



THE VOTER

Fall 2025 Newsletter ~ Volume 6 Issue 2

LWV OF MARQUETTE COUNTY

SEP 24



A snapshot of the LWVMC's Annual Meeting in June at Ore Dock Brewing Co. in Marquette, MI.

Message from the Editor

Hello all!

You may be thinking, “Why does this edition of *The Voter* look different?” Well, there have been conversations amongst the Newsletter Committee for some time about finding a more engaging and intuitive platform to publish our quarterly newsletter. After some research, it was found that Substack may make an exciting new home! With interactive features and great photo layout options, I hope readers find this edition of *The Voter* to be a smoother read — whether you are viewing from desktop or mobile.

Because our newsletters are often (inadvertently) long, you may not receive the entirety of the newsletter in your inbox. If the newsletter is shortened or cut-off in an email, click on the "View entire message" prompt and you will be able to view the entire post in your email.

As we make this transition, we welcome feedback from members. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please direct them to lwwmqtc@gmail.com.

Happy reading!

Andie Balenger, *Communications Coordinator and Newsletter Editor*

LWVMC's Busy Summer Season!

Annual Meeting

It was a lovely evening for the LWVMC's Annual Meeting, where League members, friends, and community members gathered at Ore Dock Brewing Co. on June 4, 2025. The public event provided a comprehensive overview of the League's impactful year, with committees showcasing their work through engaging poster board displays and lively conversations. Music from “Just For Fun Trio,” including LWVMC member Patty Gagnon and fellow musician Mary Margaret Wagner (Monica Regis was absent), serenaded the room. The event drew a diverse

crowd of over 60 people, including 15 non-members who expressed interest in the League's mission.

The business meeting commenced with a review of the LWV's history and the organization's Oath to Democracy. Then, regular agenda items were addressed, including a preview of upcoming League events. The meeting concluded with the LWVMC election, in which bylaw changes, priorities, budget, and the entire slate of candidates for 2025-2026 were unanimously approved.



Making Democracy Work Award

The League's annual award ceremony followed. The "Making Democracy Work" award was presented to Anne McIlhagga, Government Affairs Coordinator for the City of Marquette. McIlhagga was honored with this award for her commitment to strengthening local democracy through her establishment of the Marquette Citizens Academy — a public program that offers a look into the City's operations and helps residents understand how city services and strategic plans are delivered.

The "Making Democracy Work" award was created by the League as a way to recognize and celebrate community members who demonstrate committed, visionary leadership that strengthens our democracy. Past recipients include: Marquette County Clerk Linda Talsma (2023), for her dedication to ensuring efficient, secure, and honest elections in our county, and the 2023-2024 Marquette Area Public Schools (MAPS) Board, for the board's commitment to community engagement and transparency during the search for a new mascot.



"Making Democracy Work" awardee, Anna McIlhagga.

Belle Ringer Awards

The Belle Ringer Awards are named after Florence Belle Brotherton, the first president of the League of Women Voters of Michigan. Every Michigan league is invited to identify up to four members whose contributions have made a difference in the League's service, visibility, impact, or growth. Belle Ringer Award recipients were recognized at the LWVMI convention in May.



Belle Ringer Awardee, Christie Wagner (left). Belle Ringer Awardee, Anna Wild (right).

MARQUETTE COUNTY Belle Ringers



LIBBY MYREN, as our first Student leader Fellowship Program intern, has bridged the "town and gown" gap by participating in numerous voter education/registration activities on campus while also bringing LWV's Mis-and-Dis-Information campaign to Northern Michigan University through her SkillBuilder's presentation



CHRISTI WAGNER has learned many new skills in video and electronic communication which have brought educational and League programs and forums to YouTube for our geographically widespread membership and allies.

MARQUETTE COUNTY Belle Ringers



ANNA WILD, a relatively new member, has taken on our quickly growing Environmental Committee and helped connect it to the LWVMI Environmental Group, our county's Climate Awareness Task Force, and Northern Michigan University's Climate Action student group.



ANDIE BALENGER: for going above and beyond in getting our messaging out by improving our website and social media platforms, becoming editor of the LWVMC's newsletter and agreeing to take on the spokesperson responsibilities.

2025 LWVMI CONVENTION

LWVMC Annual Awards

Jo Foley (Convener) received the "Green Thumb" award for her dedication to growing, expanding, and nourishing our League. Pri Burnham (former Voter Services Coordinator) received the "We Can Do It" award for taking on or revitalizing a project. This award particularly acknowledges someone who stepped up, overcame the odds, and contributed to the good of the League.



Jo Foley, "Green Thumb" awardee (left). Pri Burnham, "We Can Do It" awardee (right).

