



Oakland Voter

League of Women Voters Oakland Area
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2009-2010 Issue 6

April-May 2010



Voting and Elections Training & Action Day Celebrating the League of Women Voters 90th Anniversary

Wednesday, April 21, 2010

St. Paul's Episcopal Church

218 W. Ottawa

Lansing, MI 48933

9:45 am – 4:00 pm

Take action to make voting convenient for all: Times have changed. People are busier. We need election laws that serve today's busier, more complex world and fit with the lifestyles of today's families.

- Early voting and absentee voting make it more convenient for people to vote.
- Michigan voters - old and young - are overwhelmingly supportive of early and no excuse absentee voting.
- Other states implemented these reforms, making it more likely that people will vote.
- Local clerks are confident that these reforms will not lead to election fraud and the majority of voters agree.

Event Schedule:

- 9:45 am **Registration and Coffee**
- 10:00 am **Opening Remarks, *Jessica Reiser, LWVMI President***
- 10:05 am **Policy Briefing, *Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks***
A representative from MAMC will provide a briefing on the status of voting and election reforms in the Legislature and insights on how to advance these issues.
- 10:30 am **Advocacy Training, *Tim O'Brien, LWVUS Specialist, Public Advocacy for Voter Protection Project***
A national expert will offer tips and techniques on communicating effectively with legislators, strategic messaging, and specific talking points on early and no excuse absentee voting.
- 12:00 noon **90th Anniversary Luncheon and Awards Presentation**
The League marks its 90th Anniversary with a catered luncheon and a tribute presented by Rep. Joan Bauer. LWVMI will present awards to two elected officials and a League member for their efforts to advance voting and election reforms.
- 1:00-4:00 pm **Legislative Visits**
Delegations of League members and friends will meet with their Representatives and Senators. Local Leagues are scheduling these meetings and forming delegations in advance of the event.
- 2:00-4:00 pm **Reporting & Debriefing**
Delegations will return to St. Paul's Episcopal Church to report on their legislative visits.

**** Early Bird Training Opportunity ****

- 8:30 am **Messages and Media Training, *Kelly Rossman, CEO, The Rossman Group***
Public relations expert Kelly Rossman provides insights on how the media works and techniques for engaging them on our issues.

Be part of a collective voice for change. As the largest League in Michigan and one with 14 State Representatives and 5 State Senators, we hope for a good representation from all over Oakland County! League members are encouraged to invite a friend. **Fran Fisher will be setting up car pools. We hope to see YOU on April 21st.**

See Page 7 for Registration and Contact information. Registration by April 13th is suggested.

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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2009-2010

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THE OAKLAND VOTER is the official publication of the League of Women Voters. It is published seven 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.

- Editor: Eva Packard

LWVOA ON FACEBOOK!

If you are not already a member of Facebook, you can sign up at www.FACEBOOK.com and make "League of Women Voters Oakland Area" one of your Facebook friends.

Invite your friends to learn about League activities and upcoming programs.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, the "League of American Voters" has struck again. They tried (and failed) again to derail Health Care Reform by targeting 13 members of Congress in an expensive ad campaign. LWVUS President, Mary Wilson, spoke to POLITICO about the group's deceitful advertising.

In our own backyard, LWVOA was presented with a plaque on March 3rd by the Oakland County Board of Commissioners, honoring us for our 90th anniversary and many years of service in Oakland County.

We had two well-attended meetings, first, the brunch on Feb. 27th, our prison study meeting with Barbara Levine, Executive Director of CAPPs, and Monica Jahner, a former prisoner. Thanks to Margaret Kanost for helping to arrange it. Second, the Prison Consensus meeting on March 24th was also successful.

Thanks to Patricia Finn and Tera Moon for getting the winners of the PSA contest heard and seen. Listen for the PSA radio winner on WJR and WWJ and look for the video winner on channels 7, 50, and 62. The subject is the Census.

Coming up:

- Sheryl Mitchell is being honored at a breakfast on April 29th by the Race Relations and Diversity Taskforce at the Community House in Birmingham.
- On April 21st LWVMI is hosting Action Day in Lansing, where we will meet with our legislators and discuss early and no excuse absentee voting.
- Put May 22nd on your calendar. That is our Annual Meeting at the Shenandoah Country Club. The speaker is Phil Power from the Center for Michigan and former owner and editor of the Eccentric & Observer newspapers.

Finally, several candidate forums are scheduled for the May election and more will be scheduled for August and in the fall. Can you spare an hour and a half to help at a forum, have fun, and feel good about what you are doing? Try it, you'll like it. If other people are trying hard to capitalize on our name, we must be doing something right.

