

**EMPOWERING VOTERS  
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE  
CAPITOL  
VOTER**

**SEPTEMBER  
2021**

***IN THE SEPTEMBER CAPITOL VOTER***

- President's Message: Voting Rights, Redistricting and Reproductive Rights
- Observer Corps Update
- Equality Day Celebrated
- Voter Services Opportunities
- Education Committee Discusses CRT
- Preparing for Town Hall Meetings/Candidate Forums
- Book Club: "The Inside Story" on Keeping GM
- Dealing with Anxiety about Climate Change
- October is Dues Renewal Time

**LWVLA CALENDAR**

**Wednesday, September 29, 12-1 pm.** Observer Corps meets on Zoom with Eric Schertzing, Ingham County Treasurer. See article below.

**Wednesday, September 29, 7-8:30 pm.** "[How communities can promote their interests in Michigan's redistricting: Lessons learned](#)," a virtual discussion presented by MSU's Institute for Public Policy and Social Research. [Register here](#) to attend.

**Saturday, October 2, Noon-2 pm.** "[MI Body MI Choice](#)" Women's March for

Reproductive Rights, State Capitol. Masks required.

**Tuesday, October 19, 7 pm.** "Plugging Into The Future: Making Wise Energy Choices", environmental webinar via Zoom. Stay tuned for details.

**Tuesday, October 19, 6:30-7:30 pm.** Observer Corps joint meeting with LWV of Washtenaw County Observer Corps and Washtenaw Treasurer, Catherine McClary. See article below.

**Tuesday, October 12, 10-11:30 am.** Book Discussion Group - Zoom meeting to discuss *Second Shift: The Inside Story of the Keep GM Movement*, written by local authors David Hollister, Ray Tadgerson, David Closs and G. Tomas M. Hult. See article below.

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT Donna Mullins

It's been 20 years since our country was united in sorrow over the tragedy of the Twin Towers. I remember watching the memorial service at Yankee Stadium and seeing the crowd identify as American and grief struck. That was it. I specifically told my son that he was witnessing what made our country great, our ability to forget our differences when we needed each other.



One score later, we are divided in many ways and there are very loud voices that continue to stoke the division even as we all battle a common enemy in COVID. Where there is a crack, some meet it with a crowbar rather than a repair. It's cause for concern. Here's a rundown of some of the issues and how the League is addressing them.

### Voting Rights

In a response to the "big lie" regarding the last elections, partisans introduced legislation to make it harder to vote. In Michigan there is an effort to get around a promised veto by circulating a petition to change voter ID laws. It will be extremely difficult to get the required number of signatures on this petition to affect the 2022 election. [Bridge Michigan](#) reports that a more likely outcome is that "any new voting laws approved through the initiative process would instead take effect in 2023 and be operative for the 2024 election." The situation is fluid. (Still.)

LWVMI has a plan to respond to this threat which will be unveiled this month. Co-presidents Christina Schlitt and Paula Bowman have made strong public statements opposing the legislation as well as the petition drive. The threat is real but should not distract us from the redistricting process, which will affect our representation for the next decade and is happening right now!

### Redistricting

Draft maps have been submitted for seven state Senate districts and 18 House districts; this includes Ingham, Eaton and Clinton counties. MLive has a good [article](#) that includes the maps. LWVMI has been present throughout the process. We've been following

carefully with the dedicated help of member Jacqueline Stewart, who sends summaries of the commission meetings to our committee that is addressing the process, including communities of interest. The public may comment on the proposed maps. Current dates are as follows:

- September 30 and October 1: The MICRC (Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission) will vote on its draft maps for the U.S. Congress, state House and state Senate.
- October 11-28: Constitutionally required Public Hearings on these draft maps.
- November 5: Commission votes on proposed maps.
- December 30: Commission will vote on the final maps.

### **Reproductive Rights**

This is more of a national issue right now, but you no doubt have read about the recently passed Texas abortion law which prohibits abortions after 6 weeks of pregnancy. Here is a portion of the statement released by LWV: *“Bodily autonomy is a personal right. The League of Women Voters believes every person deserves the access and the privacy to make their own reproductive choices, and we will continue the fight for reproductive justice in Texas and across the nation.”*

The Supreme Court allowed the law to stand until it is formally challenged by someone who has been found to be in violation of the law. While it is unusual practice not to review a law that is so “creative” in its application, it’s also not particularly rare.

