

# League Links

## November 2024

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### IN THIS ISSUE...

- Co-President's Message
  - Voter Service Updates: Election Season Recap
  - Advocacy Updates
  - Membership Leaders Network
  - Board of Canvassers Observer Program
  - Former LWVMI President Passes
  - Urge President Biden to Publish the ERA
  - Grosse Pointe League Engages Democracy
  - Spotlight on Local Leagues
  - Calendar
- 

### Co-President's Message

We come to you with immense gratitude for all that each of you has done over the past year, working hard to serve and educate voters, advocate for League positions, and build the capacity of the League.

We also come to you with huge questions and much anxious uncertainty about what lies ahead in the aftermath of the election.

A blog posted by LWVUS President Dianna Wynn on November 13th offers a strong statement on navigating nonpartisanship in the current political environment. We can see that LWVUS leadership is working on a path forward.

Excerpts from the blog ([click here](#) for the full piece):

We are proud of the League's work this election to empower voters and protect voting rights. However, we are deeply concerned for the future of women in the United States — as well as LGBTQIA+, black, brown, and immigrant communities.

We have reason to be concerned considering Mr. Trump's past actions in

office, promises made, and the tinge of sexism and racism throughout the campaign.

The League does not endorse candidates, but we have always engaged in political advocacy. The election is now over, and those who were elected are no longer candidates. As a nonpartisan organization, the League has every right to call out statements, actions, and policies that are counter to our values and principles.

The League is an expert in nonpartisanship with over a century of experience in pro-democracy work. Navigating through a hyper-partisan political environment in a nonpartisan manner can be confusing to some. Despite what political parties may have you believe, issues are not inherently partisan. Of course, political parties take partisan positions on issues. But that does not alter the League's nonpartisan approach.

Advocating for gender and racial equity is not partisan. Calling out attacks on democracy is not partisan. After all, our mission is to "defend democracy." We cannot live up to our mission if we are unwilling to speak up and speak out.

Support for women's equality is nonpartisan. Our belief in the rights of women is not derived from a specific candidate or party. Nobody — Democrat, Republican, or other — has an exclusive claim on equality.

The League has stood for the political rights and representation of women for over a century, and in that time, political support and public opinion around issues like suffrage, abortion, workplace discrimination, maternal rights, and more have evolved and shifted. Yet, we have always stood firm in our values.

Our concern for and commitment to women's empowerment is grounded in our core values. To claim this commitment is partisan is to belittle — and seek to silence — us.

Considering all of this — that we are concerned for women and other marginalized groups and that our concern is nonpartisan — what do we do? The truth is that we're still figuring that out.

We're looking to our members, organizational allies, friends, family members, and within ourselves. We must forge ahead to find ways to propel, inspire, and demand an inclusive democracy in this next era of our nation. But even in these challenging times, I fervently believe in two things:

1. A woman president is not just a possibility but an inevitability.
2. Our hope for a better future lies in collective action.

I am committed to collective action to bring about that inevitable future. Today, I implore you to do the same.

Here are Wynn's suggestions for action:

- Join or support pro-democracy organizations—including your local League.
- Remind yourself of the world we are working to create, whether by

- gathering with others or reflecting alone.
- Practice self-care.
- Embrace “radical hope”—the hope that “has always fueled activism.”

We hope you will discuss Diana Wynn’s blog and its implications for your League’s plans for 2025. Consider local advocacy, educational programs on issues, the mis- and disinformation presentation, and how you may engage as many people as possible to respond to action alerts from LWVUS and LWVMI.

Together, we go forward!

Paula Bowman and Denise Hartsough  
LWVMI Co-Presidents

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## Voter Service Updates

A very special thanks to our local Leagues who stepped up during this election season in so many ways!

- Twenty-four local Leagues sent out 36,941 mailings during our GOTV post card campaign.
- Sixteen local Leagues produced and distributed 104,915 copies of local voter guides and supplements in their local communities.
- Thirty-one local Leagues distributed 100,750 of the LWVMI Voter Guide to libraries and other organizations in their communities.
- A large number conducted candidate forums in their communities for both the August Primary and November General Elections.
- Nine local Leagues contacted 224,642 registered voters in our first-ever GOTV text banking project. These text messages included reminders about voter registration, early voting and Election Day voting. LWVMI was pleased to pay for this project through grant funding.
- Twenty-four local Leagues conducted town halls to update Michigan voters on their new voting rights; 17 presented multiple sessions with 98 total presentations and 2284 people engaged.
- A large number of our local Leagues assisted in registering new voters, many during National Voter Registration events.
- Many local Leagues sponsored tabling events and other programs to educate Michigan voters.

