

**EMPOWERING VOTERS  
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE  
CAPITOL  
VOTER**

**MARCH  
2022**

**IN THE MARCH CAPITOL VOTER**

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**LWVLA CALENDAR**

**Tuesday, March 22 at 7pm.** "Ukraine, An Informal Discussion of Current Events" webinar, hosted by Donna Mullins. See article below for more info and to register.

Through March 30. [Michigan History Center](#) exhibit, [I Voted: Michigan's Struggle for Suffrage](#) about the people, protests and policies that have transformed voting in Michigan from statehood in 1837 through today. Check museum for times and info.

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT Donna Mullins



You may have heard that the League is supporting a proposed constitutional amendment that enshrines the fundamental right to vote in Michigan. The effort is led by [Promote the Vote](#) (PTV), a collaborative organization which is closely aligned with LWVMI (3 of the 13 board members of PTV are also board members of the Michigan League). The wording of the petition has not yet been officially approved. Once it is, we will need help to obtain half a million signatures to place it on the November ballot. Petitions will be available on April 1 and signatures are due by **mid-July!** Clearly, we need all the volunteers we can get to make that happen. LWVMI is asking that each local League have a lead organizer and team leaders. We are [collecting names of volunteers now](#).

The advantage of a constitutional amendment is that it supersedes any legislation. Any law which limits the right to vote would be moot if this amendment passes. It's a big deal.

The fundamental right to vote in Michigan means that no person shall interfere with the right to vote through any law, rule, regulation, qualification, prerequisite, standard, practice or procedure. Additionally, no person shall engage in any harassing, threatening or intimidating conduct affecting the right to vote or, further, that uses any means whatsoever that has the effect of denying the fundamental right to vote. It guarantees:

- the right of people serving in the military to vote by absentee ballot and have that vote counted if it is postmarked on or before election day and received within 6 days after the election.
- the right to vote a straight party ticket.
- the right to automatically be registered to vote as a result of getting a driver's license or official ID from the Michigan Secretary of State (unless declined).
- the right to register to vote by mail on or before the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the election.
- the right to register in person up to and including the day of the election.
- the right, once registered, to prove their identity by executing a signed affidavit to prove their identity.
- the right, once registered, to vote absentee without giving a reason.
- the right to state-funded, free prepaid postage to return an absentee ballot.
- the right to have a state-funded system to track absentee ballots and notify the voter of the status of that ballot.
- the right to have at least one state-funded secure drop box for every 15,000 registered voters in a municipality.
- the right, once registered, to have an absentee ballot sent to a voter by submitting a single signed request covering all future elections.
- the right to have the results of an election audited to ensure the accuracy of the election.
- the right, once registered, to participate in early in-person voting for 9 consecutive days before the election.

With enough volunteers we can get this done. Right now we need to know how many people can help obtain petition signatures. (You can get your book club to sign, or hang out at the local farmers' market with a clipboard, or whatever works for you...every signature helps.) There are also other ways to help beyond getting signatures. [Sign up](#)

[now](#) to make voting a fundamental right in Michigan. Training will be available in March. (The first training is March 22.) If you have questions, please contact [Donna Mullins](#). We can do this

Together,  
**Donna**

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## LOOKING FOR LWV CONVENTION DELEGATES Donna Mullins

This year's [LWV convention](#) is being held in Denver from June 23 to June 26. There is a \$450 fee to attend in person as a voting delegate or non-voting observer. You may also attend virtually for \$300. We cover the cost of registration but not travel, housing or other costs. This is a working convention but there will be opportunities to meet people who are focused on voting and making our nation a more perfect union.

We are currently researching if there is an Airbnb nearby that could house our members who attend. I will likely be driving out and back in my little red Tesla to save on cost and reduce air pollution. There is room in my car for guests.

Our local League can send a total of 3 voting delegates. If you are interested in attending, please contact [Donna Mullins](#). Board members have priority to attend, but all members are invited to be considered.

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## VOTER SERVICE ONGOING ACTIVITIES Joanne Winkelman, Voter Service Director

So much is happening behind the scenes! Beth and Lisa Moore have been working hard updating the [Voter Service](#) section of the LWVLA website in preparation for the upcoming elections. There are still a few more tweaks to be made, but we're well on our way with updated material and easy access to information, announcements of forums, and voter guides as they become available. Check it all out on our [Voter Service](#) page.



