



The Midland Voter

The League of Women Voters of the Midland Area
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www.lwv-midland.org

From the President

It's all about public K-12 education. We carried our banner and walked for education. We met, discussed, and came to consensus on questions about the role of the federal government in K-12 public education. We have a candidate forum Monday, October 17, for MPS Board of Education candidates. We have a committee studying financing of the Midland County public school districts, in preparation for working out our own local position on public school funding....

In these times of turmoil over our national and state economies; with the knowledge that wages (for the most part) are declining; realizing that home values are dipping; experiencing the cries among us for lower taxes and budget balancing; it's only natural that paying for the universal free public education of our children and youth has risen to the top.

What does it cost to adequately educate a child? What does adequate mean, anyhow? And, of course, WHO IS GOING TO PAY?

Proposal A changed Michigan K-12 public school funding from a primarily local to a primarily state obligation. It was intended to decrease the wide variance of per pupil expenditures among local school districts. The system worked well for a few years. However, the sales tax portion of the funding is quite volatile. Additionally, tax revenues have decreased to the point in Michigan that schools experienced a \$470 per pupil **decrease** in the foundation grant. Local boards of education

You are Invited:

Midland LWV 2011 Calendar

October 17: School Board Election Forum, LWV, AAUW and MCTV at MPS Boardroom, 6:30 p.m. This taped program will be repeated several times on MCTV before the election.

Week of October 17: Making Democracy Work, MCTV, channel 96

November 8: School Board/City Council elections

December 7: Annual Christmas Potluck Dinner, 6 p.m., (board meeting 4:30 p.m.) at Carole Swinehart's home: 5315 Sunset Drive.

In 2012, watch for:

January/February: local league consensus on Midland Public Schools position. Great Decisions. Radio Days

May 23 Our annual meeting.

have the difficult and thankless job of making their budgets balance while still providing an education to all the children and youth in their district.

The Citizens Research Council (CRC) of Michigan has stated things very clearly in the publication, **Distribution of State Aid to Michigan Schools**, Report #371 (August 2011):

*“Funding for public K-12 education under Proposal A’s school finance system is entering a new phase. In the near-term, this new phase is characterized by a reduction in the aggregate state revenue base in FY2009 and FY2010; revenue growth that trails the projected growth in spending each year; and an increasing number of students being educated in declining enrollment districts. At the same time and in this era of resource constraints, public schools are being asked to educate children to a higher standard, to improve student outcomes, to increase graduation rates, and to prepare kids for success in a globally-competitive workforce or post-secondary education...
“...Given the fiscal realities of today and the evidence provided by the past 16 years under Proposal A, the timing may be right to consider school finance reform....”*

All of us will need to stay interested, informed, and involved if we want to give this issue the attention it deserves. Money does matter in the education of our children and youth. Maintaining a free quality education for the next generation may be the only way to come out ahead.

Please take the time to go to www.crcmich.org and read at least the 4-page summary from **Distribution of State Aid to Michigan Schools**. It will give you a very fact-based look at the K-12 public school funding difficulties in Michigan.
Karen Sherwood

Midland Public School Board Forum

LWV will host a Midland Public School Board forum along with AAUW in preparation for the Tuesday, Nov. 8 election. The Forum will be held at 6:30 PM on Monday, October 17 at the Midland Public Schools Administration building.

The following candidates will be participating for the Midland Public School Board:

Yvonne Gorton, Lee A. Rouse, and Gerald L. Wasserman are running for a 4 year term. Both Lee A. Rouse and Gerald L. Wasserman are incumbents. Voters will select 2 of the three candidates. Angela Brandstadt is the only candidate running to fill a partial term ending 12/31/2013.

Betty Wineland from AAUW will serve as the time keeper and Karen Sherwood will serve as moderator.

For many years AAUW and the League of Women Voters (LWV) have hosted this candidate forum

where we ask questions about school district matters and candidates have an opportunity to respond. The program will be televised live on Channel 98 and repeated a number of times between October 17 and the election.

National Consensus Study on the Role of Federal Government in Public Education

The Midland area LWV met to form consensus on the role of the federal government in public K-12 education. We looked at the historical role of the federal government and how it has changed, and discussed the place of Common Core Standards in our schools. This led to the questioning if federal government should become more involved or less involved in public K-12 education.

The second consensus meeting focused on funding and equity. What funding should come from the federal government? What should the requirements be for districts to receive federal funding? How can an equitable education be offered on a national level?