Based on responses to our election worker surveys, members worked as follows:

August Primary: Total 109\*

- Election inspectors (79), absentee voter counting boards (20), poll challengers (7), poll watchers (1) and receiving boards (2).
- Early voting only-11, Election Day only-63 and EV/Election Day-35.

November General Election: Total 106\*

- Election inspectors (71), absentee voter counting boards (16), poll challengers (8), receiving boards (1), Board of Canvassers observers (5) and other (5).

- Early voting only-6, Election Day only-49 and EV/Election Day-41.
- VOTE411: National statistics indicate just shy of 9.2 million voters turned to VOTE411 for their election information. Although we don't yet have final Michigan statistics, well over 70 VOTE411 administrators worked tirelessly to contact hundreds of candidates and encourage them to respond to their invitations to participate. VOTE411 Director, Carolyn Vertin and Voter Services Assistant, Jane Poczatek, responded quickly to requests from MLive for candidate information. In addition, Carolyn and Jane were available to respond promptly to any issues occurring at the local level. Kudos to our VOTE411 admins and leaders!
- A large number of local League members are currently observing the Board of Canvassers as they work toward certifying their elections before the State Board officially completes its certification. This observation continues to be a very important part of our work!

\*If you worked during this election season, either during the August Primary or November General Election, and have not yet completed the survey(s), we encourage you to do so. (See article below.)



I'm sure there are many other examples of events our local Leagues conducted during this election season that are not listed. Please let me know of other items that I haven't captured here.

### **August Primary and November General Election Worker Surveys**

Don't forget to complete our Election Worker Survey if you served as a poll worker/election inspector, poll watcher or poll challenger. This provides valuable data for our grant reporting.

[August Primary Link](#)  
[November Survey Link](#)

### **Voter Services Responds to Hot Line Requests**

Promote the Vote (PTV) operates the Election Protection Hotline (866-OUR-VOTE). During the November election, they averaged well over 100 calls per day. PTV referred two of those calls to LWVMI for help.

A voter in Houghton Lake, due to car problems, needed a ride to the polls.

The Crawford County GEO Unit stepped up. Marcia Koppa's husband drove the voter to the polls-50 miles one-way!

The Calhoun County League arranged to get a Battle Creek resident to an early voting site.

This is what our local Leagues are all about-stepping up to do whatever they can to get people to vote! A special thanks to both of these Leagues for their help-we are so appreciative of your efforts!

Thanks to all who made a difference in getting out the voters and educating our communities! Wishing you all a safe and happy Thanksgiving!

Judy Florian  
VP for Voter Service  
jflo@comcast.net

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## Advocacy Update

The Advocacy Committee hosted a statewide Zoom meeting on November 14th to highlight the election results and legislation that LWVMI will work to move during the lame duck session. If you missed the presentation the [Power Point](#) and [video](#) are available for you to view.



Lame Duck Session: The Legislature returned following the election to the period known as the lame duck session, the period between the election and the end of session. In 2023 and 2024, the MI Governor, MI Senate and MI House of Representatives have been held by Democrats, a trifecta they have now lost. The Michigan House will be led by Republicans starting in 2025. The Legislature may have only 10 working session days left to pass legislation that has been introduced in 2023 and 2024.

