What an incredible time as we deal with a world turned upside down by the Coronavirus. The League, along with everyone else has had to learn new ways to carry out our mission while reducing the possibility of having members become infected with Covid-19.

We've moved our annual meeting – where members elect Directors and Officers, and approve the budget—to online voting. An invitation to view the budget, the slate of candidates with their bios, and instructions on how to nominate yourself or someone else to the board was emailed on April 27th. A link to Signup Genius...
where you can vote will be sent on May 11th, and the process will close on May 16th. Only members will be able to vote.

We've also moved board and committee meetings, Lunch and Learn, and Brews and Views to Zoom to keep us all safe during these uncertain times. You'll find information about how to participate throughout this newsletter, and updates or invitations will be emailed to you giving information and instructions on signing up.

Just over a hundred years ago, another pandemic changed women’s role in the community and the workforce, and may have contributed to the passage of the 19th Amendment. The 1918 pandemic, known in the United States as the Spanish flu was devastating, killing about 675,000 Americans. We didn’t understand the science of viruses in 1918; we know much more now, but still not enough to keep us entirely safe. We’re hoping that the death toll this time is nowhere near the 1918 numbers, and that medical science is able to provide us with a reliable vaccine in the near future.

This pandemic is likely to change much that we’ve taken for granted; we’re just beginning to understand the economic and personal cost of the disease. There are early indicators that much of the retail and restaurant industries may not come back in quite the same fashion we’re used to, and that many individual businesses may close completely. Our voting systems are being pushed to accommodate this new world that may require us to maintain social distancing into the fall. Whatever the future, the League will be here to continue its work as a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. In the meantime, stay safe.

To learn more about the influenza pandemic of 1918 and its effect on our right to vote, here are

• An article from the Smithsonian
• A 12-minute WNYC podcast called What the Spanish Flu Had to do With Women’s Suffrage
• An article in National Geographic

CENSUS 2020
It's not too late!!
COVID-19 has impacted the 2020 Census in the following ways:

- Deadline for responding to the Census, either online, by phone, or by mail has been postponed until October 31, 2020. If someone has a question, wants a paper form (either b/c never got one, or lost it, whatever) you can call English 844-330-2020, Spanish 844-468-2020.
- However, in filling out the Census Questionnaire, Heads of Households still must answer questions based on where household members were living on April 1, 2020. That April 1 date has not changed.
- Census Bureau in-person follow up with those who haven’t responded to Census has been delayed until August.

Michigan’s response rate as of April 12 was 54.7%, third in the nation. Minnesota was first and Wisconsin second. The U.S. response rate was 48.1%.

Our 2020 Census Education got stopped in its tracks, but we did make pretty big tracks. We presented to, or provided Census Bureau handouts in person to about 3,200 people. We approached about 150 different groups of all kinds and did about 140 actual presentations or in-person handout distribution.
We built potential new partnerships for future education efforts, paying special attention to the LWV commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
These groups included the alumnae association of Delta Sigma Theta, Habitat for Humanity of Huron Valley, Girls Group, Avalon, and Neighborhood Watch groups on the east side of Washtenaw County. We kept a spreadsheet of organizations and contact people which could help future DEI efforts.

Remember, **EVERYONE COUNTS**. Everyone living in the U.S. No citizenship question!

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**Advocating for Health Care**

The national League of Women Voters has a position advocating for Single Payer healthcare system for all Americans although not supporting specific legislation. A group of members from local and state leagues has been meeting to promote Medicare for All by planning for education of members and the public and advocacy for healthcare. A current focus has been to encourage state and local governments to promote resolutions that support Medicare for All (Single Payer Healthcare). The current coronavirus pandemic has revealed many cracks in our healthcare system. This [letter](#) from the League of Women Voters, Northwest Maricopa County was developed to accomplish both of those purposes. Stay tuned as the League of Women Voters of the Ann Arbor Area works to provide additional education and advocacy on this issue.