Members of local Leagues all across the United States will be discussing these topics to reach consensus on a national position. Our League will be a voice in the national discussion. The results of our consensus will be compiled with the national results and then published.

Thank you to both Karen Sherwood and Judy McDowell for leading us in a thoughtful process. We appreciate the tone and depth of information that Karen gave to the Midland Daily News in preparation for the study.

Our Future Position: Midland Public Schools

As the Midland LWV we will be formulating positions for our local public schools, following the informational studies of 2010 and 2011.

- In the spring of 2010 our league sponsored a panel presentation by the Superintendents of our 5 districts. In their presentations, they talked about the steps taken in their districts to operate within the funds available for their schools. Many of the actions they talked about included cuts in services.
- January 29, 2011, two speakers addressed Proposal A. Mr. Bill Karbowski, spoke to us as an appraiser and an assessor and treasurer on the Pinconning Area School Board. He currently is a member of the Bay/Arenac

- Intermediate School Board. Mr. Clark Volz, the Superintendent of the Midland County ESA shared his insight on Proposal A from his experiences in Midland and as principal in the Caledonia Public Schools and Superintendent of the Maple Valley Schools.
- February 12, 2011, Mr. Craig Thiel spoke as the Director of State Affairs for the Citizen's Research Council of Michigan. The CRC of Michigan is one of the state's oldest and most respected public policy research organizations. He addressed Reform of K-12 School Districts and Governance Management in Michigan.

Our local LWV program statement for 2011-2012 is:

To investigate the funding of five local public school districts (Bullock Creek, Coleman, MCESA, Meridian, and Midland) and explore the effects of decreases on the education offered to Midland County students. Publicize information.

GOALS: To increase League members' knowledge and that of other Midland County residents about the effects of reduced funding for local schools. To affect how residents think about funding for education and begin addressing the question, "How can we finance a quality education for all?"

RATIONALE: Current budgetary problems at all levels of government have resulted in serious budget problems for public school districts across the state of Michigan. Each local district has made far-reaching changes in operations to accommodate funding changes. The League can perhaps provide a comprehensive view of the effects in Midland County. The investigation is supported by an extensive LWVMI position titled, "Education: Structure Financing and Goals."

The LWV of Michigan supports the development of a publically financed education system in which there is an opportunity for a good education for all children in Michigan. As part of the educational position the LWVMI states the following:

Local districts should have the option of raising additional millage in order to provide enrichment of the basic educational program.

Local districts should be able to establish achievement goals at the local level.

As a local league our January and February meetings will focus on consensus questions, addressing positions in support of local public education in these changing times.

Terry Townley

Watch For "Making Democracy Work" on MCTV

The title may be an old friend, but "Making Democracy Work: The TV Version" is brand new, starting the week of October 17 on MCTV Channel 96.

Hosted by Cathy Nelson Price and Karen Sherwood, "Making Democracy Work" will re-emphasize the League of Women Voters of the Midland Area's dedication to fostering an informed, participatory voting population. Taped twice monthly at the MCTV studio, the half-hour show will run in MCTV evening prime time. It will also be archived and available for viewing on streaming video.

Guests on the first show, "Are You a Voter?" are Midland County Clerk Ann Manary and Midland City Clerk Selina Tisdale, who will discuss voter qualifications while exploring why more of us don't register and vote.

The second show will focus on "Becoming an Informed Voter," with guests Ron Beacom of MCTV and Ralph Wirtz of the Midland Daily News. Topics will include ethical standards for both print and broadcast media, as well as the emerging world of the blogosphere, and how that needs to be differentiated from regulated news outlets. Future shows may allow for a studio audience, so if you are interested in attending a taping, contact Cathy Price, bobthesh@pipeline.com.

PLEASE REMEMBER THE DATE

Our annual meeting and dinner will be held on the evening of May 23, 2012. Our guest speaker will be Amy French, Ph.D. Candidate, Instructor of History and Director of the Delta College Food Pantry, Delta College. Ms. French researches issues of labor, gender, and law in the United States during the Gilded and Progressive eras, as well as the "long civil rights era" of the 1940s through the 1970s. The program promises to be educational with a lot of laughter added to the evening.

Alice "Sharron" Such

CONVENIENT VOTING – A NEED FOR MICHIGAN

We need voting laws that serve today's busier, more complex world and fit the needs of today's families. Michigan is one of only 15 states that do not offer some form of convenient voting such as early voting or no reason absentee voting.

