

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
To: susangilbert@csinet.net



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LWVBCC: Contact Us

lwbcc.org

P.O. Box 161
Three Oaks MI 49128

LWVBCC Calendar

January 13 (Monday) 10:00
LWVBCC Book Group Meets
Home of Donna Dutton, Union
Pier

January 14 (Tuesday)
Bridgman Library
4:00 Program Planning
5:00 Board Meeting

February WINTER BREAK!

January 2014

Dear Reader:

Some change is good so each new year we create a new look for the LWVBCC Newsletter. We editors are being encouraged to keep our formats simple and "optimize for mobile" ie keep the template narrow. It will also copy better for our website.

Best Wishes for 2014
Susan Gilbert, Editor

LWVBCC on Facebook Now!

Check out our Facebook page! Many thanks to John Ripley for creating this informative and colorful page. Be sure you "Like" us and invite your friends to "Like" us too. Think about posting a comment.



From the President

I'm hoping you've each had an enjoyable holiday and are ready to face the adventures, challenges and opportunities of the year ahead.

The first thing on our League calendar is the book group meeting on Monday, January 13. Whether you're planning to attend or not, I urge you to beg, borrow or buy one of the books that will be discussed: Diane Ravitch's *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools*.



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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.

The next meeting is on Tuesday, January 14 at the Bridgman Library.

Minutes are posted after they are approved by the Board.

[October 15, 2013](#)

Quick Links

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This is an extremely important book, well documented and complete with Ms. Ravitch's list of suggested remedies to begin to correct what's been transpiring in the education of our youth in the United States in the past 12+ years. This book kept me awake nights! I'm reading the second book, *Surpassing Shanghai* now.

The second January event is Program Planning on the 14th prior to the Board meeting. This is our opportunity to influence the positions of our national League. See the article below.

LWVBCC takes a winter break (an especially good idea this winter!) but we'll be back at it in the spring. 2014 will be an especially busy year for our League, with two consensus meetings, voter registration and -it's an election year!. Please plan to be involved and [contact me](#) with your suggestions, comments and inspirations.

My sincere wishes for a Happy New Year to one and all.--- Chris

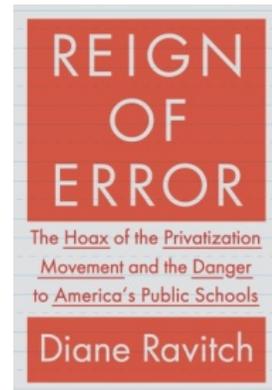
Book Group Meeting Monday, January 13

The Topic is Education

The next Book Group meeting will be held on Monday, January 13 at 10:00 am at the home of Donna Dutton, [9897 Nolan Ave, Union Pier](#). If you can, please let Donna know if you might be attending. [E-mail](#) or call her at 269-469-9763.

The two book selections are the Diane Ravitch book *Reign of Error* and *Surpassing Shanghai* by Marc Tucker and Linda Darling Hammond.

Members are encouraged to read the books even if they cannot come to the book group meeting. The more we learn the better we will be prepared for the spring consensus meeting on education --a needed update of the LWVMI position.



National Program Planning Tuesday, January 14

4:00 pm at the Bridgman Library

Every two years, prior to the National Convention (to be held in Texas in June), we have the opportunity - indeed obligation - to have an impact on existing or potentially new LWVUS issues and positions. This process, called program planning, is the basis for LWVUS education and action and is vital for the League's success as a grassroots organization.

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Welcome New Members!

Joyce Mims Union Pier

Susan Quiriconi
New Buffalo

A new hardcopy member roster will be coming out in February.

Members please be sure we have your current contact information.

[E-mail editor](#)



We are asked to offer suggestions for an entirely new study, recommend an update to a previous LWVUS study (and existing position), or concur with a study recommendation put forth by another League. For example, the Massachusetts League has recommended an update study on campaign finance (similar to the agriculture update we are working on this year) which we can support. Or we can make a suggestion of our own, hoping other Leagues share our priority. The study or restudy or concurrence with the most support makes the cut.

This meeting is open to ALL members and gives each of us the opportunity to learn more about national issues of greatest importance. If you are unable to attend but would like to make a suggestion, contact [Chris Zilke](#). Suggestions really welcome!

LWVBCC Awarded Grant By LWVUS Ed Fund

The League of Women Voters of the United States Education Fund has awarded LWVBCC a \$1,000 grant as part of a Youth Voter Registration project. LWVBCC will go into high schools in our two counties this spring to register students and to provide some "voter training" when possible. LWVUS recognizes the importance of educating and registering the next generation of voters.

Any members or friends of the League interested in helping with this project should contact Voter Service Chair [John Ripley](#). We do a great job registering voters and you'll want to be a part of this exciting effort!

Michigan Legislative News

Always busy in December!

The Michigan legislature passed two bills in December opposed by the League, both the subject of Action Alerts. The first was the nicknamed Plan Your Abortion Bill or Plan for Rape bill--launched using a strange legislative tactic that lets a petitioner, in this case Michigan Right to Life, collect the signatures of about 3% of the voters then force the legislature to either vote on the measure or put it on the ballot. We would have preferred the latter, as we felt more than 3% of the voters should make a decision that requires women to purchase a special insurance rider to have an abortion covered, whatever the circumstances. The irony is that only about 3% of abortions in the state are paid for by insurance. Oh, and with this method the governor has no veto, important because Snyder vetoed a bill with a similar provision last year.

