



In This Issue

- Education Consensus Meeting**
- Voter Registration Project**
- Membership Luncheon**
- April Book Group Selection**
- Meeting on the GRID**
- Annual Meeting June 17**
- Aq Meeting Report**
- The Future of Employment**
- Editorial**

LWVBCC: Contact Us

[lwvbcc.org](http://lwvbcc.org)

**P.O. Box 161  
Three Oaks MI 49128**

LWVBCC Calendar

- APRIL 10 (Thursday 1:00 pm  
Education Consensus Meeting  
St. Joseph Public Library
- April 22 (Tuesday) 5:00 pm  
LWVBCC Board Meeting,  
Bridgman Public Library
- April 28 (Monday) 10:00 am  
Book Group Meeting
- April 30 (Wednesday) Noon.  
Membership luncheon at  
Coach's in Stevensille
- May 13 (Tuesday) 6:00pm  
Presentation on THE GRID at  
AEP/Cook building in  
Buchanan.
- May 20 (Tuesday) 5:00 pm  
LWVBCC Board Meeting,  
Three Oaks Village Hall
- June 17 (Tuesday) 6:00 pm  
LWVBCC Annual Meeting &  
Dinner at Orchard Hills  
Country Club.

April 2014

**President's Letter**

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Fifth Assessment Report released on March 31 did, as expected, "lay bare the grim impact of climate change". Over 500 scientists and government officials have been involved in the creation of this document. Here is a link to the [Executive Summary and Chapter Review](#).

We're all aware of "reduce, reuse, recycle" - but there IS much more each of us can do. Write our representatives about our concerns, write to the CEOs of corporations whose products we use asking them to be more environmentally conscientious (excessive product packaging is one of the issues that bugs me), be aware on a daily basis of the decisions we make that may have a negative impact on our environment.

I'm currently reading "Enough is Enough" - Building a Sustainable Economy in a World of Finite Resources - by Rob Dietz & Dan O'Neill. I recommend it.

Enjoy April. Warm weather coming ... finally!

Chris

Education Consensus Meeting Thursday, April 10 at 1:00

**HELP WANTED \* WE NEED YOU \* BE A SPORT \* PITCH IN**



It never seems to end, the ever increasing demands on our time and effort. Sometimes though, we just have to say, "yes!" This is what we hope you will say to this reminder to participate in our workshop to clean up, clarify, and offer opinions about the League of Women Voters position change language in Education. A state committee has worked diligently to update the meaning, intent, and focus of where we stand on this important topic. Now it is our turn to weigh in on this work,

## LWVBCC Board of Directors

Chris Zilke President  
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Liz Ennis Education  
Joe Naines Adult Ed  
Sandy Click At Large  
Melissa Clapper At Large  
Mary Gignac At Large  
Earl Bickett Spec. Projects

### 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, April 22 at the Bridgman Library.

Minutes are posted after they are approved by the Board.

[January 14, 2014](#)  
[November 19, 2013](#)  
[October 15, 2013](#)

### What is a Consensus Meeting?

Consensus is the process the League uses to reach member agreement on study issues. "It is neither a simple majority nor unanimity: instead it is a overall sense of the group." For a state or national study the outcomes of all the local League consensus meetings are sent in and the respective Board determines if there is sufficient agreement amongst the Leagues to take a position. Without a relevant, up-to-date position the League cannot take action on an issue.

arrive at consensus and submit our opinions and suggestions to the state leaders.

If you have the interest, time and willingness to learn more about one of the top political, and societal issues of our day then you should definitely join us. You will learn of the massive changes happening with public education today and add your voice to those who are struggling to hang on to this institutional touchstone of democracy.

Our format for the afternoon will be informal and the activity is planned as "elbows on the table discussion." We have quite a bit to cover as we update language and explain as we go. Melissa Clapper and Liz Ennis served on the state committee and are anxious to share the work. Please join us if you can. Your opinions matter to us.

EDUCATION CONSENSUS MEETING  
THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 1:00pm to 4:00pm

MAUD PRESTON PALENSKE MEMORIAL LIBRARY  
[500 MARKET ST. ST. JOSEPH MI](#) (on the bluff)

It would be lovely to know how many to plan for. Please [e-mail Liz Ennis](#) to advise of your attendance. Thanks much!

You can click on the [Education Study Links on the LWVMI website](#) to read the papers and review the new language under consideration.

### Youth Voter Registration Project: In Progress!

#### Spring Campaign in Area High Schools/Community Colleges

The 2014 Youth Voter Registration Project has launched, targeting local high schools and our two community colleges. 14 League volunteers will be doing this valuable work.

If you haven't volunteered but would still like to please contact Voter Service Chair [John Ripley](#).



