

Subject: News from League of Women Voters of Berrien and Cass Counties Michigan

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From: LWV of Berrien and Cass Counties Michigan (sent by LWV of Berrien and Cass Counties Michigan <susan@lwvbcc.ccsend.com>)

To: susangilbert@csinet.net



LWV Berrien & Cass Counties, Michigan Newsletter

In This Issue

**Holiday Open House
From the President
Member Contact
Information**
**Book Group Selection
Save the Date 1/19/15
Aging Well in Michigan
Voter Turnout 2014
Benefitting from the ACA
Scandinavian Countries**

LWVBCC: Contact Us

lwvbcc.org

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Three Oaks MI 49128



LWVBCC Calendar

December 5 (Friday) 6:00-10:00 pm LWVBCC Holiday Open House and Potluck at Judy Scully's in Lakeside.

January 12 (Monday) 10:00 am. Book Group meeting in New Buffalo.

January 13 (Tuesday) 4:00 Program Planning and 5:00

December 2014

DECEMBER 5 HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE & POTLUCK

MEMBERS BE SURE TO RSVP TO EVITE INVITATION

It's not too late to join the party at Judy and Joe Scully's in Lakeside. Members and their guests are invited from 6:00-10:00 pm Friday evening for a lovely evening of good food, drink and companionship. It's a wonderful event every year.



Please RSVP to the Evite invitation you received on November 17 and indicate what potluck dish you are planning to bring to accompany the ham provided by the League. Or you can [e-mail Judy](#) directly.



Here is a picture from last year's party. Put yourself in the picture and in the fun this year! Pictured from left to right, are Darlene, Bonnie, Margarita, Donna and Bette.

Gentlemen, this picture just happened to be all women, but there were lots of men there.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

From Chris



PM Board meeting. Three Oaks.

January 19 (Monday) Noon.
Lunch with the League.
Coach's Bar & Grill in
Stevensville.

LWVBCC Board of Directors

Chris Zilke President
John Ripley Treasurer
Pat Lauth Secretary
Donna Dutton Membership
Voter Service Mary Gignac
Susan Gilbert Commun.
Jean Sharp Environment
Judy Scully Health & SS
Liz Ennis Education
Melissa Clapper At Large
Earl Bickett Spec. Projects

Note that John Ripley is now the treasurer and Mary Gignac Voter Service. Thank you to both for taking on these jobs.

Board Meetings/Minutes

Board meetings are held on alternate months at the Three Oaks Village Hall or the Bridgman Public Library. Members are encouraged to attend.

There is no Board meeting in December. The next meeting is on Tuesday, January 13 in Three Oaks. Exact location will be posted in the January newsletter as the Three Oaks Village Hall is moving. The meeting will start at 4:00 because of state program planning.

Minutes are posted after they are approved by the Board.

[October 21, 2014](#)
[September 16, 2014](#)
[August 19, 2014](#)
[July 15, 2014](#)
[May 20, 2014](#)
[April 15, 2014](#)

Hmmm--Black Friday and I am at home trying to digest yesterday's sumptuous meal --after having participated in an hour-long aerobics class this morning. Shopping is the furthest thing from my mind and I've never really understood the frenzy of Black Friday.



I prefer to think of December and the holidays ahead. As cold as it may get here in Michigan, baking, looking forward to visits from and to family and friends, walking the dog, watching the birds at our feeder--all are appreciated and "warming" to me.

Catching up on past e-mails (purging those that have been in my inbox for more than a year!), reconnecting with far away friends is something I "should" do more often.

League-wise since our legislators seem to LOVE the lame duck session, please keep an eye out for Action Alerts and make calls/write letters expressing your point(s) of view.

Enjoy whatever holidays you celebrate, eat, drink and read--within your means. And please, if you haven't yet done so, pay your dues!

Thanks, everyone, for helping to make my year interesting and enjoyable.

ATT MEMBERS ON CHANGES IN CONTACT INFORMATION

Updates needed for new Membership Roster

The lost membership rosters were found, so we will be waiting until February to print a new roster. However, we still need to know if any of your contact information has changed. The most common change is with phone numbers, from landline to cell. Please give us your preferred phone number -- we only need one or two for households.

If any of your contact information or contact preferences have changed please [e-mail Susan Gilbert](#) with the changes.

If you are considering joining the League, now would be a good time so you can be included in the roster. [Donna Dutton](#) is membership chair or you can get a [membership form](#) off our website.

LAME DUCK SESSION STARTS DECEMBER 2

LWVMI is on the job--Watch for Action Alerts

A Lame Duck session occurs after the election and before the new legislature takes office in January. It's short and bills can move very fast. For any of a number of reasons, perhaps thinking the electorate is preoccupied with holidays and shopping, legislators like this period to pass all sorts of legislation. Deals are made, votes change, bills are substituted. LWVMI VP for Advocacy Judy Karandjeff,





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HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS

Stumped for gift ideas this holiday season? Consider giving a League of Women Voters membership to a relative or friend. It is a particularly nice gift for a young person who is interested in politics--or maybe isn't but you wish they were. There are over 800 Leagues in the U.S. Go to the [LWVUS website](#) to find them all.

Also consider patronizing our sponsors. A gift of dinner at the Bentwood Tavern or Terrace Room. Center of the World Woodshop has beautiful things. Or treat yourself and have Servicemaster come in and clean your floors.



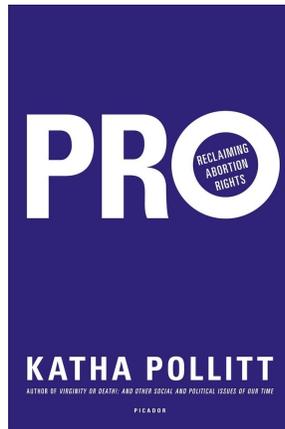
pictured here, lives in Lansing and will be following the action--as well as anyone can!



