



The Midland Voter

The League of Women Voters of the Midland Area

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www.lwv-midland.org

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You are invited!

Midland LWV 2013 Calendar

January 9 at 10 a.m. Grace A. Dow Library, lower level: The AAUW Midland Branch will host Jennifer Heronema, President and CEO of the Legacy Center for Community Success. We are invited to learn about TLC's structure and plans for growth, including TLC's recent acquisitions of the Literacy Council and Midland Area Partnership.

January 15 at noon, United Way (Strostacker) Building: Lisa Grills and Ann Coburn Collins will speak on "The Economic Status of Women in the Great Lakes Bay Region". Pizza and veggies will be served for lunch. (There will be a donation box.)

January 22 at the Grace A. Dow Library conference room A: we will meet to discuss diversity in the League, including diversity of political viewpoints.

February 5 at 1:30 p.m. in the Grace A. Dow Library conference rooms: program planning for next year.

February 6 at 1 p.m. in the Grace A. Dow library conference room A: board meeting.

February 20 at the Whiting Forest at 1 p.m.: Tawny Nelb will speak on "Voices from the Midland Home Front: Women's Contributions in WWI and WWII".

March 7 at the Chippewa Nature Center at 7 p.m.: In conjunction with the Chippewa Nature Center, our League is sponsoring a program on hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") in Michigan, a topic of great interest due to major changes in the drilling process used for recovering natural gas from shale. Watch our website for updates.

April 17, we will gather at the Sanford Meridian Technology Lab at 10 a.m. to learn about the "new tech" program in the schools. There will be time for discussion after the presentation. We will meet for lunch after the presentation at the Railside in Sanford.

May 22 around 7 p.m. at the Holliday Inn: our annual meeting.

From our President:

Last year our local League studied the funding of our K-12 public schools and decided we should urge the state League to update its position. We believed the decreases in funding from the state were negatively affecting the quality of the education that could be offered by our local districts. I have contacted local League presidents throughout the state, asking them to support our efforts to get the LWVMI to adopt an update of our education position as part of the 2013-15 Program at the state convention in May. Two of them, Lansing and Manistee, have already responded positively.

Unfortunately, it turns out that funding is not the only concern of local K-12 public school districts. According to information on the Reinventing Michigan website, Governor Snyder put forth his planned Education Achievement System (EAS) in June of 2011, as a way to, "...redesign public education in Michigan's lowest performing schools..." Information on the EMU website, states that the Education Achievement Authority (EAA), "a new **statewide school system** (emphasis added) that will assume operation of the lowest 5 percent of performing schools in the state of Michigan...or [schools which] are under an Emergency Manager" was established through the EAS. The System is governed by an 11-member Education Achievement Authority Board; two members are appointed by the Detroit Public Schools (DPS), two members are appointed by Eastern Michigan University (EMU) and seven members are appointed by the Governor.

All members serve at the “pleasure of the respecting appointing authority.”

In the lame duck session, legislators worked on bills to extend the current EAA from an “inter-local” or “regional” agreement between EMU and DPS to become law in the State of Michigan. A lot of bills were passed after the November election, but not bills related to the EAA. That does not mean the effort is over. It is expected to be an issue in the new legislature.

It will be important for us to continue pressing for adequate funding for our public school districts. However, it will now be imperative for us to explore the concepts put forth in the December legislation for the EAS and EAA's. Our public schools have been locally controlled by **elected** board of education members. Proposal A changed funding from a primarily local to a primarily state function. The concepts in the plan for EAS and EAA are complete opposites of how our schools are currently organized and how they operate.

How far should we go in transferring local control to state control? Will the EAS gradually become a truly statewide school district?

Will current districts be required to turn over unused district buildings to the EAS so other schools can move in and compete against the local district?

Will corporation CEO's, church pastors, and college professors (the makeup of the current EAA Board) be appointed to make school system decisions statewide? Will that work locally?

On December 12, J. Zubrzycki, reported in **Education Week**, “The city school board unanimously voted to withdraw from the statewide authority.” Whether they will be able to break the contract and actually withdraw will be settled in court.

There is a lot of information available about the EAA. Please research this important issue so that you get a real feel for what is actually occurring and what is being proposed. I found many, many sources by Googling, “Michigan's EAA.”

Karen Sherwood

Program Planning For 2013–15.

Tempus fugit* and it is now time to plan the program to be adopted at the LWVMI convention in May 2013. This program should reflect where we think LWVMI should focus its efforts in educating ourselves and the public about issues of the day. The positions we adopt are the foundation for our advocacy and therefore it is important that they be relevant and up-to-date. We pride ourselves on being a 'grassroots' organization where members choose and truly understand the issues they are asked to advocate for.

