signed bill SB 259 on May 1st, 2023, which will allow absentee ballots filed by residents that are overseas or military ballots, to be counted if received up to six days after the election. They just have to be postmarked by the election date.

Thanks to the passage of the proposition, voters will have extended time and additional options. These and others were mentioned during a State Convention presentation: additional ballot boxes, exploring early vote counting needs and ballot tracking were others. There is a network of people working tirelessly to figure this all out and make it happen! THANK YOU! ✓



Calhoun County Unit

Sue Rosko

Voter Services



During May Calhoun's Voter Services director **Lori Kline-Closson** and board member **Cherie Riser** hosted a table at the Battle Creek Senior Expo. In addition to public exposure, membership forms were taken as interest increased. At the event it was a thrill meeting **Dana Nessel**. When she entered the arena the Michigan's Attorney General saw Calhoun's LWV booth and headed right for it! She had the most positive things to say about LWV! The Attorney General gave our organization credit for the positive legislative things that have happened in Michigan.

In other Voter Services areas, Lakeview Schools again participated in the High School initiative through the state. They earned awards last year. This year their staff and students are using the past and new materials from the SOS office to continue the registration and education program. In April the students held a registration event for the school. **Lori Closson-Kline** and **Linda Smoot** (Vote 411) presented five Marshall High School with Voter Education. Job well done in all areas by Calhoun's Voter Services team.



Volunteers will now be needed for our Juneteenth events in Albion and Battle Creek, both on Saturday, June 17. Washington Height Family Fair and Pride Fest in Battle Creek have requested tables on Saturday, July 22. Please watch your emails for scheduled times and volunteer as we continue to build community relationships.

Clerk Engagement

Susan Stuart recognized each of the counties clerks with the Secretary of State's proclamation. Invited to attend a special meeting of the County Clerk, the president was able to commend and offer League support again to the each of the clerks. **Kristi Dougan** from the Board of provided updates on implementation of Proposal 2 and where clerks had concerns in implementation. When nine days of early voting is instituted, among other things the clerks will need support with poll workers. Members are encouraged to become poll workers and to encourage others to do the same, including responsible students. Clerks are beginning to explore possibilities for instituting the nine days of early voting. The Election representative and Calhoun County Clerk expressed appreciation for the League.

For our Annual Meeting Calhoun County's Clerk was invited to speak, sharing the inner workings of the election process. The integrity, multiple checks and balances was shared. Later in the meeting our Clerk

Kemberly Hinkley was honored with our inaugural Champion of Democracy Award. We appreciate her diligence, professionalism, calmness in tough situations, commitment to democracy and the truth and her kind spirit. Kimberly has worked in great relationship with out Unit, readily welcoming us and providing necessary information for our League projects such as 411.

Advocacy

Having attended the Challenging Borders International Conference at Albion College and the LWVMI Convention the continued need for understanding, dispelling mis- and dis- information, and taking action continues to be emphasized.

End Gun Violence: Chair **Susan Stuart** has an active committee. She thanked members for helping to get this important initial legislation passed. They continue to be active in advocacy and share updates on events and actions needed. On May 5 the Calhoun Unit was invited by a Battle Creek Central High School staff person to host a Voter Registration/Information table at an Anti-Gun Violence rally organized by their students. With the loss of two members of the Senior Class and a loss in each of the last 4 senior classes, the students are motivated to take action against Gun Violence. Lori and Sue served at the table, sharing our End Gun Violence information, registering students and urging students to vote. Several speakers—mayor, school police officer, family, state representative and student leaders—shared passionate testimony and call to action. The coverage can be found on the Calhoun County LWVKA Facebook page, in the Battle Creek Enquirer, and on WWMT. Members are encouraged to attend the Kalamazoo event on June 5 and to continue to support state and national legislation.

Money in Politics: Lisa Reed is attending the LWVMI study committee meetings led by LWV Washtenaw. She will be reporting back to the Unit.

National Popular Vote: Karen Weideman and Sue Rosko are trained with the LWVMI materials. Further assistance in sharing information would be appreciated. Videos of the presentation and information is being shared. Members are asked to please follow the "Take Action" link on the LWVMI website for this and to share it with others..

