



The Midland Voter

The League of Women Voters of the Midland Area

January 2012 (Vol. 44, Number 3)

832-3533

President: Karen Sherwood
839-6926

Membership: Judy McDowell
631-1173

Editor: Julie Schmidt

www.lwv-midland.org

From our President

If you're reading this, then you've at least survived the holiday season and you are caught up enough on your work-load that you have a few minutes to devote to "League stuff." Good for you!

The issue you need to concentrate on for right now is our local study of public school funding. You should have received an electronic copy of the background paper, consensus questions, and most recently, corrections to the background paper. If they've been lost in the holiday scramble, you can find them on our website, www.lwv-midland.org. If you don't have access to a computer, give me a call and I'll see that you receive a paper copy of the documents. (Karen's phone: 989-832-3533.)

Our local public schools are vital to our community and we in Midland County have always taken great pride in the quality of our schools. Until the 1994-95 school year, most of the funding came from taxes on property within each local school district. When districts needed money, local residents voted on millage increases. Proposal A radically changed Michigan's public school funding. Now funding comes primarily from the state in the form of the per pupil foundation grant.

When the economic downturn hit Michigan, the performance of Proposal A for public school funding stumbled dramatically. Our schools have not had an increase in the per pupil foundation grant since 2008-09. In 2009-10, the foundation grant that was promised was not fully funded (even with an influx of federal recovery dollars). Then this year (2011-12),

the per pupil foundation grant was cut by \$470. The absence of adequate funding has been devastating to our local school districts. (continued on pg. 2)

You are Invited:

Midland LWV 2012 Winter-Spring Calendar

January 17: local public school funding – meeting and consensus: 1 p.m. at Terry Townley's home, 6112 Siebert.

Through January: start-up groups for Great Decisions.

January 18: taping of "Making Democracy Work," City Government and MCESA, 2:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. at MCTV.

February 1: Board Meeting 1 p.m. at the Grace A. Dow library, basement conference rooms.

February 15: redistricting; speaker will be Sue Smith, LWVMI President. 10 a.m. United Way conference room #106.

February 15: taping of "Making Democracy Work," 2:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. at MCTV.

February 20: local and national program planning for 2012-13. 11 a.m. Rosemary Wilson's home, 4113 Cruz Drive. Bring a sack lunch.

In February: begin gadding for Radio Days.

March 7: Board Meeting 1 p.m. at the Grace A. Dow library, basement conference rooms.

March 11 to 17: Radio Days

March 14: Consensus on LWVUS study of privatization, 1 p.m. at the United Way conference room #106.

March 21: taping of "Making Democracy Work," 2:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. at MCTV.

April 4: Board Meeting 1 p.m. at the Grace A. Dow library, basement conference rooms.

April 18: taping of "Making Democracy Work," 2:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. at MCTV.

May 2: Board Meeting 1 p.m. at the Grace A. Dow library, basement conference rooms.

May 23: Annual Meeting.

(continued from page 1) Please take a few minutes to read our background paper and give some thought to the consensus questions. Then come to the meeting at Terry Townley's home (6112 Siebert) on January 17 at 1:00 p.m. to discuss the issue, reach consensus on as many of the questions as possible, and provide direction for a new position that our local League can vote on at the Annual Meeting in May. Our MCTV "Making Democracy Work" program featuring an interview with Linda Cline on public school financing will be shown as an introduction.

We have two more issues to study this year: Redistricting in February and Privatization in March. However, right now I'm urging you to become as informed as possible on the funding of our local public schools. I strongly believe our children and youth, our teachers, our school administrators, our other school employees, and our local Boards of Education all deserve our undivided attention.

Karen Sherwood

A Busy Calendar! Program overview for the coming months

There is something in League for everyone and before you know it spring will be here. Ask your friends if they are interested and bring them to any of these programs. Only members may participate in consensus or in program

decisions but of course anyone is welcome to join on the spot!

Local Public School Financing Consensus will be held on **January 17**, at 1 pm at Terry Townley's home. The results of this consensus will be compiled into a position which will be presented for adoption at the Annual Meeting in May. Details and links to resources are on our web <www.lwv-midland.org>.

State Study of Redistricting – consensus questions and study material will be ready shortly after January 14th. They will be posted on the state website which can be accessed through our local website. The deadline for consensus is June 1 but for practical purposes the meeting should be held much earlier. We will meet **February 15** at 10 a.m. at the United Way Building, conference room #106 to hear Sue Smith, president of the League of Women Voters of Michigan speak on this subject. The plans right now are to break for lunch after Sue's speech and meet for consensus right after lunch. Plan to come, learn, discuss and decide.

Local Program Planning (2012-13) and National Program Planning (2012-14) will take place at Rosemary Wilson's home **February 20**. Bring a sack lunch. This is when we determine where we want the league to set its priorities.

Locally, we will determine our priorities for the coming year. Two positions, the Midland Police Dept. and the Acquisition of Gifts, are being updated and will be available for approval at the Annual Meeting. The other positions have already had recent updates.