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**Join Us!**

The May Lunch and Learn will be held on Friday, May 29th beginning at noon on Zoom rather than live. Our guest speaker will be Edward R. Golembiewski, Washtenaw County Director of Elections. Ed will talk about the scope of the work of his office as he (and we) prepare for the
August primary, and the November general elections. Plan to pack your lunch and join us for another information-filled session. Watch your inbox for more details and instructions on signing up for the Zoom meeting.

The June Lunch and Learn will also be via Zoom. We’ll be taking up a discussion of Chris Whipple’s book *The Gatekeepers: How the White House Chiefs of Staff Define Every Presidency*. Join us for an inside look at what Publishers Weekly calls “a vibrant narrative of the real-world West Wing…confident and fast-paced…In this page turner of a history, readers will discover new facets of historical events they felt they already knew.” Save the date: **Friday, June 19** for a “pack your own lunch” and discussion beginning at noon. Watch your inbox for details on signing up.

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**Candidate Forums are coming!**

August 4 is the date for our state and local primary election and preparation is already underway for League Candidate Forums to be held in June and July. As of today, we have 19 forums to plan and conduct, with more possible. (Click [HERE](#) to see the Washtenaw County Unofficial List of Races and Candidates.) This year’s forums will be virtual (on-line) but will still engage candidates with questions prepared by the League in cooperation with other citizens’ groups and public input. We will record each forum and all will be available for viewing on demand on CTN, on the LWVAAA YouTube channel, and other outlets.

SPECIAL FORUMS: Announcing a partnership between The Washtenaw County Bar Association, the Dispute Resolution Center, and The League of Women Voters of the Ann Arbor Area. Four Candidate Forums have been scheduled that encompass the judicial and law enforcement for the August 4th primary. The 14th District Court, the 22nd Circuit Court, the County Sheriff Department and the Prosecuting Attorney's Office will be presented as ZOOM offerings on **July 14, 15, and 16** and will be available to stream after that.

Volunteers will be needed. Please watch your email for details!

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**Voter Services Committee**

Our Voter Services Committee has been hard at work in spite of the new restrictions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Vote411.org.** No election will occur in Washtenaw County in May 2020, given the COVID-19 stay-at-home executive orders, since all proposals have been moved to August 2020. [Vote 411.org](#) will ramp up between April 24 and June 2, 2020. Questions go out to Candidates in April, to be returned by them in May and posted in June for the August 2020 Primary.

**Voter Registration.** No more work in the schools through June, since they’ve been closed by the Executive Orders. Roddy Wares is trying to get a plan to contact seniors for voter registration and voting.
Special Events Registration. Just before the lock-down orders, a high-participation special registration event was held at 10,000 Villages, Ann Arbor.

Underserved Populations. LWV-AAA’s Voter Services plans to distribute food bags to food banks (in which they will distribute their normal food donations to food-challenged folks). The food bags will be printed outside with LWV-AAA information; inside, the food bags will have LWV-AAA Voting Registration and Absentee Ballot applications. This method will likely reach many under served people.

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Our first virtual Brews and Views was a wonderful success!

Special guest Barbara L. McQuade, professor at the University of Michigan School of Law and former U.S attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan, addressed the question of the impact of COVID-19 on our 2020 elections. A significant portion of the evening was devoted to Q&A with questions submitted in advance as well as during the evening. We learned a lot – here are a few key points:

- The President has no power to change the election date.
- Congress can adjust the date of election of its members and the presidential election usually coincides with congressional elections.
- The President's and Vice President's term of office ends January 21, 2021, no matter what happens.
- If no one is elected to take office as President starting January 21, 2021, the question of who would assume the office is very complicated with no clear answer. (See below* for links to news articles on this topic.)

It is essential that upcoming 2020 elections be safely and securely held. To do this, we can employ several strategies:

- All states use no-reason-required absentee voting with implementation of procedures to make the process secure. As of July 30, 2019, 30 states plus Washington, DC allow no-excuse absentee voting, 5 states already hold elections entirely by mail, and 15 states require a reason to vote absentee, meaning they need to revise their election rules to facilitate the vote.
- Use extended voting periods rather than holding elections on just one day.
- Make election day a holiday.
- Provide states with federal resources and technical assistance without mandating procedures, which are a state power.
- Provide support to U.S. Postal Service so it will be able to manage the extra demands on service caused by voting by mail.

