



Sunshine Week was launched in 2005 by the American Society of News Editors — now News Leaders Association — and has grown into an enduring initiative to promote open government.

LWV-US Position: Citizen's Right to Know / Citizen Participation

The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation at all levels of government. The League further believes that governmental bodies must protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible.

This year Sunshine Week was March 14-20, but promoting open government is always important.

The League has long worked for the citizen's right to know and for broad citizen participation in government. Leagues are empowered to apply that position at the state and local levels.

In Michigan, the League has used this position to call for transparency in State Education and Redistricting positions. This year's Sunshine Week is likely to see both 1. More attention to the campaign launch by Progress Michigan for a ballot proposal to eliminate the exemptions in Michigan's FOIA law, and 2. Legislation intended to improve Michigan's transparency. Currently, both the State Legislature and the Governor's Office are exempt from Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

In 2015 Michigan ranked 50th out of 50 states in government transparency by the Center for Public Integrity. Only two states still don't require lawmakers to disclose finances – Idaho and Michigan. The League's State Advocacy Committee and State Board monitor legislation and ballot proposals and will call for action when appropriate.

If your League already has or is creating an Observer Corps program, volunteer if you can. You will learn a lot, and it's an excellent way to learn about transparency in your local municipalities and school boards. In May, the LWV-MI State Convention will offer a workshop on Observer Corps Programs.

Another action which a Local League Board could take is to write a Letter to the Editor and/or post on your Social Media. Members may also write, but not in the name of the League.