

LWV

VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF INDIANA COUNTY

WINTER 2022

LWVIC to Discuss Priority Issues with State Legislators

by Aida Shotts and Anne Simmons

Interviews with our legislators are currently being scheduled. An interview with PA Representative Jim Struzzi is set for March 7, via Zoom at 6:00 p.m., and with PA Senator Joe Pittman for March 21, via Zoom at 7:00 p.m. All members of the League of Women Voters of Indiana County (LWVIC) will receive Zoom invitations. Community members are welcome to participate and may request Zoom invitations by sending an email to lwvindianacounty@gmail.com.

Legislative interviews provide the opportunity for LWVIC members to discuss ideas and identify legislation we intend to support or oppose as well as assist us in building and maintaining relationships with our legislators. The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania (LWVPA) has provided a series of questions focusing on the

priority issues for the current legislative session. These questions have been emailed to our legislators. The seven priority issues for the 2022 LWVPA Legislative Interviews are the following:

1. Climate change
2. Clean water
3. Gun safety
4. School funding
5. Voting process
6. Voting by mail
7. Voter access



If you are interested in leading the discussion or writing a summary of a priority issue, please send an email to Aida Shotts (abshotts@gmail.com).

Ceremony for New Citizens

On October 22, 2021, 28 individuals representing 20 nations became new citizens of the United States. Representatives of the Immigration Service presented each person with citizen documentation and an American flag. Each year LWVIC is on hand to encourage the new citizens to become voters and provides voter registration applications. Volunteering at the registration table were Sandy Whitson, Ellen Chinn, and Aida Shotts.



Upcoming Events

February 2022 – Annual Meeting

Wednesday, February 16, 2022, 7:00 p.m.
via Zoom, Climate Conversations with
Dr. Bonnie McGill, Carnegie Museum of
Natural History

March 2022 – Legislative Interviews

Monday, March 7, 6:00 p.m. via Zoom
PA Representative Jim Struzzi

Monday, March 21, 7:00 p.m. via Zoom
PA Senator Joe Pittman

April 2022 – Citizen Education initiatives

May 2022 – Annual Yard Sale

May 2022 – Annual Dinner

Annual Meeting Features Climate Conversations



LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF INDIANA COUNTY
Presents

Dr. Bonnie McGill
Climate & Rural Systems Partnership
Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh, PA
Wednesday, February 16, 2022, 7:00 pm
Socializing begins at 6:30 pm

Email lwvindianacounty@gmail.com for Zoom link

THE CLIMATE AND RURAL SYSTEMS PARTNERSHIP SUPPORTS PEOPLE TO:

- Share perspectives on climate change and climate justice
 - Find common ground
 - Build a vision for a hopeful future
 - Practice having conversations
- Meet people who think, feel and live differently



Bonnie McGill is an ecosystem ecologist with a Ph.D. from Michigan State University and currently a Science Communication Fellow on the Climate and Rural Systems Partnership at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh.
McGill grew up in Home, PA in Indiana County.



Regional Climate Stories

Farming and Climate Change

by Vera Bonnet

The role of agriculture in climate change is complex. Agriculture can be both a source of heat trapping gases, and a casualty of climate change. It is often a victim of extreme weather events attributable to climate change: While warmer weather leads to longer growing seasons, other seasonal changes are more problematic. For instance, summer droughts make corn unsellable, and late freezes in the spring are disastrous for orchards. Timing of soil freeze and thaw also impacts when farmers can put equipment on their fields. Livestock farmers need cool temperatures for preserving milk and for wool production. In addition, warming minimum daily temperatures mean less relief at night for livestock as well as for crops.

Farmers have been part of the solution to these changes. Over time, they have been instrumental in maintaining good soil and water infiltration by planting cover crops that build organic matter in the soil. Specifically, legume cover crops can be used to mitigate climate change because legumes replace nitrogen in the soil, thus reducing the need for fertilizers. Nitrogen is one of the main nutrients that plants need to grow. In the early 1900s, scientists invented a process to mass-produce, ammonia, a nitrogen-containing compound that plants can absorb from the soil and a very effective fertilizer.

