



# League of Women Voters of the Ann Arbor Area

P.O. Box 3832, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3832



January 2017

## Message from the President

### Welcome new members:

The 2016 election has enlivened people's interest in civic action and our membership rolls are reflecting that enthusiasm. *We have nearly doubled our membership in the last six months* and we want to welcome each and every one of our new members. Please come to our new member meeting (See calendar below) if you would like to explore ways to become involved. We want to meet you in person and engage you in our organization.



### Immediate Action:

After overcoming initial reservations about the appearance of partisanship, the board of the League of Women Voters of the United States has decided to participate in the Women's March on Washington. And in Michigan, our state League, LWVMI, will be participating in the March in Lansing. Both of these marches promise to be inclusive and diverse. *March with us if you'd like. Make a sign, wear a button, or bring your American flag to fly. Speak up against hate and intolerance.*

For more information about the march in **Washington**, go to:

<http://forum.lwv.org/document/womens-march-washington-saturday-january-21> The site contains safety tips and other helpful information.

For more in information about the march in **Lansing**, go to our Facebook page:



For information about the local marches in **Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti**, go to our website:  
[lwvann Arbor.org](http://lwvann Arbor.org)



## ACTIVITIES CALENDAR

Date	Event	Time	Place
Thurs, Jan 26	Taxes: <i>Is the State legislature playing fair with local government?</i> A panel discussion.	7:00-8:30 pm	Ann Arbor District Library 343 South Fifth Ann Arbor
Fri, Jan 27	Book Discussion <i>Sisters in Law</i> <u>RSVP</u> for lunch	Noon - 2:00 pm	The Cedars of Dexter Clubhouse 411 Cedars Lane Dexter
Sat, Feb 4	Program Planning Meeting Tax & Budget Study*	10:00 am - noon	First UU Congregation of AA 4001 AA Saline Rd. Ann Arbor
Mon, Feb 6	Redistricting: What's happening in Michigan?*	7:00 - 8:30 pm	Hathaway's Hideaway

310 S. Ashley  
Ann Arbor

Mon, Feb 20	New Member Meeting*	6:30 - 8:00 pm	Hathaway's Hideaway 310 S. Ashley Ann Arbor
Fri. Feb 24	Lunch & Learn Public or Private? Who Owns Water? Guest Leader: Ellen Dannin	Noon - 2:00 pm	The Cedars of Dexter Clubhouse 411 Cedars Lane Dexter
Tue, May 16	Annual Membership Meeting* Guest Speaker: Doug Koop Legacy Land Conservancy	7:00-8:30 pm	

\*Indicates LWV-members only event

## Spotlight on... REDISTRICTING

### Redistricting and the Impact of Gerrymandering

As the U.S. faces yet another election in which the president-elect lost the popular majority vote, attention has returned to problems with the Electoral College and how we draw electoral districts. The [LWV December newsletter](#) explored the history of and problems with the Electoral College. Today we turn to redistricting, and the problem of gerrymandering in particular.

### What is gerrymandering? The OED

defines "gerrymandering" as "manipulating the boundaries of (an electoral constituency) so as to favor one party or class."

**How does gerrymandering work?** Gerrymandering typically occurs when the dominant party in a legislature draws district boundaries to give their voters disproportionate influence. For example, a state's voters may be 60% "blue" and 40% "red," but districting may ensure that the red party holds a majority of seats in the state legislature. At the federal level, gerrymandering can create state delegations that are not representative of their electorate. It works [like this](#). What is clear is that both parties use gerrymandering to their own benefit



**The Gerrymander**

when given the opportunity.

**How did gerrymandering impact the national 2016 elections?** It is difficult to separate the effect of gerrymandering from factors like political geography (Democratic voters tend to concentrate in urban areas) and the Voting Rights Act (the requirement to have "majority-minority" districts can create [stronger, but fewer, Democratic districts](#)). But we do know that on November 8, 2016, Democrats and Republicans almost evenly split the U.S. House popular vote (48% to 49%) but Republicans took a [disproportionate number of seats](#) (55%). We also know the U.S. Supreme Court may soon develop a [legal standard](#) to define gerrymandering in cases across [several states](#).

**What role has gerrymandering played in Michigan's elections?** Michigan, like all states, redistricts after the national census every ten years. In 2012, after a Republican-controlled redistricting in 2010, the Michigan House went 9-5 for Republicans even though Republican candidates lost the statewide popular vote 46% to 51%. In 2016 the popular vote was closer (48% Republican, 47% Democratic) but the delegation remained 9-5 and the Michigan House remained strongly Republican, 63-47 (the state Senate does not hold elections until 2018 so remains a lopsided 27-11). In both state and federal legislative bodies, one party's representation is significantly disproportionate to its share of Michigan's popular vote.

