



Midland Voter

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE MIDLAND AREA

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Peggy McGee, 835-8922
Co-president

Julie Schmidt, 631-1173
Co-president

Harriett Raymond, 835-7817
Membership

Kelli Youngson, 631-8795
Editor

APRIL CALENDAR

*Board Meeting Tuesday April 9, 7 p.m. at Julie Schmidt's home, 2412 St. Mary's Dr.

*General Meeting: Tuesday April 30 at 11:30 a.m., Local program planning meeting at Shirlene's.

*LWV Annual Meeting Wednesday, May 22nd at 6:00 p.m. at Pi's Restaurant. See advertisement on page 2

Board meetings and *all LWV meetings* are open to Midland LWV members and friends

"The most damaging phrase in the English language is: 'It's always been done that way.'"

Admiral Grace Hopper

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

The Midland Area League of Women Voters Bulletin is published nine times a year; not in December, July or August

Presidents' Message

Last month we looked at national program planning and this month we will focus on our local programs. We have several local positions, studied over the years, and it is now time to review them and see which ones we want to keep, update, or drop. Come for lunch at Shirlene's restaurant on April 30 (11:30 a.m. so we will be ahead of the crowd). We will have a good time eating and discussing. If you have an idea for a local study, bring it along, or call Peggy or Julie. Our annual meeting is coming fast (Wed. May 22 at Pi's restaurant) and we need to get your ideas out to the membership before then. If you can't remember all our local positions, log on to our web site www.lwv-midland.org to review them.

We are working on two items this year. Fran Hamburg and her committee are reviewing city planning and Peg and Julie are watching the tax abatement trials to follow what is happening. (Brief review: the

Midland Cogeneration Plant, the Dow Chemical and Dow Corning Corporations have appealed their personal property taxes and are asking for a tax reduction. The trial of the Cogeneration Plant is now before a tax tribunal in Lansing. The other two trials will come up later.) For up-to-date info on those tax trials, come to our annual meeting. Our guest speaker will be city attorney Jim Branson, who will let us know where we stand and what is going to happen next.

Lastly, Radio Days went off splendidly in March, as usual. The message got out, the Midland LWV got a little richer. Many people worked to make this happen; Margaret Rockwell spearheaded the event and worked the hardest. Next month we will have a detailed list of sponsors and thank you notes to those who helped. We really appreciate all of you!

Julie Schmidt

LWVUS Mission Statement:

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

LWV Annual Meeting

We will be having their buffet dinner at
Pi's Restaurant.

The cost will be \$12.00 per person.

Speaker presentation begins at 7:00 pm.
James Branson will be our guest speaker for
the evening.

We will be having our traditional used
book/video sale, so bring along a
few to share.

*Make your checks payable to Midland
Area LWV, and send to Joyce Scott, 5709
Tiffany Ln, Midland, MI 48642. Reserva-
tions are due by May 1, 2002.

Communications from Richard Robinson, Michigan Campaign Finance Reform Network

Campaign Finance Network, informs us of the good possibility of passage of the House Bill in the Senate this week so that the bill can go to the President's desk. By the time this newsletter comes out, we will know the outcome. If it passes, soft money will be forbidden to national parties. This goes a long way to remedy some of the inequities in campaigning, but it will leave much more to do. This is a beginning step and is what was presented as having a pos-

sibility of passing. For the future, what is the role of soft money in the States? What about campaign advertising? How can we strengthen the role of the Federal Elections Commission in oversight? How about public financing of candidates who agree to it?

In the meantime, we see signs that action is moving in the direction of cleaning up election practices. In Massachusetts where voters had overwhelmingly voted for public campaign funding in 1998, the Legislature nev-

ertheless refused to provide an appropriation to fund the Massachusetts Clean Election Law passed by voters. The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court awarded a judgment to candidates who have been certified for public campaign funding under the Massachusetts law. Today's decision upholds the voters' will and overrides the legislative obstruction. See National Voting Rights Institute at www.nvri.org for more information.

-Margaret L. Rockwell

The Rising Cost of Judicial Campaigns Spurs A Movement for Reforms

Judicial campaigns have changed - and not for the better.

For decades a quiet backwater of the electoral process, have in recent years been flooded by money and attack ads, undermining the public confidence in the judiciary and prompting calls for reforms ranging from merit selection, to longer judicial terms to public financing of judicial campaigns.

Thirty nine states hold elections for state judges, and 87 percent of all state judges face an election of some sort - be it partisan, nonpartisan, or a "retention" election (in which an incumbent faces an up-or-down vote but no opponent).



In 2000, state Supreme Court candidates raised \$45.6 million, a 61 percent increase over what they raised in 1998. In addition, outside groups spent another \$16 million on ads in judicial races.

The outside groups appear to be the

driving force in the escalating judicial ads wars. The Chamber of Commerce and other business groups, incensed by big awards in class action suits and personal injury cases, have been financing multimillion dollar campaigns to elect pro-business judges, while trial lawyers give millions to elect pro-plaintiff judges.

The American Bar Association (ABA) last month for the first time recommended that states consider public financing of judicial elections.

The ABA will be working with groups that support proposals for public financing for judicial campaigns in states such as Illinois, North Carolina, Wisconsin, and Texas.