Our league has scheduled this meeting Tuesday Feb. 5, at 1:30 p.m. in the Grace A. Dow Library conference rooms. We will be asked to review the current state positions and recommend retention, dropping, updating, or reopening for study. The positions are available on the "LWVMI website" www.lwvmi.org/positions.html and rather than just

checking 'retain' we might consider dividing the load among our members so that each position gets a thorough review. The range is wide, from concerns with the Ecology of the Great Lakes to Social Services. Please let me know at fphamburg@chartermi.net if you are willing to review one or two of the positions and make a recommendation.

Midland has led the way in proposing a review of the state position on financing education as stated in 'Education: Structure, Financing and Goals'. The LWVMI Board has followed up on this by making an update in whole or in part of this position its recommendation for the 2013-15 biennium. It is possible that this recommendation might extend to include the two other education positions, Public School Academies and Teacher Certification, so take a look at those as well. Given our concern with this issue, I am reasonably sure that we will concur with the LWVMI Board's recommendation. However, if some other areas also need attention please include those in your discussion.

Above all, please make this meeting a priority on your calendar. It is a pleasure to have such a vital home league as a base for my efforts on the state board and I look forward to seeing you there.

Fran Hamburg, VP for Program, LWVMI

* (a not-very-close translation: “It's much later than you think!”)

We Have Five New Members

It's fun to welcome new people: these five joined our LWV within the last year.

Joan Brausch is an active Democrat with “a passion for justice, concern for those in need, the elderly and the children.” Joan has been involved in politics for many years. She is a native of Minnesota and met her husband at the University of Cincinnati in Ohio. They moved to Midland for his job at Dow Chemical Co in 1971. Joan, with a masters' degree in theological studies, was employed at her church, Blessed Sacrament for 20 years. She has many friends who are LWV members, and admired their work on voter rights. She wanted to be a part of that work and decided to join League at the same time she decided to run for state representative, against Republican Jim Stamas. Although she lost the election, she garnered many votes and supporters and is encouraged enough that she plans on running for office again in 2014. Dave and Joan's son lives in Grand Rapids with his wife and two children and their daughter lives in Mauritania, Africa where her husband works for our state department; they have a two-year old daughter. Joan loves to travel, read, go for walks and garden.

LuEllen DeLine has long been interested in LWV but has many other commitments, including AAUW and PEO (a philanthropic educational organization working for the advancement of women through funding scholarships and assisting women in higher education). LuEllen is retired from Dow Chemical Co. where she worked as an administrative

professional. Her husband is also a Dow retiree and their blended family consists of eleven adult children, grandchildren and now great grandchildren all around the country, Her interests are sewing, reading and the DeLine cottage on Crooked Lake near Lake City and Cadillac, MI. She plans to watch League issues and when something comes up she is interested in, she will work on it.

Lisa Grills is a native of Bay City and the executive director of the YWCA Great Lakes Bay Region, headquartered in Bay City. The Bay Region YWCA has produced a report on the economic status of women in the Great Lakes region and Lisa will do a program for us in January on their findings. Political participation was one of the five indicators covered by the study and Lisa is interested in advocacy and in finding a way to get more women into public office. The YWCA advocates for the Violence Against Women Act and Lisa's group travels to Washington D.C. to help protect and support the act. Lisa's interest in politics led her to the Midland LWV. She would like to get more Bay City people interested in starting a LWV branch there. Lisa has a degree in social work from Saginaw Valley State University and she did medical social work before returning to school for a teaching degree. During the teaching years she began work at the YWCA as development director, decided to stay and then moved into the executive director position. She has been at the YWCA for eight years. Lisa's husband is a psychiatric nurse who also teaches parent education classes. They have four children, a son in engineering at University of Michigan, a daughter in graphic design at SVSU and identical twin daughters who are high school sophomores. Lisa likes to play golf and tennis and she likes to ski.

Gila Mohadjer (pronounced Zhila) was born in Iran and grew up in Germany. She and her husband moved to Midland 14 years ago so her husband could work for Dow Chemical Co. Gila received her high school diploma in Germany a year after the Iranian revolution. She also earned a medical degree in Germany but chose not to go through all the tests that would have qualified her to practice in the U.S.A. She teaches human anatomy and physiology at Delta College. Her interest in how politics works led her to join a Great Decisions group. Three years ago she became a U.S. citizen and decided the best way to understand our laws and regulations was to become a member of the LWV. Her husband is also a citizen but their Iranian roots draw them back often; they spent Christmas vacation there. Their daughter was a college student at Alma and then went to Cambridge to get a masters degree; from there to Paris and Berlin where she is earning a PhD in international relations; she has been married six months. Their son graduated from the University of Michigan and is now studying medicine at the University of Pennsylvania.