Read more here!
May Brews & Views

Join us on May 20, 2020 from 7:00pm to 8:30pm when our guest will be Attorney Patrick Levine Rose who will talk about USPS funding, among other pressing Covid19-related topics. If we are to vote by mail, the USPS will be essential.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO AUTOMATICALLY BE MAILED AN ABSENT VOTER BALLOT APPLICATION PRIOR TO EVERY ELECTION?

- Click here to submit your request to be placed on your City or Township’s Permanent Absent Voter List.
- Voters on the Permanent Absent Voter List are sent an Absent Voter Ballot Application by mail prior to every election.
- The voter can choose whether or not they would like to submit the Application to receive a ballot.
- Voters on this list are not automatically sent a ballot itself.

New Format for this year's annual meeting:

Due to the current restrictions on public gatherings, our LWVAAA Annual Meeting has been cancelled – Board election and budget approval will be managed on-line. Here is how you can participate!

Each May at our Annual Meeting, LWVAAA members elect Officers and Directors and approve a budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Because of current concerns about in-person gatherings, this year we will use electronic communications to vote. Here’s how it will work:

On April 27 members were sent an email announcing the upcoming election. A copy of the proposed slate of officers and directors presented by the nominating committee AND a copy of the proposed budget for fiscal July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021 were attached to the email for review. If you are a member and you did not see this email, you can request another copy at league@lwvannarbor.org. The deadline for additional nominations for Board positions was May 2.
Questions about the budget can be directed to Treasurer Betty Bishop (bbishop@umich.edu).
Voting will take place May 11. A Signup Genius ballot will be sent to all members with the questions to be voted – eg “Do you approve the slate as presented? (yes or no)” and “Do you approve the budget as presented? (yes or no)” Members will cast their vote by completing and submitting the form. The deadline for completing and submitting ballots is May 16. Election results will be communicated to the membership via email and on the LWVAAA website.

LWV of Ann Arbor Area – Brighton/Howell Unit

Although it seems so long ago when our League held its last public event on the 2020 Census in February, our upcoming events were unfortunately cancelled as this public emergency overtook our lives.

· Our March membership meeting hosted Brighton City Clerk Tara Brown, with plans to update everyone on the changes in voter registration and absentee ballots. Unfortunately, this was cancelled.

· Next, we had arranged a presentation with the director and board members of Livingston Recycle that would have lined up with Earth Day in April. Again, cancelled!

· Finally, Sue Smith and Ellen Lafferty were asked to be guests at the Southeast Michigan MENSA Society, presenting the latest information on Michigan’s Redistricting Commission. Our hopes to enlist MENSA members to sign on to the Redistricting Commission were set aside, when this event was also cancelled.

Despite these setbacks to the important work of the LWV, we keep rolling along.

· We’re proud of our many League members who worked the long hours at the polls on March 10th, demonstrating the integrity and surety of secure elections in our community.

· Our VOTE411 team has been able to hold numerous Zoom meetings to complete the important work necessary in preparation for the upcoming elections. We are ready to publish once the candidate list is confirmed by the Livingston County elections coordinator.

· We are continuing our partnership with the Livingston County Complete Count Committee.
Plans for our annual May membership meeting are being considered, where we will continue to define our role in informing and engaging voters in the upcoming elections. The consideration of becoming a Member-at-Large unit will be included on our agenda for discussion.

We look forward to seeing the various ways that Leagues across the State are creatively maintaining their mission of educating and engaging voters in these unimaginable times.

“People say, what is the sense of our small effort? They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time. No one has a right to sit down and feel hopeless. There is too much work to do.
- DOROTHY DAY, social activist

The Coronavirus, our prisons and our positions, let’s increase our efforts to lobby for prison reform.

