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LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF MARQUETTE COUNTY

THE VOTER

Spring 2025 Newsletter ~ Volume 6 Issue 1



The DEIA Committee with MMIWR Presenter, Caroline LaPorte

MMIWR Presentation

By Andie Balenger

On February 5, the League of Women Voters of Marquette County hosted Caroline LaPorte, the department head and associate professor of Native American studies at Northern Michigan University. She gave a special presentation on the epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives (MMIWR) in the United States and Canada.

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Center (NIWRC), and expert in Indian country law. She has also published work and made significant contributions to federal legislation like the Violence Against Women Act, the Not Invisible Act, and Savanna's Act. LaPorte is an immediate descendant of the Little River Band of Ottawa Indians and was elected as the associate judge for the Tribe in 2021.

The League's regular membership meeting space was packed, with nearly 90 attendees, including 42 non-members. The event was proposed and organized by the League's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) committee, which strives to ensure that our local chapter represents the diverse communities of Marquette County while promoting equitable access to voter services.

LaPorte's presentation outlined how the forced removal of Indigenous peoples from their ancestral homelands has perpetuated colonial violence, particularly against Anishinaabekwe (Anishinaabe women), and how the epidemic of MMIWR stems from the breakdown of Indigenous social structures caused by federal policies like the Indian Civilization Fund Act 1819 and the Indian Removal Act of 1830.

"The inconsistent handling of violent crimes against Native women reaches far beyond the lack of training or failure of individuals to respond appropriately to such crimes," LaPorte said. "It is current federal law based on the historical relationship between the United States and Indian tribes as governments that shape the current legal authority over such crimes. This historical legal relationship also serves as the foundation for American cultural tolerance of violence against Native women."

More information about MMIWR can be found at niwrc.org

LWVMC updates its land acknowledgment

By Sandra Breitenbach

For thousands of years, Marquette County has been home to Indigenous communities. A land acknowledgment recognizes these communities and their historical and current connection to the land.

In October 2021, Jo Foley and Sandy Breitenbach met with Amber Morseau, former director of the center for Native American Studies at the Center for Native American Studies (CNAS) at Northern Michigan University to discuss writing a League-specific land acknowledgment. This was a collaborative effort, with Amber Morseau, suggesting we use the one used at NMU and also allowing us to post their graphic created by Reese Carter at our meetings. In December 2023, we met again at CNAS, this time with Assistant Professor, Jud Sojourn, to get advice on making our statement more meaningful and personal. We decided to add historical, cultural, and current issues important to the Native American communities to help educate the membership.

Our latest version, written by Andie Balenger, includes more details on Treaties responsible for the loss of land and ensuing consequences because of that loss, like the breakdown of Indigenous social structures leading to violence, specifically against Anishinaabe women. It references action groups associated with current crises, including Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives (MMIWR) and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). It also includes a link leading to more information. This new acknowledgment, a result of a collaborative process, will be read at the beginning of our membership meetings, posted on our website, and included in our newsletters.

Here it is.

Marquette County is located on Anishinaabe Akiing, the ancestral and present-day homelands of the Anishinaabe Three Fires Confederacy of Ojibway, Odawa, and Potawatomi nations. Gichi-namebini Ziibing

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However, the loss of ancestral homelands has perpetuated colonial violence, particularly against Anishinaabekwe (Anishinaabe women). The epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives (MMIWR) stems from the breakdown of Indigenous social structures caused by policies like the Indian Civilization Fund Act of 1819 and the Indian Removal Act of 1830. The League of Women Voters of Marquette County remains committed to advocating for the rights of women, girls, and relatives, as outlined in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), through education, awareness, and advocacy.

Shoreline Cultural Trail

By Andrea Ingmire

The City of Marquette is developing the Shoreline Cultural Trail, a seven-mile interpretive space along Lake Superior's coast that stretches from the mouth of the Carp River to Presque Isle. This initiative aims to honor and preserve the community's entire history and prompt curiosity about local heritage and the natural environment through new public spaces, public art, and digital content. The first significant trail installation is a sculpture titled "Seven Grandfather Teachings" by Anishinaabe artist Jason Quigno, located at the entrance of the newly renovated pier in Lower Harbor.

