

**EMPOWERING VOTERS
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE
CAPITOL
VOTER**

OCTOBER 2020

LWVLA CALENDAR

Tuesday, October 20, 4:00 p.m. - Program Committee Meeting via Zoom

Tuesday, November 3 - ELECTION DAY! Vote! Remind your friends and family to vote!

Tuesday, November 10, 10:00 - 11:30 a.m. Book Club via Zoom, *The Women of the Copper Country* by Mary Doria Russell. See Program Committee notes below.

Tuesday, November 17. Evening Zoom meeting: Time TBA. Celebration of League Election Achievements, plus the Annual Meeting. Watch your email for more information.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



November 3. Election Day! It's right around the corner, and we hope that we can have a little time to breathe after that. We hope, but there is no guarantee. The national League is preparing for any eventuality and is in constant contact with the state as well as local Leagues. We are not in a crisis but we are prepared for one. Just as you keep a first aid kit ready, the League is ready if needed.

In the meantime, we have been busy distributing voter guides, talking to Brownie troops, helping clerks out when asked, posting the location of ballot drop boxes and holding candidate forums.

We have had no shortage of volunteers as you will see from Joanne Winkelman's comments below. It is business as usual only this time in the middle of a pandemic. We are, in fact, wary of COVID and have been careful to keep all members out of harm's way. We've boosted our social media presence to make up for social distancing requirements. It's been a challenge, as I've reported each month since April.

You may be wondering what happened to that pre-election rally I promoted last month. Life got in the way, as did the voter guides. We will now be celebrating *after* the election all the work that so many have done, wine optional. Make no mistake, there is plenty to celebrate. And plenty to appreciate.

Please be sure to take advantage of the 30th Circuit Court Non-Incumbent [Candidate Forum](#) on YouTube as well as the East Lansing [School Board Candidate Forum](#). I'm pleased to say that both had many fewer technical problems than our efforts of six months ago. Practice makes better, albeit not perfect.

Stay healthy. Stay hopeful. And stay tuned.

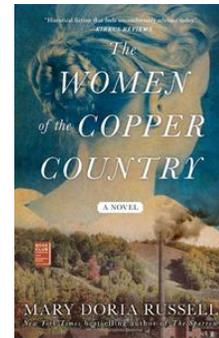
Together,
Donna

NOTES FROM THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE Dorothy Engelman, Program VP

The League presented two timely and informative programs in September. On September 21, the topic was ***Michigan Democracy: Safe, Accessible, and Secure***, featuring Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, City of Lansing Clerk Chris Swope and Delhi Township Clerk Evan Hope. The webinar was recorded and you can view it [here](#).

The Environment Advocacy Group (EAG) hosted ***Much To Do About Trash*** on September 29. Speakers Emily Freeman and Heidi Sanborn gave us plenty to think about! A big "thank you" to EAG for arranging for these great speakers. Read about it below and watch the webinar.

The Book Discussion Group will meet Tuesday, November 10 on Zoom at 10 am, the subject being ***The Women of the Copper Country***, by Mary Doria Russell. It's an historical novel set on the Keweenaw Peninsula in 1913. Annie Clements, "America's Joan of Arc," started a rebellion by leading a strike against the largest copper mining company in the world. The author is noted for her meticulous research, fine prose, and compelling narrative drive; her novels, critically acclaimed as well as commercial successes, are studied in literature, theology and history courses. The discussion is open to all. Please contact Donna Mullins if you're not on the email list.



November 17, 2020, is also the date of the Zoom event *Celebration of League Election Achievements./Annual Meeting*. It will be in the evening and we'll let you know the details soon.

The Program Committee will meet on Tuesday, October 20, at 4 pm to plan programs through March. If you'd like to suggest a topic, please [email](#) me.

Respectfully submitted,
Dorothy Engelman

OCTOBER MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Donna Mullins

When Kathy Esselman suggested to **Bob Miller** that he should consider being a member of the League, he was surprised. A man in the League of *Women* Voters? Another myth busted: the League welcomes all who are interested in nonpartisan citizen participation. As a member, Bob volunteered to help with voter services and was asked to become a member of the board—and is now the board secretary (lucky for us!).



When Bob was about 12, he had a newspaper route which inspired him to read what he was delivering to people's front doors (and not their shrubs.) That began a lifelong interest in public affairs and politics. A particle physicist, Bob understands big and little things and that has made him a valuable member of the League.

Bob's favorite thing about the League is its role in educating the public about politics and issues in a nonpartisan manner. He likes the format of our candidate forums, which encourage candidates to discuss their experience and positions on issues as opposed to being critical of their opponents. He suggested we expand the use of that kind of forum in non-election years to promote civil discussion of competing issues.