The Michigan League of Women Voters takes positions on a number of issues including Health Care and Prisons: [https://lwvmi.org/positions.html](https://lwvmi.org/positions.html). The League takes these positions after a process of study and consensus and then lobbies our elected officials to advance these positions. Currently we are hearing a cry for support for our brothers and sisters incarcerated in prisons across the state because of the lack of health care procedures and equipment to help deter the spread of COVID-19. The Detroit Free Press recently reported that 90 prisoners in Parnall Correctional Facility in Jackson have tested positive for COVID-19 with many more in quarantine. The article predicts that unless something is done soon, such as screening employees, increase cleaning supplies, and increasing the quality of masks, the situation will worsen. [https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2020/04/05/coronavirus-spreading-fast-michigan-prisons/2938733001/](https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2020/04/05/coronavirus-spreading-fast-michigan-prisons/2938733001/)


An invitation from the Secretary of State’s office:

**Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission**

We’re eager to engage the members and community of League of Women Voters of the Ann Arbor Area in this historic process and invite them to apply. We want to inform your members and community that all applicants are now able to apply
entirely online, including free online notary services and email submission of their application. The deadline to apply, June 1, is only six weeks away, so we need to get the word out quickly. We’re hoping to encourage Michiganders from all communities to apply so the applicant pool can best reflect the rich diversity of Michigan. You can help us ensure your community has a voice on the commission. This is an extraordinary moment for all Michiganders to get involved and ensure the fairness and integrity of our elections. We would truly appreciate the chance to invite your members and community to apply and be part of this transparent, citizen-led process. You can find out more at the program’s website, RedistrictingMichigan.org, and follow us on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram @redistrictingMI.

The demographics of the applicant pool as of 4/13/2020:

Have you heard of the Clerk Engagement Project?

The Election Protection Coalition, of which the League is a partner, is working to assess how Michigan’s elections are proceeding under the new laws. As you know, on March 10, we had our first state-wide election since election changes went into effect. The group is interested in collecting feedback from our county clerks regarding the election process and ways that the group can be of help moving forward with this year's elections. We are so pleased that the ACLU-Michigan has hired Diana Faraj, as Voting Rights Program Manager, to be the resource for all things Clerk Engagement. Her cell is 773-355-6821 and her email is DFaraj@aclumich.org. Look for more information on this important work and the possible need for volunteers as they move forward!

To Find Out About Upcoming Events please visit the LWV-AAA Events Calendar on our new website www.lwvannarbor.org.
Looking for Primary or Voter registration information? Remember, the League of Women Voters' VOTE411.org is there to answer all your questions!!

Not a member? Wish to join?

Message from your LWVAAA Treasurer
When you join the Ann Arbor Area league, you become a member of the Michigan League and the League of Women Voters US (the national league). Dues are $70 for an individual, $100 for a household, and $10 for a student.
Dues are designated as follows:
Individual dues: LWVAAA retains $15, LWVMI receives $23 and LWVUS receives $32.
Household memberships: LWVAAA retains $22.50, LWVMI receives $32.50 and we send $45 to LWVUS.
Our local league is the front line of non-partisan support for our mission of Empowering Voters / Defending Democracy. Your dues support: voter education and registration campaigns, our website, email, newsletter, and meeting and program expenses.

You can pay via PayPal or by printing out the Mail In Payment Form and mailing it with a check to LWV-AAA, P.O. Box 3832, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3832.

*NOTE: If you joined or paid dues since July 1, 2019 your membership is paid through December 31, 2020.

To learn more about LWVAAA, go to www.lwvannarbor.org

Thanks – Betty Bishop, Treasurer

LWVAAA LEADERSHIP TEAM

OFFICERS
President: Joan Sampieri
Vice President: Donna Crudder
Treasurer: Betty Bishop
Secretary: Sue Smereck

DIRECTORS
Geoff Smereck, Voter Service
Barbara Brown, Membership
Carolyn Madden, Advocacy
Susan Wooley, Communications
Lynne Kochmanski, At Large
Ellen Lafferty, Representative, Brighton/Howell Area

NOMINATING COMMITTEE
Dee Dishon
Paige Silence

Mission Statement
The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.