



Oakland Voter

The League of Women Voters Oakland Area
725 S. Adams Road, Room 292, Birmingham, MI 48009
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President: Eva Packard e-mail: Pres@lwvoa.org

2008-2009 Issue 1

August/September 2008



**A Fair and Impartial
Michigan Supreme Court**
Monday, September 22, 7:00-8:45 pm
Farmington Community Library
32737 W. 12 Mile Rd (west of Orchard Lake Rd.)
Farmington Hills 48334
** see map on page 7*



Panelists include:

Brian Dickerson, Detroit Free Press columnist.
Rich Robinson, Executive Director of the Michigan Campaign Finance Network
(Watch our website calendar for a possible additional panelist!)

Mark your calendars and join us for a thought provoking and timely discussion on Michigan Supreme Court elections. Eighty percent of Michigan voters believe that campaign contributions influence the decisions judges make. Speaker presentations will be followed by an opportunity for audience discussion.

Supreme Court election campaigns have become expensive and highly contentious in the past decade. The growth of contributions, donor disclosure loopholes and the absence of Court rules for recusal have created the perception, if not the reality, of conflict of interest in the Court's selection of cases and its decisions. These factors are undermining one of the pillars of our democracy - our shared belief in fair and impartial courts that ensure equal justice for all.

The League of Women Voters Oakland Area will be hosting the forum. Co-sponsors include the League of Women Voters of Michigan (LWVMI); League of Women Voter chapters in Ann Arbor, Detroit, Grosse Pointe, Northwest Wayne County, Troy; the Michigan Campaign Finance Network; the Michigan Impartial Courts Coalition; and AAUW of Michigan..

This forum is one of three public LWVMI forums this fall supported by the League of Women Voters Education Fund through a grant from the Program on Constitutional and Legal Policy of the Open Society Institute.

**** Voter Registration Volunteers Still Needed ****

There is still time to volunteer to assist in registering voters at the Department of Human Services (DHS), 235 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. This ongoing program runs to October 3.

Voter registration time slots are from 9 am to 12:30 and from 12:30 to 4 pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. On Wednesday the hours are from 10 am to 1 pm and from 1 to 4 pm. Please let us know when you would like to volunteer. With your help, we can make a difference and give these citizens their right to vote.

Looking forward to hearing from you,
Shelley Goldberg – (see membership directory for contact information)
Carole Elder – (see membership directory for contact information)

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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THE OAKLAND VOTER
is the official publication of the
League of Women Voters.
It is published eight times a
year by the LWVOA.
Articles and Letters to the Editor,
with writer's name, address and
phone number may be sent to
the LWVOA office.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *by Eva Packard*

It was our busiest Primary season ever with **Candidate Forums** for 32 different offices including six Judicial races, four State Representative districts, six County Commissioner districts, 15 Township offices and one City Council. A new innovation was the streaming of the judicial forums online by our partner, the Oakland County Bar Association, so that people could watch them sitting at their PC.

We would have liked to do even more forums because so many elections were decided in the Primary, especially in townships, but we **need more members to volunteer to coordinate and/or to moderate forums**. Because we have so many separate cable organizations in Oakland County and often the videos need to be shown on multiple cable systems, we **need a Cable Coordinator** to assure that the taping is arranged, copies of the forum are distributed, and rerun times are determined and posted on our website to get to a wide audience.

We also created **Voter Guides** on our website for every race on the ballot for a governmental office, including for the first time Voter Guides for every contested Township election. All 21 townships in the county elect (on a partisan basis) a Supervisor, Clerk, Treasurer and 2-4 Trustees with some also electing 5-7 Park Commissioners.

For 76 township offices only one political party had candidates on the ballot so the Primary was the final election. Only 11 township offices will be contested in the General Election! Also in many State Representative or County Commissioner districts, one party is dominant so that party's Primary winner is usually elected.