The Lansing League has been approached by a historically black sorority and a fraternity to partner in upcoming election activities. Discussions have just begun, but we are thrilled to begin new partnerships with these organizations. Volunteers will be solicited for assisting in any partnership activities that arise. Stay tuned.

Five schools in our area have taken on the [MI Vote Matters High School Voter Registration Challenge](#) sponsored by the Secretary of State, League of Women Voters Michigan, Inspire2Vote, Michigan Center for Civic Education and We All Vote. Whenever a school in our area signs up, we are contacted for support. Information was sent to East Lansing High School, Haslett High School, Lansing NexTech High School, Mason High School, and Waverly High School, with an invitation to request that League



members address students either in person or virtually. At this time, no school has requested League presence. If you have a personal connection with any of these schools, feel free to offer our services. The League has a special PowerPoint and script that can be used to address students. Contact [Joanne Winkelman](#) for the PowerPoint and other available materials.

As usual, once we get closer to the elections there will be a call-out for volunteers to contact candidates to complete their Vote411.org responses. Voter Guide distributors will also be solicited.

Lastly, printing Voter Guides for the fall election is quite expensive (around \$6,000). The Lansing League is looking for partners to help defray the cost of printing the guides. If you know of any corporation or individual who would like to assist us with printing costs, please contact [Donna Mullins](#) and/or [Joanne Winkelman](#).

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## AN INFORMAL DISCUSSION OF THE UKRAINE AND RUSSIA

### Donna Mullins

Many of our members have been touched by the courage of the Ukrainians and saddened that the Russian people will pay heavily for the behavior of their leaders. The news is difficult to bear. Because our members are deeply interested in current events, we are sponsoring a conversation on the Ukraine and Russia on Tuesday, March 22 at 7pm via Zoom. [Registration](#) is required.



Our featured speaker, Jennifer Castner, is Director of The Altai Project, a nonprofit organization that works with frontline leaders to protect natural landscapes, wildlife, indigenous peoples and traditional lifeways in and around Russia, Mongolia and Kazakhstan. She has been involved in the environmental justice and Indigenous rights movements since 2002. With a longstanding commitment to Russia, Jennifer studied at the Moscow Energy Institute in 1992 (as part of her Russian language and linguistics degree program from Bryn Mawr College), lived and worked in Kiev the early 1990s, and worked in medical philanthropy in Russia in the late 1990s.

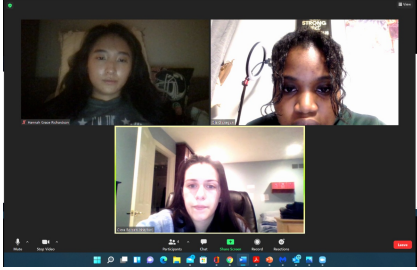
When she's not busy with The Altai Project, Jennifer provides Russian-English translation/interpreting and consults on grants administration and the Russian environmental and indigenous movements for nonprofits and foundations. She is fluent in Russian and has traveled extensively in Siberia and the Russian Far East, Ukraine, and Europe. She lives in East Lansing, Michigan with her husband and son.

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## LWVLA FORMING MSU CAMPUS UNIT

### Camilla Davis, Membership Director

The League of Women Voters always welcomes college students when they join the League. However, we never have many join us. We know that there are students eager to participate politically, but it is often



challenging to engage them in local League activities.

Building on the LWV concept of Geographic Units to create new League units that are mentored and answerable to a local League, LWVLA has received approval from LWVMI to establish a Campus Unit, open to all MSU students. President Donna Mullins has

worked with a team of MSU students to create the Unit. Ola Olusegun, Hannah Richardson and Ciera Borden, with Donna's guidance and advice from Camilla Davis, LWVLA's Membership Director and LWVMI Membership VP, developed a plan for the student organization that meets both League Geographic Unit Guidelines and MSU's Registered Student Organization requirements.

Advantages to establishing a Campus Unit include increasing diversity of the League, gaining access to university resources, promoting the League to younger people, increasing the membership of the League, and helping students gain practical experience. All plans should be in place by the end of this MSU semester, with the Campus Unit of League of Women Voters ready to recruit student members in the fall. This is an exciting opportunity to engage with younger citizens in our community.