### **Our Work Continues!**

Clearly, the League has a role in all this. In an effort to organize our resources we will soon survey members to learn how they would like to be involved in our mission. A similar survey was given to members who attended last year’s “Somehow we made it” membership meeting. This survey will be announced through a Constant Contact email with a link to the survey.

We value your membership. Numbers count, and just having you as a member adds clout to the League. Over the years many of you have participated in voter services, our new Observer Corps, and our advocacy groups which address the environment, public health/gun safety and education. Volunteers write, edit and publish this newsletter. Volunteers organize and publicize our events. Our mission is our soul but our volunteers are our heart; they keep us running.

Keep an eye out for a link to the survey in the near future. Our organization is needed now more than ever; challenges abound. We will meet them

Together,

*Donna*

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**OBSERVER CORPS**  
**Valerie Lafferty, Chair**

The Observer Corps (OC) continues to offer real-time feedback of what is actually happening in our tri-county communities, from the continued divide on wearing masks to deciding how incoming federal



funds will be distributed. Click [here](#) for members' reports. Please note an important but under-explained new foreclosure law that allows individual owners to reclaim surpluses as well as Eaton County's new Broadband Commission to expand broadband to the entire county, notably underserved rural areas.

To increase transparency, safety and convenience and to reduce our carbon footprint, the OC would prefer virtual meetings going forward, posting meeting recordings on the internet afterward with enhanced sound and perhaps video, if it can be managed by the local units of government. We think this would be an improvement over the current mixed and ad hoc methods of making the meetings public. In the meantime, please welcome a member new to LWVLA and already a valued contributor to the OC, Kendra Grasseschi.

We need new OC members, especially in a few rural municipalities and a few larger ones like East Lansing, Mason, Delhi, St. Johns, Delta, Charlotte or Eaton Rapids. It will take a few hours a month but is guaranteed to be interesting and will bring you into smart conversation for our once-a-month debrief meetings with other OC members. Please [email](#) or call me at 517-349-6660 to discuss.

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## PROGRAM NOTES

### Susan R. Chalgian, VP-Programs

Our August 26 Equality Day event, celebrating 101 years since the 19th U.S. Constitutional Amendment (see below\*) was ratified and the establishment of the League of Women Voters, was a great success. Mori & Mama entertained about 35 guests with their lovely music; Kate O'Neill delighted them with stories of her suffragist mother; Judith Karandjeff, Advocacy Chair of LWVMI, addressed "Voting Rights Today" and other legislative updates; and Susan R. Chalgian, VP-Programs of LWVLA, read a "History of the League of Women Voters." Michigan author Debbie Diesen (*The Pout-Pout Fish*) talked about her children's book *Equality's Call*, and Jillian Reese, Curator at the Michigan History Museum, discussed the exhibit entitled "I Voted: Michigan's Struggle for Suffrage" (open through 3/30/22). In the background was the "ERA II" fabric art by the quilting artists DIVAS, displays of LWVLA School Poster Contest winners, and an information table hosted by Voters Not Politicians.



We have some nice photographs thanks to Mark Chamberlin, who donated his time and photography skills.

A video of Kate O'Neill's presentation can be viewed at this [link](#) and hopefully will soon be on our website.

On another note, the Environmental Advocacy Group has scheduled an October 19 virtual event on preparing for an electric future, and more events will soon be planned. Members with program ideas should feel free to [email](#) or call me at 517-420-0637.

**The Nineteenth Amendment:**

*The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.*

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## VOTER SERVICES UPDATE

Joanne Winkelman, Chair

### National Voter Registration Day is Next Week

I just learned that the Lansing City Clerk's Office is planning two events (see below). If you are able to register voters at either location please email the [City Clerk](#) and [copy me](#) so I know who from the League is participating. Let the Clerk's office know the day and times you are available. The events are scheduled outside, but if the weather is poor they will move indoors at both locations. Make sure you bring a mask! As an extra incentive, the Clerk's Office is buying lunch for anyone who works a 3-hour shift over the lunch time.