The trail will activate the City's shoreline with eight story markers, which will be installed in June 2025. The signs will blend public art, design, wayfinding, language, narratives, and storytelling opportunities accessible via QR codes linking to the City's MQTCompass website. The project is the first phase of an ongoing collaborative effort led by the City of Marquette's Office of Arts and Culture in partnership with local Tribes, arts, environmental, cultural, economic, and educational institutions. The eight story markers will highlight waterfront access for all, create points of curiosity, and celebrate the stories that shape Marquette. Moreover, the Cultural Trail strives to spark conversations, pique interest, and act as an invitation to explore our community beyond the shoreline, including cultural amenities, organizations, businesses, natural and built landmarks, neighborhoods, parks, and historic downtown.

Tiina Morin, the City of Marquette Arts and Culture Office Manager, has been eager for this project to get off the ground. "In the last ten years, our Office has transitioned from programming to capacity building. There's been a shift in how we think about arts and culture as we move beyond the traditional framework of special events, museums, and gallery walls," Morin, said. "We have taken a broader view on the role of arts and culture in government... it not only creates a vibrant and attractive community but increases the health of our residents, natural environment, and our economy. This perspective might be standard for larger cities, but in a geographically isolated community with a population just over 21,000, I think it's daring."

Fact Checking Reminder

By Libby Myren

What is disinformation and misinformation? Disinformation comes from the people who create and spread false information. Misinformation comes from people who share that disinformation, not knowing it is untrue. Disinformation may be produced deliberately to help someone retain or gain political power, create chaos, or generate revenue and attention.

Disinformation is **Deliberate**

Misinformation is a **Mistake**

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disinformation, check the information sources of a post for additional context that might not be shared. When you see an argument that seeks to pull you in one direction or another, consider the substance of the argument and the motivation of the speaker, then take a step back and consider whether the underlying premise of the argument is valid. When you encounter messages that refer to specific identities, consider if the speaker is trying to influence your opinion of the group through stereotypes.

Conspiracy theories spread quickly, so check the accuracy of the information you take in. Look for trustworthy information sources that transparently report data with minimal bias. Above all, exercise skepticism about what you hear and read, and avoid amplifying disinformation by interacting with it online. More information about mis/disinformation can be found on the [League's website](#).

Sue Holliday, Pri Burnham, and Libby Myren will present the Michigan League of Women Voters' presentation "Resisting Disinformation" as a Skill Builder at NMU on March 10 at 6:00 p.m. in Jamrich 1317.

ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- ✗ **DON'T CLICK OR SHARE.**
If you quote the bad information, you help spread it.
- ✓ **DO SHARE ACCURATE INFORMATION.**
Without mentioning the wrong info, set the record straight by sharing the correct messages.
- ✗ **DON'T ENGAGE PUBLICLY.**
If someone you know is sharing bad info, message them privately & ask them to take it down.
- ✓ **DO REPORT & BLOCK.**
Report inaccurate info to social media platforms, group administrators & election officials. Block users you don't know who share mis or disinformation.

LWV

New Board Member Spotlight: Andie Balenger

Meet Andie Balenger, our newest board member and spokesperson.

Andie joined the League in the fall of 2022, while working as a reporter for The North Wind, Northern Michigan University's independent student publication. While covering a community forum on local elections and voting machines, she was inspired by the League's work and decided to get involved. Initially contributing to the League's newsletter, *The Voter*, she has since taken on the role of Editor.



With an undergraduate degree in political science and a passion for public administration, Andie was eager to support the League's mission. She is currently pursuing a master's degree in the administration of outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism, where she explores ethical recreation on Indigenous lands.

Her favorite part of League membership has been engaging with a community of strong women defending democracy in the Upper Peninsula. She feels honored to contribute to such a respected organization and values the opportunity to provide her unique perspective on current issues.

This past fall, Andie was asked to serve as the League's spokesperson—and enthusiastically accepted!

"In this role, I am eager to use my communication skills to highlight the League's efforts in increasing voter turnout and ensuring our community stays informed," Andie said.