Did you see the article on Aug. 10 by Brian Dickerson of the Detroit Free Press on the importance of the Primary and how one organization (Right to Life) which turns its people out has success in getting its candidates nominated for the General Election? Often the margin is small, but as noted above, many districts have a dominant majority party so the group's candidates will be elected in November. As Brian noted, "Like every other political entity, Michigan is run by those who show up." **How can we get out the vote and encourage more than 20% participation in Primary elections?**

See the report by **Judy Bateman** on all our efforts for the May School and August Primary elections. A big thanks to her and all the other names listed who helped in these significant voter service efforts. A special thanks to **Linda DePoorter** who gave above and beyond for the judicial forums. **Debra Horner** was responsible for our Voter Guides.

Now that the August Primary is behind us, we are gearing up for the **November election**. **We WILL print and distribute a Voter Guide** to public libraries, city and township halls throughout Oakland County and mail guides to all League members and contributors. We will **need people to help with coordinating and proofing the printed guide**.

In addition to the races from the Primary ballot that are continued to the General Election, there are elections for 12 school districts (with nine contested), Oakland Community College (three contested seats), three villages, four cities, and a few Library Boards. Questionnaires for Voter Guides will go to contestants in all contested elections. Many candidate forums are being planned so we will need lots of workers.

Big thanks to **Carole Elder** and **Shelley Goldberg** who organized our major three-month effort to register voters at the Department of Human Services (DHS) office in Pontiac. This runs through October 3rd. We also have requests to register voters in other locations. **Volunteers are needed for voter registration.** (See page 1.)

Contact me if you can help or have ideas related to any of the Voter Service areas noted above. Eva pres@lwvoa.org (see membership directory for additional contact information)

"As a League of Women Voter member, you are a part of an organization where citizens like you are actively engaged in effecting change on the local, state and national level."

LWVOA Involved in 33 Candidate Forums by Judy Bateman

Since April LWVOA has coordinated or been a part of 33 candidate forums, including three school board forums, six judicial forums, one city and twenty-three partisan-contest candidate forums. Thanks go to Eva Packard for either her direction or participation in all of these forums.

The **April School Board forums** were held in Clarkston (co-sponsor PTA District Council), Oak Park (co-sponsors Oak Park PTA and PTO Council), and Pontiac (co-sponsor Pontiac Northern High). Jerry Burden, Laura Gogola, and Judy Bateman were coordinators and moderators.

The Pontiac Schools forum was very special because of the participation of students from Pontiac Northern High. With the help of Donna Sklar and Shelley Goldberg, students understood what the function of a school board is and were able to generate their own questions. Three students chosen by teacher, Ms. Eloise Williams, were panelists at the forum posing questions to the candidates. Another student assisted the timer, Fran Fisher, and a fifth student split the moderator duties with moderator, Judy Bateman.

Six judicial forums were held in partnership with the Oakland County Bar Association (OCBA) and the *Detroit Free Press*. Linda DePoorter, Eva Packard, and Judy Bateman were instrumental in producing these forums which included Circuit Court, Probate Court, and District Courts 45A (Berkley), 46 (Southfield), 50 (Pontiac), and 52/2 (Clarkston). The judicial forums could be viewed online on the OCBA website.

Lisa Stadig-Elliott, Executive Director of OCBA, must be recognized for coordinating dates, venues, personnel, contacting the candidates and working at all six events. Federal Judge David Lawson and Michael Schloff from OCBA served as screeners along with Margaret Alli and Michael Sullivan. Judge Lawson stepped in for moderator Linda DePoorter at the last minute in Clarkston when she fell and had to leave to have six stitches on her forehead (Note: she is doing fine). Quoting the Judge: *"Sometimes we don't appreciate how well someone does something until we have to do it ourselves. That's certainly the case with Linda, who makes the job of moderator look effortless, which I now know is not."*

OCBA panelists included Michael Lee, Jennifer Grieco, Joseph Papelian, Kathleen Bogas, Donald McGinnis Jr., and Keefe Brooks. Free Press panelists included Nicole Christian, Brian Dickerson, Stephen Henderson, and Ron Dzwonkowski.

The **twenty-four additional Candidate Forums** were held for four State Representative races (Districts 27, 39, 44, 45), 6 County Commissioner Districts (6, 21 and by LWV Troy for 24 and 13,19,20 jointly), 15 races in four Townships – West Bloomfield (5 offices), Oakland Township (2 offices), Washington (4 offices), and Royal Oak Township (4 offices with Common Action Movement of that township), and Farmington Hills City Council with the Council of Homeowner Associations (COHA).

