



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®] OF MARQUETTE COUNTY

8TH ANNUAL REPORT – MAY 2026



LEADERSHIP TEAM'S REPORT

Courtesy of the Convenor
Jo Foley

Defending Democracy has become an immediate, visceral goal over the past two years. LWVMC leadership needed to determine where our members wanted to focus their time, energy, and actions. We initiated a strategic planning process involving the Board, committee chairs, and interested members, both old and new. The top goal was to become Marquette County's go-to source for election information.

Our previous voter registration efforts have found that Marquette has a high voter registration rate. Our current efforts focus on youth (elementary, high school, and college), underserved populations, and registered voters who haven't voted in the last two years. We have received grants to print 1,000 extra Voter Guides and ensure they are delivered to every Township Clerk in the County.

We are disseminating voter information to our community through conventional and virtual media and by making our educational meetings available as recordings on our YouTube channel. We are working hard to have our League reflect the demographics of our County and to hold candidate forums outside Marquette City. Internally, we are working to improve communication with our growing membership and to bring more of them into committee and leadership positions. By the end of this year, we hope to have a functioning Fund Development Committee and the beginnings of a Speaker's Bureau.

We will be ready to be a force for democracy in this election year and will be even stronger and more effective in the presidential election year, 2028. Please step up and find a way **YOU** can contribute, large or small, to the force that is our League.



Board of Directors

Back row: Lynnette Ewbank, Laura Sabo, Jeanne Sekely, Jo Foley, Joan Park, Sandy Meyskens, and Laura Petrie

Front row: Andie Balenger, Sandy Breitenbach, Ann Constance, and Johanna Worley

Not Pictured: Barb Owdziej

NONPARTISANSHIP

We often talk about being nonpartisan, but what does that actually mean?

The League of Women Voters is proud to be nonpartisan, neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties at any level of government, but always working on vital issues of concern to members and the public.

From the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS):

ISSUES ARE NOT PARTISAN

Our mission is to empower voters and defend democracy. We've been doing this for over 100 years. Our advocacy work is issue-based, and our positions are arrived at through careful study and member input. We never derive our positions from politicians or political parties, and even when candidates or parties support the same issue, we never endorse them.

DEMOCRACY CONNECTS US

League members are not a monolith. Our members have opinions and political stances that span the US political spectrum. What brings us together is our commitment to empowering voters and defending democracy.

NONPARTISAN, NOT APOLITICAL

The League will continue to fight for the nonpartisan issues and policies we have always worked to advance. We will continue to work to elevate more diverse voices from within our membership and our communities, making this a place where everyone has a voice.

WE BRIDGE THE PARTISAN DIVIDE

You have a place in the League, as long as you are committed to our belief in an inclusive democracy, no matter your political identity. Republican, Democrat, Independent, Libertarian, conservative, liberal, moderate, progressive, or any other political perspective—we welcome your participation in the League and democracy.

ADVOCACY

The League of Women Voters has two arms. One is an educational, tax-exempt organization that provides voters with information on candidates and issues, as well as information about elections and government. The other is the advocacy arm. While the League does not support or oppose candidates or parties, we do take positions on issues we have studied.

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK (MDW) AWARD

The MDW award was created to recognize and celebrate community members who demonstrate committed, visionary leadership that strengthens our local democracy. In 2025, the League presented the award to Anne McIlhagga, Government Affairs Coordinator for the City of Marquette, for establishing the Marquette Citizens Academy, a public program that helps residents better understand how city services and strategic plans are delivered.



PARTICIPATION IN HANDS OFF, NO KINGS 1.0, 2.0, AND 3.0 PROTESTS



UNITE & RISE 8.5

Unite & Rise 8.5 is an LVW initiative that aims to build a movement by engaging and mobilizing 8.5 million voters. The goal is to protect and preserve our democracy by uniting and rising up against the anti-democratic actions of this administration.