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## FEBRUARY HIGHLIGHTS MICHIGAN COUNTIES

### Valerie Lafferty, Observer Corps Chair

What role does the county government play in our daily lives, you ask? It plays a *huge* role! Learn all about it on this [YouTube video](#) from the Michigan Association of Counties.

A big thanks to all of the intrepid LWVLA Observers. If you want to know what happened this past month in a local unit of government near you, check that out [here](#).

Help us make the greater Lansing area an even better place to live—volunteer to be an Observer today! Democracy improves with participation. We need your eyes and ears. Email [Val Lafferty](#) or call her at 517-349-6660.

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## LWVLA PROGRAM NOTES

### Susan R. Chalgian, Programs VP

The Book Discussion Group will next meet on April 12 at 10 am via Zoom to discuss *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States: Revisioning American History* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. Please contact President [Donna Mullins](#) for more information and to receive the Zoom link.

And watch for upcoming details for the LWVLA's Annual meeting, likely to be scheduled in early May.

As always, if anyone is interested in assisting with program planning, please don't hesitate to contact me by [email](#) or at 517-420-0637.

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## A GOOD READ ON THE DESTINY OF THE HUMAN SPECIES Betty Seagull, EAG Member

We all know, in a general way, that climate change poses a threat to the future of life on earth. But most of us have no idea how much we are imperiling ourselves because we ignore the realities of biological laws. In his new book, *A Natural History of the Future* (2021), Rob Dunn, Distinguished Professor in the Department of Applied Ecology at North Carolina State



University, takes on the task of explaining what the laws of biology tell us about the destiny of the human species. As usual, Professor Dunn does this with wit, style, readability and generous chapter-by-chapter citations that give you the option of going to original sources, should you so choose.

Having been an academic myself, I am always impressed by the breadth of Dunn's knowledge. (I'm a big fan, having read five of his other books.) Academia rewards specialization, but Dunn seems to know everyone and to have read everything. This is a page-turner which ought to be required reading for all intelligent/voting adults. Here are a few nuggets:

- "...we have so squeezed, parted and re-formed the wet dough of Earth that we have inadvertently extinguished wild species on which we depend or might depend and, at the same time, have favored the origin of species likely to cause us problems. And because extinction proceeds manifold more quickly than the origin of new species, the numbers aren't even." (p. 60)
- "...most species on Earth will need to move to survive climate change. Several thousand mammal species. Many thousands of bird species. Hundreds of thousands of plant species. Millions of insect species. Some untold number of microbe species." (p. 61)
- "Humans...are dependent on many thousands of species, but they depend disproportionately on a relatively small number of crops and domestic animals" (p. 115).
- "Ultimately, as we look to our immediate and distant futures, the easiest way forward is to conserve natural ecosystems and their services when we can" (p. 207).

When you read Dunn you will be happy you live in a northern place like Michigan—your property will only become more valuable as southern locations become uninhabitable. And you will realize the seriousness and urgency of saving what we have before it is too late.

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## PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE TAKES A PAUSE Martha Couretas, Co-chair

Melinda Frame and Marty Couretas will be taking a hiatus from writing Public Health and Safety Committee updates for the *Capitol Voter*. We have also requested that this committee be placed on 'inactive status.' We leave you with several (linked) websites that will provide reliable research-based resources and commentary that promote prevention of deaths and injuries from firearm violence.

[Gun Violence Archive](#)



[Giffords Law Center](#)  
[Michigan Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence](#)  
[Coalition to Stop Gun Violence](#)  
[MOMS Demand Action](#)

(Click on *Take Action*)

Should you wish to be included in periodic and relevant email updates that pertain to gun violence prevention and public health and safety legislation in Michigan, please [email](#) me or call me at 517-927-1190, and I will include your name and email on these updates.

Gun violence is preventable.

Gun violence is a public health and safety issue.

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## ONE THING

***Buy toilet paper*** made from bamboo or recycled content. According to the Natural Resource Defense Council, 15 percent of deforestation is due to toilet paper production alone. Do you really want to flush Canada's ancient boreal forest (and its myriad nonhuman inhabitants) down the toilet?

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## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS! Camilla Davis, Membership Director

Kim Dana, East Lansing

Debra Gordon, Perry

Isabel Maria Hershey, East Lansing

Myrtelisa Bunker-Schumacher, East Lansing

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## 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](#).

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

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