President, Judy Bateman

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

Sheryl Mitchell honored as Diversity Champion

Sheryl Mitchell, LWVOA Director of Citizen Education, will be **honored as a Diversity Champion** by the Race Relations & Diversity Task Force at its annual **Honor Roll breakfast at The Community House, 380 South Bates Street, Birmingham on Thursday, April 29, 2010 at 8:00 a.m.**

Sheryl is a bridge builder who consistently seeks win-win outcomes to meet the needs of all involved and foster inclusion. She is a creative consensus builder whose actions demonstrate that such a team can achieve more than a single individual. Her intelligence, experience and readiness to volunteer are invaluable. She has co-chaired United We Walk in West Bloomfield and serves as a Senior Policy Advisor to the Oakland County Board of Commissioners. She led LWVOA's PSA Contest project for high school students. (See below.)

Join us to honor Sheryl. **Please coordinate your reservation for breakfast with President Judy Bateman as space is limited. The cost is \$25** and payable to The Community House by check or credit card. The Chester Street and Pierce Street Parking structures provide two hours of free parking. Registration begins at 7:30 a.m. and the program will start promptly at 8 a.m.



See/Hear the Public Service Announcement Contest Winners

The **2010 Census – Yes! We Count!** was the topic of the high school Public Service Announcement (PSA) Contest held by LWV Oakland Area. Awards were given out at a reception on February 23rd for Television and Radio submissions.

Nicole Pentis won the TV PSA contest and **Chad Shepard** won the Radio PSA contest. Both students attend Lahser High in the Bloomfield Hills School District. Congratulations to the winners. The 30-second PSAs encourage residents to fill in and return their Census forms. Their PSAs can be played by going to our website www.LWVOA.ORG, thanks to the efforts of Tera Moon and Mary Pickett. Watch Nicole's PSA – it will bring a smile to your face.

We would like to thank local **TV stations WKBD (CW50), WXYZ (Channel 7), and WWJ (Channel 62)** for running the TV winner and local **radio stations WJR 760 and WWJ 950** for running the Radio winner. Channel numbers may vary on cable. A special thanks to **Carol Cain of WKBD-TV** who ran the TV PSA as part of a discussion on the importance of the Census on the **Street Beat** show on Sunday morning, April 4th, LWV Oakland Area was mentioned and Nicole Pentis was congratulated.

Thanks also to **Amy Bloom of Oakland Schools** for her support in getting information to the schools and to **teachers Donna Learmont and Pete Bowers**, who mentored the students. We thank our Judges: **Eric Coleman**, Oakland County Commissioner; **Harvey Gersin**, Greater West Bloomfield Cable Advisory Board, **Joni Hubred-Golden**, former editor and journalist, **Kris Kelly**, Community Affairs Director WWJ-TV & CW50, and **Linda Shepard**, C&G Newspapers.

Thank you to **Sheryl Mitchell** and her LWVOA team of **Patricia Finn, Shelley Goldberg, Tera Moon**, and **Donna Sklar** for planning and implementing the PSA contest project, to the U.S. Census Bureau Regional Center for gift bags and **Einstein Bagels** for their To Go Coffee Boxes for the reception, and to Sue Abrams, Judy Bateman, Fran Fisher, Eva Packard, and Renate Soulen who helped with the refreshments for the reception. Prizes provided by the League of Women Voters Education Fund.

May 4, 2010, City & School Elections

On **Tuesday, May 4th**, three Oakland County school districts (Ferndale, Hazel Park, and Lamphere) and two cities (Bloomfield Hills for City Commission and Lathrup Village for a Headlee override millage proposal) will hold elections.

Voter Guides for those elections are being prepared by **Debra Horner** and will be available by April 12th on our website www.LWVOA.ORG.

Candidate Forums have been set up by Jerry Burden:

Monday, April 12th at 7 pm – Bloomfield Hills City Commission -- 4 candidates for 2 seats at the Bloomfield Hills City Hall, 45 E. Long Lake Rd., Bloomfield Hills 48304. Forum will be taped for showing on the city channel.

Thursday, April 29th at 7 pm – Ferndale School Board – 4 candidates for 2 seats at the Ferndale High School Media Center, 881 Pinecrest, Ferndale 48220. Forum will be taped for showing on the school channel.

Two LWVOA Members to receive '8 over 80' Honors

Jewish Senior Life of Metropolitan Detroit annually recognizes eight individuals over 80 years of age who have dedicated their time, talents and lives to the community and are still doing so. This year 5 women and 3 men have been selected for the Tikun Olam Award for their contributions to 'repairing the world'. Among the honorees are two long-time members of the League of Women Voters: Frances Fisher and Judith Levin Cantor.