While the invention of fertilizer revolutionized farming, doubling the number of people that one

acre of land could feed, fertilizers require a lot of energy to manufacture. They are made from ammonia at high pressures and at high temperatures, mostly from burning fossil fuels like coal and methane gas. These give off carbon dioxide, the greenhouse gas that is the main cause of climate change. Ammonia manufacturing today contributes between 1 and 2% of worldwide carbon dioxide emissions.

Fertilizers also produce greenhouse gases after farmers apply them to their fields. On average, crops only take up about half of the nitrogen they get from fertilizers. The remainder mostly runs off into waterways, or gets broken down by microbes in the soil, releasing the nitrous oxide. Nitrous oxide is a potent greenhouse gas. Although it accounts for only a small fraction of worldwide greenhouse gas emissions, pound for pound, nitrous oxide warms the planet 300 times more than carbon dioxide.

Cover crops have been shown to increase crop yields, and attract pollinators, among other benefits. They also increase resilience in the face of increasingly erratic and intense rainfall, as well as under drought conditions. In short, cover crops help when it doesn't rain, they help when it rains, and they help when it pours!

Indiana native Bonnie McGill is an ecosystem ecologist and science communicator at Pittsburgh's Carnegie Museum of Natural History, working with farmers in

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An Indiana County farm

Images courtesy of Malcolm Hermann

Environmental Issues Committee (EIC) Studies Local Impact

by Ellen Chinn

The EIC's current focus is concentrated on Climate Change. Part of our work is with the Climate and Rural Systems Partnership (CRSP) to learn how best to converse with diverse groups of people about climate change. The LWVIC Annual Meeting on Wednesday, February 16 will feature a presentation via Zoom by Dr. Bonnie McGill of CRSP. (See invitation on page 2 of this newsletter.)

The EIC is also researching regional climate stories looking at how Climate Change is affecting people and wildlife locally—farmers, business owners, coal miners, fish, birds, amphibians and more. EIC members are producing a series of quarterly articles about how our area is or will be affected by Climate Change. The first in the series, entitled “Farming & Climate Change,” was written by Vera Bonnet.

Check out our webpage for resources to learn more about Climate Change:
<https://lwvindianacounty.org/climate-change/>



Cindy Rogers and Vera Bonnet, members of the League's Environmental Issues Committee, presented a bench made from recycled plastic film to the Indiana County Conservation District Office. LWVIC has donated Trex benches to other community organizations.

EIC's other focus is on Plastics and the Environment (<https://lwvindianacounty.org/plastics-and-the-environment/>). We continue with the Trex Bags to Benches Program keeping plastic film out of landfills and into free plastic-lumber benches for our community. A win-win situation!

Please join us for our next meeting on February 2, 2:30 p.m. at the Conservation District Offices, 435 Hamill Rd. We've got lots to talk about!

Farming and Climate Change

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Mercer County. McGill began by downloading more than 100 years of weather station data from the Mercer area and surrounding counties to determine whether night-time temperatures have been getting hotter. According to her research, “The short answer is yes.” Night-time temperatures have been warming over the last century in most months of the year, especially August, September, and December. Also, the number of days per year over 90°F in Mercer County is on the increase.

McGill's measurements also show that the number of days in which precipitation has exceeded one inch has increased over time, especially in the fall. In fact since 2000, weather stations in the Laurel Highlands recorded three of the five wettest springs on record (2017, 2004, and 2002) were 2.5-4.2” above normal.

Local Indiana farmer Vince Receski confirms these findings through his own observations. His overriding concern relates to increased rainfall: “You have to rush to get into the field when you have dry weather” he says, “and thunderstorms are much harsher now.” Other impacts include too much rain for planting in the spring, too much rain in the fall for harvesting, and winters when the ground does not freeze, leading to problems for soils. Livestock farmers also see changes in calving times, a need to shear lambs more frequently, as well as potentially greater parasitic infestations in hooved animals. Receski briefly sums up his feelings, saying “the rapidity of change is scary.”

LWVPA Government Policy Report to LWWIC

by Susan Boser

Action urgently needed for two national bills.