From LWVOA the following people were involved in the judicial forums:

Moderators -

Judy Bateman (1)
Linda DePoorter (4)

Timers -

Doug DePoorter
Fran Fisher
Laura Gogola
Paul Zalewski

Pages -

Jerry Burden
Eva Packard
Renate Soulen
Alissa Terrell
Andrea Zalewski
plus Delta Sigma Theta members
Nikhil Atkins, Cari Cooper,
Marsha Lewis and Thomasina Lentz
plus from OCBA: Jan Anson,
Katie Augsburg, Kristen Bennett,
Georgia Buckley, Dennise Gac and
Cathy Willhite.

For the other Candidate Forums, thanks to our Coordinators:

Judy Bateman (5 forums)
Jerry Burden (6)
Ann Edwards (6)
Laura Gogola (1)
Lola Koch (2)
Barbara Moorhouse (1)
Karen Fabian (2) with
Pam Brady of Troy
COHA

Thanks also to our Moderators:

Judy Bateman (2)
Jerry Burden (7)
Laura Gogola (2)
Carla Gribbs (2)
Mary Howarth (3)
Barbara Moorhouse (3)
Neil Zechman (1)
Karen Fabian (2) of Troy
Andy Nickelhoff of COHA.

The following members assisted as timers, screeners, pagers, and in various other ways:

Sue Abrams	Eva Packard
Mary Ann Barkach	Carla Patrick-Fagan
Linda Brown	Jane Perrin
Karen DeGrendel	Marge Polidori
Ann Edwards	Marilyn Ratner
Carole Elder	Gerri Rinschler
Patricia Finn	Barb Rosalik
Fran Fisher	Erin Shuster
Karen Johnstone	Sue Whalen
Christine Jurgensen	Andrea Zalewski
Karen Linnell	Paul Zalewski
John Magary	Kathy Lindstrom
Marti Martin	

Special thanks also to Chris Milia, Pauline Navoy, Russell Ford, and others from West Bloomfield Civic Center TV for reserving the library, getting risers, and videotaping the six West Bloomfield forums. Chris and Russell also did the videotaping, copying and distributing of the Circuit Court and Probate Court forums.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OAKLAND AREA STATEMENT

To Women's Commission of Oakland County on May 7, 2008

*The following is the transcript of the statement made by LWVOA President **Eva Packard** about issues related to the economic autonomy of women. She was the last of 37 speakers that day.*

The **League of Women Voters** is a non-partisan political organization. We are known for encouraging the informed and active participation by citizens in government and providing voter service information to the public. However, the League of Women Voters also studies issues and works to increase understanding of major public policy issues. After study and member consensus, the League formulates positions on issues and then works to influence public policy through education and advocacy at all levels of government.

I've heard speakers today address many issues that the League of Women Voters has positions on. I've opted to focus on some that were not highlighted by others. I will mainly address issues vital to the **economic autonomy of women**. To consider these fully, we must also consider needs related to their children and their development, health and safety.

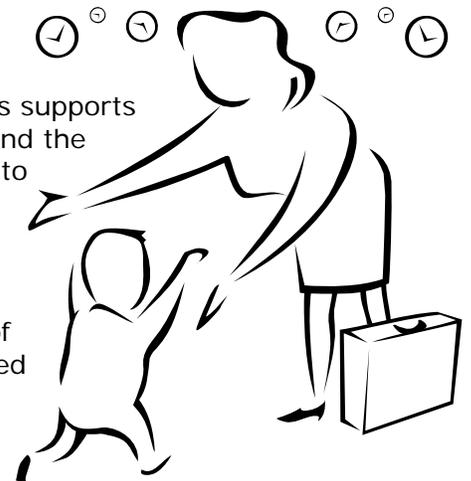
The League of Women Voters believes that all levels of government have the responsibility to provide **equality of opportunity for education, employment and housing**. Their gender should not disqualify women. Examples of kinds of programs which the League supports include:

- Programs in basic education, occupational education and retraining when needed.
- Expanded opportunities in apprenticeship and on-the-job training programs.
- Child-care centers for preschool children to give mothers the opportunity for employment.
- Improved public **transportation** systems that provide better access to jobs and affordable housing.
- Programs to inform individuals of their civil rights in education, employment and housing plus the opportunities open to them.