Fran Fisher has served as Co-President, Treasurer, Vice-President of Voter Service and as a Director of LWV Oakland Area and its predecessor Leagues. Voter guides, candidate forums, voter registration, explaining proposals to groups, issue studies on topics ranging from education to natural resources – she has participated in them all. Fran has been a role model and an active volunteer. She taught science at Hillel Day School for 30 years to 4th, 5th and 6th grade students, creating her own curriculum and offering innovative fun activities (including some on her own time) which taught them about plants and animals and the environment before it was fashionable. When students meet her years later, they hug her and tell her how she interested them in careers in science or medicine.

Fran served as President of the Orchid Society and is known as a plant doctor who can revive others' sick plants. She was involved in the Brandeis book sale and served as President and later mentored younger women who formed its Book Stock successor to raise funds for various causes. She trained as an AARP Tax Aide and offers free help for people in completing their tax forms. Alumnae of her college sorority still meet for lunch regularly because she initiated the lunches and is involved in their continuation to maintain those friendships.

Judith Levin Cantor joined and was active in the League of Women Voters in the mid-50's. She has been a history teacher, an archivist, an author, an editor, a curator, a speaker and a volunteer in a variety of community organizations. Her writings include "Jews in Michigan: Discovering the Peoples of Michigan" which received an outstanding book award from the Michigan Historical Society. Judy has curated exhibits on "Blacks and Jews: The Michigan Perspective" at Wayne State University, "The Sinai Heritage" now at Huron Valley Sinai Hospital, "Becoming American Women in Michigan: The Jewish Immigrant Experience" at the Detroit Historical Museum and Michigan Hall of Fame, and "Haven to Home in Michigan" celebrating 350 years of Jews in America at the Detroit Historical Museum in 2009 and now at the Holocaust Memorial Center.

She is a Past-President of the Jewish Historical Society and served on the Board of Directors of the Michigan Women's Historical Center and Hall of Fame and as a Trustee of the Historical Society of Michigan. She has received numerous awards including the 'First Lady of Michigan' Award in 1987 during the Michigan Sesquicentennial, the Leonard Simons History Award from the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan in 1998, and the Medal of Honor from the American Jewish Historical Society in 2009. She was a charter member of the Friends of the Bloomfield Township Public Library.

The **Eight Over Eighty** honorees will be inducted into the Senior Adult Jewish Hall of Fame at a community **Brunch** held on **Sunday, May 16th at 11 am** at the Jewish Community Center in West Bloomfield. Contact our office for more details if interested in attending. Fran Fisher and Judy Cantor are two truly exceptional senior adults who still continue to contribute to the community!

The Oakland Area LWV was pleased to have two speakers give excellent presentations at our February meeting concerning the conditions in Michigan prisons, particularly for women prisoners.

Barbara Levine, Director of CAPPS (Citizens Alliance on Prisons and Public Spending) spoke first and opened by noting that prison size is not driven by crime rates, but by policy decisions, especially regarding parole. For example: during the 1980s and '90s there was a Get Tough mentality. There were 36,000 prisoners in the early 1990's – that went up to 51,000. Various issues affected the fluctuation.

- For example, the "Good Time" policy was eliminated. It was a progressive system that meant if a prisoner served time without new penalties she could have time reduced from her sentence.
- During the 1990s there was a federal program called Truth in Sentencing that required violent offenders to have to serve 75% of the time of their sentence, but it was stiffened here even though it already was happening in Michigan,.
- There is a pending bill now to restore the "Good Time" policy but there is no chance of its passing in the Michigan Legislature.
- Michigan is currently out of sync with the other states and the Federal Government in its parole policies.
- Currently it costs \$34,000 a year to house the average prisoner.
- Twenty years ago the Corrections budget was 5% of the state budget; today it is 23%.

Our second speaker was **Monica Jahner, who has been an inmate in Michigan prisons**. She served a lengthy prison term for "conspiracy to commit murder" where there was no death. During her time in Michigan prisons, Monica served as a "Jail House Lawyer" -- helping other inmates. She has taken part in the "Arrow" Advocacy Program that helps with housing and jobs after release. She commented that the Department of Corrections (DOC) breeds dependency on what to do and how and when to do it, whereas those released need to learn to be independent. We are not protecting society by warehousing people in prison with training and programs reduced:

- If the GED programs were returned to Michigan prisons, then those taking the GED program could be encouraged to help other inmates with their education. GED programs help self esteem.
- There are no longer the prisoner newspapers or prison libraries that existed until the mid-90's.
- Juveniles continue to be incarcerated in adult facilities in Michigan. They should be housed separately.
- There are more mentally ill in the state prisons than there used to be due to the closing of separate facilities for those with such problems. They are medicated/sedated to keep them "calm".
- Overcrowding and variable visitation policies make it rougher for inmates.