State and National News

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Save the dates! The LWVMI State Convention will be held in Grand Rapids from May 16 to 18. Talk with someone who has attended to see why this is such an excellent opportunity to network, share new ideas, socialize, and conduct the League's important business. If you would like to attend as a delegate, submit your name to any Board member. There may even be some funding available to help defray expenses.

For those who can't make it to Grand Rapids this year, we are looking for suggestions – and contributions – for a gift basket to be auctioned off on the last day of the Convention. We are looking for something unique to the UP or Marquette, transportable, and fun. We've done food (including Jean Kay's pasties and Dockers candy) and locally-themed art and books in the past, so we're hoping to come up with something new and creative.

LWVUS Federal Judiciary Study

By Pri Burnham



At last June's National Convention, the delegates authorized an expedited study of the federal judiciary—courts from District through Appellate and up to the US Supreme Court (SCOTUS). The results from local Leagues will be collated in April/May and submitted for a vote by the delegates to the LWVUS Council in June 2025. The responses to the LWVUS Study Committee's 12 Consensus Questions could lead to a national policy that would allow local, state, and the national LWV to advocate for reform measures, for example,

term limits and/or mandatory ethics rules for the Supreme Court, the end of "judge shopping," or clarification of conflicts of interest requiring a justice's recusal from a case.

Over the next month, our Study Group, composed of David Allen, Sandy Breitenbach, Pri Burnham, Diane Chielens, Jo Foley, Marge Forslin, Jake Guter, Katelynn Jensen, Alec LaPlante, will be reviewing background information about the court system and then grappling with how to respond to the 12 Consensus Questions. Our recommendations will be presented to our membership for their input and approval or revision, then to the LWVUS on or before April 14. Any member interested in providing feedback can contact Pri Burnham (priburnham@gmail.com).

Our Oath to Democracy

By Celena Stewart, CEO LWVUS, Blog 1/17/2025

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For [over a century](#), the heart and soul of our work has been centering voters' voices in democracy. We've participated in many of our nation's most pivotal voting rights battles, from women's suffrage to the Equal Rights Amendment to the passage of the *National Voter Registration Act (NVRA)* and the *Help America Vote Act (HAVA)*. As democracy turns another corner, we are launching our new campaign: [Women Defend Democracy](#).

"That we will faithfully execute our civic responsibility as nonpartisan advocates;"

LWV is proudly a nonpartisan organization. And we're focused on issues that matter to communities. We believe in a strong democracy by and for *all* people. We stand for the rights and representation of all voters, no matter their political party — not to mention their race, gender, primary language, and more.



CEO Celina Stewart

We are working to build a strong, multiracial democracy where women — and those who don't conform to a gender binary — stand empowered with our allies to participate in civic life that benefits us all. Above all, we are steadfast in our commitment to empowering voters — never supporting or opposing political parties.

"We do this fearlessly, reflectively, and collectively. We act from a place of hope and collective power."

These times require that we remain thoughtful and earnest rather than reactionary and divisive. We reject any emotion or ploy that seeks to overwhelm us or turn us against our neighbor. We approach our work with dignity and curiosity, seeking to see the greatest good in every living being. We focus on solutions rather than problems.

"We affirm that we will work to provide democracy education and election administration support, restore and defend voting rights protections, abolish the Electoral College, protect democracy organizations, and fight for reproductive freedoms. We will not be deterred from these tasks.

We strive to protect bodily autonomy and defend communities that are targeted based on parts of their identities, such as gender, race, political party, ability, and financial status.

As LWV continues to grow, we mark the journey into our second century with a determination to transform into an organization with a membership that reflects the beautiful diversity of our country. While our work is far from done, our expansion, partnered with our century of tried and true experience, positions us as powerful defenders of democracy.

That's one reason we're launching [Women Defend Democracy](#). We developed this campaign in the weeks following the 2024 Election to meet this critical moment in US history. Through this campaign, we will:

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- Protect democracy organizations and institutions; and
- Fight for reproductive freedom.

“So, join us to protect life, liberty, freedom, and justice.”