The spotlight is on Bob because he exemplifies the principles of the League of Women Voters by promoting citizen participation without regard to party affiliation and by supporting the League's activities in many ways over many years. Thanks for everything, Bob!

Photo above: Bob with wife Shelagh Ferguson-Miller.

VOTER SERVICE

Joanne Winkelman, Voter Services Director



Thank Goodness for Volunteers!

Thank you to everyone who graciously volunteered this year for voter service activities. Although we have been curtailed from running voter registration drives and visiting schools, the Lansing League has stepped up with virtual assistance.

[Vote 411.org](http://Vote411.org)

Vote 411 candidate information could not have been completed without the help from all who made calls to remind candidates to submit their responses. These calls resulted in a much greater response rate, thereby allowing citizens greater access to candidate information. Approximately **20** league members made calls to candidates during the primary and again in the general election. Big kudos go to **Anna Scott** and **Beth Moore** for pulling it all together.

Voter Guides

In August it was not clear which of our previous locations were going to be able to accept voter guides this year. A call-out to all League members resulted in **28** volunteers calling places in the tri-county area. Once the guides were created and printed, another **30** members sorted and/or delivered guides throughout the area. Special shout-out to **Dorothy Engelman** for putting the Ingham and Clinton/Eaton guides together for printing, **Beth Moore** for coordinating the distribution, and **Marilyn Wilson** for the use of her garage to hold the approximately 6,000 state and local guides.

Forums

On October 7 and 8 the Lansing League held forums for the 30th Judicial Circuit Court and East Lansing School Board. **Donna Mullins** and **Elaine Fischhoff** took on all the technical details of running the forums, while **Dorothy Engelman** moderated and **Bob Miller** timed with a new system of using colored backgrounds. All the candidates seemed pleased with the forums and one noted, "It went like clockwork." The final products look very professional thanks to **Donna Mullins**.

Student Engagement Activities

Lynn Wilson, **Kathleen Oberst** and **Merry Jo Hill-Hernandez** were instrumental in providing information and voting reminders to 80 high school teachers and 388 students.

Thank you!

PROMISING NEWS FROM "MUCH TO DO ABOUT TRASH" WEBINAR
Val Lafferty, Environment Advocacy Group (EAG)



The EAG recently hosted an enlightening webinar with thoughtful presentations by Michigan's Environment, Great Lakes and Energy Dept. (formerly DEQ) Recycling Specialist, Emily Freeman, and the Executive Director of California-based National Stewardship Action Council (NSAC), Heidi Sanborn. If you haven't yet had a chance, please watch the [replay](#)

Residents and taxpayers of Michigan reportedly [pay \\$1 billion](#) to landfill nearly \$600 million worth of materials each year. Ms. Freeman explained that solid waste is currently governed by 1994 laws, which unfortunately have had the unintended consequence of spawning landfills versus finding sustainable solutions to waste disposal. While the problems have been under active review by stakeholders since 2012, only now (May 2020) are a complex and comprehensive set of bills—HB 5812-5817—in play with bipartisan support, informally called the Solid Waste Rewrite. Passage of these bills would signal Michigan's transition from the short-term thinking of hiding the vexing waste management problem to developing solid, long-term solutions. These proposed laws, if passed, would seek to maximize the 'highest and best' use of waste materials with convenient, inclusive access to recycling, composting and waste reduction. More local control, more oversight and state funding to help develop recycle/reuse markets are also in the package—a big deal!

Many think the problem of waste management should start with the producer of goods choosing designs and/or materials that can be reused or recycled. Under our current system, residents and taxpayers foot the bill for disposal. Ms. Sanborn stated that, in her experience, waste management is often the third most expensive municipal cost, after fire and police protection. So instead of producers opting for the cheapest or most convenient practices to maximize their return, a paradigm-shifting concept called [Extended Producer Responsibility](#) (EPR) incentivizes producers to take responsibility for post-consumer product disposal by making sustainable choices. It is starting to work in specific areas.

NSAC also stresses a broad economic concept called the [Circular Economy](#).
[READ MORE.](#)

ONE THING

Vote with your ballot *and* with your wallet: Being an eco-conscious consumer includes not rewarding companies that harm the environment with your money.