Programs should assist women to become self-supporting, contributing members of society.

Specifically in the area of **Child Care**, the League of Women Voters supports programs, services and policies at all levels of government to expand the supply of affordable, quality child care for all who need it, in order to increase access to employment and to prevent and reduce poverty.

Furthermore, to **meet basic human needs** necessary for an adequate quality of life for women and their children, the League of Women Voters supports a system of comprehensive and coordinated services to provide basic resources such as access to health care including nutrition and prenatal care and to income assistance to assure decent standards of food, clothing and shelter.



The League of Women Voters supports **early intervention** policies and programs that support mothers in promoting the well being, encouraging the full development and ensuring the safety of their children. The League also supports **violence prevention** programs.

The League of Women Voters is an organization where leaders and members work to make our communities a strong, safe, fair and vibrant place to live. That is why we advocate for programs such as those discussed here today to empower women and enable them to live the kind of lives that so many of us here in this room today do.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input on issues that affect women in our county.

Other League members who spoke that day for other organizations on issues that LWV also supports were Karen Linnell (AAUW- see page 6), Debbie Macon (Women Officials' Network), and Shelli Weisberg (ACLU).

Former State Representative Returns to Peace Corps

Former State Representative, WON founder and LWVOA member **Pan Godchaux** has returned to the Peace Corps for a second tour. Her first was immediately after college and took her to **Bolivia**. This time she's been assigned to **Moldova**, one of the former Soviet Socialist Republics. It is sandwiched between Romania and the Ukraine.

Pan is maintaining a blog at pangodchaux.blogspot.com to keep us abreast of her adventures. She recently completed 10 weeks of intensive language training and has been sworn in as a Peace Corps volunteer.

Moldova is about the size of Maryland (13,000 sq. miles), but its population is 25% smaller (4 million). It is a very poor country, having a GDP per person similar to that of Pakistan and Nicaragua. Pan is living in a house with no running water or indoor plumbing.

Meanwhile, another LWVOA member, **Susan Safford** who was Pan's legislative aide, is now a Peace Corps volunteer in Romania. She's working with the EPA to educate students about various ecological concerns. Language learning seems to have been a bit easier for her than for Pan. Susie's standard of living looks a lot more comfortable, too. Read her blog for more. susiesafford.blogspot.com

(Adapted from article in WON (Women Officials' Network) online newsletter.)



* * * * *

IF you see ARTICLES mentioning LWVOA in NEWSPAPERS, Please CUT OUT and MAIL TO OFFICE. In this busy election season, we send out many Press Releases to large and small newspapers throughout Oakland County about our candidate forums and voter guides and issue meetings. But we don't know what gets published or what is written about our events, especially in the small papers unless YOU let us know. Please help! THANKS

* * * * *

The community needs everyone to participate in order to be a strong, safe, fair and vibrant place to live.

Membership in the League of Women Voters is open to all citizens.
Dues are \$60 per year or \$30 for students.
See our website: www.LWVOA.org
and click on Join the League
to print a Membership Form to mail in or
to join Online via Paypal.



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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN, BIRMINGHAM BRANCH STATEMENT

To Women's Commission of Oakland County on May 7, 2008

The following is a transcript of the statement made by Karen Linnell, chair of the Public Policy Committee for the AAUW Birmingham branch.

The AAUW advocates equity for women and girls through advocacy, education and research. This year we are focusing on several issues: encouraging women to vote, supporting changes in No Child Left Behind as it is up for reauthorization, studying the effects of the passage last year of Proposal #2 (the misnamed Affirmative Action amendment), advocating for gender equity, acting on our belief that health care is a right, and backing pay equity.

It is the last item—**pay equity**—that I would like to talk about today. April 22 was Equal Pay Day--the annual symbolic day on which women's average wages catch up to men's from the previous year. Her male counterpart must work five days a week for twelve months, whereas she will work seven days a week for sixteen months to earn equivalent wages.

