

League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area

Questionnaire for candidates for Kalamazoo County Commission

Name: **Ann Nieuwenhuis**

Political Party: **Republican**

Biographical Information occupation, education, background and experience (75 words)

Age 57. 5833 East HJ Avenue. WMU Instructor. B.S. and M.A. WMU. Active partner with civic leaders working collaboratively to achieve goals. Leader in county-wide initiatives to stabilize and stretch revenues and resources. Vice-chair Older Adult Services Advisory Committee and Health and Community Services Committee. Member statewide Agriculture and Tourism Committee. 36 years MSU County Extension. Life-long resident. Small business owner. Strong statewide perspective and network. Proven track record providing common sense solutions. Visit www.electann.com.

- 1. What will you do as a commissioner to improve the quality of life for residents of Kalamazoo County? How will your talents and skills enable you to succeed in these efforts? (125 words)***

Effective county government demands active leadership. I am eager to continue my active participation in all levels of government. I value being a conduit to connect people, resources and community needs across Kalamazoo County. I have been able to combine my role as a commissioner with my community and development expertise enabling me to work successfully with others to improve the quality of life for all residents. My priorities: Lead the charge against unfunded state mandates to avoid fiscal and social damage to local government. Develop programs that strengthen our local economy and retain people with expertise and know-how to drive innovation. Stabilize the funding of our vital infrastructure to create jobs, attract businesses and increase local property values. Continue to provide Common Sense Solutions. (125 words)

- 2. Considering the recent oil spills in the Gulf of Mexico and Kalamazoo River as examples of threats to the environment and public health, how well prepared is the county to avoid and recover from such threats. What changes, if any, would you advocate to our current policies and practices? (100 words)***

With increasing environmental and public health threats, citizens need to understand the risks facing their community. As an Emergency Planning Specialist, I facilitated community discussions to weigh the cost of emergency preparedness against expectations for response and recovery. Kalamazoo County Commissioners face the same challenge. The question we must address is: Can we afford not to be prepared? We must remember that the best of plans depends upon the people who implement the process. I have first-hand involvement with the Kalamazoo County oil spill and appreciate the Sheriff and his staff's quick response and continued work to protect our community. (100 words)

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**3. How would you improve citizen participation in government and the political process?
(100 words)**

We need a stronger research-driven citizens' agenda of priorities. To accomplish that goal, County Commissioners need to place a higher value on civic leadership and the amount of involvement of our citizens from voting to volunteering. We can begin the process by reviewing our current format for citizen time and renew our efforts to teach citizens the roles and responsibilities of County government. I know that with frequent interaction with our residents, a commissioner learns what people need and want and what residents are willing to support. Together we can identify ways to increase a citizen's personal engagement in government. (100 words)

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