



LWV

VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF INDIANA COUNTY

FALL 2022

Make an Impact — Volunteer with LWVIC!

There are many ways that you can volunteer to support the initiatives of the League of Women Voters of Indiana County, including:

Participate in a specific activity—helping with voter registration, the annual yard sale, etc.

Lead a program or annual event. Examples of LWVIC volunteer activities are the following:

- *Laurie LaFontaine* – Peggy Clark Grassroots Environmental Leadership Awards
- *Karen Ross* – Voter registration at the United States Citizenship Naturalization Ceremony
- *Sandra Whitson* – Membership Committee
- *Cheri Widzowski* – Facebook Manager

Join a committee

LWVIC committee members work together to research issues and engage with other citizens to influence public policies of local and national importance. Please send an email to the committee chair to express your interest in joining that committee. To learn more about the work of each committee, please review their pages on the LWVIC website (www.lwvindianacounty.org).

Child Advocacy Committee on Education – Chair: Sue Welsh (sbwelsh48@gmail.com)

Environmental Issues Committee – Chair: Cindy Rogers (rogers944@comcast.net)

Fair Districts PA – Chair: Joyce Rizzo (rizzojoyce6@gmail.com)

Voter Services Committee – Chair: Kay Smith (kaybsmith06@gmail.com)

Form a new group to study a specific policy or proposed legislation.

Serve in a leadership position as a LWVIC board director or officer (president, vice president, secretary, treasurer). Board director and board officer responsibilities are described in the LWVIC Bylaws that are posted on our website (www.lwvindianacounty.org).

Help with the work of state committees of the Pennsylvania LWV. Read about many opportunities to volunteer on pages 5 and 6.

Child Advocacy Committee Posts Information on Public Safety and Gun Legislation

The Child Advocacy Committee on Education has hosted three webinars on public safety and gun legislation. Information has been posted on the homepage of the LWVIC website (e.g., links to resources and webinar recordings).

The first webinar was led by Trooper First Class Clifford A. Greenfield, Public Information Officer/Community Services Officer, Pennsylvania State Police. Trooper Greenfield's presentation was titled, "Current Gun Laws in Pennsylvania." Links to the sources he referenced in his presentation are listed on the homepage of the League website.

The second webinar was led by Dr. Sue Welsh, chair of our local league's Child Advocacy Committee and Dr. Susan Boser, member of the LWV of Pennsylvania's Government Policy Committee. Their presentation focused on efforts of the League of Women Voters to learn more about gun legislation and school safety. One educational initiative of the Child (continued on page 5)

PA Voters Eye Constitutional Amendment Changes

by Joyce Rizzo

I am concerned with the process our legislators are using in Harrisburg to change the Pennsylvania Constitution.

In early July of this past summer, right before it recessed until September, The PA General Assembly passed a package of five PA constitutional amendments – one of which would pave the way for legislation severely restricting or banning abortion and others that would change voting procedures and upset the separation of power in the state government. Everyone in Pennsylvania should clearly understand what the amendments are and how citizens of Pa will be affected.

The amendments would:

- Declare that the state constitution does not grant any right to abortion, including no right to public funding for the procedure. Though writing it into the constitution does not change access to abortion immediately, it is clearly meant as a basis to enact future restrictive legislation. Currently, Government funding for abortion in PA is strictly limited to cases of life endangerment, rape or incest.
- Require the PA Auditor General to audit elections. This is an unnecessary bureaucratic change. The PA Department of State has been overseeing elections, including conducting risk-limiting audits to ensure the integrity of the process. This amendment stirs up a lack of trust in state and local election officials, who work throughout the year for safe and secure elections.
- Require voters to present government-issued ID at every election, both at polling places and online. PA citizens currently must present government-issued or student ID when they register to vote or vote at a new location.
- Impose stricter residency and age requirements on new voters. The amendment requires a 90-day residency in PA in order to vote. Currently, the residency requirement is 30 days. This would mean that anyone who moves to PA between August and November would not be able to vote in the general election in November. Strangely, it also makes the voting age 21 years. The 26th amendment to the US constitution sets the voting age at 18.
- Expand the PA General Assembly's power to

stop any regulation with a simple majority that is not subject to a governor's signature or veto. This alters the balance of power among the three branches of government: executive, legislative and judicial. Regulations are currently crafted using a multi-step process involving public and legislator input. This proposed amendment to the PA Constitution will increase the power of the legislative branch.

