



LEAGUE OF  
WOMEN VOTERS®

# Midland Voter

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE MIDLAND AREA

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Newsletter

## CALENDAR 2010

- March 24**      **Info and Issues Meeting:** “The Future of Public School Financing in Michigan” with area school Superintendents, MCESA Building, 3917 Jefferson, 7 pm
- March 27**      **Local Program Planning,** Donna DeVinney’s home, 4954 Grandview Circle, March 27, 9:30 am
- April 7**        **Board Meeting,** Conference Room B, Grace A. Dow Library, 1 pm
- April 13 and 20**    **Consensus Study Days:** Study and Discussion of the League of Women Voters Michigan Restudy of Prisons, Midland County Jail, 101 Fast Ice Drive, 7 pm
- April 28**        **School Board Candidate Forum,** Board Room, MPS Administration Building
- May 4**          **School Board Election**

## MARCH INFO AND ISSUES MEETING TO FOCUS ON PUBLIC SCHOOL FINANCING

The League will host area school district Superintendents at the March Issues and Info Meeting: “The Future of Public School Financing in Michigan.” The meeting will be held on March 24 at 7 pm. in the MCESA building, 3917 Jefferson at 7 pm. Superintendents John Hill, Bullock Creek; Doug Fillmore, Meridian; Carl Ellinger, Midland; and Clark Volz, Midland County ESA will open the session with a short overview of financial issues in their respective districts. A moderated panel will follow. Discussion will cover such topics as alternate ways to fund public education, benefits and drawbacks of consolidation of schools and services, federal funding options, charter schools and legacy costs.



To prepare for the meeting, you may want to review the state League position on public school financing:

<http://www.lwvmi.org/shared/education.html>

## **GREETINGS FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Terry Townley and ESA Superintendent Clark Volz have been working together planning a very important information and issues meeting titled “The Future of Financing Public Education in Michigan.” This meeting will be held **March 24 at 7:00 p.m. in the Midland County ESA Conference Rooms A & B.** It will feature a panel of local school district superintendents. The panel will discuss the current funding procedures, then answer questions, including questions from the audience. I think it’s a meeting you won’t want to miss.

Our public schools have been a point of pride in Midland County. Midland Public has been the largest district, and until Proposal A passed in 1994, its funding was most secure. That’s because local property taxes were the primary source of funding for public schools and both The Dow Chemical Company and Dow Corning Corporation had large, profitable plants within the school district boundaries. Bullock Creek, Coleman, and Meridian were not as blessed with assessed property values, but local millage requests were often successful as local voters supported their school districts.

The passage of Proposal A changed many vital elements of public school funding. The state took charge of funding. Property tax on homesteads was limited dramatically; a two-cent sales tax was initiated as the single largest source of revenue for schools; and funding was calculated on a per-pupil basis.

At the time, Proposal A provided significant increases for “in formula” districts like Bullock Creek, Coleman, and Meridian. Clear efforts were made to increase their funding and to decrease the difference in funding between them and “out-of-formula” districts like Midland. Proposal A also included language to “hold harmless” the “out of formula” districts by continuing to give them monies over and above the per pupil amounts set for most districts.

Across the state, the public was swayed by the attractive decrease in their property taxes. However, people who studied the matter foresaw the weaknesses of the Proposal. Interestingly, Peggy McGee wrote a letter to the editor as President of our League in March of 1994 warning, “It is clearly evident that sales tax revenue is not growing as fast as personal income and it is lagging further and further behind personal income growth...Nearly 70% of school funding will come from the sales and property taxes – both of which are likely to have retarded growth under Proposal A.”

Peggy’s warnings were becoming reality even before the latest deep recession came to our nation and state. Now schools face hard financial decisions not only during the budget process, but regularly they are forced to make cuts mid-year.

March 24 will be our last information and issues meeting this fiscal year. It should be a very educational meeting. I urge you to come join this important discussion about the funding of our public schools.

