



# Midland Voter

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE MIDLAND AREA

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Newsletter

## SPRING 2011 CALENDAR

**May 4 Midland LWV Board Meeting.** Grace A. Dow Memorial Library, 1 p.m.

**May 16 Deadline for Annual Meeting reservations** (See article)

**May 25 Annual Meeting, featuring The Hon. Jonathan Lauderbach as speaker.**

**Deadline for June *Voter*.** Send copy to [bobthesh@pipeline.com](mailto:bobthesh@pipeline.com)

**MEMBERS ARE WELCOME AT ALL GATHERINGS. COME AND BRING A FRIEND!**

## **Walk for Education this Saturday**

**May 7 at 10:00 a.m.**

The walk is organized by 12-B Michigan Education Association Coordinating Council for Midland area residents to express their support for local public schools.

Walkers will gather in the parking lot across Washington Street from K-Mart. The group will leave the parking lot and walk down the green zone area to, then around the ball stadium to downtown Main Street. The walk will continue along Main Street, then down Ashman Street to the Tridge area. Walkers will disperse from the Tridge area after a small rally.

Participants are encouraged to wear red—bring their families, friends, neighbors, friends of public education, signs, decorated bicycles, roller blades and strollers.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Have you been paying attention to budget talks in Michigan and what the promises are to K-12 schools in our area? If not, it really is time to get informed!

Proposal A set up a School Aid Fund (SAF) for the purpose of funding K-12 education from a combination of property and sales taxes, plus some general fund expenditures. Projections are that the SAF will be adequate to fund K-12 education at the 2010-11 levels for the 2011-12 year. (These levels already reflect reductions in funding that have been implemented the last few years.) However, the Governor's Budget Plan proposes to divert some of the SAF money to the higher education budget resulting in a 2011-12 per pupil foundation allowance reduction of \$470! Including additional cuts in categorical aid, the reduction for Midland Public will amount to \$490 per pupil; Meridian Public is will be \$487 per pupil; Coleman Community's reduction may reach \$508 per pupil.

Another factor facing our local Districts' budgets next year will be an increase in the pension contribution rate. This is primarily the result of a retirement incentive offered by the State to school employees last year. The incentive resulted in some 17,000 retirements across the state (compared to 5,000 the year before). Contribution rates to retirement plans are based on actuarial calculations; a sudden influx of 17,000 retirees can have a profound effect. It is expected that the retirement rate may increase by 5%. In local District budgets, that translates to 5% of total salaries of all district employees.

The cost of these two factors for Midland Public next year looks to be over \$6.5 million! For Bullock Creek the likely cost will be over \$1.4 million; for Meridian Public the cost will be just under \$1 million; Coleman is looking at a cost of over \$500,000.

In 2010, the local district superintendents, along with ESA Superintendent Clark Volz, met with us to talk about cuts that had already been made in their districts. It was pretty much the unanimous opinion of the superintendents that they had trimmed their districts beyond "just the fat."

Proposal A severely limits the monies districts can raise locally . Michigan's public schools depend heavily on state funding through the per pupil foundation allowance. According to the superintendents at our 2010 meeting, the foundation allowance accounts for approximately 85% of the operational funds for each of the five districts that are in the MCESA. There are only 1.5 mills remaining in the potential 3 mills enhancement millage that Proposal A allows districts to raise locally. Our public schools are in an impossibly tight financial squeeze.

I wish I had petitions for you to carry or even an initiative I could urge you to vote on. Right now it seems the best you can do is write to Senator John Moolenaar and Representative Jim Stamas urging them to vote against any budget that proposes spending SAF monies for uses other than K-12 public school districts.

On Saturday, May 7, there will be a Walk for Education in Midland. It will begin at 10:00 a.m. in the Washington Square parking lot. (That's across Washington Street from the K-Mart Plaza.) Let's all show our support for our local public schools by joining this walk.

*Karen Sherwood, President*

## SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS NOW HELD IN NOVEMBER

All the school districts in Midland County have switched their board elections to November.

The State of Michigan encouraged this as a cost saving measure to consolidate elections.

Thus, in October, we will have a forum for the MPS and the Midland ISD boards and then possibly a second forum for city council candidates. The deadline for candidates to file to run is in August.

## Annual Meeting Update

The Annual Meeting mailing should have reached you by now. If you have not received yours, please let Karen Sherwood know.

The mailing includes the meeting notice, 2011-12 proposed local program, proposed budget (including dues), candidate slate for elections, and a proposed by-laws amendment.

It looks to be a great evening with a choice of three entrees for dinner, presentation of the Making Democracy Work Award, and Honorable Judge Jonathan Lauderbach as our speaker.

The event will be held **May 25** at the Holiday Inn, 810 Cinema Drive, beginning at 6:00 p.m. with a cash bar. Dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m. Our MDW Award presentation will be at 7:15 p.m., followed by Judge Lauderbach at 7:30. The business meeting at 8:15 p.m. will wrap up the night.

Dinner is \$25.00, including tip. Your reservation for dinner needs to be in to Sandy Burmester by May 16. There is a form at the bottom of the meeting notice and in this newsletter that you may use to make your choice known to Sandy. If you cannot get to the dinner at 6:30, try not to miss the speaker at 7:30. If you're really running late, be sure to get there for the business meeting at 8:15. **WE MUST HAVE A QUORUM!**