At the present time at the federal level, two critically important bills have been stalled. These are the Freedom to Vote Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Act. The League is strongly urging every member to reach out to both our Senators, but particularly to Senator Toomey. Pennsylvania is one of the states in which the Legislature is moving legislation forward to limit voting rights. As a Republican not seeking re-election and having affirmed the integrity of the 2020 voting in PA, Toomey provides a critical opportunity for a vote to protect our democracy. You can send him a letter through this link: <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/urge-senators-toomey-and-casey-to-vote-yes-on-voting-rights-legislation/>

Legislative action regarding voting rights.

Several bills are currently in the House related to changes to voting processes and rules to ensure fair elections. SB 106 was passed before the winter break, and the House is scheduled to take up their version of this bill, HB 1800 in this session. This is Constitutional Amendment regarding voting processes. The House is taking up HB 1596 this session as well, which reduces access to voting through a number of measures. The League opposes both of these bills, and asks League members to contact legislators asking them to oppose both of these measures. You can use this link: <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/tell-your-legislator-to-reject-hb-1800/>

Subpoena for voter data. A lawsuit is currently in the Commonwealth Court opposing the Senate Intergovernmental Committee's request for voter data, specifically driver's license numbers and last 4 digits of the social security number. The League is a co-litigant.

Redistricting. The Legislative Redistricting Commission recently completed public comment on the proposed new maps; Susan Gobrecki, LWVPA Director of Government Policy, testified this past week. The 5-person LRC unanimously approved the proposed Senate Map, but approved the House map on a split vote.

The League has concerns about the Congressional maps, though. This may be going to litigation. The Governor has vetoed the map drawn by the PA House Government Committee. An application has been made by voters including the Executive Director of Common Cause PA, active members from the State League, and advocates from Fair Districts PA. They are being represented by the Public Interest Law Center, and are asking the State Supreme Court to intervene and adopt a redistricting plan in time for the 2022 primary election. In addition to fair districts, they are also seeking to block prison gerrymandering.

Committee focus of the month –

Local elections. We are encouraging local Leagues to increase their involvement in local poll watching, working to ensure fair elections at the local level. We anticipate partnering with the Voter Services Group to do a joint training, and support local leagues in recruiting. The committee is seeking feedback on how the state League can support local efforts.

Happy 102nd Birthday, League of Women Voters!



The League of Women Voters of the United States was officially founded on February 14, 1920 by the leaders of the women's suffrage movement. These leading suffragists were members of the National American Women Suffrage Association (NAWSA), the organization that led the movement to secure the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution that granted American women the right to vote in elections. The NAWSA made two significant changes. First, the NAWSA changed its name and reestablished itself as the League of Women Voters. Second, the goal of advocating for the right of women to vote was amended to preparing newly enfranchised women to vote as informed and educated citizens.

Good Government Groups Oppose Controversial PA House Bills

by Joyce Rizzo

The Pennsylvania House of Representatives kicked off 2022 by proposing two controversial bills – both of which involve changing the state Constitution.

The first is HB 2207, which was voted out of the House State Government Committee along party lines on January 10. HB 2207 proposes to abolish the Legislative Reapportionment Commission (LRC) and replace it with an 11-member “citizens’ commission”.

During this redistricting cycle, the LRC led by non-partisan chair Mark Nordenberg, has done extraordinary work in drawing legislative districts following the 2020 Census. They have held numerous hearings, livestreamed those hearings, allowed ordinary citizens to submit maps and provided a website where anyone can view maps and comment on them. The Commission has done this under considerable pressure because the 2020 Census data was released much later than in previous decades.

The “citizens’ commission” proposed in this bill is not the 11-member independent body advocated by Fair Districts PA and other good government groups. Most of the commission would be appointed by leaders of the General Assembly with no provisions for independent and third-party representation.

The second proposed bill is HB 38 – also written to change the PA Constitution. This bill was numbered HB 196 in the last legislative session and passed in both the House and the Senate. What remains in order for the bill to become constitutional law is for it to pass again in this current legislative session and then put on the ballot for voters to approve it. Legislative leaders are anxious to pass it early in this session so that it will go before the voters during the upcoming May primary. Voter turnout is traditionally low in primary elections and voters tend to vote “yes” when faced with a ballot question no matter what the issue.

HB 38 is a terrible bill that would create regional judicial districts. Citizens would only be able to vote for judges running in their particular district instead of voting for all judges statewide. The judges in our three appellate courts make legal rulings that affect all Pennsylvanians. Creating judicial districts would undermine the independence of the courts and go against the separation of powers.

