



LWV

VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF INDIANA COUNTY

WINTER 2023

League of Women Voters—Its History, Mission, Vision

by Anne Simmons

For 103 years, the League of Women Voters has been a nonpartisan, activist, grassroots organization. Membership has been open to men since the 1970s; we keep the original name to honor the women who struggled to win the right to vote.

MISSION: *Empowering voters.
Defending democracy.*

VISION: *We envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, and the knowledge and confidence to participate.*

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

WE BELIEVE:

- The right to vote is a critical principle of our democracy.
- Our democracy is stronger when every eligible voter can cast a vote, and have it count.
- We should encourage every eligible voter to cast a ballot in every election to make their voices heard.
- We want our election system to be free, fair, and accessible to all eligible voters.

Let’s continue to work together to ensure that all eligible voters—particularly those from traditionally underrepresented or underserved communities, including first-time voters, youth of voting age, new citizens, communities of color, the elderly, and low-income Americans—have the opportunity and the information to exercise their right to vote.

“Meet and Greet” with Our Pennsylvania Legislators

by Susan Boser

The LWVPA is encouraging local leagues to change the approach to the annual legislative interviews. In the past, local leagues have invited their representatives to meet with us, asked a set of questions developed by the state league and then reported the findings back to the state.

Beginning this year, LWVPA is encouraging us instead to see this as a “Meet and Greet,” calling on our legislators in their offices, and to follow our own agenda on issues that matter to us here in Indiana County. We are encouraged to be prepared not only to ask our representatives their positions, but also to clearly express the actions

and votes that we, as their constituents, would like to see. These meetings will take place in March and will be followed up by a “Legislative Lobbying Day” in Harrisburg in April (details to follow.)

A small group of league members, working with a coalition including members of Fair Districts of PA and American Association of University Women, are planning for Meet and Greets with Senator Joe Pittman, State Representative Struzzi, and State Representative Smith. If you have interest in participating, please contact Susan Boser at sboser12@gmail.com.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion—A Community Conversation

by Anne Simmons

Everyone is welcome to join a community conversation about DEI that will help us increase our understanding of social justice issues as well as enable us to build support and connections in our community.

Community organizations including the Indiana Free Library and the League of Women Voters are partnering with other community groups and individuals to facilitate these community conversations. We are inviting middle school and high school students, college students, parents, and community members to participate.

Book group members may choose to read either of the two books noted below. The books are aligned and organized into the same five sections.

- *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism and You*; Author Jason Reynolds
- *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*; Author Ibram X. Kendi

Seeing the need to get more books for community members, LWVIC purchased 30 additional copies through a special grant from LWVPA, in addition to 16 books originally purchased for this project.

The meetings will be held at the Indiana Free Library on Monday evenings from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. We hope to offer individuals the opportunity to participate in-person or virtually. This program is free and open to the public and we make every effort to be sure they are accessible to all.

Meeting 1: March 20, 2023

Section 1: 1415-1728; Cotton Mather

Meeting 2: April 3, 2023

Section 2: 1743-1826; Thomas Jefferson

Meeting 3: April 10, 2023

Section 3: 1826-1879; William Lloyd Garrison

Meeting 4: April 17, 2023

Section 4: 1868-1963; W.E.B. DuBois

Meeting 5: May 1, 2023

Section 5: 1963-Today; Angela Davis

LWVIC Receives Recognition at the State Level

by Anne Simmons

The League of Women Voters of Indiana County continues to receive “shout-outs” at statewide meetings. At a recent meeting, the upcoming LWVPA convention was discussed and a meeting participant mentioned how the LWVIC

convinced everyone at the convention to add a position on Marcellus Shale.

We have an active presence at the state level, including the following committees and groups: DEI, Environmental Issues, Fair Districts PA, Government Policy, Social Policy, and Voter Services.

Recently Kathy Cook, LWVPA Environmental Policy Director, commented in an email: “I was delighted to receive your newsletter today—what a fantastic resource for your members. Donna Cashdollar has done an excellent job of showcasing the work you do. Thank you so much for including my article on the LWVPA environmental team. [Fall 2022] I am so proud to be associated with your league; you are a model for what all our leagues should strive to become.”



LWVIC's new magnetic badges

Indiana County Represented at Fair Districts PA Rally

by Joyce Rizzo

On January 3, the first day of the PA General Assembly 2023-2024 legislative session, Stanley Chepaitis, a Fair Districts PA Indiana County coordinator and small organic farmer, spoke to more than 100 Pennsylvanians gathered on the State Capitol steps at a “Fix Harrisburg” rally. The rally attendees were supporting procedural rules reform for both the state Senate and the House—advocating for rules that would foster greater cooperation and collaboration between the legislators of the two major political parties.

