



Calendar

October 2023

11 Kalamazoo County Commission Candidate Forum

Sponsored by WeVote, LWVKA, Now Kalamazoo
5:00 to 7:00pm. WMU Student Center, Gordon Evans moderator, public event

17 Biodiversity Program "All You Need is Love: Holding Biodiversity Close in a Changing World"

6:30–8:00pm, Keystone Rm, Village Clubhouse, Friendship Village, Kalamazoo

23 LWVKA Board Meeting

6:00pm, via zoom @ Contact Barb Dircks at barbdircks@gmail.com

November 2023

7 LWVKA Book Club

7:00 pm at Kazoo Books 2413 Parkview Ave. Kalamazoo, We will discuss the book, "The Water Will Come: Rising Seas, Sinking Cities, and the Remaking of the Civilized World", by Jeff Goodell, contact Aedin Clements (aedinclements@gmail.com). This is rescheduled from October, and is the final meeting in 2023.

27 LWVKA Board Meeting

6:00pm, via zoom Contact Barb Dircks at barbdircks@gmail.com



Happy Halloween

President's Column

By Barb Dircks

Ask yourself, how often can members of a volunteer organization take pride in a non-profit, purpose-driven desire to make things better – in this case for voters? The answer, by participating in the many opportunities the LWVKA offers! Belonging to our organization is powerful! Feeling welcome and known; being included; feeling supported and connected – the following quotation says it all, "Belonging is what unlocks the power and value of diversity."

This month look for articles detailing the collaboration, problem solving and decision-making that make all levels, local, state and national leagues, strong! One look at the calendar for upcoming events is evidence of the shared benefits and challenges we have tackled!

Belonging this month meant:

Supporting—the creation of a Biodiversity program, Liking posts on Facebook, following up on a Veterans millage study / Candidate Forum with WEVotes

Planning—the theme, "Year of Action" beginning with Women's Equality Day / Observer Corps development / Town Hall presentations for Prop 2 / Donor Appreciation event /

Volunteering—Bronco Bash / KVCC sites / National Voter Registration Day / Black Wall Street /

Collaborating—reaching out to new partners / researching Ranked Choice Voting policy / joining ACLU regional meetings

Thanking members—all the volunteers who used Sign-up Genius to show up to register new voters at libraries and on College campuses / so many members who pass along information and show up to committee work on Zoom

Preparing—voter registration materials, voter guide prep / Grant applications

Participation—Strategic plan development / YWCA Women's Equality Day attendance / Judicial Forum / Citizen interview initiatives

Anticipating—Election needs and aid for clerks / mentorship and need for apprenticeships / New Voting Rights Event in November

We move forward, continue connecting, and appreciate the benefits of belonging we share! The VOTER that follows is a further example of this theme! "Diversity is having a seat at the table, Inclusion is having a voice, and belonging is having your voice be heard." Or in this case, read! 📖



News from
National

LWVUS Update

Paula Manley

October is Voter Education Month

2-6 National Voter Education Week and High School
Voter Registration Week

9— Indigenous People's Day
24— United Nations Day
26— Early Voting Day
27— VOTE411's 17th Birthday

The John R. Lewis Voter Registration Act HR 14 has been reintroduced in Congress. This bill will fully restore and modernize the Voting Rights Act. League members are asked to contact their Representatives to urge passage to protect voting rights.

LWVMI Advocacy

Denise Hartsough

For an update on legislative issues the LWVMI Advocacy Committee is following, tune in on Wednesday, October 4, at 7 pm. Any league member is welcome to sign up and attend: https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZcqf-qtpj4qHd3rS3hLjC-nQ_TRQI-geODmr

Governor Whitmer announced her priorities for the fall legislative session:

1. Protect Reproductive Health by passing the Reproductive Health Act, which LWVMI supports.
2. Lower the Cost of Health Care by codifying the cost-saving measures of the Patient Protection & Affordable Care Act in Michigan law, which LWVMI supports.
3. Lower the Cost of Prescription Drugs. LWVMI has not reviewed this legislation yet.
4. Enact a 100% Clean Energy Standard, Improve Energy Efficiency, Empower the MI Public Service Commission and Streamline Permitting. LWVMI is working with MI Energy Council and MI Energy and MI Jobs as the bills go through the legislative process.
5. Establish Paid Family and Medical Leave, which LWVMI supports.
6. Shore Up Election Security, which LWVMI supports.

Other Updates:

LWVMI joined the Michigan Health Is Health Coalition to require health insurers in Michigan to provide coverage for medically necessary treatment of a mental health or substance abuse disorder.