### Membership Luncheon April 30 at Noon

#### For Prospective, New and Current Members!

This is going to be an informal get together to talk about what the League's mission is, what we do exactly, upcoming programs and plans. We'd like to get to know our new members better--and also some current members! Prospective members are also encouraged to attend to learn more about this great organization.

We will meet at Coach's Bar & Grill at [2528 Glenlord Rd in Stevensville](#). This is where we had the November education meeting and we liked it. As then, we will all order "on our own" from the menu. However, for planning purposes the Coach's staff would like to know how many will



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**Welcome New Member**

Karen Ristau of  
Union Pier

**Great Time to Join  
the League**

Available now: for a limited time we offer to new members an extended membership benefit. You will not be billed for dues until a year from October (in 2015!). This gives new members a longer time to get oriented to the League.

Click on the links in the block below for more information on League membership.



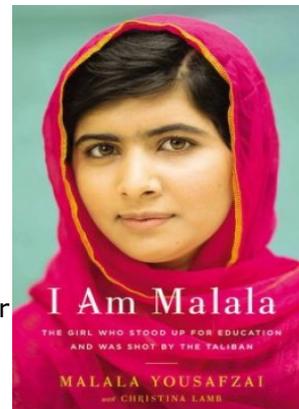
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be attending, so please rsvp by [e-mail](#) to our membership chair Donna Dutton or call her at 269-469-9763 by April 25th.

**April Book Group Selection**

**Next Meeting is Monday, April 28 at 10:00 at Lorraine Stepanek's**

*I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban* by Malala Yousafzai and Christina Lamb is the selection for April. The group decided it would like to read an inspiring and uplifting book after reading about education and agriculture.



This young woman was just a child when she was shot in the head by Taliban members for speaking out on the advantages of education for girls. British doctors saved her life and she seems to have made a full recovery. She continues to promote education for girls. Truly an inspiring book--and widely available at libraries and bookstores in hardcopy or electronic editions.

Lorraine's home is at [16695 White Oak Lane](#) in north New Buffalo Township. To help Lorraine plan refreshments, please [contact her](#) if you plan to attend.

**Tuesday, May 13 meeting on THE GRID**

**In Cooperation with AEP**

What is the state of the GRID, that all important network that powers our homes and businesses? Seems every time there is a storm there is a GRID problem. Is it flexible enough to work with alternative energy sources? Who is responsible for the GRID anyway?



Marc Lewis, VP of External Affairs at I&M/AEP, will update us on this important aspect of the energy scene at 6:00 PM on May 13th at the AEP/Cook Building, 500 Circle Drive in Buchanan. This is the same venue where we had the Congressional debate in 2012 and also meetings on coal and alternative energy. Thank you AEP!

This meeting is free and open to the public. No reservations required.

**Annual Meeting & Dinner Tuesday, June 17**

**Save the Date!**

Our speaker this year will be Larry Weber, Senior Vice President and Chief Nuclear Officer at the Cook Nuclear Plant. He will speak on the situation at the Fukushima Nuclear Plant in Japan.

**Agriculture Consensus Meeting Report**

Learn how saving on homeowners starts in your garage.



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Equal Pay Day April 8



Equal Pay Day is the symbolic day when women's earnings finally catch up to men's earnings from the previous year. It takes an extra 3 months and 8 days!

Turns out Mary Barra, the new CEO of General Motors, has a total compensation package of \$4.4 million. Not bad but her male predecessor, Dan Akerson, earned \$9.1 million in 2012.

Quick Links

[League Information](#)

### A Good Job Done By All

At the end of the day the committee celebrated at a local pub in Buchanan! Pictured L to R are Chris Zilke, Vicky Pfauth, Susan Gilbert and Theresa Richter.



Twenty-one women and men gathered at Fernwood to hear the committee's presentations and consider the consensus questions. it was a long day but the group hung in there and we did reach consensus on topics related to farm subsidies, animal management, food labeling, R&D, and food safety. Wow!

### Studies Show Effect of Poverty, Youth, Mobility & Drugs

#### The Future of Employment

A new study by the Oxford Martin School of Oxford University predicts that 47% of U.S. jobs could be eliminated by automation in the next 20 years. Read the [Press Release](#) and link to the study.

Those who entered the workforce at the beginning of the recession in 2008 have had a particularly difficult time. The worst of it is the situation may not improve, ever. [Read a disturbing article](#) originally published in the Minneapolis Star. It features a young man who graduated from the U. of Illinois law school and is now selling cars in Minneapolis.

A common perception is to think of the unemployed as slackers and usually inner city residents. Further, that those working at fast food restaurants making minimum wage are usually teenagers. Recent data disputes these views and the above mentioned study and article show the job market is only going to get worse for many Americans.

More than half the Americans who make \$9.00/hour or less are 25 or older and 41% have at least some college education. Of the 50,000,000 living in poverty 41% are white and the new face of poverty is in the suburbs.