UPDATES FROM THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE
Bettie Menchik, Co-Chair

The Education committee met outside in September. We are monitoring what is happening with the local schools. We realize how difficult this time is for all schools. School administrators are less than thrilled with talking about the problems they are encountering. We have collected information from a variety of media sources about the impact of COVID-19 on schools and families. A sampling of those follows:



“Dallas; Austin, Texas; Los Angeles; Nashville, Tennessee; Miami and Broward County schools in Florida all reported enrollment declines, missing large swaths of children in the youngest grades. Enrollment equals money for classrooms and teachers, especially in high poverty districts that are funded primarily through state aid. Less money means teachers get moved around, reassigned or laid off. Or it could mean fewer support services for students, or fewer specialized classes, or fewer nurses and counselors. In short, less money means less of what students need. It could widen achievement gaps and leave even more children behind.”
([USA Today](#))

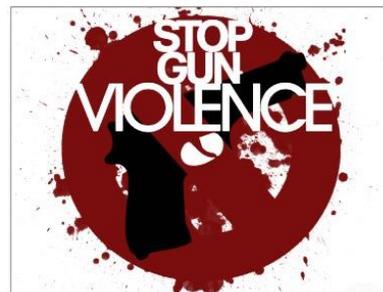
On top of everything, the pandemic may [set back progress toward gender equality](#). Or, at least, maternal equality: substantial research has shown that most professional gender gaps are, in fact, [motherhood gaps](#). (Women without children are much closer to parity with men when it comes to salaries and promotions.)

The hybrid model, in which students do some days remotely and some in person based on a complex schedule, is especially difficult for parents. Now that school has started, working mothers, who already [bore the brunt](#) of child care, are facing brutal choices. Returning to work might mean no one can watch their remote learners — private child care is expensive and grandparents are at high risk. Staying home could cost them their career — or, in more immediate terms, their ability to pay rent. “How are you supposed to say to your job: ‘I will need some days off work but they’ll be different each week?’” asked Francesca Donner, the gender director at *The NY Times*. “It’s just devastating.”

NOTES FROM THE GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION COMMITTEE Martha Couretas

From the headlines:

- FBI claims Michigan militia group tried to kidnap Governor Gretchen Whitmer
- Two brothers charged in Whitmer plot photographed with guns at Capitol
- State Democrats debut bills to ban firearms from Capitol
- Gun ban unlikely at Michigan Capitol, despite plot to storm it, take hostages



Recent news continuously reminds us of the lawlessness of a faction of gun owners in Michigan. The mediocre strength of Michigan gun laws and the constant introduction of legislation to further weaken those laws create an environment that emboldens self-styled militia factions. We must move sensible gun legislation forward by using our collective voices to stop illegal and dangerous bullying actions.

Chris Smith, J.D., Ph.D., Board President of Michigan Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence, summarized the present situation in Michigan:

What impact does the presence of firearms in civilian hands have on the essential components of American democracy? Roadblocks imposed by armed civilians embody a rejection of “the rule of law,” a key component of democratic governing systems. Bringing firearms to confront one’s political opponents at a public demonstration increases safety risks. It also appears to employ threatening devices to stifle democracy’s essential elements of free expression and public debate. And in Michigan... this reminds us of the unanswered question about the purported benefits of permitting civilian-held weapons of war in the visitors’ galleries of the state legislature during legislative sessions.

In this month of October, we are consumed with preparation for the November 3 election, working to support the candidates that match our values and our hopes for an equitable and safe United States. Our work is not done after the election. As Ruth Bader Ginsburg said, “Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time.” We are not alone in this work. Reasonable people are working hard and cooperatively to help prevent death and injury by firearms.

Here are some of the newer initiatives that aim to moderate the wrong thinking concept that gun violence prevention means “taking away our guns.”

[READ MORE](#) about these initiatives.

PUT YOUR CONCERNS TO WORK FOR THE LEAGUE! JOIN A COMMITTEE!

The LWVLA presently has three special interest committees working to inform League members as well as the public on issues that concern and affect our society and our environment. All of them:

- monitor legislation and news pertaining to their area of interest,
- hold forums (now webinars) and host speakers to widen the discussion, and
- create informational materials that can be accessed by everyone.

[Gun Violence Prevention](#) tracks gun-related legislation and events in their quest to reduce the gun violence that permeates our society. They will meet by Zoom on Saturday, Nov. 14, at 11:00 am. Contact [Melinda Frame](#) or [Marty Couretas](#).

Education has begun to study online schooling in its many different forms and in both traditional and charter schools, and may advocate with the state League. Meetings are currently by Zoom. Contact **Bettie Menchik** or **Judith Andre** for meeting information.

Environmental Advocacy has focused its efforts on issues ranging from climate change, solid waste, Line 5 and PFAS to water quality, recycling, renewable energy and more. Contact **Ellen Link** for next scheduled Zoom meeting and current plans.

The committees' objectives and activities are sometimes limited by their size, so they are always looking for new members with a diversity of ideas, backgrounds, personalities and talents. Like your League membership, the amount of time and effort you put into committee work is up to you. Each committee meets monthly or as otherwise arranged. If any of these special interests calls to you, contact the committee chair to find out when their next meeting is or to get answers to other questions.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Rosemary Adams - Holt
Daniel Black - Lansing
Donna Bozgan - East Lansing
Cassidy Christy - Dexter
Rondy Murray - Lansing
Irene Shelley - Lansing