

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

- March 18 (Tuesday) 5:00
LWVBCC Board Meeting Three Oaks Village Hall
- March 28 (Friday) 10:00-3:00
Agriculture Consensus Meeting at Fernwood.
- APRIL 10 (Thursday 1:00 pm
Education Consensus Meeting St. Joe Public Library
- April 22 (Tuesday) 5:00
LWVBCC Board Meeting, Bridgman Public Library
- April 28 (Monday) 10:00 am
Book Group Meeting

LWVBCC Board of Directors

- Chris Zilke President
- Bonnie Pollack Treasurer
- Pat Lauth Secretary
- Donna Dutton Membership

March 2014

President's Letter



Dear League Members - Many of your fellow members have been involved in two very significant studies over the past several months: a LWVUS Agriculture Update Study and a LWVMI Education Update Study. Consensus Meetings during which ALL members are asked to participate are coming up on March 28 (Agriculture) and April 10 (Education).

Both subjects are complex, interesting and important. You will be surprised at the amount of information you will learn during the meetings and will then have the opportunity to influence the outcome and future actions to be taken by our State and National Leagues by answering the many questions posed. Participating in a consensus meeting is one of the privileges and responsibilities of League membership. Please put the dates on your calendar now.

We need your participation and look forward to seeing you.

Chris

Agriculture Consensus Meeting March 28

Put the Date on Your Calendar; Make Your Reservation!

Fernwood Botanical Garden in Niles will be the site on Friday, March 28 of an all-day consensus meeting on agriculture to update the existing LWVUS position. The time frame is actually 10:00 am to 3:00 pm with approximately an hour break for lunch. The



first half of the consensus questions will be covered in the morning and the second half in the afternoon, so if you can only come for half a day you can still contribute to the consensus. The cost of lunch is \$12 complete and you must make a reservation for lunch (see the article below for the new method). Note that non-members may attend but cannot participate in the actual consensus discussion.

John Ripley Voter Service
Susan Gilbert Commun.
Ginny Washburn Finance
Jean Sharp Environment
Monica Eberhardt Environ.
Judy Scully Health & SS
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, March 18 at the Three Oaks Village Hall.

Minutes are posted after they are approved by the Board.

[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.

In Berrien and Cass Counties we are very conscious of agriculture because of the huge fields of "row crops" and the bounty of our vegetable farms and orchards. We may also be aware that a new Farm Bill has just been signed by the President, one of a series of farm bills going back to the 1930's, the era of the dust bowl.

However, now the farm bill has an *annual* price tag of between \$15 and \$35 billion. There are other issues besides subsidies and crop insurance and they include CAFOs (factory livestock farms), new agriculture technology, food safety and food labeling. Each of these affects all of us.

We have added a special [Agriculture Study page](#) to our website where you will find the Consensus Questions and the 23 study papers prepared by the LWVUS Agriculture Committee. These papers are not as long as they look, when, for example, you might see page 1 of 12, as usually half the pages are references and footnotes. We have put an asterisk by the most important papers.

How to Make Reservations for Ag Meeting Lunch

NEW LWVBCC Payment System

Fernwood has always been very gracious about taking reservations for us, but it is a favor. And sometimes we have other reasons to collect money. So the amazing Mr. Ripley has come up with a system for LWVBCC using Paypal--BUT you do not have to have a PayPal account and can use a credit card.

So [CLICK HERE](#) to make your reservation for lunch on March 28 at Fernwood. The cost is \$12. John's instructions below. It is not hard--similar to buying anything online.

By clicking on the words Click Here above, you will now have access to our all-new online way to pay. You will see a "Shopping Cart" where there's a copy of your purchase request. Click on "Check Out" (what most people do) or "Check Out with PayPal" if you have a PayPal account. You will now see buttons for "Your order summary" or "Choose a way to pay." If you wish to pay by credit card, just click on the words "Don't have a PayPal account?" That opens an online form called "Pay with a debit or credit card." Make sure that the bullet circle next to the words "Credit Card" is filled in. Then just fill in the requested information in the area below that and then click "Review and Continue" all the way at the bottom. That will open a window entitled "Review Your Information" where you can click "Pay." Your \$12 per person lunch charge will be shown. Thank you. See you there!
John

Education Consensus Meeting Thursday, April 10

Put This Date on Your Calendar Too!



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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.

On Thursday, April 10 we need your voice, your ideas and the pleasure of your company. Beginning at 1:00 pm we will meet at the St. Joe Library, first floor meeting room, for a consensus meeting on the questions put forth in the State League's Re-Study on Public Education. Our members, Liz Ennis and Melissa Clapper worked on the state committee which formulated the background papers and made recommendations for new language in the State League's education position language. You can click on the [Education Study Links on the LWVMI website](#) to read the papers and review the new language under consideration.

If you might wonder why this is so important for us, think about the public debates over our schools and the related political and social issues that have become some of the most talked about topics of today. As you well know, the League of Women Voters has position language on education. However, we have been limited in our public response because our words have not kept up with many of the new twists and turns in legislation, public policy and popular trends. These include charters, choice, technology and the Education Achievement Authority or EAA. Now more than ever, the League needs to be heard, locally and in Lansing.