**What can be done to redraw district lines?** Regardless of which party is in power, allowing legislators to define district boundaries is a case of "the fox guarding the henhouse." Many states have removed redistricting power from their legislatures through independent, bipartisan redistricting commissions. Rather than legislators deciding who their voters will be, an independent redistricting commission fosters public input, equal representation and fairness, and increases voter confidence and turnout. Such a commission may be created by legislation or a ballot initiative. Legislation has been proposed in Michigan ([H.B. 4800](#)) but remains stuck in the majority-controlled Elections Committee. A ballot initiative would bypass the legislature; in Michigan, 400,000 petition signatures is all that is needed to put an independent redistricting commission to a statewide vote.

[Learn more about how redistricting may impact our state by joining LWV on](#)

**Monday, February 6th**

***Redistricting: What is happening in Michigan?***

*See calendar for details.*

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## **LWVAAA Studies State Taxation and Budgeting in order to update LWVMI position**

Through a process of study and consensus, members of the League of Women Voters take positions on public policy issues. We then use these positions to lobby our elected officials to make our democracy work for us all. At the present time, the League of Women Voters of Michigan is in the process of updating its position on state taxation

and budgeting policies. Each local league is asked to study the issue and then respond to a series of questions designed to guide the development of a position.

LWVAAA has two activities planned to study government finance.

- On [January 26th](#) (see calendar) we will host a public forum with representatives from city, county, and township levels of government to talk about how their budgets are affected by state level decisions.
- On [February 4th](#) (see calendar) we will hold a meeting of our members to discuss the consensus questions sent to us by the LWVMI study team.

In preparation for these meetings, members are asked--if you choose--to read the material below.

[The current position](#)

[Guide for Government Finance Study](#)

[State Revenue Chart](#)

[Government Finance Definitions](#)

[Resource List for Government Finance Study](#)



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## 4th Friday Lunch & Learn Series

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**Noon – 2:00 p.m.**

**Cedars of Dexter Clubhouse**

**411 Cedars Lane, Dexter, MI 48130**

**Soups, salads and sandwiches are available for \$5-10.**

**Please bring cash or BYO lunch.**

**RSVP: [lww.ann.arbor.area@gmail.com](mailto:lww.ann.arbor.area@gmail.com)**

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**FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2017**

**BOOK DISCUSSION:**

*Sisters-in-Law: How Sandra Day O'Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsberg Went to the Supreme Court and Changed the World*

**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2017**

**DISCUSSION:**

**Public or Private? Who owns water?**

League member Ellen Dannin will lead a discussion on privatization of water. Ellen is the author of many articles on labor law and privatization of public infrastructure, in addition to two books on labor and privatization and one on New Zealand workplace issues.

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

## Privatization of Water: A move toward more efficient service delivery or deepening resource inequality?



In the wake of the Flint water crisis, there were calls to privatize the city's water and sewage system. Indeed, this is a conversation that is happening in local governments around the country as municipalities find themselves without the funds to maintain and rehabilitate aging water systems and other public works.

### ***So, does privatization make sense?***

***In favor:*** Those who are in favor of privatization argue that, because they have a profit motive, private companies are likely to provide more efficient services than public utility companies. When a water system needs an immediate overhaul, a private company has more financial flexibility due to its ability to borrow money and can thus act faster than municipal governments. Proponents also argue that private companies are *more* accountable to citizens because, unlike government agencies, they can be sued by private citizens. In response to criticisms of price hikes by private utility companies, Richard G. Little of the Sol Price School of Public Policy at the University of Southern California notes that a major problem with the current underfunding of public water systems is that rates are kept artificially low; rate increases are a requirement of fiscal responsibility.

***In opposition:*** Opponents of privatization argue that the profit motive acts against the best interests of consumers, as it drives companies to 'cut corners' and 'gold-plate' water systems, meaning that they build unnecessarily expensive infrastructure in order to maximize revenue. Opponents also argue that private companies are primarily accountable to their shareholders, rather than private citizens. They note that investor-owned utilities charge an average of 59% more than local government utilities and that the switch to private utilities leads to the loss of 1 in 3 water jobs. Competition for contracts is often slim and the negotiating power of local governments weak, leading to a 20-30% increase in operation and maintenance costs attributable to corporate profits, dividends and income taxes. While opponents acknowledge the artificially low rates, Wenonah Hauter of Food and Water Watch argues that, rather than increase rates for private citizens and potentially price-out the poor from access to a basic resource, local governments should be asking commercial and industrial water users to pay more for the services they profit from.