OPPOSING THE SAVE ACT

The LWVMC urged community members to demand that their representatives oppose the SAVE Act suite of bills, which would mandate documentary proof of citizenship (DPOC) to cast a ballot, a requirement that would disproportionately impact Americans who are systematically marginalized, including women and people of color.

NMU CONNECTIONS

NEW! LWVNMU – A SATELLITE OF THE LWVMC

The League of Women Voters of Marquette County has expanded to NMU's campus! Starting in Fall 2026, a satellite league of LWVMC, the League of Women Voters of Marquette County at Northern Michigan University (LWVNMU), will begin operations at NMU. Consistent with LWVMC's values and objectives, LWVNMU aims to provide NMU students with opportunities for local civic engagement, advocacy, and professional development, as well as information on local voting and voter registration. Members of LWVNMU are also strongly encouraged to attend LWVMC General Membership Meetings and join committees if they'd like. Look out for opportunities to mentor and volunteer with LWVNMU in the future! LWVNMU is extremely excited to begin its involvement on NMU's campus and in the Marquette County communities!



STUDENT LEADER FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM (SLFP)

SLFP is an NMU program dedicated to creating capable, considerate, and community-oriented young leaders. One of the SLFP students' requirements is a real-world community service internship, giving them a chance to practice their newly acquired leadership skills in the broader community. This year, the League had two fellows complete their internship requirements through League activities.

IRIS BAILEY SLFP INTERN

Major: English

Minor: Gender & Sexuality Studies, Political Science

Year: Entering senior year. After graduation, plans on pursuing a Master's in Public Administration

Why the League: I'm continuously impressed by the positive impact the League has locally in Marquette County, and with so much recent discourse surrounding democracy, I wanted to be part of an organization that informs and encourages voting!



TINA KOROTKO SLFP INTERN

Major: Political Science

Minor: Economics

Year: Senior, finishing classes in August. Will be staying in Marquette for a few years after graduation for work experience before attending graduate school.

Why the League: I've been fascinated by the voting process since I was little, and my parents would take me with them to vote, so I see the League as an opportunity to inspire others to participate in their democracy!





Marching in the "United We Stand" July 4th parade in Marquette



Pride Fest at Mattson Lower Harbor



Skandia Days Parade

2025

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



Evergreen tree for the Winter Solstice Art & Evergreen show at Peter White Public Library



Blueberry Festival, Marquette



Adopt-A-Highway Road Clean-Up US-41 Green Garden Rd. to Co. Rd. 480

COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK

Courtesy of the Coordinator,
Andie Balenger

The Communications Network is present across all LWVMC pursuits. Our work helps spread the word about the League's activities, including action alerts, educational opportunities, and public events.

The Communications Network made strides in two areas this past year. First, our quarterly newsletter, "The Voter," is now published on Substack. The new platform has proven engaging for readers, with interactive features and photo galleries that create an immersive reading experience. Second, our YouTube channel received an overhaul to increase access to key information for members and the public. Uploads were reorganized to make our content easier to find.

Our goal is to make information about all things LWVMC as accessible as possible. The changes we made this year are part of our ongoing effort to share our work more effectively with League members and the broader community. If you are interested in getting involved, we are always looking for more people to help!