So please come to our April meeting and help us arrive at consensus on new language for education. We promise tasty snacks! The meeting will be from one to four. Again, April 10, St. Joe Library. See you there.

Youth Voter Registration Project

Spring Campaign in Area High Schools/Community Colleges

The Youth Voter Registration Project is launching now, targeting 10 local high schools and our two community colleges.

Volunteers will be needed to help, and you are strongly encouraged to email [John Ripley](#), if you have not already done so and can help.



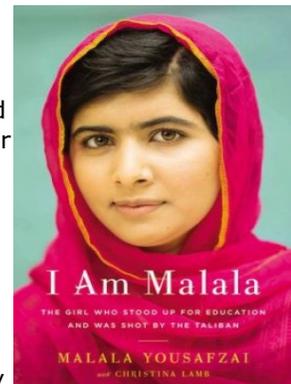
Plans call for on-campus registration activities to be conducted during mid-March to late April. If you are available and can attend a meeting or two before then, please email John asap.

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



Quick Links

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Not the Texas I Expected

by Susan Gilbert

Texans are really very friendly. They drive big pickups, Lone Star editions. They do not open carry guns and many come from other places, like Michigan.

They are doing a lot of road construction, with federal dollars (a lot of those seem to be flowing to Texas). But one of the projects I was most impressed with was the Central Library in San Antonio. Nicknamed "Big Red" it opened in 1995 and is 220,000 square feet. It is open 7 days a week and

an inspiring book.

I Am Malala is widely available at libraries and bookstores and in hardcopy or electronic editions.

Recent PEW Research Center Reports

Libraries & Book Reading

A recent PEW Research Center report [How Americans Value Public Libraries in Their Communities](#) shows that Americans still value their public libraries and feel library closures would have an adverse impact on their communities. Moreover, libraries are used frequently by those who do not have computer access at home and/or are looking for a job. If you have been in a library lately this will not come as a surprise. At right is one of two computer areas at the San Antonio, Texas main library at about 4:30 on a beautiful Sunday afternoon. See more on the San Antonio Library in the sidebar article on Texas.



[Another PEW Research Center Report](#) also revealed that the typical U.S. adult has read 5 books in the past 12 months. Almost half of the readers under 30 have read an e-book in the past year.

While the media generally gives less time to books, Oprah Winfrey continues to promote reading, with a few pages in every issue of her magazine *O* devoted to books. *The Week* also has a regular book section.

It All Comes Down to Water by Susan Gilbert

Lessons Learned While Traveling

I often share with you observations from my travels and this year is no exception. We have been in Belize (we'll save that for another time), Texas and Southern California.

Both Texas and California have been in a state of drought for a few years; this year it is worse. Both states need to put up "No more residents allowed" signs as soon as possible.



is open 7 days a week and library circulation doubled after it was built. Wouldn't you like to use this library?



This is a Chihuly glass sculpture in the escalator atrium.

Raising the Minimum Wage

There are many arguments pro and con for raising the minimum wage. Opponents argue it will eliminate jobs and increase prices.

Indeed the increased use of self-serve check-outs and kiosks could increase as the price of human labor goes up. Even U.S. customs now has self-service kiosks to check in to the country.

There are also arguments in favor of raising the minimum wage. Here is an [article from a recent New York Times](#) in favor of increasing the minimum wage.

But they won't. The legislature in Texas has done little to deal with the water problem. They passed a bill providing funding for some water infrastructure projects with the caveat it had to be approved by the voters. Fortunately, the voters approved. But the problems are more fundamental and go way back in Texas history. An article in the Texas Quarterly, which I cannot find online, describes the basic conflict in Texas between surface water, which belongs to everyone, and aquifer water, which belongs to the people who sit on top of it. Landowners can sell their water rights, and what has happened is that "water brokers" buy these water rights and sell the water they pump to Texas cities. The problem is what is called the "biggest straw syndrome" in which the biggest straw aka pipeline, can drain an entire aquifer. The Texas legislature has not come to grips with this issue.

Meanwhile individual Texas cities are coping with their water problems as best they can. San Antonio, the 7th largest city in the U.S., is starting to treat the "brackish" water in the aquifer beneath the city. Austin has the Edwards Aquifer, which is huge, but it is being threatened by development. Some cities are more desperate--one has totally depleted its aquifer with normal use plus fracking, a process we know that requires huge amounts of water. Other cities won't share.

In California Governor Jerry Brown has declared a drought emergency. (It's raining here today in San Diego and we don't mind at all.) Historically, desalination has been too expensive to be practical. However, San Diego is building a 50 million gallon a day desalination plant that is supposed to come on line in 2016. So far, the project is on time and on budget. [Read about it here.](#)

Why should we care about the water woes of Texas and California? We're sitting here under 100 inches of snow and have plenty of water. Well, Texas and California are breadbaskets. California produces half of all the produce consumed by Americans. Read this fascinating [article from Mother Jones](#) on California production and the amount of water it takes to grow your favorite nuts and veggies.

All of which brings us full circle--come to the agriculture consensus meeting on March 28 and become informed.

This newsletter comes to you from La Jolla, California

Written on February 27 and 28, this newsletter will arrive in your mailbox on Sunday, March 2 through the magic of Constant Contact.

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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