

VOTER

League of Women
Voters of Indiana
County, Pennsylvania



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LWVIC Board of Directors, 2017-18

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724-599-9225

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Join Us for an Educational Speaker from Fair Districts Thursday, September 14, 2017 at 7:00 pm Oak Place Community Center, 1055 Oak Street, Indiana

Transparent, impartial, fair. No matter what political party you belong to, these three adjectives matter to you, to me, to all of us.

When it comes to our current legislative districts and how they have been drawn, however, these three adjectives do not apply.

Right now, in Pennsylvania and across the country, there is a push to end gerrymandering - the practice of dividing voting districts to give one party a majority in many districts while concentrating the voting strength of the other party into as few districts as possible - and rightly so.

Gerrymandering benefits parties not people. When our districts are gerrymandered, the legislators don't need to listen to all of their constituents; they know that their seats are safe, and their constituents' concerns are not always given the due they deserve. When our districts are gerrymandered, the legislators choose their voters, but in a fully functioning democracy, we voters should be choosing our legislators.

But there is a solution.

Every 10 years, voting districts are redrawn. The next time our voting districts will be redrawn will happen after the 2020 census, but **the time to act is now.** Fair Districts PA is working throughout the state and right here in Indiana County to urge our legislators to pass legislation that would appoint an impartial, independent citizens commission to direct the redistricting process. (For more information on this legislative process visit <https://www.fairdistrictspa.com/solution.>)

Please contact your PA Senators and Representatives and ask them to sponsor SB22 or HB 722 and to request that they ask the state government committees to schedule public hearings on these bills. In addition, attend the educational event (listed above) sponsored by LWVIC & Fair Districts Indiana County to learn more about redistricting and what you can do to make a difference.

Free and fair elections are the foundation of our democracy, but these qualities are eroded when we live in gerrymandered districts. Gerrymandering is a tough problem, but there is a solution. **Together we can begin to make our democracy work for everyone once again.**

Save the Date!

Friday, September 22—Happy Hour

Please join us for an evening of conversation and an introduction to your League. Members are encouraged to bring a friend who might be interested in joining the League as we gather for this informal member get together.

(Check your email soon for more information or contact lwvindi-anacounty@gmail.com.)

Child Advocacy Committee on Education Hard at Work

Members of the Child Advocacy Committee on Education (Anna Goldman, Pepita Jimenez-Jacobs, Joyce Magee, Anne Simmons, Sue Welsh, Susan Wheatley, and Nancy Westburg) worked hard this past year to educate themselves (and the community) on how public schools are funded in Pennsylvania.

Now they are broadening their scope and beginning to research and discuss progressive tax reform and its implications for education. In particular, the committee is focused on the Fair Share Tax Plan which helps working families and generates new revenue for the Commonwealth.

Following are two reports regarding taxing in Pennsylvania. (Fair Share Tax Plan to Support Public Investment in Pennsylvania from the Pennsylvania Budget and Polity Center <https://www.pennbpc.org/fair-share-tax-support-public-investment-pennsylvania> and The Price of Property Tax Elimination from the Keystone Research Center www.keystoneresearch.org/media-center/press-releases/report-price-property-tax-elimination.)

But education is not enough; advocacy is the next step, so the committee is urging League members to contact our legislators and urge them to support the Fair Share Tax Plan. Follow the links below for more information.

Letter to encourage Representative David Reed to support the Fair Share Tax Plan by the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center
<http://www.pennbpc.org/sites/pennbpc.org/files/HOUSE%20FACT%20SHEETS%20-%20REVISED%2062.pdf>

Letter to encourage Senator Don White to support the Fair Share Tax Plan by the Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center

Environmental Committee Instrumental in Forming Task Force

This past May, the LWVIC Environmental Issues committee partnered with the Center for Community Growth, Evergreen Conservancy, and the Indiana Office of Planning and Development to host the Sustainable Economy Summit. Soon thereafter, the Sustainable Economic Development Task Force of Indiana County was formed, and a steering committee was established. The steering committee works in cooperation with the Indiana County Center for Economic Operations which includes the Chamber of Commerce, the Tourist Bureau, IUP, and the Indiana County Development Corporation.