As you read this article, these two bills may have already come up for a vote in the House. The League of Women Voters of PA and other good government groups strongly oppose them. We must all be vigilant and tell our representatives to vote against HB 2207 and HB 38.

Peggy Clark Grassroots Environmental Leadership Award

by Laurie Lafontaine

The League of Women Voters of Indiana County is requesting applications for the Peggy Clark Grassroots Environmental Leadership Award be



submitted by April 1, 2022. This award recognizes citizens, groups, or businesses who show exemplary leadership and active participation in issues that involve protecting or preserving our environment. The award was established in honor of a longtime Indiana County grassroots environmental activist and League member and is awarded annually. There are two categories: individual and group.

Please submit request to Laurie Lafontaine at lauriemplafontaine@gmail.com or 480 Airport Road, Indiana PA 15701. Questions, please call 724 422-3763.

Update on Voting Laws in the United States

by Joyce Rizzo

On January 6, 2022, the President of the United States, speaking at a ceremony to commemorate the sacrifice and service of the Capitol police as they protected lawmakers from an attempt to subvert the certification of the free and fair 2020 election, asked the questions: “Are we going to be a nation that accepts political violence as a norm? Are we going to be a nation where we allow partisan election officials to overturn the legally expressed will of the people?”

The answers to these questions are crucial to the health of our democracy. Yet in many states, legislatures have been passing laws aimed at restricting access to voting and taking away power from professional local election officials and placing it in the hands of politicians.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice’s Voting Laws Roundup December 2021, between January 1 and December 7, at least 19 states passed 34 laws restricting access to voting, more than any other year since 2011. It is very likely that the trend will continue into 2022 with many states pre-filing or carrying over proposed legislation that did not come to a vote or did not pass in 2021.

The most egregious laws are those that would authorize partisans to take control of election administration typically handled by professional election personnel. Arkansas enacted three laws that take certain powers away from elected county clerks and give them to county board of elections commissioners, which are controlled by political parties. A comprehensive Georgia law removed the secretary of state from the State Election Board and the legislature will now handpick a chairperson to take his place. Arizona passed a law that transfers statewide election administration from the secretary of state to the state attorney general but only until a new secretary of state is elected in 2022. These examples are clearly actions taken to punish elected officials who would not support the idea that the 2020 election was rigged.

In 2021, the U. S. House of Representatives passed The Freedom to Vote Act and the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. Both bills

were written to expand voting rights in the United States and to curb voter suppression laws being passed by state legislatures following the contentious 2020 presidential election. Proposals such as making Election Day a holiday, pushing for increased voting by mail, banning partisan gerrymandering and trying to eliminate “dark” money from politics were included in the bills. In the Senate, a vote to change filibuster rules to allow a majority vote to pass the bills failed. As a result, these bills seem to be shelved indefinitely.

Currently, a bipartisan group of senators is talking about making changes to the Electoral Count Act of 1887, a law written to guide Congress on how it should handle disputes in the states following an election. Some changes under consideration are making it clear to members of Congress the specific reasons they can raise questions about a state’s electoral votes and increasing the requirement for how many members of Congress it takes to debate a state’s votes.

Will our elected leaders protect voting rights for all Americans? We must keep a spotlight on this most important issue. The health of our democracy depends on it.

Announcements

Storage Available for Yard Sale Items

Storage of items for the LWVIC Annual Yard Sale is available. The yard sale is our League’s only fundraiser and is usually held in early May. Please contact Kay Smith to make arrangements for the storage of donated items: (kaybsmith06@gmail.com).

Family Fun Fest 2022

The Children’s Advisory Commission of Indiana County is sponsoring Family Fun Fest at the Indiana Mall on Saturday, March 26, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

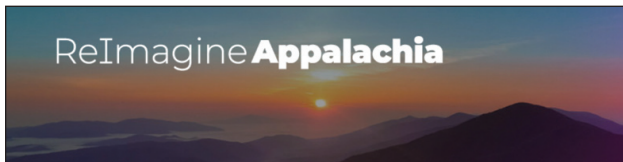


LWVPA Social Policy Report to LWVIC

by Susan Boser

School Funding Trial. We are closely following the trial regarding the inequitable structure for school funding in Pennsylvania. The League encourages local Leagues and other local groups to get involved in increasing public awareness of this issue and its implications, and holding state lawmakers accountable. Actions include passing a resolution supporting the lawsuit and writing a letter to the editor.