Although Monica is, herself, on parole she has permission to work with other women who are on parole. She now works with the DOC by helping women prisoners who are being released deal with the reality of getting back into society. For example, many are homeless and need help with housing. She noted:

- We don't hear as much about prisoners who are released, get an MA and then enter into a social work career. We usually hear of just the problem cases.
- The term, "on parole" means supervision for 2 years by a parole officer regardless of the length of sentence. However, you cannot keep someone in prison or on parole past the maximum time of the sentence.
- Some parolees qualify to be on a tether which allows them to be in society under certain conditions. Parole officers watch the GPS monitor to know what the parolee is doing.

We, LWV members, were given suggestions of what we might do to help the situation with Michigan prisons.

- Help return the GED program for prisoners.
- Lobby for the restoration of Pell Grants for use by prisoners.
- Work for "banning the box" in Michigan. This refers to a box on an employment application that asks if you have been a felon. Checking the box creates an oppressive stigma for the individual who is working to turn their life around.
- Work to allow removal of the "sex offender" identification for some. Some states have gradations to their sex offender registry. Michigan has no such gradation. It is possible to be on the registry without being in prison.

Each person attending the program was given the Winter 2010 copy of the CAPPS publication *CONSENSUS*. One article was titled: **CAPPS 10-point plan** gains traction. The article describes the CAPPS plan **to reduce Corrections spending in 2010**. Its recommendations are grouped as follows:

1. Prison sentences should be reserved for people who are dangerous.
Sentencing reforms and alternative sentencing options are needed.
2. The people who are sent to prison should be prepared as effectively as possible for their return to the community.
These include in-prison programs, family support, good-time credits, and community re-entry programs.
3. The parole decision-making process should maximize the release of people who do not present a current threat to public safety. Use the minimum sentence unless objective factors demonstrate prisoner is a current threat.

League of Women Voters receives Proclamation to honor its 90th Anniversary



At the Oakland County Board of Commissioners meeting on March 3, 2010, LWVOA President Judy Bateman received a Proclamation honoring the League of Women Voters on its 90th Anniversary from County Commissioner Eric Coleman and Commission Chairman Bill Bullard. Other LWVOA members in the picture are (left to right): Jerry Burden, Debbie Macon, Eva Packard, John Magary and Karen DeGrendel.

Commissioners Eric Coleman, Tim Burns, Gary R. McGillivray and David Potts co-authored the Proclamation signed by the board, which recognized the League for its ongoing efforts to build a stronger democracy by encouraging the informed and active participation of citizens in government through its voter information, education on issues and work to affect change.

***They Represent You* brochures updated**

Webmaster **Tera Moon** has posted updated versions of Oakland Area's ***They Represent You (TRY)*** brochures on our website: www.LWVOA.ORG. The 60 communities covered by our League are broken into 8 brochures:

- Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Bloomfield Township, Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms, Franklin, Southfield Twp.
- Farmington, Farmington Hills, Keego Harbor, Orchard Lake Village, Sylvan Lake, West Bloomfield Township
- Novi, Northville, South Lyon, Walled Lake, Wixom, Villages of Milford & Wolverine Lake, and Townships of Commerce, Highland, Lyon, Milford & Novi.
- Villages of Holly, Leonard, Ortonville, Oxford and Townships of Addison, Brandon, Groveland, Holly, Oxford, Rose & Springfield
- Auburn Hills, Rochester, Rochester Hills, Oakland Township
- Clarkston, Lake Angelus, Lake Orion, Pontiac and Townships of Independence, Orion, Waterford & White Lake
- Clawson, Ferndale, Hazel Park, Madison Heights, Pleasant Ridge, Royal Oak
- Southfield, Lathrup Village, Berkley, Huntington Woods, Oak Park, Royal Oak Township

The tri-fold printed version of the Rochester Area brochure has been printed and distributed by **Ann Edwards**. Printed copies of the other 7 brochures should be available in the month of April and will be packaged and distributed by League members to public libraries, city/village/township halls, various community centers, and high school government classes.

Thank you to **OCC students Angela Valovich Bennett** who updated the online versions to reflect the November 2009 election and **Jennifer Reinhart** who converted the online versions to print format.