These cookies are visual reminders that women get a bite out of their paychecks. Women in Michigan are paid 69 cents versus men earning \$1 with comparable education and experience, earning Michigan a rank of 47th out of 50 states. I thought of other ways to demonstrate this pay gap besides cookies. My favorite was to sell hot dogs on the courthouse lawn, charging men \$1 and women 69 cents, but I didn't know if Brooks would give me a permit.

The Senate just voted down the Fair Pay Restoration Act, although our two senators supported it. But I'd like to share the story behind that bill, also known as the Ledbetter Fair Pay Act.

In 1979 Lilly Ledbetter was hired as a supervisor at Goodyear's tire assembly department. Her employer forbid discussion about pay so she didn't know her first paychecks didn't match her coworkers' paychecks. She just assumed they did. In 1998 an anonymous note turned up indicating she was being paid less than all her male counterparts in the tire assembly department, even recent hires with far less on-the-job experience.

Ledbetter filed a discrimination charge with EEOC less than a month after receiving the letter, but it was already too late. Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act imposes a six-month limitation period on discriminatory acts (from their inception), preventing her from even bringing the claim to court. But the fiery mother of two just wasn't content to see the injustice she says she bore go unanswered and filed suit to determine and recoup her losses. In spite of Title VII, Ledbetter prevailed and was awarded nearly \$4 million in pay and punitive damages which the judge reduced to \$360,000 (the jury calculated she was owed almost \$225,000 in back pay over her 19-year career). But her vindication did not last. Goodyear appealed and the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals' unanimous opinion tossed out the award and dismissed Ledbetter's complaint altogether. In May of 2007, a divided Supreme Court upheld the 11th Circuit Court's decision saying, in essence, workers who wait too long under the civil rights law are out of luck.

The Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2007 passed the House last July. It was introduced in the Senate on July 20 and placed on the Senate Legislative Calendar on August 2, 2007. And there it sat until two weeks ago. Because of the senate filibuster rule, a bill must receive 61 votes to end debate, allowing it to be voted on the floor. Only two Republican women senators (Olympia Snow and Susan Collins) crossed the aisle. The Fair Pay Restoration Act received 58 votes and so was not eligible for a vote up or down.

We have not given up and continue to contact our two senators, Levin and Stabenow, to continue to encourage their colleagues to support this bill. By the way, the bill merely restores the previous practice of counting the 180-day period from the time the person was made aware of the inequity which this Supreme Court redefined. The Fair Pay Restoration Act (S. 1843), addresses the Supreme Court's recent, wrongheaded decision in Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. AAUW has been a leader in trying to move the bill forward.

Contact info for Michigan Senators:

Sen. Carl Levin, 269 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510
levin.senate.gov/contact/index.cfm

Sen. Debbie Stabenow, 133 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC 20510
stabenow.senate.gov/email.html

Save the Date!

Annual Fall Luncheon

Monday, October 20th at 12 noon
Farmington Hills Public Library Auditorium

"Prisons and Jails: Time for Reform?"