LWVMI supports the Fair Chance Access to Housing

Act to ensure access to housing for those with convictions. No legislative hearing has taken place yet.

LWVMI continues to advocate for the National Popular Vote bills, which are on second reading in the House and in the Senate Elections & Ethics Committee.

To see all legislation for which the League has a position, go to www.lwvmi.org and click on Advocacy 2023. To see bills: www.legislature.mi.gov.

Thanks to LWVMI's Judy Karandjeff, VP Advocacy, for this information!

LWVKA Book Group-New Date

Our book meeting for October has been rescheduled to allow members to attend the biodiversity event on October 17th.

Our new date is Tuesday, November 7th, giving us some extra time to complete the book *"The Water Will Come: Rising Seas, Sinking Cities, and the Remaking of the Civilized World"*, by Jeff Goodell. We will meet at Kazoo Books at 7pm. Please contact Aedín Clements with questions.

Observer Corps

Barb Dircks

Did you know...

Everyone can be an observer and watch House and Senate proceedings:

<https://www.house.mic.gov>
<https://www.senate.michigan.gov>

Our existing Observer Corps is in looking for new volunteers. We will be setting a date for training in October.

There is an innovative way GR is approaching this topic watch this youtube short
<https://www.documenters.org/about/>

We look forward to hearing from YOU!

Membership

Jennifer Snyder

LWVKA is pleased to welcome several new members:

Kayla Boonstra of Kalamazoo
Carol Pauly of Portage
Susan Anderson of Battle Creek

WELCOME
New Members!




Veterans Services Proposal

By Paula Manley


The LWVKA Board has endorsed the ballot proposal to fund Kalamazoo County Veterans Services Office which appears on the November 7th ballot. This proposal will levy .1 mil to support the Kalamazoo County Veterans Service Office. The millage seeks to give the Veterans Services Office long-term stability by ensuring funding for the next decade.

The Board considered two relevant League Positions in their decision to support the ballot proposal. The LWVUS Position on Meeting Basic Human Needs states in part: "Persons who are unable to work, whose earnings are inadequate, or for whom jobs are not available have the right to an income or services sufficient to meet their basic needs for food, shelter and access to health care." The LWVKA Position on Providing Government Services in Kalamazoo County discusses areas to be assessed in judging a services delivery system which includes: "Funding mechanisms (e.g., adequate, equitable, stable)".

12,823 veterans reside in Kalamazoo County. This compares to Ingham County which serves 12,962 veterans and Washtenaw County has 13,752 veterans. Five staff (two of whom are grant funded and may not be employed past the next 18 months) assist Kalamazoo County veterans and their families apply for benefits through the Department of Veteran Affairs. Staffing is less than similar communities as there are seven staff in Ingham County and six in Washtenaw County. The Veterans Service Office also provides, when funds are available, financial relief to qualifying veterans and their dependents through "Soldiers and Sailors Relief" which assists with housing, utilities, food and transportation. 



Kalamazoo City Commissioner and Mayoral Forum

This forum will take place in the new WMU student center, Ballroom A on October 11th. All Kalamazoo City Commissioner and Mayoral candidates have been invited. Free pizza and soft drinks will be available. The Kalamazoo City Commission candidates will answer questions from 5-6pm. There will be prepared questions on public safety, housing and transportation accessibility and climate change. The audience will also be able to submit questions for the candidates. There will be a short break and then the Mayoral candidates will answer questions from 6:15-7:00 pm. This forum is being co-sponsored by LWVKA, Western Student Association, WMUK, Now Kalamazoo, WeVote and Lee Honors College. RSVP here: <https://experience-wmu.wmich.edu/event/9188322>. If you have further questions please contact Chris Kuthe at ckuthe57@gmail.com or 269-501-3305. We hope to see you at the forum. 



You're Invited

Barb Dircks

You're invited...to share your thoughts! In one of several ways: in person, at a social happy hour, on a Zoom exchange — or sending me an email. barb-dircks@gmail.com. The League wants to build on the shoulders of others — YOU!

If you have ever worked on Election Day or been trained to do so, let us know your take-away feelings and ideas? We both celebrate you and want to motivate others to join the action

Facebook posts are one way to reach out beyond membership to spread the word of events and actions the LWVKA is taking to inform and educate voters on election news. Like us on Facebook!

Are there other places you look to find League news? Other ways to reach out to new voters you want to suggest?