- Change the selection process for lieutenant governor. This amendment would allow each major party's nominee for governor to choose their own running mate. Currently, in primary elections, PA voters choose who they want for governor and lieutenant governor separately.

Most people would agree that changing the state constitution is a consequential event. A thoughtful citizen would expect that there would be much discussion and debate about the issues, well-publicized hearings so the public could stay informed and input from both political parties and outside advocacy groups. A brief history of this legislation emphasizes that it was not a transparent process where each separate issue was carefully considered and determined to be the will of the citizens of PA.

- It started as a standalone bill (SB106) to allow a political party's candidate for governor to choose their own candidate for lieutenant governor. The bill passed the Senate April 27, 2021.
- The PA House added 3 unrelated amendments and passed it on December 14, 2021.
- It sat dormant from December 2021 to July 2022.
- The controversial abortion amendment was added on July 7, 2022 at 10:35 p.m.
- The next day (July 8, 2022) the full Senate passed the package with all five amendments. Later in the day, it was passed, first in committee, then by the full House. The PA General Assembly then left for summer recess until September.

Changes to the PA constitution require that the legislature pass the bill package of amendments in two consecutive legislative sessions. Then, it is put on the ballot as a referendum question for voters to approve or reject. Since this amendment package has already passed during the 2020-2022 session, it would have to pass again during the next session

PA Voters Eye Constitutional Amendment Changes

that begins in January of 2023. Then it will be placed on the ballot in an upcoming election. There is a strong belief that the legislature's leaders plan to pass the package early in 2023 and place the ballot questions on the May 2023 primary ballot when voter turnout is traditionally low.

Many good-government groups, including the League of Women Voters of PA, are asking why the legislature is using the constitution amendment process instead of the traditional legislative process to address these critical and controversial issues. They argue that the balance of power is disrupted because constitutional amendments cannot be vetoed by the Governor. Supporters of the process say "we need to let the voters decide."

If this is their true motivation, then why wasn't there more transparency in the process? Where was the debate and public input? Why was it rushed through before summer recess, especially considering that the abortion amendment (a topic of concern to many Pennsylvanians) was only added the night before passage? Why plan to put it on the primary ballot in May 2023 instead of the general election in November 2023 when more people vote? If the legislature truly wants

the voters to decide, then perhaps it's time for PA to pass proposals for citizen initiative and referendum as many other states do when faced with crucial issues.

The League of Women Voters of Indiana County and the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania are focusing their efforts on educating the public about these constitutional amendments and their consequences if they become law in the coming months. It is critical that all of us become involved in opposing these measures.

- Call or write to your state senator and house representative.
- Write letters to the editor in local publications.
- Stay alert for news updates on the status of the constitutional amendments.
- Talk to your PA family and friends about the seriousness of this issue. People are busy with their daily lives and may miss its importance amid the deluge of daily news.

This is a serious example of how broken the legislative process is in Harrisburg. Is this how we want our state government to work? For most of us, I truly believe the answer is "no."

LWVIC Participates in IUP Six O'Clock Series

An informational session on voting for Indiana University of Pennsylvania students was held on September 26, 2022. This session, "Vote! Our Democracy Depends on YOU!" was led by three panelists: Dr. Stanley Chepaitis, Fair Districts PA; Dr. Alea Perry, IUP Department of

Political Science; and Dr. Deanne Snavelly, League of Women Voters of Indiana County. Topics discussed included ways to register to vote, why it's important for college students to vote, and how students can use their vote to petition government to act in their interests.

League members distributed voter registration materials to university students. In addition, information about the "Fix Harrisburg" campaign was available (www.fixharrisburg.com).



Deanne Snavelly and Stanley Chepaitis address IUP students during an informational session of voting.



Voter Services Activities – Registration and Information

Members of our local League participated in multiple voter registration and informational events this fall.