ERA and Disclose Act: Members are asked to go to lwv.org to use the "Take Action" link to encourage legislators to continue working to support reinstating the ERA into the constitution and to take action on dark money (Disclose Act).

Legislative: A committee is needed to assist with legislator interviews and to monitor/share town halls.

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Annual Meeting

On May 24 we held our year end/annual meeting but with a High Tea in the historical Wagner Ballroom in Marshall. 37 members, prospective members and guests attended! Our County Clerk **Kimberly Hinkley** spoke, covering the safety and security of our elections and an update on Proposal 22, which our Unit had worked hard on. A big thanks to the Event Committee consisting of **Cathleen Knoll, Nancy Cracraft, Kathleen Lambrix, Pat Sheets** and others who pitched in for all of their hard work with this event. Thank you, too, for all who donated food. What a delightful evening as we shared League information.

The Nominating Committee (**Fran Pierce**) is still in the process of filling two board positions—Co-President and Communications Director. The addition of a co-president is vital! A Director-at-Large position has been added in order get others involved and ready for leadership.

The new LWWKA Calhoun County Unit Board consists of:

Co-President: **Sue Rosko**
 Co_President: Unfilled
 Secretary: **Cherie Riser**
 Voter Services: **Lori Kline-Closson**
 Vote 411: **Linda Smoot**
 Clerk Engagement: **Susan Stuart**
 Membership: **Fran Pierce**
 Environment: **Judy Cieslak, Susan Anderson**
 Advocacy: **James & Marsha Powers**
 Marketing/Communications: Unfilled
 Program/Events: **Cathleen Knoll**
 At-Large: **Virgie Ammerman**

A Communications Committee is being formed to assist with that area. The Unit is looking for persons with skills in individual areas of social media, zoom and recording skills, graphic design, marketing, newsletters... If you have some skill in any of those areas, please contact us at lwwkacalhouncounty@yahoo.com.

We've had some great additions to the Board and on committees. We look forward to new exciting projects for the coming League year along with the strong programs of the past. The passion and excitement is much appreciated. As on all of the committees and areas above, more members are encouraged to volunteer—whether it be an office, chairing a committee, serving on a committee or volunteering for short term projects or events. Reach out to the board if you have questions and/or would like to get involved in any way. The League is needed now as much and more than ever. We continue to build non-partisan relationships across the county as we join hands to work on our mission of defending democracy and empowering voters.

Belle Ringer Awards

Three members received. The members are:



Fran Pierce: Member Recruitment and Engagement
 Fran has willingly taken on the Membership committee for our Unit, developing strategies for increased membership and energetically reaching out to members and potential members to gather people for social and learning events, thus increasing membership, engagement and relationship.

Susan Stuart: Advocacy
 Besides serving as our Clerk Engagement director, Susan stays on top of advocacy issues and stepped up and steps up to take an active part in promoting the 2022 Proposals, speaking at rallies, and bringing the gun issues to the forefront for our Unit which led to her coordinating efforts among our members to strongly educate, promote and take action in steps to end gun violence in Michigan.

Linda Smoot: Voter Service
 Linda, a strong proponent and believer in the value of the LWW Vote411, enthusiastically took on the job of gathering all of the Calhoun County ballot information, learning the intricacies of the digital system, and inputting all of the information for our county into the digital guides. This provides a strong link with voters and visibility/promotion of the importance of having the League locally.

Thank you to Kalamazoo for allowing our Unit to be represented as a Kalamazoo delegate. What a great experience—learning more about the LWW, speakers, networking... It was much appreciated and valued. 📌

Congrats!

Calendar

Saturday, June 17
 Juneteenth events in Albion and Battle Creek

Wednesday, June 28
 Board meeting and orientation, 6:30 pm. Place TBD

Global Ties Cultural Exchange

By Chris Kuthe



On May 9th, 2023 Denise Hartsough and Chris Kuthe attended a cultural exchange at Global Ties Kalamazoo, 225 W Walnut St, Suite 209. In attendance were six women from Bangladesh and three interpreters. The women were members of parliament, heads of political parties, a bank officer and the Assistant Director of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission. Many were lawyers. They were interested in learning more about the LWV. We described our history and current work. They said they had no organizations in their country that focused on the voters and admired our work. We found out that one-third of Bangladesh's elected officials must be women, based on the quota system they have in place. They have much better maternal leave support— from birth to 3 years old and free college. It was an amazing experience and we both felt privileged to be included. 🇺🇸

Membership

Jennifer Snyder

In April, LWVKA was pleased to welcome new member **Heather Jach** from Kalamazoo! 🇺🇸

W
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New Members!