Gun Safety. Two points here. First: Currently before the House, HB 235, HB 1903 and HB 1846 increase safety measures such as comprehensive background checks and safety training. The League supports their passage, and encourages sending a letter of support to your legislature. Second: The Social Policy Committee is increasing their knowledge of gun violence in Pennsylvania. For additional information, please refer to the website <http://www.ceasefirepa.org>.



Reimagine Appalachia Campaign

Organizations across the states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky are discussing how to improve the quality of life for our citizens. A few examples of the initiatives currently being discussed are the following: 1. Expand economic opportunities; 2. Modernize the electric grid; and 3. Build a sustainable transportation system. For additional information, please refer to the Reimagine Appalachia Campaign website (<https://reimagineappalachia.org>).

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CeasefirePA is a coalition of nearly 100 groups across Pennsylvania including mayors, police chiefs, faith leaders, and community organizations. The group is supporting a common agenda to end gun violence.

Engaging Younger Audiences. The committee is also creating a Student Ambassador Program for the League as an effort to engage younger audiences and constituents. The committee is exploring working with the Voter Services Committee and may also potentially link with the Government Policy Committee's January focus on recruiting local poll watchers.

Potential Legislation Covering Curriculum and Race in Public Schools. In June 2021, Representatives Russ Diamond and Barbara Gleim along with 29 other members introduced HB1532. Entitled Teaching Racial and Universal Equality (TRUE) Act, this act establishes specific limitations regarding what speech will be permitted in all Pennsylvania public school districts and postsecondary institutions, as well as all state, county and municipal agencies. No votes have been scheduled on this bill at the present time. We are monitoring the bill and will encourage our legislators to vote no if it is brought forward.

Broadband Internet Funding and Expansion. At the present time, the League does not have a published position on broadband access in rural areas; the Social Policy committee is currently developing a statement for consideration. For information, the House just unanimously voted to create a governmental body to develop a statewide plan to coordinate the grant money that will be coming to the state. The bill, HB 2071, has gone on to the Senate for vote.

For additional information on these and other issues, please check out a new feature on the LWVPA website: www.palwv.org/on-our-radar. Called "On Our Radar," this webpage provides current information from three committees: Government Policy, Social Policy, and Environmental Policy.

LWVIC Supports PA School Funding Lawsuit

by Susan Welsh

The Child Advocacy Committee on Education (CACE) has been following the progress of a lawsuit in PA Commonwealth Court, Harrisburg, that began on Nov. 12. In the case, six school districts—suburban, rural, and urban—allege (1) that the state has not adequately funded a “thorough and efficient system of public education,” and (2) that the method of funding denies students equal educational opportunities by creating large funding disparities between wealthy and poor school districts. The school funding lawsuit seeks court oversight of adequate and equitable funding.

Seven weeks of trial testimony from superintendents, teachers, financial officers and education researchers has made clear the severe resource inequities inside the schools of low-wealth

communities across the state. Students who need the most support get the least. The trial is projected to run through the end of January.

CACE has sponsored a resolution in support of the litigants, and LWVIC has voted to support it. CACE has also published a letter to the editor in the *Indiana Gazette* on the importance of this trial. You can view the resolution and the letter on the CACE page of LWVIC’s website at <https://lwvindianacounty.org/child-advocacy-committee/>.

You can virtually attend the trial or read testimony summaries at the trial link provided at <https://www.fundourschoolspa.org>. And you can find reliable resources on the history of the case, the litigants’ claims, and relevant research by clicking on the “Case Overview” tab.

League Members Keep Informed, Work for Government Accountability and Influence Public Policy

by Anne Simmons and Sandy Whitson

Membership in the League of Women Voters is available to all people age 16 and over. Men were invited to join the League of Women Voters in 1973. The term “Women” remains in the title to honor the women who fought tirelessly for the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.