Northern Appalachian Folk Festival – September 10, 2022

LWVIC volunteers distributed voter registration materials. In addition, information about the “Fix Harrisburg” campaign was available (www.fixharrisburg.com). Special thanks to the following LWVIC members and their family members for participating in this voter registration event: Susan Boser, Jeannie Broskey, Ellen Chinn, Beth Marshall, Sally McCombie, Jack Nelson, Angela Pinizzotto, Lizanne Porter, Joan Rittenberger, Joyce Rizzo, Cindy Rogers, Karen Ross, Tom Simmons, Patty Streams Warman, Vicki Stelma, Lisa Strittmatter, Sue Welsh, and Cheri Widzowski.



LWVIC bookmarks and cards – October 2022
League members distributed bookmarks and cards to libraries and at community events in Indiana County.

National Voter Registration Day – September 20, 2022

Voter registration materials and children’s books on voting and elections were delivered to the five Indiana County Public Libraries in the Blairsville, Burrell Township (Blacklick), Homer Center, Indiana, and Saltsburg communities. In addition, the *Indiana Gazette* published an article encouraging citizens to register to vote or to check their voter registration information.

National Voter Registration Day is a nonpartisan civic holiday, first observed in 2012, that celebrates our democracy. Observed each year on the third Tuesday in September, it involves volunteers and organizations across the United States in a coordinated effort on a single day to encourage citizens to register to vote.



Standing from left are Jen Van Hannak, Director, Burrell Township Library and Anne Simmons, League of Women Voters of Indiana County.

United States Citizenship Naturalization Ceremony – October 21, 2022

The IUP Office of International Education hosted the U.S. Citizenship Naturalization Ceremony in the Toretti Auditorium, Kovalchick Conference and Athletic Complex at 11:00 a.m. Directly following the ceremony, League members distributed voter registration information to the newly naturalized American Citizens.

We Need You!! Opportunities to Get Involved

by Susan Boser

There's a lot going on right now, and we need help. Please consider volunteering for one of the following state and local LWV projects:

• **Twin challenges exist:**

1. How to engage more college and high school students as active, educated citizens, and
2. How to communicate the dangers in two political practices that are wonky and hard to understand (gerrymandering and the practice of using rules to give a few elites the power to control the legislative agenda).

To address this, the LWVIC, local Fair Districts of PA and IUP are joining forces to create a contest. To be held in the spring, college and high school students will learn about gerrymandering and the legislative rules process, and then be

Child Advocacy *(continued from page 1)*

Advocacy Committee was meeting with the administrators of three Indiana County School Districts and learning about Pennsylvania's youth violence prevention program, the "Safe2Say Something" program. Current research is summarized in the Summer 2022 VOTER newsletter that is posted on the homepage of the LWVIC website.

The third webinar was led by Sarah Miller, Director of Social Policy for the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania and focused on bipartisan proposed gun legislation in Pennsylvania. Legislation related to gun safety has been introduced into the Pennsylvania State House and the Senate over the last year. This legislation was sponsored by both Democrats and Republicans as well as co-sponsored by a Democrat and a Republican. These proposed bipartisan bills include the ban of assault weapons for people under 21, firearm training for first-time purchasers, and universal background checks as well as other gun-related safety legislation. However, the forward movement of these proposed bipartisan bills has been thwarted. The webinar recording is posted on the Government & Social Policy page of the LWVIC website.

invited to create a short creative message of some kind to educate others about these issues. The messages could be a short video, art, an essay, etc. Dr. Susan Welsh, chair of LWVIC's Child Advocacy Committee on Education; Dr. Sid Reger of FDPA; and Dr. Aleea Perry of IUP's Political Science Department are leading this project. Please consider volunteering some time to help out with this fun project. You can contact Susan Welsh at sbwelsh48@gmail.com to get started.

• **As you may have read** on pages 2 and 3 in this newsletter, our state legislature is working hard to put at least five constitutional amendments through for popular vote during spring's primary. These amendments would reshape the balance of power in the state government, restrict voting access, and establish that the state constitution does not guarantee any right related to abortion. The League is strongly opposed to all of these five amendments and our local league is organizing a focused letter-writing campaign in the local newspaper about this. We are seeking both letter writers and also people who prefer not to draft their own letter, but are willing to sign and submit a pre-drafted letter. We will provide all the background information and details. Our goal is to have letters to the editor published weekly after the first of the year to keep this issue in the public's eye. Dr. Deanne Snavelly will be heading this project. Please let her know if you can help by emailing her at dlsnavely68@gmail.com.