You're Invited

Barb Dircks

There are many opportunities for members to socialize, meet at events and volunteer in support of League and community actions this month. We look forward to being together. We also extend a special outreach to members that have worked on election days and helped at the polls in the past. This is such important work; the perspective and experience you have had would be helpful to share.

Please reach out to barbdircks@gmail.com and let me know if you are one of those special members! I will reach back so we can continue the communication, share anecdotal stories, and hopefully, generate a "Top 10 things to Know When You Volunteer to be an Election Official!" Thanks in advance, I look forward to hearing from you! 🇺🇸

YWCA Women of Achievement Award

Mary Gustas

On May 18th, a member of the LWVKA, Mary Gustas was honored with a Women Of Achievement Award at a ceremony held at the Radisson by the YWCA of Kalamazoo. Mary is the Executive Director of the Comstock Community Center. We congratulate Mary! 🇺🇸

Welcome Our Summer Intern

My name is **Kayla Boonstra** and I'm a senior at Western Michigan University double majoring in Political Science and Gender & Women's Studies. I'm passionate about all things social justice related including but not limited to: voting access, women's rights, LGBTQIA+ rights, prison reform, and ingraining equality in every facet of our nation. I will be graduating in December with the hopes of working at a non-profit where I can exercise my values and make an impact. I look forward to gaining more insight, knowledge, and expertise through my work with the LWV. 🇺🇸

Wear Orange Event Barbara Huber


National Gun Violence Awareness Day

June 5th 5-7:00 Bronson Park Kalamazoo

In June, people around the country are coming together with a simple message: there's more we can do to end gun violence. Orange has become the defining color of the gun violence prevention movement.

Join the movement by signing up to attend the Kalamazoo Wear Orange event on June 5th at <https://wearorange.org/>, enter your zip code, then click on the location on the map to RSVP. Early registration will allow organizers to effectively plan for resources and materials. Free tee shirts designed by a local artist and printed locally and more giveaways will be available.


Wear Orange, to honor survivors and the communities shattered by gun violence, to raise awareness and to show support for meaningful action by our legislature. Join others to hear local leaders in the gun violence prevention advocacy movement and survivors of gun violence. Talk with representatives from Kalamazoo organizations working with children and adults to keep them safe from violence and help them heal from the trauma of gun violence. Join to see and hear performers and unite in the call for safer schools and communities.

Just before 7pm a group photo will be taken on the steps of City Hall just moments before the Kalamazoo City Commission reads a Wear Orange Proclamation. At dusk City Hall will be lit in orange. 

Barbara Huber, long time LWVKA member, passed away on April 9th. She was an active League member at both the local and state level. Barbara served as LWVKA President. She was on the Nominating Committee from 1999-2001. She delivered Voter Guides and assisted with League finances as Treasurer and donor.

Barbara served on the LWVMI Board as National Resources Director in 1991-92. From 1995-97 she was on the Legislative Advisory Committee as Air Quality Chair. She chaired the LWVMI Nominating Committee in 1985-87.

Barbara had a strong interest in local governance, co-chairing the LWVKA Local Governance Study with Janet Scarrow. She was on the Texas Township Planning Commission. Barbara was instrumental in arranging a candidate forum which LWVKA hosted in July, 2012. Eleven candidates vying for various township positions on the August primary ballot presented their views and responded to questions before an audience of 125.

Paula Manley remembers first meeting Barbara in 1977 and hearing about the canoe trip LWVKA members had taken down the Kalamazoo River to study the pollution. Her life long interest in the environment was evidenced by her work on LWVMI board and committees and in her Texas Township community. She brought the recycling station and farmer's market to the Texas Township Hall. Barbara was also a talented weaver and a member of the Weaver's Guild. We celebrate her dedication to the League and her service to her community. 



Special Tributes

In Memory of **Janet Scarrow**

Caroline Ham

In Memory of **Barb Huber**

Tanya Potters



LWVKA Education Fund Board of Directors

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paula.mae.aldridge@gmail.com

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