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*** *It is not too late to send in your Census form if you put it aside! Do it today!* ***

Registration Form for April 21 Action Day in Lansing

Registration fee: \$10. Registration by April 13th appreciated so that materials can be sent to you.

To register online and pay through Paypal, go to www.lwvmi.org

Name _____ Local League or Organization _____

Address _____ City and Zip Code _____

Email address _____ Daytime phone _____

Legislative Districts (see below): House _____ Senate _____

Please check Lunch Choice: Vegetarian _____ Chicken _____

Attending Early Bird Training? Yes _____ No _____

Comments: _____

Send registration form and \$10 payment (check only) to:

League of Women Voters of MI
200 Museum Dr., Ste. 104
Lansing, MI 48933

Oakland County Districts:

House:	26 Marie Donigan	17 Ellen Cogen Lipton	29 Tim Melton	35 Vincent Gregory	37 Vicki Barnett
	38 Hugh Crawford	39 Lisa Brown	40 Chuck Moss	41 Marty Knollenberg	43 Gail Haines
	44 Eileen Kowall	45 Tom McMillin	46 James Marleau	66 Bill Rogers	
Senate:	12 Mike Bishop	13 John Pappageorge	14 Gilda Jacobs	15 Nancy Cassis	26 Deborah Cherry

FRAN FISHER (248-647-5246, tchrofsci@sbcglobal.net) is coordinating Oakland Area's delegation.

Car pools will be arranged. We hope to form teams of at least two per legislator and arrange appointments with legislators or their staff in the afternoon ideally between 1:30 and 3:30 pm. Church at 218 W. Ottawa St. is opposite Capitol Bldg at corner of Capitol Ave. Representatives are in House Office Bldg. at 124 N. Capitol Ave, 1 block away. Senator offices (except Bishop who is in Capitol Bldg.) are in the Farnum Bldg. at 125 W. Allegan St, 2 blocks away. See www.housedems.com/parking for an area map. **Please contact Fran and let her know if you are planning to go. We need you!**

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LWVOA Annual Meeting

MARK your calendar for the 2010 Annual Meeting on **Saturday, May 22** from **9:45 am – 2 pm.**

Our speaker is **Phil Power**, founder of **The Center For Michigan**, a “think-and-do-tank” whose objective is to assist our state through its current period of wrenching economic trouble and to lay the foundation of informed hope for a better future Michigan. The Center intends to encourage a citizen movement of people who are moderate in attitude, bi-partisan in approach and aggressive in policy orientation.

Power will discuss **Michigan's Defining Moment**, a Public Engagement Campaign begun in 2007 to develop a common ground agenda best suited to help Michigan achieve a new era of sustainable prosperity. He will tell us the results of statewide Community Conversations involving over 10,000 participants. Plan to be there! Visit their website at www.thecenterformichigan.com to learn more. LWVMI will be working with them.



Oakland Area

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A Voice for Citizens,
A Voice for Change

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Calendar of Events

- Mon. Apr. 12 7 pm Bloomfield Hills City Commission Candidate Forum
City Hall, 45 E. Long Lake Rd., Bloomfield Hills 48304
- Mon. Apr. 19 7 pm LWVOA Board meeting at 725 S. Adams Rd, Birmingham 48009
- Wed. Apr. 21 9:45 am LWVMI Voting & Elections Action Day and LWV 90th Birthday Celebration**
St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 218 W. Ottawa, Lansing **See Page 1.**
Voting Reform Issues Briefing, Advocacy Training, Lunch, Meeting with Legislators.
Registration and Contact information on Page 7. Cost: \$10
Contact Fran Fisher if you plan to attend as she is coordinating our delegation.
Car pools being arranged. Register by 4/13 to assure lunch.
- Thur. Apr. 29 8 am **Diversity Champion Honor Roll Breakfast – Sheryl Mitchell honored.**
The Community House, 380 S. Bates St, Birmingham 48009. Cost: \$25
Contact President Judy Bateman if you plan to attend.
- Thur. Apr. 29 7 pm Ferndale School Board Candidate Forum
Ferndale High School Media Center, 881 Pinecrest, Ferndale 48220
- Tue. May 4 7am-8pm Elections for Ferndale, Hazel Park and Lamphere School Districts,
Bloomfield Hills City Commission and Lathrup Village Proposal
- Sat. May 22 10 am LWVOA Annual Meeting at Shenandoah Country Club, W. Bloomfield**
Speaker: Phil Power, Center for Michigan CEO
- Sat-Tue June 12-15 LWVUS National Convention, Atlanta, GA

**90 Years of MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK:
A HISTORY OF CHANGE
A FUTURE OF HOPE**