January is “membership month.” If you have not already paid your dues, please renew your membership for 2022. This makes you a member of the local Indiana league (LWVIC) as well as the Pennsylvania league (LWVPA) and the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS). It provides you with continued information regarding public policy, voting rights, education, environmental issues and government accountability.

Dues for an individual are \$55.00 per year. For each additional family member, dues are \$27.50 per year. Student membership is free.

For additional information or to provide a gift of membership to a friend or family member, please contact Sandy Whitson, LWVIC Membership Chair (swhitson8@comcast.net).

To pay membership dues, you can:

- Write a check payable to LWVIC and mail to the LWVIC Treasurer: Ellen Chinn, 156 Wine Avenue, Indiana, PA 15701.
- Or, access online payment on the LWVIC website (lwvindianacounty.org). Click on the *Membership Dues and Donations* tab. Use the *Donate* button to obtain PayPal or Debit/Credit Card payment information.
- Or, send an email to Sandy Whitson, LWVIC Membership Chair (swhitson8@comcast.net) to join the LWVIC for free because you are a student.

Monthly Board Meetings

The LWVIC hosts board meetings on the third Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. using the Zoom platform. LWVIC members are welcome to participate. To request the Zoom invitation and meeting agenda, please send an email to lwvindianacounty@gmail.com.



Citizen Education Empowers Civic Engagement

by Anne Simmons

The Citizen Education Subcommittee was formed in January 2021 and is working to increase public

awareness of voting, civics, and government with the aim of empowering citizens to participate in the democratic process. This initiative has been led by Misty Nocco and River Hone with a focus on elementary school students; Vicki Stelma and Anne Simmons on secondary school students; and Joyce Rizzo on community members and elected officials. The voting cards for high school students and voting bookmarks for community members were designed by Donna Cashdollar.

The subcommittee members discussed how to improve and expand our League's current programs (e.g., voter registration events, candidate nights, legislative interviews) as well as the development of new League initiatives. Discussions concentrated on how to provide information about voting, civics, and government to community members and school students, specifically how to increase the participation of high school students in the voting process.

In reference to high school students, students who participate in the voting process as young adults often become "super voters." A super voter is someone who votes in every election once they become eligible to vote, including in primary and general elections, presidential elections every four years, and congressional races that follow two years later. In addition, super voters vote in local, state, and national elections.

The new Citizen Education initiatives implemented in 2021 are the following:

Elementary School Students

- **Educational materials** – Loose-leaf binders of educational materials for students in pre-kindergarten through grade 5 were organized in loose-leaf binders and delivered to Indiana County School Districts. These "Citizen Education Binders" included resources focusing on

voting, elections, government, and Pennsylvania history. Examples of the materials in the binders are bookmarks, posters, coloring and activity books, and blackline masters. Pennsylvania Senator Joe Pittman, Pennsylvania Representative Jim Struzzi, and United States Congressman G.T. Thompson contributed many of the materials.

Secondary School Students

- **Voting cards** – iPhone-size cards were provided to Indiana County High School seniors. The cards included information about voting and elections in Pennsylvania.

- **Governor's Civic Engagement Awards** – Information about these awards was emailed to school district superintendents and high school principals. The Governor's awards are presented annually to high schools in Pennsylvania to recognize the efforts of students to educate their fellow classmates about the voting process. Notably, the United High School was recognized for reaching the Gold Award level of civic engagement because 97% of their high school students who were eligible to vote in the spring 2021 Pennsylvania primary election registered to vote.

Community Members and Elected Officials

- **Voting bookmarks** – Bookmarks were delivered to public libraries, bookstores, and coffee shops throughout Indiana County for distribution to community members (e.g., Burrell Township Library, Book Nook, and Market Street Pastries). The bookmarks included information about voter registration and elections.

- **Voting workshop series** – Three workshops were held on Monday evenings during the months of September and October 2021. These workshops were led by Joyce Rizzo, Susan Welsh, and Sherene Hess, members of the League of Women Voters of Indiana County and Susan Gobreski, Director of Government Policy, League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania. The workshops topics were proposed voting legislation at the federal and state levels, and election security procedures and infrastructure in Indiana County.

