



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
LEELANAU COUNTY**

**Press Release from League of Women Voters, Leelanau County for Immediate Release July 2013
Contact: Marian Kromkowski, LWVLC Board Member, Publicity Chair [231-271-5600](tel:231-271-5600)**

**2013-2014
Calendar of Events**

**Monthly Meetings Noon at
Government Center**

SEPT 4

Dave Barrons on Climate Change

OCT 2

Panel on "Abuse in Leelanau"

NOV 6

Scope and Power of County
Government

JAN 8

LWVMI Education Consensus

FEB 5

Farm Labor Task Force

MARCH 5

LWVUS Agricultural Study
Consensus

APRIL 2

Energy Committee

MAY 7

Voters Service

JUNE 4

The Challenges of Leelanau

Special Events

AUGUST 25

LWVLC Picnic
Northport Marina Park, 4-6 pm

OCTOBER 15

Justice Marilyn Kelly
Old Art Building

DECEMBER 4

Luncheon for members and guests

MAY 22

Annual Meeting –Justice Bridget
McCormick

**League of Women Voters Leelanau County:
Modest Beginning to Independent League**

On June 17, 2013 the League of Women Voters United States welcomed three new local Leagues. One gaining independent status was the League of Women Voters Leelanau County. The LWVUS noted that each "has shown its dedication to protecting and strengthening our democracy." From modest beginnings in the 1990s to a vibrant 80 plus member organization, the LWV Leelanau County strives to live up to its charter of being a "nonpartisan political organization, encouraging the informed and active participation in government, working to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influencing public policy through education and advocacy." The League will celebrate its independence on Sunday August 25 with a potluck picnic at the Marina Park in Northport from 4 to 6pm Members and their families are invited. Robin Long and Chava Bahle will provide musical entertainment. A logo design for LWVLC will be selected from members' entries brought to the picnic.

In the 1990s, Leelanau resident Kathy Turner organized the Leelanau County Issues Discussion Group (CIDG). This energetic and committed group of women tackled numerous subjects at monthly meetings. Several years were devoted to the study of Farmland Preservation in Leelanau County. Members worked toward the approval of a countywide millage to support the preservation of local farmlands. Following the failure of the millage and the County Commission's vote not to renew its support for its program, CIDG membership dwindled. In 2008 the remaining members advocated joining other concerned area citizens as a unit of the League of Women Voters Grand Traverse Area. Fifteen women from Leelanau joined the LWVGTA at that time. A board of 4 members was elected to conduct the business of the group with Kathy Turner as president.

By 2010, 35 people had joined the Leelanau Unit. The Board was increased to six. In 2012 the Leelanau Unit hosted six countywide candidate forums and one ballot initiative presentation. Energized by the increase in attendance at its events and its growing membership, the Leelanau Unit took on two studies: Energy chaired by Ann McInnis of Northport and Agricultural Migrant Worker Visas chaired by Suzanne Hoff from Suttons Bay.

The Agricultural Migrant Worker Visa Committee compiled data, interviewed local agricultural farmers and processors and monitored state and national immigration and farm bills. After a year's work, the group presented its findings to a League meeting with over 100 attendees. A position was adopted in April of 2012 supporting the agricultural sector in its efforts to meet the challenges of hiring an adequate number of skilled agricultural workers. The study has been praised by local farmers and cited in many area publications. The Farm Labor Task Force now

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continues this work. The Energy Committee has studied many forms of renewable and alternative energies that could be adopted in Leelanau County. It has twice presented programs on its research.

By the spring of 2012 membership had swelled to 60. President Vina Mikesell opened the discussion of whether it was time to consider becoming an independent League. In April of 2012 members voted their approval for becoming independent of the Grand Traverse Area League. The Leelanau Unit prepared numerous documents to meet all state and national LWV requirements. In April 2013, the Michigan State League Board unanimously voted to grant Leelanau's request for independence. This paved the way for the LWVUS granting Leelanau's independent status on June 17, 2103. The LWVLC now has a 10-member Board that conducts the business of the Leelanau League and plans the next year's events.

While waiting for word on its application for independent status the Leelanau Unit hosted columnist Jack Lessenberry at its spring Annual Dinner. He obviously liked what he saw as two days later on his weekly Michigan Radio commentary Mr. Lessenberry noted:

“Some think they are the little old ladies who check your name off the voter list at the polls. In fact, the League of Women voters is, more than any group I can think of, everything good about Democracy in action. They include men as well as women, and are highly informed people with two main purposes. One is voter information. They do everything they can to make sure that citizens have the information they need to make smart choices But they also take very clear positions on issues. The League is strictly non-partisan. They never endorse candidates nor recommend that anybody vote against a candidate, no matter what. However, they know what they stand for – clean, open and responsive government at home, world peace, and protection of both the public and the environment through policies promoting clean air, water and unpolluted land.”

In addition to its regular meeting on the first Wednesday each month at the Leelanau County Government Center, the LWVLC will host retired Michigan Supreme Court Justice Marilyn Kelly on October 15, 2103 at 7:00 PM at the Old Art Building in Leland and current Justice Bridget McCormack at its Annual Dinner on May 22, 2014.

The LWVLC membership now stands at 81 with new members joining at every meeting. Membership is open to women and men 18 year of age who are U.S. citizens. Associate membership is available for noncitizens and those under 18 years of age. Annual dues are \$60.00/individuals, \$90.00/household (two members at same address) and provide membership in the League of Women Voters Leelanau County, the League of Women Voters Michigan and the League of Women Voters United States. Its website is LWVLeelanau.org.

2013-2014 LWVLC Board (L to R) Marian Kromkowski, Barbara Reinert, Mary Tonneberger, Ann McInnis, Vina Mikesell, Sharon Golm, Martha Shaver, Jo Ellen Walker, Suzanne Hoff and BJ Christensen



Justice Marilyn Kelly speaks on Court Reform Oct. 15th at Old Art Building in Leland. \$10 suggested donation



Justice Bridget McCormack speaks on her 1st Eighteen Months at the MSC at LWVLC Annual Dinner May 22