Our work is for and with the people. Every League member is you. Whether we're volunteering to register young voters at a local high school, opposing unfair redistricting practices that will disempower our neighbors, helping our friends and family get informed by setting up state and local candidate debates, or sending our resources to democracy rights groups, we're fighting in the ways we choose, and we can all participate in civic life.

That's the League's Oath. Yours might look similar. Maybe it includes [looking up your local League](#) so you too can empower voters and defend democracy. Maybe it means finding your own personal form of activism. Either way, I encourage you to affirm your oath today.

Our pledges keep us committed to each other, to our democracy, and to our future. We'll see you on the other side.

In solidarity.

Local League Committee Reports

Membership Committee

By Barb Owdziej

It's that time of year when we start planning the League's Annual Meeting. Be sure to mark June 4 on your calendar. Once again, we'll take advantage of Ore Dock's gathering space and recognize a few deserving members with awards.

We need your input for those awards! Historically, we (you) select an individual (or group) for:

1. Green Thumb (helping the League "grow")
2. We Can Do It (taking on or revitalizing a project)
3. Making Democracy Work (For an outstanding community member who has taken action to strengthen democracy in the community)

Forms are available at the general meeting and on the website (Members-Documents-Forms & Brochures)

March's general membership meeting will be preceded by a brief orientation for new(ish) members. The purpose of this orientation is to provide very basic "need to know" guidelines when identifying as a League member, as well as



Newcomers to the League:

Alexander Berger
 Jeff Burtch
 Colleen Gaffney
 Kyouhee Choi
 Jane Fitkin
 John Forslin
 Sarah Konefal
 Meagen Morrison
 Summer Morrison
 Emma Moser
 P Kathryn Russell
 Catherine VanHorne
 Martha Wnuk

Our committee meets irregularly but welcomes anyone interested in attracting, engaging, and retaining league members. For the next three months, we will meet on the third Friday at 1 p.m. to hammer out the finer details for the annual gathering. Please contact me if you're interested;

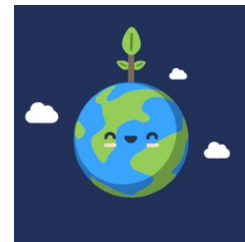
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levels (local, state and national) and opportunities to get involved. All are welcome, and it's brief.

Environmental Committee Report

By Anna Wild

Your Environmental Committee has been busy! We watch state and national environmental legislation, act as the “battery fairies” of Marquette County by collecting, sorting, and recycling batteries, and engage speakers and tours on various topics. **We are most excited about Friday, April 25 – our celebration of Earth Day!** Mark your calendars and stay tuned for more updates. We are partnering with the Northern Climate Network to plan an entire week of activities, community participation, and education opportunities. Whether you want to bask in the sunrise, engage with elementary schools, clean up our neighborhoods, or debate current environmental topics, we guarantee there will be an event to fit your interests. This project is a work in progress, and as we finalize the event schedule, we will publicize the itinerary. Join us during Earth Week as we celebrate the mesmerizing beauty of the UP and work to preserve our planet.



Voter Services Committee Report

By Pri Burnham



Board meeting

While we are taking a well-earned rest from voter registration and voter education projects after the 2024 election cycle, the Voter Services Committee has been and plans to be active in several ways, including participating in an NMU tabling event on January 31 hosted by Voices United, a relatively new NMU group that sponsored a panel discussion on civic engagement.

After the Voices United event, we invited the campus Latinx Student Union to present a program for our April membership meeting. Sandy Breitenbach contacted the group, which responded with an impressive proposal on immigration. The proposal will be submitted for Board approval at the next

In the fall at the membership meeting, there will be a presentation on alternative voting systems and methods. The voter services committee will be addressing topics like ranked choice, proportional voting, national popular vote, the parliamentary system, and possibly more.

Finally, Libby Myren's SkillBuilders program on mis/disinformation, scheduled for March 10 at 6 p.m. in Jamrich Hall, will be a timely way for NMU students to become informed on the issue. Our League will receive a \$400 grant from the Michigan League for putting on this presentation.

Communications Network

By Laura Sabo

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accessible. This allows people with disabilities to navigate and interact with the content more easily. Accessible websites improve user experience for everyone and enhance inclusivity by providing equal access for all users.