The Michigan Senate passed a bill setting up a drug testing pilot program for welfare recipients i.e. the unemployed. Read a [Free Press article](#). This is because many think that welfare recipients are also drug users who fritter away our tax money. A [Bloomberg/Business Week analysis](#) of a new Rand study says Americans spend \$109 billion a year on illegal drugs, more than they spend on electronics and appliances. It seems unlikely inner-city welfare recipients alone are fueling this kind of spending.

[Consider Membership](#)  
[Membership Form](#)  
[Donate to the League](#)

### Health Care Costs Increases for Workers

Workers are spending 28 percent more on health insurance benefits than they did three years ago because of increases in deductibles, co-pays and increased premium sharing. The costs for employers have gone up 14% as they shift more of the cost to employees.

### Abortions Decrease

Good news here is that the U.S. abortion rate has fallen to its lowest levels since the Roe vs. Wade decision in 1973 according to the Guttmacher Institute, which attributes the decrease to more widespread use of contraception. Look at the Institute's interesting [Fact Sheet on Induced Abortion in the U.S.](#)

### Local Steel in NY Bridge

The Tappan Zee Bridge in New York is finally being replaced. The 16,000 foot bridge is the longest in the state and replacing it the biggest project ever.

Steel for the new bridge will be made at the Burns Harbor mill of Arcelor Mittal USA. Steel from China was used in the Oakland Bay Bridge and there have been problems. Cheaper is not always better.



## We Need to Assert Ourselves!

by Susan Gilbert

### Enough is Enough

As Chris Zilke and Liz Ennis say in their newsletter pieces, there are times when you have to speak up. My point in this piece is we all need to do it and we have to do it louder and more often. Because they are not hearing us!

All of us reading this newsletter are aware of the problems out there-- at the local, county, state and national levels. Many are long standing, so why isn't more progress being made? Our state legislature and Congress seem solely concerned about getting re-elected (spending billions) and shafting the other party. The state legislatures are obsessed with social issues: gay marriage, abortion, drug testing of welfare recipients etc. There are the old standbys too, such as voter fraud, failing schools and a balanced budget amendment to the U.S. Constitution (the U.S. Government is *not* like a family and too many families can't balance their budgets either).

Our lives are generally comfortable and some issues seem remote -- like how many tons of whatever gases are sent into the atmosphere by our lifestyle. The 5th UN report on climate change points out that we are already experiencing the effects of global warming, much sooner than expected. What a surprise! I don't care if people dispute the reason for the warming, but we are now at the point we have to deal with its effects. Did you see the TV report about the ocean creeping into Miami?

Those of us who studied agriculture want to see meat inspectors kept in slaughter houses. The meat packers don't want them there and it saves the government money, so guess what is going to happen -- unless we speak up!

The issues that affect me directly bother me the most. Like the lousy Internet service we have, here and in this country generally. You may not be aware (unless you have read my previous articles on this subject) that almost every developed country has better and faster internet service than we do. The deer have ravaged many gardens and roam freely (many carrying Lyme disease), but no one takes control seriously. Have to keep lots of deer around for the hunters. The roads are a mess. Our legislature has been trying to figure out how to fund expanded road and bridge repairs for years, but no plan yet! We have a jobs problem in this state and last I heard construction jobs pay pretty well and people making money pay taxes that might help fund those road projects.

What got me started thinking about this editorial was the gas line explosion in Harlem. Old, buried gas lines are leaking all over New York--and other cities. Here's [one article](#) on the subject. There are also old water mains, sewers, etc. Basically our infrastructure is a mess.

The League of Women Voters works hard on many issues to prod our lawmakers to do the right thing. LWVMI president Sue Smith recently testified in Dearborn against a steel plant's request to emit more air pollution! Read the [local paper article](#). By being a member of the League you are helping to make a difference. But we have to up the

The current Tappan Zee bridge opened in 1955 and was only designed to last 50 years (until 2005!). It also carries far more traffic than ever intended. The NY governor's office refers to it as the "hold your breath bridge." Commuters will have to hold their breath until 2018 when the new bridge is scheduled to open. Much time was lost arguing over whether to replace or restore the bridge and who would pay for the work.

level of our game. Get more involved in League activities, serve on committees of all kinds (I've volunteered for the SW Michigan Planning Commission committee on internet service), write and call your legislators more often and press them hard in the upcoming election period. Make them listen--keep the U.S. and Michigan in particular a model for the best!

Like us on Facebook 

Visit the new LWVBCC Facebook page. We're confident you'll be impressed. Be sure to "Like" us.

## The League: A Valuable Resource in Our Communities



## Helping to Make Democracy Work

**Ask about our extended membership benefit available to new members this time of year.**

**Interested in joining the League? Go to our [website](#) or contact our membership chair [Donna Dutton](#).**

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