Local League members Connie Glave, Sue McCollister and Carole Swinehart recently participated in a workshop presented by the League of Women Voters of Michigan that was devoted to learning about and advocating for ways to make voting more convenient and accessible. Special emphasis was on **No reason absentee voting**, which allows any registered voter to vote absentee without specifying a reason. It is currently offered in 27 states and is under consideration by the Michigan legislature. The workshop event was an excellent opportunity to learn more in detail about efforts to make voting more convenient and to observe first-hand our Michigan legislators in action.



Connie Glave, LWVMI Pres. Sue Smith, Sue McCollister and Carole Swinehart

After the workshop, the three Midland LWVers had appointments with Senator Moolenaar and Representative Stamas. Later they visited the House in session where the LWV delegation was introduced. They each got to visit the floor along side of Rep. Stamas. It was a great day!

Sue McCollister and Carole Swinehart

Senior Expo

Our League sponsored a table and an ad for the Senior Expo at the Midland Mall on October 12, 2011. We had our banner hanging in the back of the booth and had copies of "Your Elected Officials," "5 Tips for Easy Voting;" sticky note pads with the League logo; real "made in America" mints and other League literature. We also had a fact sheet put together by Carole Swinehart with all of the candidates (including write-ins) and the ballot issues on it for the November 8 election.

Our table was very colorful. Judy McDowell, Karen Sherwood, Sharron Such, Rosemary Wilson, and Fran Hamburg worked shifts in 2-person teams. We were well received and were able to give out voter information that really isn't available anywhere else.



Judy McDowell and Karen Sherwood at the LWV booth at the Mall

Have we received your membership renewal?

As our annual membership campaign nears completion we are delighted by the number of continuing member renewals we have received. A sincere **"thank you"** to all who added an extra gift to their membership dues - especially to our growing number of Sustaining Members. All these monies over and above regular dues greatly enhance the League's ability to provide citizen education projects and other services to our community.

It is critical that outstanding renewals be received immediately in order to insure that members continue to receive important publications and other benefits of membership. If you have any questions, contact Vice President for Membership, Judy McDowell (989)839-6926, jmcdowell@charter.net.

(The ballot for Midland City and County)

NOVEMBER 8, 2011

GENERAL ELECTION

CITY OF MIDLAND

MIDLAND PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

4 Yr. Term: Vote for Two (2)

Gerald L. Wasserman
Lee A. Rouse
Yvonne Gorton
Joyce L. Perry – Certified Write -In Candidate

2 Yr. Term: Vote for One (1) Term

Angela Brandstadt

MIDLAND COUNTY

BULLOCK CREEK SCHOOL DISTRICT

4 Yr. Term: Vote for Two (2)

Henry Mashue
James Nemeth

COLEMAN COMM. SCHOOLS

4 Yr. Term: Vote for Two (2)

Benjamin Tigner

MERIDIAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

4 Yr. Term: Vote for Two (2)

3 Certified Write-In Candidates

Danielle Fillmore
Rebecca M. Hitsman
Jonathan Joseph Nelson

MIDLAND CITY COUNCIL

WARD 1: Vote for One (1)

Thomas W. Adams

WARD 2: Vote for One (1)

Maureen Donker

WARD 3: : Vote for One (1)

J. Dee Brooks

WARD 4: : Vote for One (1)

Diane Brown

WARD 5: : Vote for One (1)

Marty A. Wazbinski

MERRILL SCHOOLS

School Bond Proposal

BAY-ARENAC ISD

Midland, Ward 1, Precinct 6
Special Ed. Millage Proposal

*(Midland Area LWW
10/11/11)*

League of Women Voters of the Midland Area
P.O. Box 1203
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MEMBERSHIP FORM

Enclosed is my check (made payable to LWV of the Midland Area) for:

- Individual Membership (\$55)
- Household Membership (\$75)
- Student Membership (\$30)
- Sustaining Membership (___\$100___\$150___\$200___other-specify amount \$___)
- CHECK TOTAL**
(Membership contributions are not tax deductible)

Separate check made payable to LWVUS Education Fund
(This contribution is tax-deductible)

NAME _____

PHONE (H) _____ (W) _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ ZIP _____

E-MAIL _____

(Communication by e-mail is fast, easy and inexpensive. To save mailing and paper costs communications will frequently be sent via e-mail. If you do not have access to e-mail, please check here _____)

Mail check(s) with this form to LWV of the Midland Area, Box 1203, Midland MI 48641-1203
Please use separate sheet to note special interests, skills, suggestions for LWV programs.