SUBSTACK



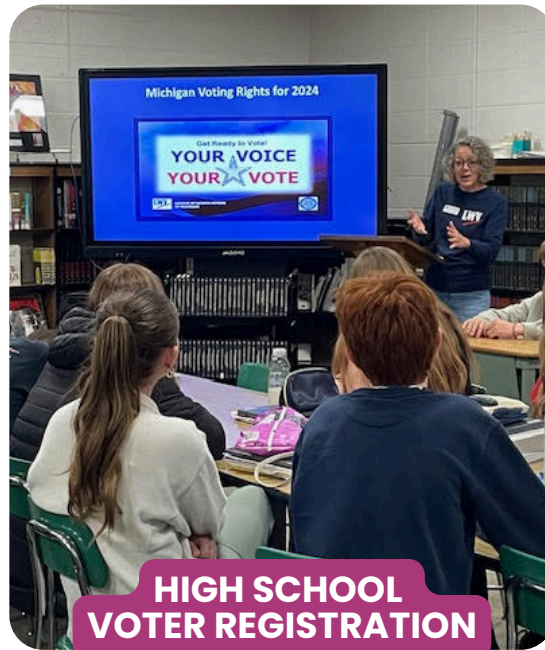
YOUTUBE

VOTER SERVICES

Courtesy of the Coordinator,
Sandy Breitenbach

Voter Services' core goal is to encourage informed voting. We start young with Hooked on Voting. Hundreds of children participated in these events this year. They voted for their favorite fish while parents spoke with volunteers and picked up election and LWVMC information. By visiting high schools in the area and NMU, students were encouraged to check their registration status, register online, and learn how to access information about candidates on the ballot. Many will be voting for the first time. A candidate forum and a printed voter guide presented candidates for the Marquette City Commission and the Board of Light and Power. Many voter guides were distributed in our community, and many citizens attended or watched our forums!

HOOKED ON VOTING



HIGH SCHOOL VOTER REGISTRATION

NMU FALL FEST



DEIA COMMITTEE

Courtesy of the Committee Chair,
Sandy Breitenbach

The mission of the DEIA (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility) Committee is to promote actions that will make our local LWV welcoming to all members of our community. In line with goals developed through a strategic planning process, our accomplishments this past year include:

- Implementation of a calendar policy that highlights important religious and cultural dates to be considered whenever events are planned.
- Continued acknowledgment of the historical and current Indigenous ties to the land at our meetings and events.
- Investigation of barriers restricting access to voting in collaboration with the LWVMC Education Committee.



OBSERVER CORPS

Courtesy of the Committee Chair,
David Allen

The Observer Corps is an opportunity for League members to observe local government entities, both to learn about government functions and to convey to officials that we care and are watching. We currently have about eight Observer Corps members, but we'd love to have additional people join. In particular, we'd like to recruit observers for the Marquette County Commission and the Marquette Area Public Schools. We could also use an additional observer for both the Marquette City Commission and the City of Marquette Planning Commission.



ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE

Courtesy of the Committee Chair,
Anna Wild

Our committee aims to educate and increase civic engagement and awareness among our League members and the residents of Marquette County, promoting responsible stewardship of our precious natural resources and protecting life-sustaining ecosystems for future generations.

Last year, we hosted monthly battery-sorting parties, toured the Marquette Water Filtration Plant, and welcomed guest speakers. We monitored legislation at all levels, reviewing bills and drafting letters of support or concern to our elected officials.

To promote community education, we partnered with NMU for two April events. We presented on climate change and sustainability in the Great Lakes region at the April Membership meeting, featuring our committee, the Superior Watershed Partnership (SWP), and NMU's Sustainability Hub for Innovation & Environment (SHINE). We also participated in the Northern Climate Network's "Climate@Noon" series to discuss climate, community, and gender issues.

Participating in these events renewed our commitment to protecting the UP for future generations, and we're excited to see where this year takes us and welcome your input and involvement!



Battery Sorting

From left to right: Anna Wild, Pri Burnham, Barb Coleman, & Barb Owdziej



Climate Change + Sustainability Presentation

Left to right: Pri Burnham, Joan Park, Johanna Worley, Krystle Baecker (SWP), Avery Case (SHINE), Anna Wild, Barb Coleman, Chloe Ravenscraft (SHINE)

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Courtesy of the Committee Chair,
Sandy Meyskens

The Education Committee plans and delivers educational programs for the membership and the public. At membership meetings, the committee presents league basics, league positions, and topics of interest to members.

In the Fall of 2025, the committee hosted Dr. Robert Van Howe, the Marquette County Health Director, at a General Membership meeting. His presentation, titled "How federal funding has impacted healthcare in Marquette County," detailed the effects of federal budget cuts in the Upper Peninsula, particularly in Marquette County.