- **Tuesday, Sept. 28**, 11 am – 5:30 pm, Southside Community Coalition Parking Lot, 2101 W. Holmes, Lansing. Note: 3 – 5:30 pm will be the busiest time, as parents pick up their children from the after-school program that starts at 3 p.m. We will be having the children take home an activity sheet attached to a voter registration form.
- **Thursday, Sept. 30**, 10 am – 2:30 pm, Lansing Community College, Washington Mall (outside of Arts & Sciences Building), 419 N. Washington

The Lansing City Clerk is always appreciative of the League's assistance. If you have further questions, email or call me at 248-804-7433. If you need a refresher on registering people, let me know and I will provide a quick tutorial.

If you signed up for another event later this month, contact [Shara Washington](#) to verify whether the event is still on.

### High School Presentation and Voter Registration Drives.

In the past, the LWVLA has presented at schools throughout the tri-county area on voting issues and conducted voter registration drives. Unfortunately, COVID is still lurking and, as a result, a team effort with the East Lansing City Clerk's office had to be postponed. East Lansing schools have a "no visitor" policy. In lieu of our presence, the updated PowerPoint was sent to the high school principal for distribution to the Social Studies teachers with directions for registering online.

Just announced, the state League is spearheading a high school voter registration contest. They will be contacting each high school principal with the details. If a school is interested in the contest, the local league will be asked to present (PowerPoint) and register students. Stay tuned. If we hear from principals, I will give a call out to volunteers. There will be a training on the materials before we visit schools. It's been a long time since we've been able to get together and review the latest voting changes.

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## REPORT FROM THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

### Bettie Menchik, Chair

The Education Committee has begun to look at the politically charged issue of **Critical Race Theory** (CRT) that is being widely debated in school boards around the state, many of which are facing observers who claim CRT is now influencing American K-12 curriculums. What we are learning is that Critical Race Theory is a concept first written about in graduate school literature in the 1990s. The theory argues that historical patterns of racism are ingrained in law and other modern institutions and that the legacies of slavery, segregation and Jim Crow still create an uneven playing field for Black people and other people of color. The idea is that racism is not a matter of individual bigotry but is systemic in America. Recently, critics have made CRT a catchall target for opposition to equity efforts, affirmative action and “wokeness” in general.

Instead of focusing on CRT, the committee is looking at how **Culturally Responsive Teaching** connects students’ cultures, languages and life experiences with what they learn in school. Culturally responsive teaching and Critical Race Theory are not the same. Culturally responsive teaching is defined as using the cultural characteristics, experiences and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for reaching students more effectively. This teaching model requires five motivational conditions: 1) developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity; 2) including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum; 3) demonstrating caring and building learning communities; 4) communicating with ethnically diverse students; and 5) responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction.

We will be discussing how to respond to individuals who claim a school district’s educational equity policy, equity initiatives, or culturally responsive teaching practices are CRT in disguise. Our next meeting will be on Zoom on either October 6 or 20 (both are Wednesdays) at 5 pm; [email](#) me for the exact date and time.

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## GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPATING IN TOWN HALL MEETINGS AND CANDIDATE FORUMS

### Martha Couretas, Co-Chair, Public Health and Safety Committee

#### The Message

Mass killings, daily deaths from suicide, domestic violence, carelessly stored weapons responsible for child deaths, and crime all make gun violence a public health and safety issue. Many of these deaths are preventable if those we elect—our city council members, our State of Michigan legislators, and members of Congress—will accept their responsibility for public safety and strengthen firearm legislation that results in fewer deaths and injuries from firearms.

**The November 2, 2021 election** includes candidates for local city councils, where support of community-based actions are being considered or are already in place. (The *Capitol Voter* will focus on Michigan legislators and congressional candidates in 2022.)

#### Introduce Yourself

Include your name, city and state. If speaking to a candidate, state that you live in his/her district. You may also want to say how long you have lived there and your profession.

### **Thank Your Candidate for Being There**

This is especially important when the forum might be tense or controversial. By setting an environment of civility, the speaker will be more receptive to your questions.

### **Tell a Brief Story**

Make certain that the candidate/congressperson understands that this question is relevant to the district they represent. Resources: LWVLA Capitol Voter (August 2021), “Reducing Gun Violence through Community-Based Programs”; Michigan Live.com, “[Gun violence surge grips Michigan cities](#)”.