Katherine Redwine is a reference librarian at the Grace A. Dow Memorial Library in Midland. She has

known about the League for a long time and as a librarian she is focused on getting out information that is non-partisan; her LWV interest is in voter service and changes in voting laws. She is from Virginia and met her husband at Wake Forest University. She earned a masters degree in library science from the University of Chicago. He is an analytical chemist, which brought them to Midland for work. They have two sons; one is earning a PhD in chemistry at Purdue and one is getting a mechanical engineering degree from Saginaw Valley State University.

From **Terry Townley**: As we reflect on the senseless loss of children's lives in Newtown, Connecticut; it is helpful to know that the LWV of the USA has a position on Gun Control.

Statement of Position on Gun Control, as Adopted by 1990 Convention and amended by the 1994 and 1998 Conventions:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the proliferation of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons in the United States is a major health and safety threat to its citizens. The League supports strong federal measures to limit the accessibility and regulate the ownership of these weapons by private citizens. The League supports regulating firearms for consumer safety.

The League supports licensing procedures for gun ownership by private citizens to include a waiting period for background check, personal identity verification, gun safety education and annual license renewal. The license fee should be adequate to bear the cost of education and verification.

The League supports a ban on "Saturday night specials," enforcement of strict penalties for the improper possession of and crimes committed with handguns and assault weapons, and allocation of resources to better regulate and monitor gun dealers.

Radio Days

It is time to start gearing up for Radio Days. For those of you who are unfamiliar with this event, it is a major fundraiser for our local League. Last year we raised \$1550 from local business supporters. Just as important as the money is the chance to raise public awareness of what the League does for the community. **Would you consider asking even one business to support our local League with an advertisement on WMPX/WMRX?**

During Sunshine Week March 10-16, Radio Station, WMPX/WMRX in Midland, allows our League to sell advertising to local businesses. The station donates that time, so all of the revenue from the sale of those ads goes to our league. The businesses can use the spots either for their own ads or for public service announcements provided by the League. The station also airs interviews with various members about League activities. WMPX/WMRX is running public service announcements for us, throughout the year as well and we are grateful for their support.

Think about where you shopped for the holidays, ate a good meal, had your hair done or even went to the dentist etc. Would you be willing to approach the owner of that business in February and ask them to purchase an ad through our League, to air on WMPX/WMRX? In late January or early February we will be assigning businesses for the “gadders” or foot soldiers to solicit. Please consider helping. Many businesses have advertised for several years and it is just a matter of someone asking them to participate again. We hope every member will participate in this important project. Thank you to all who have helped in the past as well. Call **Connie Glave** at 631-2356 to help. Thank you.

The election of 2012

Yes, the election that it seemed would never happen is now OVER. Your local LWV got voting information out to thousands of people and we are already working on strategies to do more in the coming years. Here is a sketch of what happened.

1. We joined VOTE 411, a web based voter guide sponsored by LWVUS and LWVMI. Sue McCollister inputted our grid information; then candidates were able to enter their own information. We had 1,126 hits so we deemed it a successful effort.
2. Our Voter Guide was printed by the Midland Daily News, delivered to their subscribers. We paid for 1500 extra copies which we delivered to sites around the county.
3. 500 LWVMI Voter Guides were distributed at the Senior Expo and to sites in the county.
4. Happily, our fundraising covered the costs of the above efforts.
5. Our Candidate Forum, broadcast and replayed by MCTV, was held in spite of poor participation by one party.
6. Our President gave two talks on the state ballot issues.

Thanks to everyone who helped with the above efforts!

Coming in February 2013: watch for our updated printing of our pamphlet: “Your Elected Officials.”

Carole Swinehart, Voter Service

Making Democracy Work

In our first season, 19 shows were produced for our local television station, MCTV. Season two will retain a regular broadcast time but we will tape only 12 shows with Cathy Nelson Price taking the single host role. Be sure to keep watching our great local program.

Great Decisions

There is still time to join a **Great Decisions** study group. A video and briefing book are prepared by experts from the Foreign Policy Assn. and are used in the discussions. There are eight topics to be discussed:

The Future of the Euro

Egypt

NATO

Myanmar and Southeast Asia

Intervention

Iran

China in Africa

Threat assessment

The groups will meet on Tues afternoon, Wed. morning, Thurs. morning and Thurs. evening. For more information phone **Sandy Burmester** at 832-3079.

And last of all: here’s to our top LWV member for the month of December: **Rosemary Wilson**, who volunteered and chaired our annual Christmas dinner, including planning out the food and pricing it for us, buying the food, donating her home, setting up her tables and cleaning up afterwards. She had help –many thanks to Terry Townley for decorations and set-up help, to Fran Hamburg and Sue McCollister for bringing wine and to Sue for collecting the money, and to those who stayed to clean-up –but it was mostly Rosemary’s party and Rosemary who worked the hardest. We all had one grand time. Thank you Rosemary!