Candidates Night in October 2021 a Success

Participants in the LWVIC Candidates Night, October 26, 2021 reported that the public event was very successful, both in-person at Indiana Area High School and the live radio broadcast over 1160 WCCS. Candidates for the Indiana County Office of Register and Recorder, and for Judge of Common Pleas Court of Indiana County responded to questions submitted by the audience.

LWVIC President Anne Simmons, who had introduced the candidates, commented on the positive feedback she received for the non-partisan and professional format of the evening. In addition to numerous League members and others from Indiana County communities, the audience included many high school students. After the event, three new members joined the League.

League volunteers at the event were Peggy Eyer and Aida Shotts, candidate greeters; Ellen Chinn and Susan Welsh, citizen greeters; photographer Cheri Widzowski; Sandra Whitson and Deanne

Snively, who distributed question forms; Kay Smith and Joyce Rizzo, who collected the forms; runner Lil Clemons; and timer Cindy Rogers. The question screening team consisted of Stanley Chepaitis, Laurie Lafontaine, Rod Ruddock, and Kay Snyder.



Participating candidates were Gina Force, Maria Jack, Marlene Connelly, and Patrick Dougherty. Force and Dougherty were candidates for Judge. Jack and Connelly were candidates for Register and Recorder.

Good Reasons to Trust Local Elections

All elections—even presidential elections—are conducted by local officials. There are many good reasons for you to trust local elections in Pennsylvania and Indiana County.

#1 There are many safeguards in place to ensure election security.

- Only citizens who meet state voting requirements can receive a ballot and vote.
- Almost all election procedures require two or more trained personnel to be involved. They take an oath to uphold state security laws.
- There is a strict chain-of-custody policy tracking everyone who handles a voting machine or other election equipment.

#2 Indiana County has secure voting machines that can be audited after the election. They provide a paper record of votes to verify election results.

#3 Before each election, voting machines are programmed, tested and sealed.

#4 Voter intimidation and discrimination are illegal.

A victim or witness of an incident on Election Day should report the incident to the Indiana County Board of Elections and District Attorney.

#5 PA uses a ballot tracking system for mail-in and absentee ballots.

Every mail-in ballot has a unique bar code to eliminate duplicate votes. You can track your own mailed ballot by completing an online form.

#6 Indiana County conducts audits after every election.

Risk-limiting audits are designed to detect errors, check the accuracy and integrity of voting systems and ensure that votes are counted properly.

#7 The County Commissioners Association of PA (CCAP) makes elections reforms one of its top priorities.

CCAP discusses election issues with state legislators and the Secretary of the Commonwealth to improve the process for future elections.

League of Women Voters— Supporting Voting Rights for Over 100 Years



by Anne Simmons

The League of Women Voters has strived over the past 100 years to educate voters and increase voter participation. More recently, the issues at the forefront have been voter registration, voter access, vote counting, and the certification process.

A hallmark of American democracy is free and fair elections. The challenge for all of us in 2022 is to continue our timely and in-depth understanding of pending legislation in Harrisburg and Washington DC. The political landscape is changing daily.

The League of Women Voters believes that voters should play a critical role in democracy. The League's mission of "Empowering voters, Defending democracy" continues to shape and inform the work of the League of Women Voters of Indiana County.

Let's continue to work together to ensure that

all eligible voters—particularly those from traditionally underrepresented or underserved communities, including first-time voters, non-college youth, new citizens, communities of color, the elderly, and low-income Americans, have the opportunity and the information to exercise their right to vote.

The websites noted below provide primary sources and resources to increase understanding of major policy issues, voting and elections, and pending legislation.

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us>

Pennsylvania General Assembly – Use the magnifying-glass icon to search for state legislation.

<https://www.congress.gov>

United States Congress – Use the magnifying-glass icon to search for federal legislation (e.g., Freedom to Vote Act of 2021 and John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021).

<http://vote.pa.gov>

Pennsylvania Department of State – Voter registration and information about voting and elections

<https://fairdistrictspa.com>

Fair Districts PA – Information about the legislative redistricting process

<https://www.palwv.org>

League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania; Go to News for policy issues and pending legislation.

<https://lwvindianacounty.org>

League of Women Voters of Indiana County; Go to Voter Services, Fair Districts PA, and Government and Social Policy to learn more about the initiatives of our local League.