Next Steps:

We encourage you to work the polls for the November elections! You can find more information and an application here: https://www.kalcounty.com/clerk/elections_voting/inspectors.html 






Calhoun County Geo Unit

By Sue Rosko

This month has been a very successful month of connecting with and beginning/expanding partnerships with other non-partisan organizations. Kellogg Community College has expressed their respect for LWV and have now joined with us at each VP level and within various departments. Albion College's Gerald Ford Institute also held a registration table and gathered the Calhoun County League Information to share with students. A coalition of non-partisan groups has formed under the SW Michigan region of ACLU. Our Unit has taken the lead in sharing county information with the group and has arranged for a group meeting with the County Clerk. Our partnership with clerks remains strong. We've shared an article on Promote the Vote, Registration and the Poll worker survey with the news media and social media. This and links to the survey and other information was shared with all of our GOTV partners as well. The colleges were given the Student Voter Summit link/flyer and encouraged to send staff and students.

Registration/Information tables were hosted by members at the Festival of the Forks in Albion, Kellogg Community College's Bruin Blast, and on September 30 at the Big Read in Albion. A big thank you to the volunteers, including new members, who stepped forward to allow us to make these happen. Each event was very well received and many new contacts were made. Information was tailored at each to meet the demographics of the community. Registering voters or sharing the access to online registration, voter

rights and Proposal 2 were shared at each event. SMART gun safety was shared at Festival of the Forks, Calhoun County Clerk's survey to encourage registration as poll workers was shared at the Bruin Blast, and banned books are to be shared at the Big Read.

On September 26 the Events Committee hosted their first Quick Bites. Quick Bites is an hour long, simple gathering to get to know one another and to share a piece of information on one of the Unit's projects. In September our Voter Services director will present the LWVMI Promote the Vote material. The community is invited. We're looking forward to getting to know each other and conversing about what our Calhoun LWVKA is doing. 

Calendar

Tuesday, September 26, 1-2 pm Calhoun County LWVKA Quick Bites, Lincoln Room, 32 W. Michigan Ave., Battle Creek

Wednesday, September 27, 6:30 pm Calhoun County LWVKA Board Meeting, Marshall Public Library




Voter Registration Events

Aimée Bedard

While I wish that our Voter Registration activities could be as successful as Taylor Swift who encouraged her fans to register to vote which resulted in over 30,000 new voter registrations, I believe every new voter we register and assist in understanding the voting process is a success and critical to voter engagement.

We had a great time supporting back-to-school activities at WMU, KVCC and K College by registering new voters and sharing our Vote 411 bookmarks whose QR code allowed students to check their voting status as well as register to vote outside of Kalamazoo County and the state of Michigan. We loved meeting students and enjoyed the energy of being on campus for WMU's Bronco Bash, KVCC's Vibe Fest, and K College's K Fest. Thank you to volunteers: **Barb Dircks, Anne Flynn, Denise Hartsough, Chris Kuthe, Kathryn Racette, Cheryl Rodbard, and Judy Sivak.**

We participated in National Voter Registration Day activities on Sept 19 by partnering with WMU's We Vote initiative as well as members of the Kalamazoo City Clerk's office to register voters at WMU's new Student Center and Library. Students were engaged and very interested in ensuring they were ready for upcoming elections. We also partnered with the Kalamazoo Library to support their initiative to register voters online. While this activity was less fruitful in registering new voters, it allowed us to better understand how we might support our community in the future. Thank you to volunteers: **Paula Aldridge, Anne Flynn, Rick Freiman, Karen Gustafson, Rochelle Habeck, Denise Hartsough, Moira Macleod, Carol Pauly, Kathryn Racette, and Cheryl Rodbard.**

We will be sending out requests for volunteers for new events soon. Please contact **Aimée Bedard** aimembedard03@gmail.com to learn more about voter registration and volunteer opportunities. 

We will be sending out requests for volunteers for new events soon

Biodiversity Program

By Ruth Caputo

"All You Need is Love: Holding Biodiversity Close in a Changing World"

Join us Tuesday, October 17 from 6:30–8:00pm at Friendship Village Keystone Room in the Village Clubhouse for a conversation that will ignite curiosity and stretch awareness about biodiversity. What is biodiversity, and does every creepy-looking bug really matter? We will plant seeds for a positive approach towards responsibility and engagement and encourage you to develop a love language for the life around you.

Speaker **Dr. Rachel Love** grew up in Michigan and has a PhD from Leiden University, The Netherlands. Her work in ecology and evolution has been published in the journal *Nature* and featured in *National Geographic* and on the BBC. She currently holds a position as the Director of Science, Math, Business and Economics Learning Centers at Kalamazoo College.

Pre-reading suggestion: "What Is Biodiversity?" at: www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/what-is-biodiversity.html

Questions?

Contact [Ruth Caputo](mailto:Ruth.Caputo@decann47@gmail.com) 



What is biodiversity, and does every creepy-looking bug really matter?

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