Summer Activities

Parades

LWVMC handed out hundreds of pinwheels and bookmarks at the “United We Stand” July 4 Parade in Marquette and at the Skandia Community Day Parade. The pinwheels were a big hit! Thanks to everyone who helped set up and marched.



Hooked on Voting

Hooked on Voting is LWVMC’s Voter Services program aimed at future voters. Kids vote for their favorite Lake Superior Fish, put their ballot in a ballot box, and then fish for a prize — all

the while we hand out VOTE411 book marks and talk to adults about the importance of voting. This year the program is sporting a new display designed by Johanna Worley and Dick Ekstrom.



At the Maritime Museum's Lake Superior Day celebration, there were 29 ballots cast for the favorite Lake Superior fish. In a very tight election, Rainbow Trout edged out Sturgeon by one vote, nine to eight!



At Blueberry Festival in July, there were 441 votes cast for the favorite Michigan fish. The winner by a landslide was Rainbow Trout with 138 votes. The next highest vote getter was Sturgeon, receiving 41 votes. At Lake Superior Village Youth and Family Center, there were eleven votes cast. Rainbow Trout won this election, with Large Mouth Bass a close second.

Voter Information Tables

League members tabled at several community events during the summer months to provide voter registration information to inquiring individuals.



Pride Fest, Mattson Lower Harbor Park, June 2025. NMU's Fall Fest, Northern Lawn Center, August 2025.

LWVMI Convention

This past May, eight LWVMC members attended the two-day LWVMI Convention in Grand Rapids. The Convention occurs every two years and serves as a space for Michigan league members to vote on LWVMI positions, attend workshops to improve league actions and enhance their understandings of Michigan policy, and to connect with other LWVMI members. Those who attended wholeheartedly agreed that the LWVMI Convention was highly impactful.



Jeanne Sekeley, current LWVMC Secretary, was one of several local members in attendance.

“[One] workshop I opted for was called ‘Local League Advocacy.’ LWVMI Board Members stated that advocacy is one arm of the LWV that needs to be strengthened,” Sekeley said. “If a position is official from state or national leagues, the local chapter can run with it in relation to local issues. If there is no League position, the local league can work individually.”



Unite & Rise 8.5

Unite & Rise 8.5 is a LWVUS initiative that aims to build a movement of 8.5 million individuals to unite and rise up against the anti-democratic actions of the current administration.

Launched in May 2025 and running until the 2026 midterm elections, this initiative is part of our Women Defend Democracy campaign.

Johanna Worley (LWVMC Board Member) will be following Unite & Rise 8.5 for our local league and sharing actions and information with our members through the newsletter and action alerts.

Why 8.5?

The number 8.5 million is the estimated number of voters it would take to bring about change through nonviolent protest. This is based on the following finding from the Carr-Ryan Center for Human Rights:

“Nonviolent protests are twice as likely to succeed as armed conflicts...and those engaging a threshold of 3.5% of the population have never failed to bring about change.”

According to the University of Florida, approximately 245 million Americans were eligible to vote in the 2024 general election. Based on the above research, if 3.5% of these eligible voters — 8,575,000 people — engage in nonviolent protests, we *will* bring about meaningful change.

Are We Really in a Constitutional Crisis?

The League defines a Constitutional Crisis as:

“When the executive, the legislative, or judiciary branches cannot or will not adequately protect the US Constitution, when there are explicit attempts to dismantle a functional democracy within any of the three branches, or when any level of federal government takes action to destroy democratic institutions in a manner that intentionally or purposefully jeopardizes the US Constitution. When these events occur, the constitution is deemed at the highest serious risk and warrants full-scale action to preserve and protect democratic institutions and civil society.”



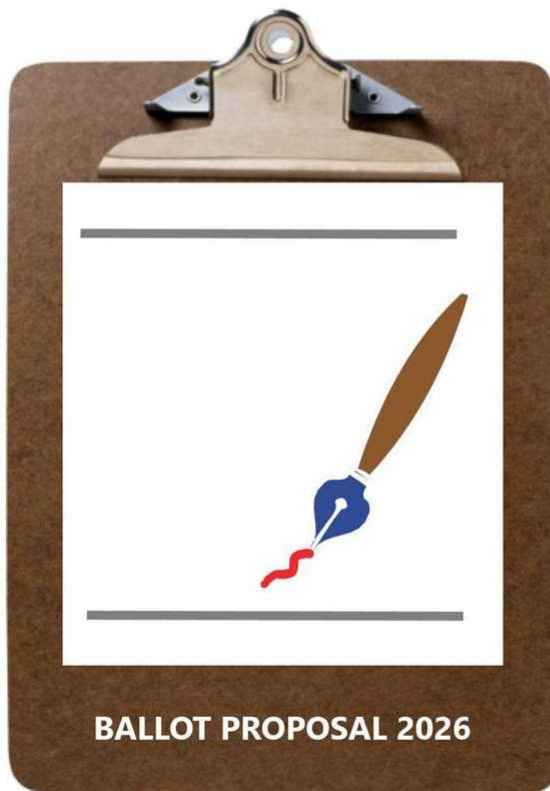
[Click to Learn More](#)

[Commit to Unite & Rise 8.5](#)



Know What You Sign!