LWVMI would like to see these bills passed and signed by the Governor:

- Support Productivity Credit for prisoners. HBs 4450-53 in House Criminal Justice Committee. SBs 861-64 in Senate Civil Rights, Judiciary and Public Safety Committee.
- Support a bipartisan plan proposing to amend Michigan's Clean Slate expungement process to simplify the petition process and eliminate unnecessary delays. HB 5957 and HB 5598 in House Criminal Justice Committee.
- Support Second Look Legislation; the criminal procedure bills that allows people serving very long sentences to petition their sentencing court to request a sentence reduction. SB 321-325 and HB 4556-4560 in Senate Civil Rights, Judiciary and Public Safety Committee; and in House Judiciary Committee.
- Support Michigan Voting Rights Act. SB 401-404 have passed the Senate and are in the House Elections Committee.
- Support National Popular Vote. HB 4156 & HB 4440 are on Second

- Reading in the House and need to pass the House and then the Senate.
- Support Statewide Mandatory Periodic Septic inspections, SBs 299-300 and HB 4479-4480 in Senate Energy and Environment Committee & House Natural Resources, Environment, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee.
  - Support Community Solar bills. SB 152 and 153 in Senate Energy and Environment Committee. HB 4464 in House Natural Resources, Environment, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee.
  - Support Polluter Pay bills. SB 605-610 and HB 5242-5247 in Senate Energy and Environment Committee and House Natural Resources, Environment, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee.
  - Support no guns in polling places and absentee ballot counting boards. HB 4127 and HB 4128 are going to the Governor for signature.
  - Support requiring schools to distribute information on gun safety. HB 5450 and HB 5451 passed House and in the MI Senate.
  - Support gun ban in the Capitol and other state buildings. SB 857 is on General Orders in the Senate.
  - Support Freedom of Information Act for Legislature and Governor's office. SB 669 & SB 670 passed Senate and are in the House Government Operations Committee.
  - Support the BRITE Act to bring reforms in integrity, transparency, and ethics. HB 5581 and HB 5586 are on Second Reading in the House. HB 5583 is in the Senate Elections and Ethics Committee.

To see the bills and an analysis, go to [www.legislature.mi.gov](http://www.legislature.mi.gov)

The Advocacy Committee plans to send out action alerts as bills move through the process and hope you will take action.

Judy Karandjeff  
LWVMI Vice President for Advocacy

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## Membership Leaders Network

Our Membership Leaders' Network meeting on November 20th will include a discussion about how local Leagues handle situations when members with vital skills must take leaves of absence or resign. What are the contingencies? We will also have an open discussion about any membership issues members would like to share with the Network. If you did not receive the link and would like one contact MerriKay at [moburkey30@gmail.com](mailto:moburkey30@gmail.com). The link is also posted on the LWVMI.org website under LWV only.

ChapterSpot Trainings are underway. You can access the training schedule and register for sessions at the [ChapterSpot Resources page](#) at [lwv.org](http://lwv.org). Feel free to participate in as many as interest you. ChapterSpot, the new membership platform, will be launched by LWVUS early in the new year.

MerriKay Oleen-Burkey  
LWVMI Membership VP

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## BOC Observer Program Has Broken Records

Even though the election fraud rhetoric miraculously disappeared after the results of the November 5th election were announced, LWV members have come out in force to monitor the Boards of Canvassers in 73 of Michigan's 83 counties. The risk of not certifying may be less this year, but the League does this work regardless of the election winners and losers. At press time, we have received nearly 500 shift reports from observers who have reported on big and small errors in various counties – definitely a record. The size of this election is probably to blame for the higher numbers of mistakes, but the Board of Canvassers piece of Michigan's election system is exactly where those errors are uncovered and corrected. There were some big ones including the Allegan County MSU Trustee race where an election worker accidentally left off a zero when reporting the MSU Trustee winners, and plenty of little ones, such as precincts that were off by one vote.

We are so grateful to all of our members for continuing with this important work. We've received positive remarks about your conscientious attendance and reporting from LWVUS, the Michigan Board of Elections, legal teams of our democracy partners, and county Clerks. This year for the first time, we had county "Leads" which have been an immense help to the organizational scheduling process. Thank you Leads! And we also thank Sara Weertz, our project manager who knows more about the Boards of Canvassers than all of us.

We are hosting an optional "BOC Debrief" at 7:00 on Thursday, Nov. 21; all are invited. The registration link is [here](#) if you'd like to join us. Also, Sara will be publishing a comprehensive report about the BOC before the end of the year. It will appear on the LWV Only page of the website when it is available.

