

**Background Questions**

Background Information

a. Name and email address of person submitting question responses

*Anne Simmons, President Email: lwvindianacounty@gmail.com*

b. Local League name

*League of Women Voters of Indiana County*

c. Interviewers names – 15 participants; The LWVIC interviewers provided detailed background information about each question as well as the position of LWVIC and LWVPA on each policy question.

*Susan Boser  
Ellen Chinn  
Cindy Rogers  
Anne Simmons  
Kay Smith  
Deanne Snavely  
Susan Welsh*

d. Interview date

*March 21, 2022*

e. Interview method (public virtual forum, private virtual interview with one or more League members, written responses from legislator, other)

*Public virtual forum*

Legislator Information

f. Name

*Pennsylvania Senator Joe Pittman*

g. Party and Office (Democrat/Republican, Senator or Representative)

*Republican Party – Senator*

h. District #

*41<sup>st</sup> District*

i. Legislative Staff Contact Info (if any)

*Tammy L. Weaver Email: [tlweaver@pasen.gov](mailto:tlweaver@pasen.gov)*

j. Notes on relationship to LWVPA (optional) - *none*

## Legislative Questions:

### *Environmental Policy*

1. What do you see as the path forward to combating climate change in Pennsylvania?

- *Stated, "Indiana County has been the largest exporter of electricity for the past 15 years.; It is no secret that natural gas has pushed the coal-fired plants out. The problem is that natural gas prices have increased."*
- *Supports an "all of the above strategy, also renewables"; Every energy source has both pros and cons as well as risk (e.g., nickel in windmills; amount of land consumed); Need for them or to be more efficient*
- *In reference to orphan wells, concerned with methane emissions; Need to plug orphan wells – Orphan Well Project, very expensive even with funds from federal government*
- *Supports 'Grow Greener III' initiative*

2. What are your plans to ensure cleaner water for all Pennsylvanians?

- *Referenced Penn Vest Board – supports the need for public sewage and public water management*
- *Concern with how to deal with boney piles, waste coal*

### *Social Policy*

3. What are your plans to address escalating gun violence across the state? The League is watching several pieces of gun safety legislation: [HB 235](#) (SB 88) calling for comprehensive background checks, [HB 1903](#) (SB 134) to allow for families to petition for temporary removal of guns from a person who is in imminent danger of harming themselves or others, and [HB 1846](#) (SB 855) calling for firearm safety training for first-time purchasers. Each of these bills are stuck in the judiciary committee. Do you have plans to push along these gun safety measures in the coming year?

- *Did not sign on to any of the three bills (i.e., SB88 – background checks, SB134 Temporary removal of guns, SB855 – Firearm safety training for first-time purchaser)*
- *"A lot to unpack."*
- *Recommend universal education; Course on Firearm Safety in the public schools*
- *In reference to the Pennsylvania Constitution, the right to bear arms shall not be questioned; The citizenry in Ukraine is armed; Right to bear arms is more than fundamental to just hunting*
- *Issue is with mental health; Bullying is much deeper than a firearm*
- *With the ongoing discussion, Senator Pittman stated, "I am willing to take a look at anything."*

4. Currently in Pennsylvania, most schools are not receiving adequate funding, and most students do not have the resources they need to succeed. According to the state's benchmark, 277 Pennsylvania districts need more than \$2,000 more per student to adequately support their education. And the poorest districts in Pennsylvania need even more, creating vast inequities in education across the state. What will you do to make sure every student in PA has access to a high quality public education, as granted by the State Constitution?

- *"We have had this conversation every year."*
- *Priority is to keep/maintain Hold Harmless provision (i.e., school districts are guaranteed to receive at least the same funding amount it received the prior year). "The Hold Harmless is critical to the survival of school districts."*
- *Asked rhetorical question, "How much money is enough money?"*
- *Funding to education is increased every year; Plan to compromise with the Governor; Concern is with how the funds are distributed*

## *Government / Election Policy*

5. Do you believe our voting process is secure? Do you believe that there are widespread problems, and if so what are they?

- *Stated, "My takeaway, whether you like it or not, is that a portion of our electorate does not have faith in the process."*
- *Complimented the League of Women Voters, "Here in Indiana County we have paper ballots."*
- *Said, "Drop boxes have showed up in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia; This led to a perception... And, add the closeness of the election."*
- *Also indicated issue of voter registration rolls, "Accuracy of voter registration rolls... Need to strengthen and protect integrity of voter rolls."*
- *Affirmed, "State Senate has the sole power to set elections, the time, manner and place; States control elections, not federal government."*

6. Do you support voting by mail?

- *Voted for Act 77 of 2019 – pre-COVID*
- *Legislators did not have an appreciation during COVID of the number of mail-in voters*
- *Individuals need to request a ballot; Does not support just mailing out ballots*
- *Criticism he received of Act 77 of 2019 for November 2022 General Election is the problems with inconsistencies; More clarity is needed with signature requirement.*
- *Pre-canvassing is something we need to explore*

7. How would you make it easier for more qualified electors to vote? For example, lengthening the timeframe for early voting, or expanding voting hours at the polls.

- *Consider extended hours and additional days for elections*

*Senator Pittman was asked if he had any additional comments to share with the LWVIC:*

*Senator Pittman: "I appreciate this dialogue every year. You probably did not agree with anything I had to say. I still respect you and I am available to you."*

*LWVIC member: "Thank you for being open to listening."*