When Signing a Ballot Proposal Petition



What is said in **PETITIONS** and about them, can be misleading and confusing. Be certain you know exactly what the ballot proposal will do and how it will affect you.

Use the QR code for information about the 2026 Ballot Proposals.



WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS!

Tina Korotko
Susy Swanson
Berkeley Thompson
Susan Morgan
John Scram
JoLene Klumpp
Ben Hendrickson
Michelle LaJoie
Jenna Smith
Georgianna Maynard

Elizabeth Houghton
Sandra Howes
Alicia Davis-Potter
Mim Dixon
Keri Lee Pierson
Connie Middleton
Colleen Seale
Leanne Lintula
Patricia Kimber
Margaret Jajich

Upcoming Events

Voter Services



PUBLIC CANDIDATE FORUM

Tuesday, September 30, 2025
City of Marquette Commission Chambers
300 W. Baraga St.

Doors open: 5:30 p.m.
Forum begins: 6:00 p.m.
Concludes: 8:00 p.m.

Marquette Board of Light & Power Candidates

Margaret Brumm
Doug McMahon
Carrie Statt

Marquette City Commission Candidates

Sally Davis
Michael Larson
Matthew Luttenberger

Plus a presentation on circulating State of Michigan petitions for the 2026 election.
There will be opportunity to meet and speak to the candidates after the Forum.

Each candidate will answer the same questions. This is not a debate. There is no cross talk or rebuttal. The questions come from constituents. You can submit a question in advance using the QR code or submit your question as a member of the audience. The Forum will also be live streamed to the League of Women Voters of Marquette County YouTube Channel.



The Marquette County League of Women Voters is a non-profit, non-partisan political organization whose main mission is educating voters, helping voters to register, and advocating for voters' rights.

Vote411 for November 2025 General Election

The Vote411 online guide will include the Marquette City Commission and Board of Light and Power races. It will also include proposals for Chocolay and Powell Townships and Bond Proposals for Ishpeming and Gwinn Area Community schools. The online guide will be published by September 26, 2025, and a print guide for the City of Marquette races will be available shortly after.

[**Vote411 Website**](#)



Adopt-A-Highway

Help us clean the highway on Saturday, October 4, from 10:00 a.m. to noon! The LWVMC's adopted a 2-mile stretch of US-41 between Green Garden Rd. and County Rd. 480. It is marked on both ends with MDOT signs that include our name. We will meet at Lofaro's Fresh Market in Harvey at 9:40 a.m. to carpool to the area. Clean up will take about two hours. Immediately after, we will eat lunch at the Smokehouse in Harvey.

[**Adopt-A-Highway Sign-Up**](#)



Environmental Committee

Energy in the U.P. Presentation

The Environmental Committee will host a special presentation at its October 9, 2025, meeting on "Energy in the UP" by Jenn Hill, Sustainable Infrastructure Advocate. The event will take place from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Peter White Public Library in the George Shiras III Room (217 N. Front St., Marquette, MI, 49855). This presentation about energy includes: History, what's different about the U.P., how electricity is produced in the U.P., and what's next. The presentation will be 35 minutes followed by a 15 minute Q&A session.

If you plan on attending, please RSVP to lwvmqtco@gmail.com.

Water Filtration and Wastewater Treatment Tours

The Environmental Committee is organizing a tour of the City of Marquette Water Filtration and Wastewater Treatment Plants on October 14, from 3:00 – 5:00 pm. Please message the League at lwvmqtco@gmail.com if you would like to participate.

Education Committee

After a brief business session at our October 15, 2025, membership meeting, Dr. Robert Van Howe (Marquette County Health Department Medical Director) will present how changes in federal healthcare funding and policies have affected healthcare in Marquette County. His presentation will be followed by a Q&A.

The meeting will be held at the PWPL in the Heritage Room. This is the first meeting in a new location for general membership meetings!

Additionally, this meeting will be recorded and posted to our YouTube Channel for future viewing.

Fundraising

Every so often, our League sends out a Community Newsletter to keep everyone informed about our activities—such as **VOTE411 for ballot information, local candidate forums in Marquette County, printed voter guides, and more.** As a member, you'll also be receiving a newsletter in the mail.