As part of the Barriers to Voting series, the Education and DEIA Committees featured Chocolay Township Clerk Max Engle, who discussed proof-of-citizenship bills before Congress and the Michigan legislature. A question-and-answer session followed the discussion.



Image (from left to right): Karlyn Rapport, Dr. Robert Van Howe, Meredith Kulishek, and Barb Coleman



Left image: Max Engle, Chocolay Township Clerk
Right image: League members, from left to right, Christie Wagner, Jane Jameson, Barb Coleman, Sandy Meyskens and Joan Park

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Courtesy of the Membership Committee Liaison,
Lynnette Ewbank

Our Membership Committee meets 3-4 times per year, while our impact is felt weekly as we welcome new members through personal contacts, orientations, and ongoing follow-up to match interest levels. Members of this committee attend each major event and monthly membership meetings, serving as greeters for members and guests and providing a quarterly orientation for new members. We oversee T-shirt and name tag purchases and plan two annual parties: the Winter Solstice and the Annual Meeting.

This year was an exciting transition year for our league, as the LWVUS provided access to register new members and renew current members through its online portal. We can still register and/or renew members using traditional paper forms, with payment by check or cash if a member prefers. We have found this portal to be a big help in staying in touch with our members and providing accurate, up-to-date information.

FUNDRAISING + GRANT WRITING COMMITTEE

Courtesy of the Committee Chair, Laura Petrie

Garage Sale Fundraiser (May 2025)

Pri Burnham hosted the second two-day garage sale fundraiser. Despite heavy rain, strong community support helped raise \$4,670. Thank you to Pri and all volunteers and donors who made this event possible.

- 2023 total: \$5,000
- Held every other year to allow time for planning and donations
- Next sale planned for 2027



Spring Fundraiser Event (April 2026)

Hosted by the Marquette Regional History Center

- Carrie Moon-Dupree, Director of Development for the League of Women Voters of Michigan, made her first visit to the Upper Peninsula to present a fascinating program on the evolution and revolution of women's bathing suits, featuring a collection of 25 pieces ranging from vintage to modern styles.
- Guest speakers: NMU Swim Coach Heidi Voight and six NMU swimmers discussed current competitive swimwear. They wowed us with how it can take up to 40 minutes to get the technology-savvy suits on and off.
- 130 guests attended at \$45 a ticket.



Community and Member Support

- \$3,000+ raised from 600 invitations mailed in January 2026 to community and league members to help support the work of Voter Services.
- Grant writing will begin in May 2026 to help cover the cost of candidate forums.
- Donations to the League of Women Voters 501(c)(3) Education Fund are tax-deductible.

If you are age 70½ or older and have an IRA, you can make a charitable gift in a way that may also reduce your taxable income. This is called a Qualified Charitable Distribution, or QCD. It allows you to transfer money directly from your IRA to a qualified charitable organization without paying income tax on the amount you give.