### **Sources:**

#### **Food and Water Watch**

<http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/insight/water-privatization-facts-and-figures>

#### **Forbes.com**

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/adammillsap/2016/10/05/privatizing-water-facilities-can-help-cash-strapped-municipalities/#63f063f450e0>

#### **Reason.com**

<http://reason.com/archives/2016/02/01/heres-how-to-fix-flints-water-system-pri>

**Truth-out.org**

<http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/26110-total-recall-water-and-the-values-of-the-value-of-water-coalition>

**WSJ.com**

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10000872396390443816804578002280926253750>

**Want to learn more about the impact of water privatization? *See flyer above.***

Join LWV Ann Arbor for ***Private or Public? Who Owns Water?*** - a "lunch and learn" discussion led by League member and water privatization expert, Ellen Dannin on **Friday, February 24th.**

Ellen Dannin is a professor and attorney focusing on labor law and privatization of public infrastructure and is the author of many articles and books on the issue, including *Taking Back the Workers' Law - How to Fight the Assault on Labor Rights* (2006, Cornell University Press) and *Working Free: The Origins and Impact of New Zealand's Employment Contracts Act* (1997, Auckland University Press).

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## **Why I joined the League: Ren Lee**

I first became familiar with the League of Women Voters when a friend introduced me to the Vote411 website. Loads of information and all non partisan, I had to know more about this organization! Similar ideology, however, is not my sole reason for joining. I ultimately joined the League of Women Voters because we can make a bigger impact when we work as a group as opposed to individuals. I am very energized to participate in a group so focused on restoring fairness to our democratic system.



### **MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME**

If you have not already sent in your dues for 2017, now is the time to do it!

You can renew using [PayPal](#) or print a [Membership Form](#), fill it out and mail with a check payable to: *League of Women Voters of the Ann Arbor Area.*

NOTE: Dues are not tax deductible - to make a tax deductible donation, check out our website [www.lwvannarbor.org](http://www.lwvannarbor.org).

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## The League of Women Voters of the Ann Arbor Area

### LWVAAA Board of Directors

Nancy Schewe, President  
Jeanine DeLay, Vice President  
Judy Mich, Treasurer  
Betty Bishop, Ed Fund Treasurer  
Zoe Behnke, Director  
Shirley Axon, Director

To leave a message for the board, go to:

[lwv.ann.arbor.area@gmail.com](mailto:lwv.ann.arbor.area@gmail.com)

### LWVAAA Team Members

Susan Smith, Nominating Committee  
Mona Walz, Nominating Committee  
Susan Wooley, Webmaster  
Mary Banks, Publicity  
Julie Baker, Facebook/Twitter  
Michelle Wallon, Newsletter  
Nancy Brucken, VOTE411.org  
Rosemary Austgen, LWV roster  
Shoshanna Wechter, Ypsilanti Connection  
Lindsay Garinger, Ypsilanti Connection

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Not a member? Wish to join?

Click here to join [using Paypal](#) or click here for a [mail-in registration form](#).

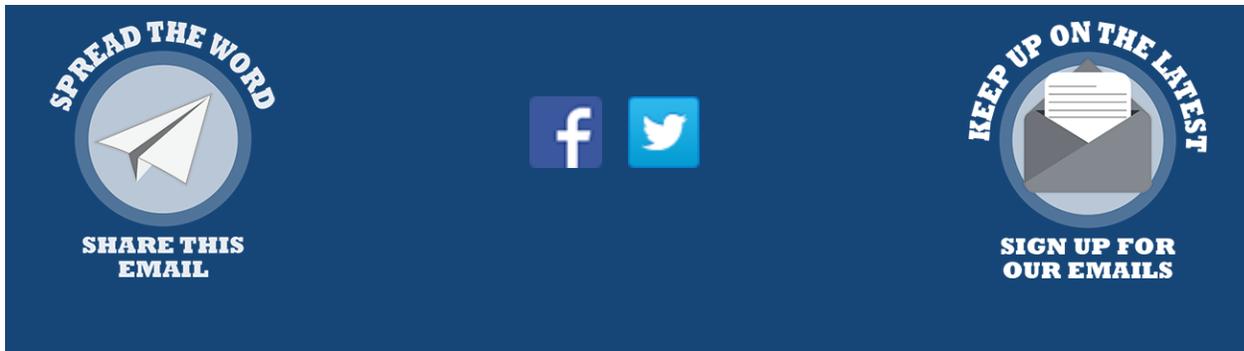
### *Visit Our Facebook Page*

#### Mission Statement

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

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