Do you find that your interest and enthusiasm for the League of Women Voters spreads when you talk with others? If you have friends or family who might enjoy receiving an introductory newsletter, please send me their name and address at ljpetrie@yahoo.com.

Our **Fundraising Committee** is looking for volunteers to help us brainstorm creative ways to support all the work we want to accomplish before the midterm elections. One of our upcoming projects is a **Spring 2026 fundraiser**—a fun program on the history of women's bathing suits, from Victorian times to the present day.



Source: Open Facebook

If you'd like to join in the planning (and the fun), please contact me!

Laura Petrie, *Fundraising Committee Chair*

THANK YOU DONORS!

From May 2025 to September 2025

- Anonymous
- Andrew Bek
- Pri Burnham
- Diane Chielens in memory of Shirley Chielens
- Mim Dixon in honor of Ann Constance
- Toni Eppensteiner
- Lynnette Ewbank
- Margaret Jajich
- Margaret Light-Mallo and John Mallo
- Joanna Mitchell
- Susan Morgan
- Barb Owdziej
- Barbara Scull in honor of Pri Burnham
- John Scram in memory of Theresa Scram
- Tadych's Marketplace "We Share" program
- Claire Twohey

[Donate](#)

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 Marketplace receipts for LWVMC. We participate in the store's "We Share" program and can receive 1% of the total of receipts we turn in. Please circle the before-tax subtotal minus any amount for alcohol or tobacco. Receipts may be turned in at meetings or contact Mary Burtch.

Calendar

September

September 22 — Education Committee, 10:00–11:00 a.m., PWPL Lions Room

September 24 — Strategic Planning Retreat, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

September 30 — Candidate Forum, 6:00–8:00 p.m., City of Marquette Commission Chambers

October

October 4 — Adopt-A-Highway, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

October 6–10 — National Voter Education Week

October 9 — Environmental Committee, "Energy in the UP" presentation by Jenn Hill, 5:00-6:00 p.m., PWPL George Shiras III Room

October 14 — Voter Services Committee, 10:00-11:30 a.m., PWPL Lions Room

October 14 — Environmental Committee Tour of the Water Filtration and Wastewater Treatment Plants, 3:00-5:00 p.m. Questions and RSVP to lwvmqtco@gmail.com.

October 15 — General Membership Meeting, Presentation by Dr. Robert Van Howe, Marquette County Health Department Medical Director, Social 6:30 p.m., Business 6:45-8:15 p.m., PWPL Heritage Room

October 22 — Board Meeting, 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., PWPL PW Conference Room

October 27 — Education Committee, 10:00-11:30 a.m., PWPL Lions Room

October 28 — Vote Early Day

November

November 3 — Election Hero Day

November 4 — General Election 2025

November 5 — General Membership Meeting, Presentation by David Allen, "The City of Marquette's Brownfield Redevelopment Authority," Social 6:30 p.m., Business 6:45-8:15 p.m., PWPL Heritage Room

November 6 — Environmental Committee, Presentation by Marquette Food Co-op, 5:00-6:00 p.m., PWPL Dandelion Room

November 11 — Voter Services Committee, 10:00–11:30 a.m., PWPL Lions Room

November 19 — Board Meeting, 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., PWPL PW Conference Room

November 19 — Program Planning Meeting, 1:00–3:00 p.m., PWPL George Shiras III Room

November 26 — Education Committee, 10:00-11:00 a.m., PWPL Lions Room

December

December 3 — General Membership Meeting, Social 6:30 p.m., Business 6:45-8:15 p.m., PWPL Heritage room

December 4 — Environmental Committee, 5:00-6:00 p.m., PWPL Dandelion Room

December 8 — Education Committee, 10:00-11:30 a.m., PWPL Lions Room

December 9 — Voter Services Committee, 10:00–11:30 a.m., PWPL Lions Room

December 17 — Board Meeting, 10:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m., PWPL PW Conference Room

Board of Directors 2025–2026

Convenor: Jo Foley — jfoley1950@gmail.com

Voter Services Coordinator: Sandy Breitenbach — sehurtubise@gmail.com

Treasurer: Laura Petrie — lj.petrie@yahoo.com

Secretary: Jeanne Sekely — jgsekely@yahoo.com

Communication Coordinator & Spokesperson: Andie Balenger
— ambalenger8@gmail.com

Board Administrator: Laura Sabo — laurasabo58@gmail.com

Director: Sandy Meyskens — smeyskens@hotmail.com

Director: Lynnette Ewbank — ewbanklj@gmail.com

Director: Barb Owdziej — swimrunnurse@yahoo.com

Director: Johanna Worley — johannaworley@gmail.com

About Us

League of Women Voters of Marquette County

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.

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Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

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

The League of Women Voters of Marquette County is a non-partisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government.