SUMMARY OF FINANCES: FY 25-26

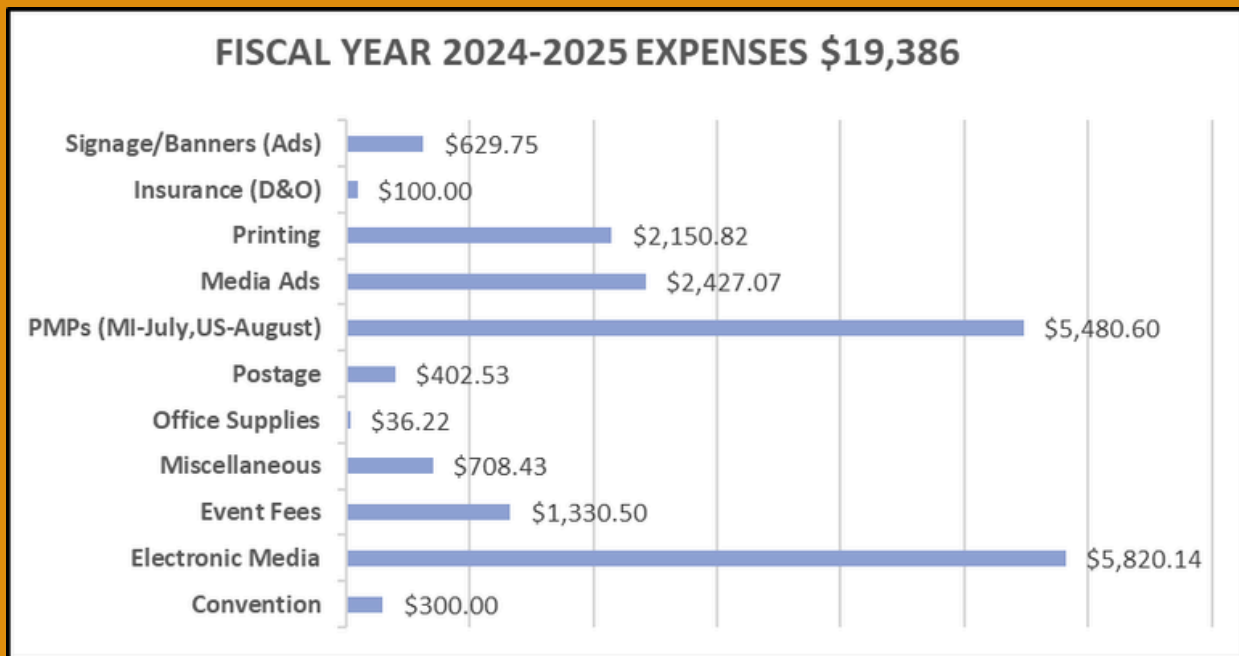
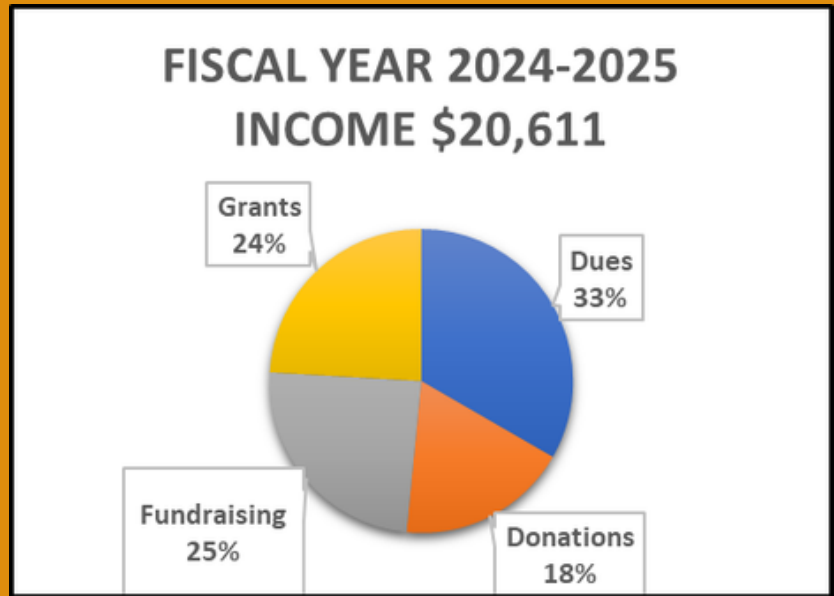
Courtesy of the Treasurer,
Laura Petrie

Our 2025-26 Fiscal Year report will look quite different from last year, yet it will end similarly, with income remaining ahead of expenses. The pie graph at year-end will show much different portions than the one shown here.

By July 2025, the LWVUS assumed responsibility for collecting membership dues nationwide. Instead of our League depositing the \$75 membership dues and holding the State and National portions in a restricted account until we receive a Per Member

Payment (PMP) bill, we now receive only our \$15 portion. Dues will no longer be our primary source of income, and PMP payments will no longer be our large expense after this year. Presently, 80% of our income is coming from fundraising and donations, while 18% from membership dues.