### **Ask Questions That Are Clear and Direct**

You want to make it difficult for the candidate to avoid answering the question or changing the focus of the question. You want to get them on record agreeing to take a concrete action.

- Do not ask a question that can be answered with “yes” or “no.”
- Do not accept an evasive answer such as, “This issue needs more study.”
- Click [here](#) for some sample questions.

### **Follow Up**

Get staff contact information while you are there. Reach out to ensure the candidate knows you will be watching as they follow through.

Get there early. Practice your introduction, story and question(s). In many cases you will have two minutes or less to speak. In addition to the responsibility of local elected officials, we all need to accept responsibility for the success of community-based initiatives. Learn about them. Support and become involved when and where you are able.

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## **BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP**

### **Donna Mullins**

October’s book club will discuss *Second Shift: The Inside Story of the Keep GM Movement*, written by local authors David Hollister, Ray Tadjerson, David Closs and G. Tomas M. Hult about Lansing’s successful effort to keep GM alive in the city. It’s available online at Amazon and [here](#), too; used copies abound. There’s a good chance we can get an author or two to join our discussion.

We will meet on Zoom on October 12 at 10 am. If you would like to be placed on the book club notification list or have suggestions for books, email [Donna Mullins](#).

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## **FEELING A LITTLE ANXIOUS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE?**

### **Marion Gorton, Environmental Advocacy Group**

Eco-anxiety is a relatively recent term in the psychotherapist’s or counsellor’s vocabulary or in everyday discourse, so you may not be familiar with it. *Oxford Languages* defines it as

“extreme worry about current and future harm to the environment caused by human activity and climate change.” It is a fear of what is happening, and what will happen, to our planet and the people who depend on it if the dire predictions of climate change play out in the next few decades.



We are fortunate in Michigan. We see storms that, in the words of many media meteorologists, are “unprecedented” or are “once in a 100-year” events, but we have not yet experienced the worst consequences of climate change occurring elsewhere. Still, many of us feel anxiety for relatives and friends who are affected by fires, hurricanes, and other climate events in other parts of the country and the world. For those of us in the last decades of life, our anxiety may stem from fear not for ourselves but for our children and grandchildren. Past generations could look forward to greater opportunities and better lives for the next generations, but the daily reporting of rising temperatures, floods, fires, lack of water resources and the inability to produce adequate food for the ever-expanding world population make us wonder if researchers and technology will be able to find answers soon enough to save the environment that sustains us.

If you find yourself feeling anxious about what our changing planet holds in store for us and for future generations, you may want to begin with an article on the [Mayo Clinic's website](#) about anxiety in general, its symptoms and treatments. For an excellent discussion of eco-anxiety, see “What to know about eco-anxiety” on the [Medical News Today](#) website. This article shares helpful information from the American Psychiatric Association and specific actions to help manage eco-anxiety.

You might also enter into discussions with friends and relatives to talk about your anxiety. Discuss possible ways to deal with the consequences of climate change. Come up with plans for adjusting to, or mitigating, the worst consequences of changes in our environment. Educate yourself about the problems and the possible solutions. Develop a plan with family and friends. Taking these steps can help you feel in control and thereby reduce the anxiety that comes with feeling powerless.

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## ONE THING

REDUCE YOUR ELECTRICITY USE: For ideas beyond unplugging unused electronics, switching to all LED lights and using task lighting, check out [Consumers Energy's](#) tips.

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## OCTOBER IS DUES RENEWAL TIME Camilla Davis, Membership Director

It's time to remind members who joined LWV – Lansing Area before February 1, 2021, that October is dues renewal month. We'll be sending you information about dues renewal via email soon. However, if you'd like to pay your dues early, you're welcome to either go the [LWVLA website](#) and pay electronically or download the [dues renewal form](#), write a check, and send it to the address on the form.

Questions? Contact [Camilla](#).



## OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP MAKE DEMOCRACY WORK

All committees would welcome new members. Contact the chairs for more information.

**VOTER SERVICE:** Contact [Joanne Winkelman](#).

**K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE:** Contact [Bettie Menchik](#).

**PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY/GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE:** Contact [Marty Couretas](#) or [Melinda Frame](#).

**ENVIRONMENT ADVOCACY GROUP:** Contact [Ellen Link](#) or [Elaine Fischhoff](#).