-Paula Bowman

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## Former LWVMI President Passes

Pat Donath, a Lansing Area LWV member, and president of the League of Women Voters of Michigan from 1999-2003, died unexpectedly on October 19, 2024. Pat was an attorney and a true 'good government junkie.' Though a Michigan native, she served as a staff associate to the U.S. House of Representative early in her career, and then Counsel and Staff Director for the New Jersey State Senate Judiciary Committee. When she returned to Michigan, she served as Counsel for the Michigan House Judiciary Committee, and then Counsel for the Michigan House Republican Caucus. In 1980, she ran as the Republican candidate for the



58th Michigan state house district. She served as a member of the Ingham County Board of Canvassers from 1986 to 1994.

Besides serving as a LWVMI President, Pat held many local League leadership positions and served on the national board for three terms. Additionally, she was a founding member of the Michigan Campaign Finance Network and helped found the Michigan Voters for Clean Elections Campaign.

Besides her congeniality, we will miss Pat's unique knowledge of judicial processes as well as her understanding of the consequences of dark money political campaigns. A service for Pat was held in Lansing on November 9th. Her family has requested donations in her honor be sent to the League of Women Voters of Michigan.

-Paula Bowman



### Urge President Biden to Publish the ERA

Despite having fulfilled the ratification requirements, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) has not been published. LWV is urging President Biden to act during his final weeks in office to enshrine gender equality in our Constitution by instructing the Archivist to publish the ERA. Local Leagues can refer to the letter to the editor template to educate and build public pressure in their community. LWVUS is providing the template for a letter to the editor [here](#) and is also urging all members to engage in the Action Alert which can be found [here](#).

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### Grosse Pointe League Engages Democracy

LWV Grosse Pointe sponsored two projects as part of their Engage Democracy focus. Both projects were a great success and are featured below.

#### My Future My Vote Video Project

This purpose of this project was two-fold:

- To reach out to young voters and encourage participation in the electoral process
- To advise them of the recent changes in Michigan voting laws that makes voting more secure and more accessible to all voters.

This project, led by Project Manager Martha Hutting and Director of Voter Services Julianne Phillips, featured junior and senior students at Grosse Pointe South High School. Their goal was to produce a short video informing young people of their voting rights and the changes that make voting in Michigan easier and more accessible. To the delight of the League, the



students produced 5 separate videos on the following topics:

- Vote for What Matters to You
- How to Preregister to Vote in Michigan
- Combating Election Misinformation
- Young Voters in Michigan
- Alternative Voting Options

Each video includes a clip from Secretary Jocelyn Benson, where she speaks directly to all Michigan voters. The students produced and recorded the videos with guidance and supervision from the Grosse Pointe South Social Studies Department and TV Production Instructor.

A link to the videos was shared with Secretary Benson's Office and the Intermediate School Districts throughout Michigan. The five videos can be viewed [here](#).

A by-product of this project was the development of a t-shirt, My Future, My Vote (shown in picture below). If you're interested in ordering a shirt, you can do so at [this link](#). The cost is \$15 (\$5 for the t-shirt and \$10 donation to our League).



### **LWVGP Poster Contest**

Another project of our Engage Democracy focus was a poster contest, which was open to high school students in the Grosse Pointes and Harper Woods. The challenge to the artists: Create a poster expressing how your vote can determine the future of your community, state, and country. The posters were judged based on impact, composition and message.

Although not a lot of entries were submitted, those received were excellent! The winners are listed below.

First Place | Madeline Unkel, Junior, University Liggett

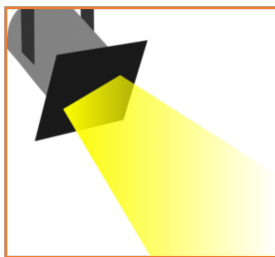
Second Place | Coco Marchal, Junior, University Liggett

Third Place | Luke Slanec, Junior, University Liggett

Honorable Mention | Madeline Hexter, Junior, University Liggett

A reception honoring the winning artists was held at the Grosse Pointe Library-Central Branch, on October 24th. The winning posters were on display in the Grosse Pointe Artists Association gallery at the Grosse Pointe War Memorial through November 5.

Thanks to our judge, Jackie Rybinski, Vice President, Detroit Society of Women Artists & Sculptors and retired art teacher; LWVGP Poster Contest Chair Margrit Poynter and Committee members Anne Ballew, Catherine Dumke, Wilhelmina Giblin and Mary Jo Johnson for their work on this project.