Our big-ticket item, electronic media, will continue to be money well spent, creating accessibility for the community and content for permanent records. Our Communications Committee has built a powerhouse for community engagement! We have a big year ahead with town halls, candidate forums, and voter registration education. Thanks to our volunteers and donors, this League has all the talent and resources needed to start the 2026-2027 fiscal year. Now we just need the time...



DONOR LIST

2025-2026

Donations

Andrea Ingmire

Ann Fisher

Anna Wild

ANONYMOUS DONOR

ANONYMOUS DONOR

ANONYMOUS DONOR

Barb Coleman

Barb Owdziej

Barbara Scull

- In honor of Pri Burnham

Carol Cappuccio

Carol Margrif

- In honor of Jane Ryan

Carolyn McDonald

Carolyn Myers

Catherine Greer Cole

- In memory of Holly Greer

Christie Wagner

Claire Twohey

Daniel Arnold

Darcy Rutkowski

Diane Chielens

- In memory of Shirley Chielens

Diane Kent

Emily and Matthew Lambert

Gayle Van Osdol

Hannah Harriman

Heather Mlsna

Jane and Richard Jamsen

Janel Crooks and Dave Kronk

- In honor of Lorraine M. Crooks and in memory of Ralph Crooks

Jeanne Sekely

Jo Foley

- In honor of Lucia Watson

Joan Park

Joanna Mitchell

Joel Klahn

Johanna Worley

John Gumaer

John & Margaret Light-Mallo

John Rebers

John Schram

- In memory of Theresa Schram

Judy Quirk

Julie Schneider

Karen Bacula

Kerrie Lee Pierson

Laura Miller

Laura Petrie

Laura Sabo

Lee Sandberg

Leslie Warren

Linda Byers Blaksmith

Linda S Kaare

LWVMI Grant

Lynnette Ewbank

Madeline Koval

Margaret Jajich

Marie Moisis

Mark Jacobs

Mary Beth Carstens

Mary C Stone

Meredith Kulisheck

Mim Dixon

- In honor of Ann Constance

Nancy Kreft

Pam Miller

Peggy Lorinser

Pri Burnham

Sally Davis

Sandy Breitenbach

Sandy Meyskens

Sue Wilson

Susan Morgan

Susan Payant

Susy Swanson

Toni Eppensteiner

Tadych

- 1% program 11/18/2025

Zonta Club of the

Marquette Area Grant

In-Kind Donations

Carrie Moon-Dupree

Hurtubise Nature

Retreat

Jack Deo

Pamela Christensen

Sue Wilson





PROGRESS REPORT: JUNE 2025 – MAY 2026


June 2025 – Members: 130

- Making Democracy Work (MDW) Award given to Anne McIlhagga, Government Affairs Coordinator for the City of Marquette, at LWVMC Annual Meeting (6/4)
- Voter Information table at Pride Fest, Mattson Lower Harbor Park (6/14)


July 2025

- Participated in the City of Marquette July 4th Parade (7/4)
- Participated in Skandia Community Days Parade (7/19)
- “Hooked on Voting” at the Maritime Museum’s Lake Superior Days, 29 ballots cast for the favorite Lake Superior fish. A tight election, with Rainbow Trout edging out Sturgeon by one vote. (7/20) 
- “Hooked on Voting” at the Marquette Blueberry Festival, 441 votes were cast. It was a landslide win for Rainbow Trout. (7/25) 

August 2025

- “Hooked on Voting” at Lake Superior Youth and Activity Center (8/7) 
- Voter Services and LWV voter information table at NMU’s Fall Fest (8/25)