*Karen Sherwood, President*

## **GREAT DECISIONS ON TV**

The Great Decisions 2010 TV series is being broadcast on MCTV Channel 99 on Thursday afternoons from 1:30-2:00 pm starting February 25 and continuing for 10 weeks. The series, which the *New York Times* has called “must watch television”, is an excellent opportunity to hear a wide range of experts analyze the critical global issues facing the U.S. this year. The programs support the Great Decisions discussions but also stand on their own as concise presentations of expert foreign policy analysis.

## STATE PRISON RESTUDY AND CONSENSUS COMING IN APRIL

Our League will join other Leagues across the state for a Prison/Jail Restudy and Consensus. Local meetings are scheduled for April 13 and April 20 at 7 pm at the Midland County Jail at 101 Fast Ice Drive.

The scope of the restudy includes:

- How and why persons are sent to prison or jail
- How individuals are treated while in prison or jail
- How, when, and why individuals are released from prison or jail to the community



There are seven consensus questions which concern: principles to guide the criminal justice system, alternatives to incarceration, responsibilities of the prison system and parole boards, oversight, and citizenship rights of individuals incarcerated. Background material on this program can be found at <http://www.lwvmi.org/documents/PrisonQstnsWbckgrnd.pdf>.

### WONDERFUL 90<sup>th</sup>!

Our long-anticipated event came off in great style on March 2 when over 75 members, elected women officials past and present, other members of the community and guests gathered at the Holiday Inn to celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of women's right to vote and the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of the League of Women Voters. In celebration of these milestones, we honored women in Midland County who have exercised their right and responsibility to participate in government by serving in elected office. President Karen Sherwood recognized the approximately 250 women identified and listed in the program as having been elected to public office in Midland County as far back as 1935. A number of these women were in attendance, representing Midland County and its townships, the city of Midland, and local school boards. (One of them just celebrated HER 90<sup>th</sup> birthday!) President Sherwood presented Making Democracy Work Awards to the following women as outstanding representatives of the group of past and present elected officials.

Maxine Brink	Mills Township 1967-72, '76-84, '88-current
Mary Currie	Midland City Council 2000-03
Maureen Donker	Midland City Council 2007-current; Mayor
Leona Falkenstein	Ingersoll Twp 1979-87, Midland County Commissioner 1987-02
Phyllis Ferris	Bullock Creek School Board 1987-99, '02-current
Ann Manary	Midland County Clerk 2009-current
Rose Marie McQuaid	Midland County Commissioner 1980-current
Donna Morris	Midland County Probate Judge 1979-2001
Lee Rouse	Midland School Board 2003-current; President
Nancy Skochdopole	Midland School Board 1981-85
Alice Sharron Such	Edenville Township Supervisor 1993-2008
Carole Swinehart	Midland School Board 1992-2003
Theresa Townley	Midland School Board 1984-1992
Elizabeth Weaver	Michigan Supreme Court 1994-2000, '02-current; Chief Justice 1999-2000

The evening was further highlighted by our guest speaker, the Honorable Elizabeth Weaver, Justice of the Supreme Court of Michigan, who spoke on "Fair and Impartial Courts". In an entertaining and informative fashion she talked about the need for reform of Michigan's dual system of selection of justices (appointment vs. election), campaign financing and the need for transparency, especially with candidate-focused "issue" ads. She commented that judicial term lengths "shouldn't be in perpetuity".

Many thanks to League members who were able to celebrate this important occasion and help us welcome our special guests. It was an event to remember

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## **Address Block**

## **90 Years in Photos: the 1940's**

During the post World War II period, the League helped lead the effort to establish the United Nations and to ensure U.S. participation. The League was one of the first organizations in the country officially recognized by the United Nations as a non-governmental organization (NGO); it still maintains official observer status today and has special consultative status to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The League also supported the creation of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as well as NATO, economic aid to less developed countries and the Marshall Plan.



**Get out the Vote in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, 1948**