But what is a sustainable economy? Basically, it's an emerging sector focusing on environmentally friendly initiatives including but not limited to energy efficiency and retrofitting buildings, increasing installation and use of renewable energy, sustainable and regenerative agricultural practices, green chemistry and green manufacturing, remediation and reclamation, and environmental conservation for future generations.

In general, members of the task force will work to identify strategies and initiatives for local economic development that are grounded in these sustainable economic development practices and that are tailored to Indiana County.

To do this, the task force is conducting a one-year participatory process, engaging local stakeholders in each of the following areas: 1) the renewable energy sector; 2) agriculture; 3) building and construction materials and 4) environmental restoration and stewardship.

If you would like to join this effort, please contact Vera Bonnet (verabonnet@gmail.com)

Fair Districts PA

Fair Districts PA (<https://www.fairdistrictspa.com/>) is a nonpartisan, citizen-led, statewide coalition working to create a process for redistricting that is transparent, impartial, and fair and is an arm of the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania.

In the early summer of 2017, Indiana County formed their own Fair Districts chapter in order to educate our community on the ills of gerrymandering and the need for reform. The LWVIC has been working in conjunction with this group to get the word out about this issue and what we as citizens can do to create change.

So far, we have focused on gathering signatures on petitions urging Representative Reed and Senator White to support HB722 and SB22 respectively. Volunteers have attended the Indiana County Farmer's Market on August 5, the Blairsville Knotweed Festival on August 12, and the Indiana County Fair on August 26 through September 2 and will be attending the Northern Appalachian Folk Festival in Indiana on September 9 & 10. In addition, a speaker from Fair Districts PA will be presenting at Oak Place Community Center on Thursday, September 14 at 7:00 pm.

If you would like to join the effort to make our democracy work for everyone, please contact Fair Districts' local coordinator, Sid Reger at fdpa.indiana@gmail.com.

Voter Services Hard at Work

This summer, the LWVIC's Voter Services committee, led by Karen Ross, held several successful voter registration events. Volunteers registered new voters, helped experienced voters change their registration, handed out absentee ballots, and partnered with Fair Districts Indiana County to gather signatures on a petition to change the way Pennsylvania draws its legislative districts.

Events were held at the following locations: August 5 - Indiana County Farmers' Market, August 19 - Indiana County Back to School Bash, and August 26 - September 2 - Indiana County Fair.

Still to come this fall is the Northern Appalachian Folk Festival to be held on September 9 & 10 as well as events at Wyotech (October 4), IUP Punxsy, and the Naturalization Ceremony at IUP (October 20). If you're interested in working on the League's core mission, contact Karen at ross.bert1@gmail.com.

LWVEF Partners with National Institute for Civil Discourse

This summer, the League of Women Voters Education Fund (which works to encourage the active and informed participation of citizens in government and to increase understanding of major public policy issues) began partnering with the National Institute for Civil Discourse (NICD) (<http://nicd.arizona.edu/>). NICD's programs are designed to create opportunities for elected officials, the media, and the public to engage different voices respectfully and take responsibility for the quality of our public discourse and effectiveness of our democratic institutions. NICD is launching a new website with resource modules and other materials in September. This new website will provide do-it-yourself modules with scalable activities, civility training, a civility pledge, and other resources.

A newsletter of the
League of Women Voters
of Indiana County,
Pennsylvania

1105 Water Street
Indiana, PA 15701

724-599-9225

lwvindianacounty@gmail.com



CALENDAR of UPCOMING EVENTS

Know someone who may be interested in membership? Let President Vicki Stelma know at 724-599-9225, and she will send a brochure & short letter describing LWVIC's activities.

Thursday, September 14, 7:00 pm—Fair Districts speaker (Oak Place Community Center, 1055 Oak Street, Indiana, see details on front page)

Monday, September 18, 7:00 pm—Board Meeting, All Members Welcome, PA-SEC meeting room (1005 Oak Street, 2nd Floor)

Friday, September 22—LWVIC Member Happy Hour (details to follow via email)

Tuesday, September 26—National Voter Registration Day

Tuesday, October 10—Last day to register to vote

Tuesday, November 7—Election Day

Monday, November 13, 8:30 am—5:00 pm—5th Annual Shale & Public Health Conference, University of Pittsburgh

Thursday, June 28, 2018—Sunday, July 1, 2018—LWV Convention, Chicago

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.