The other bill was SB 661, which blocked the Secretary of State's order that would have made election campaigns more transparent, for example by requiring disclosure of the funders of "issue ads". The governor was once much in favor of disclosure and transparency but signed the bill anyway. Rich Robinson of the Michigan Campaign

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Concern About Boys

Boys do not seem to be doing as well in school as girls. This shows up at the college level, where 43% of undergraduates are men and only 40% of graduates students are men.



BP Whiting Refinery

The \$4.2 billion update of this refinery is complete--a project begun in 2008. The purpose was to enable the refinery to process the heavy crude coming from the Alberta tar sands.

Installed were state-of-the-art equipment for air emissions and water treatment, according to the plant manager. The conversion was not without protest and dispute.

Finance Network issued an informative [press release](#).

Getting Ready for the Agriculture Consensus

Agriculture and Food Safety in the News

The LWVUS is conducting a national study to update the current agriculture position. Local Leagues will be involved, as it is at the grass roots that positions are made. The date of the consensus meeting is Friday, March 28 in the am. So naturally, news on agriculture items catches your editor's eye.



Antibiotics in animal feed: The FDA in December proposed rules to curtail the widespread use of antibiotics in Animal Feeding Operations (AFOs, a term to know). In spite of scientific evidence that human health is being jeopardized as resistance builds up, the new rules are mostly voluntary. Since 80% of all the antibiotics sold by pharmaceutical companies in the U.S. go into animal feed, how likely are they to voluntarily give up this business? Read an [article by Newsday's health editor](#).

An [editorial by the San Jose CA Mercury News](#) criticizes the antibiotic recommendation and a similar FDA voluntary request that manufacturers justify the use of antibacterial soaps and gels. These contains triclosan, which may increase resistance to antibiotics and is an endocrine disrupter (ie it disrupts hormones, including reproductive hormones).

Food labeling: Consumers appear to be reading the labels *and* taking action. Bloggers and online petitions have called for the removal of questionable ingredients and companies have responded (for example Kraft, Starbucks, PepsiCo, Chik-fil-A). It seems there are alternatives to ingredients with long names we can't pronounce. Food labeling is a consensus item. Read the [article by Candace Choi](#) of AP.

Michigan Wins "Race to the Top" Grant

Grant for Early Childhood Education

On December 19 the Department of Education announced that Michigan was one of 6 states to receive a grant, \$51,737,456, for early childhood education, a priority for both the Obama Administration and Governor Rick Snyder.



League Pictures



Holiday Party: Darlene, Bonnie, Margarita, Donna & Bette.



Our hosts Annette left & Liz center. Arlene Urquhart right.



Men supervising Liz at Holiday Party.



Melissa Clapper & Liz Ennis after their excellent education meeting in November.



Who says League members are all "little old ladies in gym

The fundings may be used for:

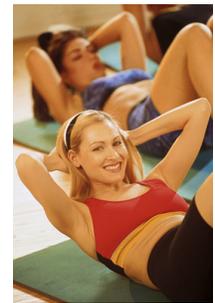


- Establishing culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate early learning and development standards across all the essential domains of school readiness for children from birth to kindergarten entry.
- Ensuring that quality program standards are applied to all early learning programs in the state.
- Building and improving state Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement Systems designed to inform parents about the quality of early learning programs and drive improvements to the quality of those programs.
- Promoting health and family engagement strategies.

Annual Health Care Rankings by State

Michigan Ranks 34th

The United Health Foundation annually evaluates the nation's health by state. The [2013 Report](#) once again gives states in the deep South the dubious distinction of being the least healthy (Mississippi is #50, Arkansas #49, Louisiana #48, Alabama #49). However, Michigan cannot be proud of our 34th place (Indiana is 41st); the finger of serious health issues reaches up from the South to Michigan in some categories. The healthiest state is Hawaii, followed by Vermont and Minnesota.



Check out the report--lots of cool maps and charts and easy to follow.

Low Wage Workers & Taxpayer Dollars by Susan Gilbert

Low wage workers are everywhere. They work in fast food restaurants and as bus boys and dishwashers in other restaurants. They work at Walmart and other big box stores. They are home health care workers and janitorial staff and they mow lawns. The vast majority are adults not teens. Fast food workers are agitating for a pay increase to \$15/hour and there is pressure building for an increase in the minimum wage. The current minimum wage of \$7.25/hour is not a living wage. The famous [McDonald's employee budget](#) made it clear that the only way to balance expenses and income is to get a second job.

Some in the business and political communities claim we can't afford to increase the minimum wage. Prices would have to increase for consumers--the price of that burger might have to go up 25¢. And in truth it might be hard for some small businesses, but McDonald's and Walmart could probably find a way to handle it. Maybe reduce executive salaries a bit. The CEO of McDonald's makes 580 times a full-time minimum wage worker (See [5 Stats that Should Shock You](#)).

What many people do not realize is that taxpayers enable and subsidize the low wage economy. Workers with low wages and meager benefits use food stamps, housing subsidies, Medicaid and other forms of public assistance. A [May 2013 study](#) by the Democratic staff of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce on Walmart and the Low Wage Economy found that a single Walmart super center in Wisconsin cost taxpayers at least \$904,542/year and possibly as much as \$1,744,590/year. Granted there may be some political fodder in there, but I think there is no serious dispute that low wage business

shoes"?

employees cannot survive without taxpayer support and that while we allegedly cannot afford roads, bridges, better schools, etc. we can use huge amounts of taxpayer dollars to effectively subsidize very profitable private businesses.

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