Since 1996, the ADA has established standards for digital content and the Internet, requiring online businesses, services, and products to be accessible to people with disabilities. However, nonprofits have not had to adhere to these guidelines.

Accessibility received more attention during the pandemic when electronic communication and meetings increased significantly. In 2024, the Department of Justice required state and local government websites to be accessible.

When you visit our website, <https://lwvmqt.org/>, you can click the disability button (widget) in the lower right corner. This allows users to change the website format, which benefits people with visual impairments, cognitive and neurological disabilities, and ADHD.

Revising our website also allowed us to centralize access to our social media sites and written communications. You can click on the Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube logos on the blue bar at the top and bottom of each website page for direct access to those sites. Our social media sites are also available at the bottom of our newsletters.



ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY



**New location on US-41
between Green Garden Road and
County Road 480**

Saturday, May 10, 2025

Meet at Lafaro's market in Harvey at
10 am to Carpool to the area.

Rain day on May12,2025. If we get 12 volunteers it will take us about 1 1/2 hours to divide and conquer the 2-mile stretch! Following our work we will enjoy a great lunch afterwards at either A&M cafe on US41 or the Smokehouse in Harvey.

The new adopt-a-highway area on US-41 is between Green Garden Road and County Road 480 approximately 2-4 miles from Harvey, Michigan. Our sign might not be posted by the time we pick up, but MDOT assures it will be installed soon after that.

Please contact Sue Holliday (susanholliday83@gmail.com) to volunteer.

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Anonymous
Pri Burnham
Meagen Morrison
Laura Sabo
Karen and Robert Schmitt



If you are interested in making a gift to the League of Women Voters of Marquette County, click the above donate button to make an online contribution.

Or mail your check to: League of Women Voters of Marquette County, P.O. Box 585, Marquette, MI 49855

Members are encouraged to save Tadych's Market Place receipts for LWVMC. Please circle the before-tax subtotal minus any amount for alcohol or tobacco. Receipts may be turned in at meetings or contact Mary Burtch.



BAGGING FUNDRAISER

April 17 and April 18

Super One Grocery Store
3070 US41

2-3 hour volunteer shifts
Starting at 9:30 am (set-up) to 4:00 pm

Volunteers will bag groceries for donations at Super One Grocery Store. We will have an information table of League pamphlets, etc.

Because the 18th of April is Good Friday and expected to be a busy shopping day, we would like to fill the 18th of April first with volunteers.

Contact Sue Holliday, susanholliday83@gmail.com if you can volunteer.



March 2025 Fundraiser

Most people are aware of the "Round Up at the Register" Programs occasionally offered at local businesses. In these programs, customers can donate the difference in their bill, rounding up to the next whole dollar, or another amount to charity.

Jim Borowski, President and CEO of Goodwill Industries of Upper Michigan and Northern UP, offered to do a Roundup at Goodwill to benefit the LWVMC. Jim had previously worked with the LWV in Chicago. Not only did he offer the fundraiser, but he also joined our local chapter.

Goodwill's purpose is to help provide rehab services, training, employment, and personal growth opportunities for people who often face barriers to employment. Their commitment to environmental stewardship is evident in the fact that millions of pounds of clothing and other materials have been kept out of landfills by the widespread implementation of reduce, reuse, and repurpose practices.

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event. In March 2025, we can “Round Up” at Goodwill on behalf of our local League!

2025 Calendar of Events

March - Women's History Month

Goodwill round-up purchase fundraiser, March 1-31

- 4 DEIA Meeting (2:30 p.m.) Provisions Coffee Shop
- 5 General Membership meeting (6:45 p.m.- 8:15 p.m.) 6:30 Social, lower level PWPL
- 6 Environmental Committee meeting (5:15 p.m. – 6:15 p.m.) PWPL Lions Room
- 7 Anniversary of [Bloody Sunday](#)
- 8 International Women's Day, LWVMC table
- 10 Observer Corps Committee meeting (10:00 a.m.) at the Crib, 401 North 3rd Street
- 11 Voter Services Committee (10 a.m.) at the Crib Coffee House
Sunshine Week, March 16-22
- 26 LWVMC Board mtg (10 a.m.- noon) Baraga Place Community Room
- 31 International Transgender Day of Visibility