Two major issues we are following are road/infrastructure funding and electoral college "reform". Two quite different bills have been floated so far to pay for the roads. The most recent would cut the sales tax on gas and substitute a different tax just for roads. The problem is that sales tax revenue go to education and local communities (over \$700 million). Electoral College reform might sound reasonable, but it's not when only one party supports it in just a few key states.

BOOK GROUP SELECTION FOR JANUARY 2015

Next Meeting January 12 at 10:00 am in New Buffalo



The full title of this book is *Pro: Reclaiming Abortion Rights* and the author is Katha Pollitt, a longtime feminist and columnist for *The Nation* magazine.

The legal boundaries of abortion rights have been steadily eroded by state governments, and many of us have come to accept and buy into the "safe, legal and rare" argument. Katha Pollit doesn't accept any of this and in her new book argues that abortion should be considered and accepted as a common part of a woman's reproductive life and a force for good for women, families and society. This book is likely to be provocative and lead to a

great discussion on January 12 at Liz and Annette's in New Buffalo.

SAVE THE DATE: MONDAY, JANUARY 19 FOR THE NEXT LUNCH WITH THE LEAGUE

More information in the January newsletter.

AGING WELL IN THE STATE OF MICHIGAN

November Lunch with the League Report

On November 12 League member Renee Reid-Smith spoke to members and guests about aging in Michigan specifically, but much of what she said would apply anywhere in the U.S. The audience was both fascinated and appalled at what they heard. So much so that future lunch meetings may focus on various aspects of elder care and health care generally. Renee is on the left in the picture and another League member, Linda Strohl is on the right. Linda is head of our area's Meals on Wheels program. Among other jobs, Renee is the governor-appointed Commissioner to



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the Michigan Commission on Services to the Aging ("MCSA"), and represents our very own Area IV.

VOTER TURNOUT 2014 GENERAL ELECTION

Not very good!

Even though Michigan's turnout was the lowest it has been in a long time, 42.78%, it was better than the national average of 36.6%. Michigan voters were, after all, electing a governor and a U.S. Senator. Indiana, which was electing neither, had a 28% turnout rate, the lowest in the nation. Other states at the bottom of the list were Texas (28.5%), New York (28.8%), Utah (28.8%) and Tennessee (29.1%).

Very interesting was the vote within Michigan. Berrien and Cass counties were two of the five Michigan counties with the lowest voter turnout! Cass **was** the lowest. Four of the five counties are along the Indiana border. Maybe voter apathy is contagious? See this [Michigan Radio article](#).

BENEFITING FROM THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

A Picture Worth Many Words

The New York Times puts out some great graphics, and on October 29 they produced [a map of the U.S. showing the increase in the insured population](#), by state and county, because of the Affordable Care Act.

There were words, of course, and some are worth singling out. "The biggest winners from the law include people between the ages of 18 and 34; blacks; Hispanics; and people who live in rural areas. The areas with the largest increases in the health insurance rate, for example, include rural Arkansas and Nevada; southern Texas; large swaths of New Mexico, Kentucky and West Virginia; and much of inland California and Oregon."

"That state boundaries are so prominent in the map attests to the power of state policy in shaping health insurance conditions. The most important factor in predicting whether an American who had no insurance in 2013 signed up this year was whether the state that person lives in expanded its Medicaid program in 2014."

MY CONTINUING FASCINATION WITH THE SCANDINAVIAN COUNTRIES

By Susan Gilbert

I read recently that Notre Dame's Global Adaption Index has concluded that Norway is the country best prepared for climate change. The other top 5 in order are New Zealand, Sweden, Finland, Denmark.

Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark typically are at the top of the

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Group shot. Marilyn Klawiter in the middle.



Karen Ristau

list when anything good is measured, which has earned them the nickname the Nordic Nirvana. They regularly lead the list of the world's happiest countries. For 2013 Denmark was at the top, followed by Norway 2, Sweden 5, and Finland 7. The U.S. ranks #17, behind Mexico. The rankings are a measurement of the well being of a country's citizens. As the authors of the [World Happiness Report 2013](#) explain the objective benefits of subjective well-being:

"...a broad range of evidence showing the people who are emotionally happier, who have more satisfying lives, and who live in happier communities, are more likely both now and later to be healthy, productive, and socially connected. These benefits in turn flow more broadly to their families, workplaces, and communities, to the advantage of all."

It is easier to be happier in the Scandinavian countries because the government provides health care, child care, elder care, free education for your children and retirement security. I think most of us would be happier if we didn't have to worry about any of those things.

Finland is usually 1 or 2 on the education achievement list. They view their teachers as critical professionals and train and pay them accordingly.

It has been observed that the Scandinavian countries are prosperous and people have rewarding jobs. There is more social mobility and their citizens are more willing to accept change and try new things. They are very technologically savvy as well as entrepreneurial.

American sceptics tend to be critical of the Nordic Nirvana. It's "socialism". "It's easier in a small homogeneous country". That may be true but these countries have taken in more immigrants percentage-wise than many countries as a result of recent global displacements. And, finally, the biggest knock of all-their taxes are high. As [The American Conservative](#) puts it

"It's true that the Scandinavians have impressively low debt and responsible fiscal policies. But that's because their citizens take on a considerably higher tax burden than Americans are willing to accept".

But no one has really given Americans that choice and the over the last couple of decades the winning message of the political right is that taxes are bad, government is bad, and individual responsibility is good no matter who you are. And, of course, we have to fight wars without raising taxes either.

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