September 2025

- “Hooked on Voting” at Peter White Public Library. 96 kids voted for their favorite Lake Superior fish. The winner was the ever-popular Rainbow Trout. The mighty Sturgeon ran a good race and came in second. (9/20) 
- Voter Services National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) at Marquette Alternative High School. Students learned about voting rights, voting integrity, and election security (9/23)
- Strategic Planning initiated at the Hurtubise Nature Retreat (9/24)
- Printed Voter Guides distributed for the November 4 General Election (9/26)
- Hosted the Marquette City Commission and Marquette Board of Light and Power Candidate Forum for the primary election: 21 attendees, 397 views of the recording on YouTube. (9/30)

October 2025

- Adopt-a-Highway roadside cleanup (10/4)
- City of Marquette Water Filtration Plant Tour, organized by the Environmental Committee (10/14)
- “Energy in the UP” presented by Jenn Hill at Environmental Committee meeting (10/9)
- Presentation by Dr. Robert Van Howe, Marquette County Health Department Medical Director, at Membership meeting, coordinated by the Education Committee (10/15)
- “Your Voice, Your Vote” presentation at Munising High School. Students learned about the voting process. (10/28)

PROGRESS REPORT: JUNE 2025 – MAY 2026

November 2025

- General Election – LWVMC volunteers worked the polls in various roles (11/4)
- "The City of Marquette's Brownfield Redevelopment Authority" presentation by David Allen at membership meeting (11/5)
- Presentation by Marquette Food Co-Op General Manager, Matt Gougeon, at Environmental Committee Meeting (11/6)
- 2026 – 2027 Program Planning Session (11/19)

December 2025

- Decorated the LWVMC "Winter Solstice" evergreen tree at Peter White Public Library (12/3)
- Presentation on American Government by Kristen Marana, Westwood High School history and government teacher, at membership meeting (12/3)


January 2026

- Fundraising newsletter distributed (1/26)

February 2026

- Voter Services presentation on planned activities for this election year. (2/4)

March 2026

- Observer Corps presentation on local government agencies the LWVMC observes (3/11)
- "Hooked on Voting" at Girl Scouts Meeting, Lake Superior Village and Youth Center (3/18) 
- Voting Information Table, Wellbeing Fair, Northern Michigan University (3/26)

April 2026

- Environmental Committee Panel Presentation led by NMU's Sustainability Hub for Innovation and Environment (SHINE), membership meeting at NMU (4/8)
- Environmental Committee presented at Climate@Noon on NMU campus, "Climate, Community, & Gender" (4/17)
- Marquette Regional History Center hosted LWVMC fundraiser: "Swimming Suffragettes: The Evolution and Revolution in Women's Bathing Suits, featuring Carrie Moon-Dupree, Development Director of LWVMI, Heidi Voight, NMU Swim & Dive coach, and NMU women's swimmers (4/22)

May 2026 – Members 130

- The Barriers to Voting series featured a discussion with Chocolay Township Clerk Max Engle on proof-of-citizenship bills. Organized by Education and DEIA committees. (5/6)

LOOKING AHEAD:

WHAT DOES THE LWVMC HAVE PLANNED FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR?



COMMUNITY EVENTS

CANDIDATE FORUMS



EDUCATIONAL PRESENTATIONS



+ MUCH MORE!

WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

THERE ARE SEVERAL WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT OUR EFFORTS:



**BECOME A
← MEMBER**



DONATE →

VOLUNTEER WITH VOTER SERVICES

The Voter Services Committee needs YOUR help throughout this busy election year!



CANDIDATE FORUMS

Lots of opportunities to volunteer! Greeters, pages, setup/tear down, question screeners, moderators, and much more!



VOTE411

Collect information from candidates and assist with online input on the Vote411 website and paper distribution of our printed Voter Guides.



HOOKED ON VOTING

Many opportunities to "go fishing" and promote voting for future voters coming up this spring, summer, and fall!

If you want to volunteer, please join and contact us at lwvmqtco@gmail.com



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF MARQUETTE COUNTY

8TH ANNUAL REPORT – MAY 2026

ABOUT US

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.

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.