• **There is much work** to be done at the state level. The League has four working committees and two of them are in need of additional help right now. These are the Social Policy Committee and the Government Policy Committee. Each committee meets twice a month for about an hour. The committee's work is to monitor particular policy issues, and identify actions that might be needed. Committees sometimes also draft information summaries on issues for the League to take up. If you have an interest in learning more about these committees, please email Susan Boser at sboser12@gmail.com.

We Need Your Environmental Advocacy!

by Kathy Cook, Director, Environmental Policy Committee, LWVPA

The LWVPA Environmental Policy Committee is a small but mighty group of League members working for change. I'm reaching out to invite you to join and support this committee in their work for climate justice across PA.

The committee has recently created statewide focus groups (see below) to allow for deeper and more specified advocacy. These groups will meet and collaborate for 1-2 hours a week and report at monthly team meetings. In addition, these groups will work closely with other environmental advocacy groups across the state to amplify our message of environmental justice. Our grassroots network of Leagues and members will be instrumental in making this happen.

Pennsylvania needs League members to step up and use our grassroots strength to create sustainable change. Please email me at: environmentalpolicy@palwv.org with any questions or comments. These LWVPA Environmental Team Focus Groups are proposed:

Water

- Focus on water pollution, stormwater management, microplastics in water
- The Delaware River Basin subgroup will collaborate with the Delaware River Basin Commission and Delaware Riverkeepers
- The Chesapeake Watershed subgroup will collaborate with Choose Clean Water Coalition
- LWVUS Climate Interest Group: Water
- Plastics subgroup – rewriting of LWVPA “All About Plastics” booklet

Agriculture

- Focus on Federal Farm Bill, soil health, pollinator gardens
- LWVUS Climate Interest Group: Food, soils, Agriculture
- Collaboration with local Environmental Action Committee and Conservation districts
- Collaboration with Choose Clean Water Coalition – Chesapeake Watershed, which meets the first Wednesday of every month at 1:00 p.m.



Energy

- Focus on solar energy, wind energy, electrification, nuclear energy
- LWVUS Climate Interest Groups: Renewable energy and Electrification
- Collaboration with PA Clean Power Coalition

Health

- Focus on childhood lead poisoning, asthma, health impacts of fracking
- LWVUS Climate Interest Group: Health
- Collaboration with Physicians for Social Responsibility
- Collaboration with Children First – Lead Free Promise Project

Environmental Justice

- Focus on collaboration with organizations in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh
- LWVUS Climate Interest Group: Climate Justice
- Collaboration with Breath Project

Zero Waste Initiative

- Focus on recycling, landfills, Climate Emergency Declarations, Climate Action Plans,
- LWVUS Climate Interest Groups: Climate Action Plans; Climate Communication

RGGI/ Fracking/Air Quality

- Focus on fracking issues, methane rule, hydrogen, air quality, carbon capture,
- Collaboration with RGGI coalition
- Collaboration with Moms Clean Air Force
- Collaboration with Protect Northern PA

Newspaper Readers and Letters to the Editor

- Local League members who read local newspapers and letters to the editor
- Goal is to uplift those articles that align with our policies and combat false information.
- Policy directors will encourage leagues to send letters to the editor.

Thank you for all you do. I look forward to working with some of you soon!

Resolve to Help Stop Climate Change

by Ellen Chinn

Let's All Make A New Year's Resolution to Help Stop Climate Change!



It'll be 2023 before you know it and the Environmental Issues Committee wants you to resolve to help Mother Earth! Climate change is upon us; we are seeing effects on our food systems, extreme weather leading to fires, flooding, drought, energy shortages and more, rising ocean levels, melting glaciers and permafrost, and negative impacts on wildlife and human health, to name but a few. To be sure, advocating for climate policy is important but small, individual acts are important too! Individual actions CAN make a difference!