Nationally, we may recommend a new study, an update of an existing position or concurrence with an already existing state or local league position. If we do, we would circulate our recommendation to other leagues for support. We have received two such requests from other leagues already asking (1) for concurrence on advocating for alternatives to incarceration and opposition to mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses and (2) for a focus on the reduction of violence and the formation of a department of peace. More will probably follow. The deadline for returning the form is March 1st.

If you are interested in helping to choose next year's local or national programs, but are unable to attend the February 20 meeting, please contact any Board member or President Karen Sherwood (by phone, 832-3533, or e-

mail, karsherwood@att.net) and share your ideas.

National Study of Privatization of Government Services Consensus on the LWVUS study of privatization is due May 1st. The meeting will be on **March 14**, at 1 pm. at the United Way Building, conference room #106. A link to the consensus questions and the study material is on our website under Program Resources.

Fran Hamburg

Radio Days

It is time to start gearing up for Radio Days. For those of you who are unfamiliar with this event, it is a major fundraiser for our local League. Last year we raised \$1875 from local business supporters. Just as important as the money is the chance to raise public awareness of what the League does for the community.

During Sunshine Week March 11–17, Radio Station, WMPX/WMRX in Midland, allows our League to sell advertising to local businesses. The station donates that time so all of the revenue from the sale of those ads goes to our league. The businesses can use the spots either for their own ads or for public service announcements provided by the League. The station also airs interviews with various members about League activities. WMPX/WMRX is running public service announcements for us, throughout the year as well and we are grateful for their support.

Please think about where you shopped for the holidays, ate a good meal, had your hair done or even went to the dentist etc. Would you be willing to approach the owner of that business in February and ask them to purchase an ad through our League, to air on WMPX/WMRX? In late January or early February we will be assigning businesses for the “gadders” or foot soldiers to solicit. Would you be willing to help? We will try to pair novices with old hands in making a few of the calls if you are not yet comfortable going on your own. We hope every member will participate in this important project. Thank you to all who have helped in the past. Call Connie at 631–2356 to help. Thank you.

"Making Democracy Work" Rolls on MCTV

With a regular MCTV time slot and four shows' worth of great guests, "Making Democracy Work" is making its mark in our community.

Here's who hosts Karen Sherwood and Cathy Nelson Price have welcomed so far: Midland County Clerk Ann Manary and Midland City Clerk Selina Tisdale, discussing the nuts and bolts of registering and voting in our area, as well as expressing some candid opinions on how our local voters stack up in terms of voter turnout;

MCTV's head man Ron Beacom and Midland Daily News Managing Editor Ralph Wirtz recalling how media coverage of the democratic process has changed with the times and rating which news organizations are doing the best job to educate and inform the voting public (you might be surprised!);

Midland Public Schools Finance Administrator Linda Cline offering some hard numbers, straight talk – and some hope – concerning the fiscal state of our local public schools, and;

Your Board officers Karen Sherwood, Rosemary Wilson and Sharron Such in our own "infomercial" detailing the League's history and programs. Even longtime members will learn something new!

Our next taping is Wednesday, January 18, with shows at 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. Our 3 p.m. guest is Midland Mayor Maureen Donker, and our 4 p.m. guest is Midland County ESA Superintendent John Searles. Studio guests are welcome during the taping; contact Cathy Price at 574–7211, bobthesh@pipeline.com

"Making Democracy Work" can be seen on MCTV Channel 99 (Charter), on Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. and Fridays at 10:30 a.m.

But if you've missed (or can't watch) broadcasts of "Making Democracy Work," they're available online at the MCTV website, www.midland-mi.org.

Great Decisions Study Begins

The League of Women Voters of the Midland Area is again sponsoring Great Decisions study groups. Four discussion groups have been organized and will begin meeting soon. Each group is open and will accept anyone interested in joining. Also, it is not too late to establish additional groups. Membership in the League of Women Voters is not required for persons who want to participate in a study group. Great Decisions is a program developed by the

Foreign Policy Association. Each year the Association selects eight thought-provoking topics of current concern and publishes a briefing book for study groups throughout the nation to use. The topics for 2012 are (1) Middle East Realignment, (2) Promoting Democracy, (3) Mexico, (4) Cybersecurity, (5) Exit from Afghanistan & Iraq, (6) State of the Oceans, (7) Indonesia, and (8) Energy Geopolitics. The 2012 books are now available for purchase at the Grace A. Dow Library. The League of Women Voters of the Midland Area has found this program provides valuable discussion in our community and so has been a local sponsor for the past thirty years. Groups currently organized are scheduled to meet on Tuesday afternoons, Wednesday mornings, Thursday afternoons and Thursday evenings. For more information on joining one of the current groups or organizing a new group, phone Sandy at 832-3079

**BE SURE TO REMEMBER THIS
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

League of Women Voters of the Midland Area
P.O. Box 1203
Midland MI 48641-1203