## Local League Spotlights

**LWV of Detroit** held a membership meeting in October with presenter Maria Woloson speaking about the LWV's "Moonshot" campaign to ABOLISH THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE. Maria is the President of the LWV of Oakland Area and a member of the LWV of Michigan board as well as the LWVMI Advocacy Committee where her focus is specifically on the Electoral College. Her presentation covered the history of the Electoral College, how it works in Presidential elections today, its impact on one-person-one-vote, and what the League and others are doing to abolish this vestige from our country's past. Maria is willing to make this presentation to other Leagues.

**LWV of Leelanau County** hosted a community meeting on "Affordable Housing in Leelanau County: What is it Exactly?" with guest speaker, Larry Mawby, President of Peninsular Housing, on November 13th. Since affordable housing was brought up frequently at LWVLC's Candidate Forums this fall, it was clear that affordable housing was being defined in several different ways, and discussion with a housing expert would be helpful.

**LWV of Jackson Area** held its Sixth Annual Friendship Tea on November 16th. This is open to the whole community and is their major fund-raising event that supports their mission of Empowering Voters and Defending Democracy. In addition to enjoying tea, participants were invited to a silent auction and an estate jewelry sale, all for a good cause.

Copper Country (with Gogebic County Geographic Unit)  
Dearborn/Dearborn Heights  
Delta County  
Detroit  
Eastern UP MAL State Unit  
Flint Area  
Grand Haven Area  
Greater Grand Rapids Area  
Grand Traverse Area (with Crawford County Geographic Unit)  
Grosse Pointe  
Holland Area  
Jackson Area  
Kalamazoo Area (with Calhoun County Geographic Unit)  
Lansing Area  
Leelanau County  
Lenawee County  
Livingston County  
Macomb County MAL State Unit  
Manistee County  
Marquette County  
Midland Area  
Mt. Pleasant  
Northeast Michigan (formerly Alpena County)  
Northern Lower Michigan  
Northwest Wayne County  
Oakland Area  
Saginaw County  
Troy  
Washtenaw County

For more information go to [www.lwvmi.org](http://www.lwvmi.org)  
or check out Facebook pages for state and local Leagues

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## **LWVMI Leadership 2023-2024**

Co-President: Paula Bowman (NW Wayne County)  
Co-President: Denise Hartsough (Kalamazoo Area)  
VP Voter Services: Judy Florian (Grosse Pointe)  
VP Advocacy: Judy Karandjeff (Lansing Area)  
VP Program: Maria Woloson (Oakland Area)  
VP Membership: MerriKay Oleen-Burkey (Kalamazoo Area)  
Secretary: Carla Barrows-Wiggins (Oakland Area)  
Treasurer: Tom Wells (Grosse Pointe)

### **Directors**

Voter Services: Carolyn Vertin (Lenawee County)  
Advocacy: Connie Mitchell (Dearborn/Dearborn Heights)  
Membership/DEI: Shirley Madden (Manistee County)  
Observer Corps: Lynne Kochmanski (Washtenaw County)  
League Links: Courtney Winell (Greater Grand Rapids Area)  
Director at Large: Charles Thomas Jr. (Detroit)

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# Calendar



## November 2024

Native American Heritage Month

November 20: [Observer Corps Network](#) | 3:00 pm

November 20: [Membership Leader's Network](#) | 7:00 pm

November 21: [BOC Observer Debrief](#) | 7:00 pm

November 28: Thanksgiving

November 29: Native American Heritage Day

## December 2024

December 3: [Giving Tuesday](#)

December 14: LWVMI Board Meeting | 9:30 am

December 15: Bill of Rights Day

December 17: Meeting of the Electoral College

December 19: Monthly Leader's and Presidents Meeting | 7:00 pm

December 31: New Year's Eve

All LWVMI meetings are posted on [LWV Only page](#) of our website with links added when available.

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### Connect with us!

League of Women Voters of Michigan

Phone: 517-484-5383

Email: [office@lwvmi.org](mailto:office@lwvmi.org)

Website: [lwvmi.org](http://lwvmi.org)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/lwvmichigan/>

Instagram: [#lwvmich](https://www.instagram.com/lwvmich)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/LWVMichigan>

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