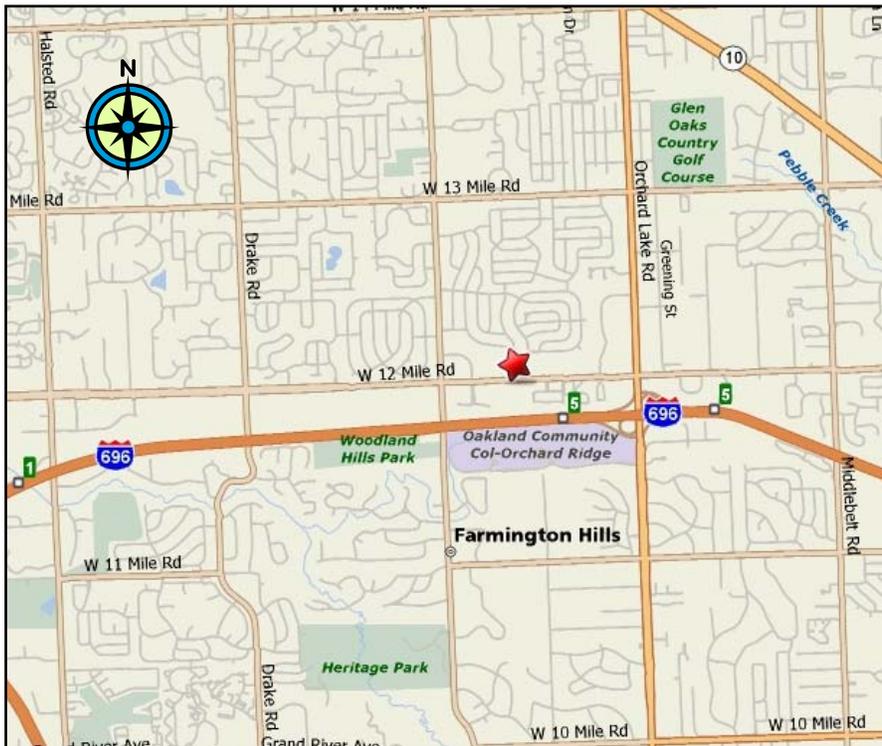


Hosted by
Marge Polidori

With assistance from
Holly Atkins Child
Margaret Kanost



At last year's state convention, Leagues voted to update the state position on prisons and we will be taking Consensus on this issue in early 2009.



For 9/22 & 10/20 Programs

Map to Farmington Community Library, Main Branch

**32737 W. 12 Mile Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI
48334-3302**

Phone: (248) 553-0300
Fax: (248) 553-3228

Library is on the south
side of 12 Mile Rd.
about ½ Mile west of
Orchard Lake Rd.
and at a traffic light.

Parking is on south and
west of bldg.
Entrance is on West side.



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 Birmingham MI 48009

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A Voice for Citizens,
 A Voice for Change

Time Dated Material Enclosed

Calendar of Events

Tue. 9/16 7 pm **District Judge 52-3** Candidate Forum (AH, LkA., Roch., RH, Twps of Addison, Oakland, Orion, Oxford)
 @OCC – Auburn Hills, 2900 Featherstone, Auburn Hills 48326

Wed. 9/17 7 pm **Sylvan Lake** Candidate Forum followed by **Keego Harbor** Candidate Forum
 @Roosevelt Elementary, 2065 Cass Lake Rd, Keego Harbor.48320

Mon 9/22 7 pm A Fair and Impartial Michigan Supreme Court

@Farmington Community Library, 32737 W. 12 Mile Rd., Farmington Hills (Map on Pg. 7)

Tue. 9/23 7 pm **Birmingham School Board** Candidate Forum

@ Birmingham School District Office. 550 W. Merrill, Birmingham 48009

Wed. 9/24 7 pm **District Judge 45B** Candidate Forum (HuntWds, OakPark, Pl.Ridge, RoyalOakTwp)

@Huntington Woods City Hall, 26815 Scotia @ 11 Mile Rd., 48070

Thu. 9/25 7 pm **Bloomfield Hills School Board** Candidate Forum [west of Telegraph, north of 14 Mile Rd]

@Gary Doyle Center for Professional Development, 7275 Wing Lake Rd, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48301

Thu. 10/2 TBA **West Bloomfield Township Trustees, Supervisor, Treasurer** Candidate Forums
 TBA **State Representative District 39** Candidate Forum (Commerce Twp, West Bloomfield Twp)

@West Bloomfield Library, 4600 Walnut Lake Rd, West Bloomfield 48323

Mon. 10/6 7 pm LWVOA Board Meeting

@725 S. Adams Square, Conference Room A, Birmingham 48009

Wed. 10/15 7 pm **Southfield School Board** Candidate Forum

@John English Administration Center, 24661 Lahser Rd., Southfield 48033

Mon 10/20 12 noon Fall Luncheon – Prisons and Jails: Time for Reform?

@Farmington Community Library, 32737 W. 12 Mile Rd., Farmington Hills (Map on Pg. 7)

National Debates: **President:** Fri, 9/26, Tue, 10/7, Wed, 10/15; **Vice-president** Thu, 10/2

Note 1: Many **more Candidate Forums are being planned** for October and will be in next *VOTER*

They will be posted in the Candidate Forum calendar on www.LWVOA.org as arranged.

Note 2: The **annual dues mailing** to members just went out.

We would appreciate it if you could respond promptly as the League year started July 1.

LWV: Where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.