April

- 2 General Membership meeting (6:45 p.m.- 8:15 p.m.) 6:30 Social, lower level PWPL
- 3 Environmental Committee meeting (5:15 p.m.- 6:15 p.m.) PWPL Lions Room
- 8 Equal Pay Day
- Super One Bagging Fundraiser, April 17-18**
- 18 LWVMC Board mtg (10 a.m.- noon) Baraga Place Community Room
- 25 Earth Day Celebration, LWVMC table

May

- 1 Environmental Committee meeting (5:15 p.m. – 6:15 p.m.) PWPL Lions Room
- 7 General Membership meeting (6:45 p.m.- 8:15 p.m.) 6:30 Social, lower level PWPL
- 10 Adopt-a-Highway and Lunch
- 13 Voter Services Committee (10 a.m.) at the Crib Coffee House
- LWVMI Convention in Grand Rapids, May 16-18**
- 28 LWVMC Board mtg (10 a.m.- noon) Baraga Place Community Room

June - Pride Month

- 4 Annual Meeting at the Ore Dock, (6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.)
- 5 Environmental Committee meeting (5:15 p.m. – 6:15 p.m.) PWPL Lions Room
- 10 Voter Services Committee (10 a.m.) at the Crib Coffee House
- 14 Pride Festival, LWVMC table
- 19 Juneteenth Celebration, LWVMC table
- 25 LWVMC Board mtg (10 a.m.- noon) Baraga Place Community Room

Board of Directors 2025

Convener

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Voter Services Coordinator

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League Liaison

Laura Petrie

lj.k.petrie@yahoo.com

2024 - 2025 Organizational Chart

To receive meeting notices, volunteer, visit/observe, or join, email the contact person.

LWVMC GROUPS	CONTACT PERSON	EMAIL ADDRESS
Communication Network	Laura Sabo	laurasabo58@gmail.com
Newsletter Committee (Editor)	Andie Balenger	ambalenger8@gmail.com
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee	Sandy Breitenbach	sehurtubise@gmail.com
Education Committee	Sandy Breitenbach	sehurtubise@gmail.com
Environmental Committee	Anna Wild	afwildcoon@gmail.com
Fundraising/Events Committee	Sue Holliday	susanholliday83@gmail.com
Fundraising/GrantWriting	Laura Petrie	petriedish57@gmail.com
Membership Committee	Barb Owdziej	swimrnnurse@yahoo.com
Nominating Committee	Darlene Allen	dthomsona@gmail.com
Observer Corps	David Allen	pdavidallen2@icloud.com
Voter Services Committee	Pri Burnham	priburnham@gmail.com
Candidate Forum Team	Jo Foley	jfoley1950@gmail.com
Print Voter Guide Team	Janet Joswiak	janetjoswiak@charter.net
Vote411.org Team	Sandy Breitenbach	sehurtubise@gmail.com
Voter Registration/Voter Education Team	Johanna Worley	johannaworley@gmail.com

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The League of Women Voters (LWV) is a non-partisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and is one of the most respected and effective grassroots organizations in the world.

On September 19, 1968, the first meeting of the Marquette County LWV was held. With over 100 members at the height of its 38-year existence, eventually membership declined and the Marquette County LWV disbanded in 2006.



In 2017, a small group ignited the revival of a Marquette County chapter. Today the LWV of Marquette County (LWVMC) continues the essential work of providing voters with nonpartisan information about candidates, elections and the mechanics of voting; conducting voter registration drives to encourage the public, especially young people, to become active voters; holding town halls around the county to educate about ballot issues and changes to our laws; observing local boards and governmental entities, including the Board of Canvassers and the Citizens Redistricting Committee.

Any person who subscribes to the purposes and policies of the League of Women Voters is eligible for membership. Voting members are at least 16 years of age.

Empowering Voters.
Defending Democracy.
Imagining a Democracy where
every person has the desire,
the right, the knowledge, and
the confidence to participate.

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