Here are a few ways:

Energy conservation cuts down on the use of fossil fuels:

- Wash your clothes in cold water
- Hang your laundry to dry
- Lower your thermostat during the winter
- Unplug electronic devices when not in use
- Buy clean electricity
- Install solar panels
- Insulate your home
- Switch to LED lighting
- Drive a hybrid or electric vehicle
- Use public transportation
- Walk or bike
- Buy locally
- Eat less meat or become vegetarian or vegan
- Don't waste food



Carbon Sequestration keeps carbon in the form of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere:

- Plant native trees and plants
- Compost
- Get rid of your lawn
- Plant a rain garden



Plastic is made from fossil fuels and essentially never leaves the environment:

- Refuse single-use plastics (plastic straws, coffee stirrers, soda/water bottles, bags, utensils, etc.)
- Don't drink bottled water
- Carry your own reusable bags
- Keep containers in your car for restaurant leftovers
- Ask restaurants to use recyclable takeout containers, paper straws and other green products
- Keep reusable utensils in your car
- Use a bamboo toothbrush with natural bristles
- Use solid shampoo, soap and detergent, wrapped in paper or cardboard
- Wear clothing made from natural fibers



For more information:

- <https://lwvindianacounty.org/climate-change/>
- <https://archive.curbed.com/2017/6/7/15749900/how-to-stop-climate-change-actions>
- <https://www.usgs.gov/faqs/what-carbon-sequestration>



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee Plans

The League of Women Voters of Indiana County is striving to create a welcoming environment where everyone is treated with respect, ideas are listened to and contributions valued, and active and open participation in all league activities is encouraged. League events are free and open to the public. We are making every effort to make sure events are accessible to all. Please contact our local league to discuss how we can assist with special accommodations:

lwvindianacounty@gmail.com

The LWVIC board directors participated in training on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) on August 22, 2022. Topics discussed at this introductory session included the purpose and importance of DEI, how the use of appropriate pronouns increases inclusion, the social construct of race and how to support and advocate for anti-racist policies and practices, how to create a diverse, equitable, and inclusive space, and understanding covert discrimination including microaggressions.

A natural extension of the DEI training is to broaden and deepen our understanding of the social construct of race and how to support anti-racist policies and practices. A multi-age book discussion group will meet in early 2023. We plan to include middle and high school students, college students, parents, and community members. Please contact Anne Simmons if you are interested in helping to plan this activity by reading the selected books and preparing questions for



discussion (annesimmons447@gmail.com). Copies of the books for the discussion are available for League members to borrow.

1. Book appropriate for adults including high school and college students: *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, by Ibram X. Kendi
2. Book appropriate for middle school and high school students: *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism and You: A Remix of the National Book Award-winning Stamped from the Beginning*, by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi

Bags to Benches Recycling

The League of Women Voters of Indiana County donated an outdoor bench to the White Township Recreation Complex/S&T Bank Arena on September 23, 2022. LWVIC continues to partner with the Evergreen Conservancy in the Bags to Benches program. Outdoor benches have been installed in eight Indiana County locations.

For each outdoor bench, 500 pounds of plastic film are collected in the county and sent to the Trex Company, which recycles the plastic to make composite lumber. Trex delivers a poly-lumber bench to Indiana County.

The public can participate in this recycling effort. Collection bins are located at the Indiana County YMCA, Indiana Borough Building, and White Township Recreation/S&T Bank Arena. Types of plastic that can be recycled include: grocery bags, bread bags, water and soft drink case overwraps, dry cleaning bags, newspaper sleeves, ice bags, wood pellet bags, Ziploc and other re-closable bags, produce bags, bubble wrap, salt bags, and cereal bags.



Left to right: Ellen Chinn (LWVIC) Jessica Prushnok (Office Manager, White Twp. Recreation Complex) and Cindy Rogers (LWVIC).

