

# VOTER

League of Women  
Voters of Indiana  
County, Pennsylvania



LEAGUE OF  
WOMEN VOTERS®

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## 2013 — A Year of Action and Learning

We accomplished so much in 2013. Here are just a few of the activities that took place from January through December during which time we educated, informed, and advocated, and, in the process, gave our community the tools to make informed decisions about their governmental leaders and the issues we all face.

- **National Voter Registration Day** and several voter registration drives
- **LWVPA Resource Guide** “Shale Gas Extraction and Public Health” finished
- **Storm water management** planning with Indiana County Planning
- **Interviews** with state legislators
- Indiana Free Library **Civic Literacy Week**
- **Monitoring of new legislation** and studies on the health effects of natural gas
- **Pennsylvania LWV Convention** in Lewisburg where Mary Beth Sweeney was honored for her service to the League
- **Children’s Advisory Commission’s** Family Fun Fest and Day of Play
- **Presentations and conference** about shale gas extraction and health
- **Testimony to Environmental Protection Agency** on concerns about proposed permit for underground injection of hydrofracturing wastewater
- Ten **board meetings, annual meeting, and summer retreat**
- **Participation in** Department of Environmental Protection’s Oil and Gas Technical Advisory Board (representing the voice of citizens)
- **Candidates Night** for Indiana Area School Board
- **Agriculture study update** committee meetings
- **Affordable Care Act** presentations for the public
- Peggy Clark Grassroots **Environmental Leadership Award**
- **And so much more!**

Undoubtedly, it was another great year!

**THANK YOU for your membership! Let’s make it another year of success. Invite a friend or two to join the League in 2014!**

## Save the Date

### Member Potluck Dinner & Meeting—Monday, January 27

Panel discussion regarding agriculture policy. Location to be announced.

## Pennsylvania Legislation to Watch

Some charter schools in Pennsylvania are under criminal investigation or on trial for fraud and misappropriation of public funds. Senate Bill 1085 contains some much needed reforms for charter and cyber charter schools, but many of the provisions will diminish local control of charters, negatively impact district finances, and change the original purposes of charter schools.

Specifically, the bill will do the following:

Eliminate the wording that charters exist to provide innovative educational models to be shared with other public schools;

Allow 10-year authorizations of charters;

Allow universities to become authorizers (bypassing local school districts);

Provide payment to charters directly from the Department of Education by subtracting from the district's basic subsidy (again bypassing local school districts);

Remove the right of districts to negotiate caps on charter enrollment (taking control away from local school districts and potentially costing the districts much more);

Allow multiple charter school organizations to apply to the Department of Education for authorization (again bypassing the local school districts);

The bill is scheduled to come to the Senate floor SOON. Call Senator Don White at 724-357-0151 and urge him to consider the concerns listed and to oppose this bill.

## Environmental Issues Committee Continues to Make an Impact in County

By Clarice Reber

Our environmental issues committee is hard at work as we continue to examine storm water issues in Indiana County.

Right now we are asking the following questions: 1. How much does flooding cost us? We have found a few examples of huge increases (for example, increases of as much as four times) in flood insurance for citizens because the federal government no longer subsidizes flood insurance 2. How many times do first responders and NGOs need to respond to flood emergencies or pump out basements? If we controlled storm water runoff more effectively, we probably could save both tax dollars and money for individual families 3. Do you have an example of what storm water costs to you, a business you know, a friend, a municipality? Your example doesn't need to be from a major flood; merely an inch of water in a short period of time can create problems.

If you do have a story, contact Clarice Reber ([ckreber@verizon.net](mailto:ckreber@verizon.net)), Cindy Rogers

(rogers944@comcast.net), or Vera Bonnet (verabonnet@yahoo.com). We're just starting to collect information and would be interested to hear your stories.

In addition, Vera Bonnet has done it again! The new Shale Gas Extraction and Public Health Resource Guide is out, and it should be online soon. As a contributor and editor, Vera was a major force in the development of this document. The League of Women Voters of Indiana County is proud to call her ours. Thank you, Vera. (See the story below for details.)

## **Public Health Resource Guide Available**

By Vera Bonnet & Heather Harr

One of the goals of the LWVIC's Environmental Issues Committee was to create an addendum to the original Marcellus Shale Study Guides updating research regarding the possible health impacts of shale gas extraction. The Indiana County committee began its work in 2012, with Vera Bonnet as lead writer. This work was picked up and supplemented with the creation, in early 2013, of the Shale and Public Health Committee of LWVPA's "Straight Scoop on Shale" initiative, which is funded through a grant from the Colcom Foundation to LWVPA Citizen Education Fund.

In February 2013, an inter-League committee met to lay out subtopics for this resource guide. Members from Allegheny, Indiana, and Washington Counties, and Roberta Winters of Radnor, took on areas of particular interest, researching and writing sections. For example, audiologist Clarice Reber wrote a section on noise effects related to shale gas extraction, and public health nurse Shirley McIlvried of LWVGP researched occupational impacts, especially exposure to silica, and developed the new topic area of shale and the foodshed.

The bulk of the research and writing, however, was carried out by Bonnet who presented her first draft for input in late spring. Bonnet's particular gift to this guide was to provide a context for understanding the contributions and limitations of various types of environmental health research, giving the reader tools to judge new developments in this rapidly evolving field.

New members joined the committee, including new LWVPA Vice President of Issues and Actions, Betty Tatham, of Bucks County. Based on Bonnet's initial document, the committee developed a PowerPoint presentation which was presented at the Apollo Memorial Library in July 2013 (thanks to Tina Zins, librarian and League member) and also at the Mt. Lebanon Public Library and the North Hills Library in October 2013.

Bonnet and the committee members reviewed and re-reviewed the guide, with additional areas covered and facts added. As new studies became available in the nascent field of research regarding the public health impact of shale gas extraction, Bonnet wove them into the narrative.

The Shale Gas Extraction and Public Health Resource Guide debuted at the November 23 Shale Drilling and Public Health conference with 25 pages and an attractive color cover. The Colcom grant paid to print 500 copies which were distributed at the conference and will also be sent to libraries. Based on initial demand, it is likely to go into a second printing. The Resource Guide is also available at <http://shale.palwv.org>.

A newsletter of the  
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## CALENDAR of UPCOMING EVENTS

Know someone who may be interested in membership? Let President Sherene Hess know at 724-762-4162, and she will send a brochure & short letter describing LWWIC's activities.

**Monday, January 27**—Member Potluck Dinner and Meeting, Time and Location To Be Announced

**June 6-10, 2014**—LWVUS Convention, Dallas, Texas

### **Our Mission Statement**

*The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.*