LWVIC Promotes Election Security and Integrity

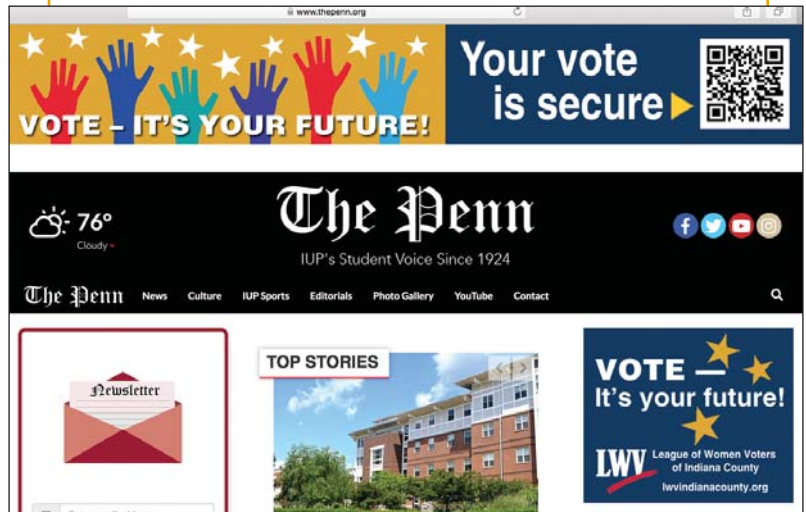
by Donna Cashdollar

During the spring primary election and the fall general election seasons this year, LWVIC has used a variety of media to present information about election procedures and security in Indiana County. This project originated in response to voter concerns about the integrity of our state's election process.

Ads listing reasons why voting is secure in Indiana County appeared in the *Indiana Gazette* and the weekly *Shopper's Guide* in April/May and October/November. In April, a series of public service announcements aired on WDAD radio.

During the months of September and October, *The Penn* and the HUB at IUP presented ads designed by LWVIC for several formats. In the HUB, visitors could see the ads appearing in rotation on TV screens and on exercise equipment screens in the Fitness Center. A banner ad appeared in rotation at the top of IUP's digital

newsletter, *The Penn*, along with a smaller sidebar ad in each edition. A QR code in these ads linked to a page on the LWVIC website dedicated to information about our state and county election procedures and security measures. HUB pages on social media sites Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter also carried this information.



October 2022 Candidates Night Cancelled

Candidates Night provides the opportunity for candidates to publicly discuss their ideas and views on issues.

The LWVIC invited the two candidates for the office of Representative in the Pennsylvania General Assembly–62nd District: Brian Doyle, Democratic candidate, and Jim Struzzi, Republican candidate, to participate in this year's Candidates Night. The event was scheduled for Tuesday evening, October 25, 2022 in the Indiana Area Senior High School Auditorium.

The 2022 Candidates Night was canceled. This event could not be held because one of the candidates was not able to attend.

Websites: Voting and Elections – www.vote411.org and www.vote.pa.gov

Learn about Candidates: www.vote411.org

Vote411 is the education fund website for the League of Women Voters of the United States. Important resources on this website include:

- See what's on your ballot – Read about the candidates running for office in your community and learn their positions on specific issues. Question responses come directly from the candidates and are unedited by the LWV United States. The League does not support or oppose any candidates or parties.

- Access voter registration information in any state in the United States.

At the www.vote.pa.gov site you can:

- Register to vote in Pennsylvania.
- Check your voter registration status.
- Update your voter registration.
- Find your polling place.
- Apply for a mail ballot.
- Get information about Voter ID for first time voters.
- Find information for college students.

LWVIC Board Retreat Shapes Plans for 2022-23



The board of directors of LWVIC participated in an annual retreat to discuss the priority issues for 2022-2023. Left to right: Ellen Chinn, Lizanne Porter, Kay Snyder, Donna Cashdollar, Anne Simmons, Sue Welsh, Joyce Rizzo, Susan Boser, Cindy Rogers, Kay Smith, and Deanne Snavely. Missing from the photograph: Aida Shotts

LWVIC Membership Supports Its Good-Government Mission

Members of the League of Women Voters of Indiana County (LWVIC) are also members of the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania and the League of Women Voters of the United States. Therefore, we support a critical presence

in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and Washington, D.C. to influence public policy through advocacy. In addition, our dues support the league's mission to keep the public informed and provide nonpartisan information to voters (Website: www.vote411.org).

All persons age 16 and older are welcome to join the League of Women Voters.

Membership dues are collected annually during the month of January. Dues for an individual are \$55.00 per year. Family Membership is \$55.00 for the first family member and \$27.50 for each additional family member. Student membership is free. Please write checks to LWVIC and mail to Ellen Chinn, 156 Wine Avenue, Indiana, PA 15701. Other options are PayPal or using debit or credit cards.

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).

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF INDIANA COUNTY • BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Anne Simmons, President
Cindy Rogers, Vice President
Ellen Chinn, Treasurer • Susan Welsh, Secretary
Susan Boser • Donna Cashdollar
Lizanne Porter • Joyce Rizzo • Aida Shotts
Kay Smith • Deanne Snavely • Kay Snyder

Editor, *Voter*: Donna Cashdollar

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.