Dr. Chepaitis spoke about the Clean Streams Act and other bills impacting PA farmers that were never considered in committee despite broad bipartisan support. Other speakers from diverse

organizations throughout the state told the crowd about legislative inaction on important issues such as gun violence, adequate school funding, wage equity for women, redistricting reform and childhood lead exposure.

While the rally was happening outside of the Capitol, the Senate swore in legislators, elected leaders and voted on rules that followed closely those from previous legislative sessions. The House recessed until late February without taking a vote on rules. The current Speaker of the House, Mark Rozzi, has since held a series of “listening sessions” to get constituents opinions on ending partisan gridlock.

More information on procedural rules reform for the General Assembly can be found at www.fairdistrictspa.com.



Dr. Stanley Chepaitis, Indiana County Coordinator for Fair Districts PA, spoke to Pennsylvanians at the Fix Harrisburg rally, calling for legislative action on bipartisan bills that impact the environment and farming in the state.



In early January, representatives from diverse organizations across the state rallied to advocate for reforming procedural rules in the Pennsylvania legislature. Fair Districts PA supports revising rules that now prevent votes on bills that have bipartisan support.



Mattel PlayBack Program Recycles Old Plastic Toys



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The toy company Mattel is encouraging families to “...take fun full circle by keeping outgrown, unusable and worn-out toys out of the landfill. Rather than throwing out toys when you and your children are done with them, send them to us (at no charge to you), and we will try to re-use their materials in new toys and in new ways.”

PlayBack works to reclaim and recycle materials, keeping Mattel toys out of the build-up of waste in landfills and oceans. While Mattel aims eventually to accept any of its toys, right now only Fisher-Price®, Barbie®, Matchbox®, and MEGA® are included in the program.

Here’s how to participate in PlayBack:

1. Visit www.Mattel.com/PlayBack to start your return and fill out the brief form.
2. Print a free prepaid shipping label.
3. Package your toys and send them back to us. You can mail your package at the Post Office, drop it in a U.S. mail collection box, leave it for your letter carrier, or schedule a free carrier pickup at www.usps.com .

You can download a PDF with more details at:

https://assets.contentstack.io/v3/assets/bltc12136c3b9f23503/bltc23dcc685588901f/629e8e468eeef9457276578a/M22_PLAY_BACK_FAQ_US_052422.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3Awe-FUB08-mf47zwJ-VMX9MKMN2iA_EbJMp-sIYMZ8RkKbILxWUJrs12_8

Nominations Invited for Peggy Clark Environmental Leadership Awards

by Laurie Lafontaine

The League of Women Voters of Indiana County is requesting nominations for the Peggy Clark Grassroots Environmental Leadership Award. Nominations should be submitted by April 1, 2023. 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 long-time Indiana County grassroots environmental activist and League member and is awarded annually. There are two categories: individual and group. The nomination form for either category can be found at:

<https://lwvindianacounty.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/NominationForm2023.pdf>.

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



In 2022 Peggy Clark Grassroots Environmental Leadership Awards were given to Silas Schiera, individual award winner, and to the Friends of Whites Woods, group award winner. Mr. Schiera started the recycling of plastic film in Indiana County. His “Bags to Benches” project earned him the Eagle Scout rank. Since 2019 eight outdoor benches from the Trex Company, which uses the plastic in its composite lumber products, have been placed in the county. Friends of Whites Woods educates and engages the community in environmental conservation and advocates for the Whites Woods Nature Center.



Regional Climate Stories

Food Waste and Climate Change by Lizanne Porter

No one likes waste. Why throw out something that is still perfectly usable? And of course, there is the money involved: times are tough, we need every dollar. But did you know there is a very real and very important connection between *climate change* and food waste?

“Worldwide, food waste accounts for 8-10% of global greenhouse gas emissions, at least double that of emissions from aviation.”¹ How? When food waste rots in a landfill, it produces methane, a greenhouse gas far more powerful than carbon dioxide.² Wasting food is literally fueling the warming of our planet! In addition, the amount of food that is currently being wasted in landfill could feed more than a billion people, according to estimates from the Food and Agriculture Organization.¹

In the United States, the Environmental Protection Agency estimates that one third of the US food supply goes uneaten, while at the same time, many Americans, including children, don’t have enough to eat.¹ There is also a tremendous waste of resources—everything that goes into the production of food, including hard physical labor (planting, watering, weeding, harvesting, etc), fertilizers, refrigerants, packaging, and transport. Much of that requires the burning of fossil fuels.

So, it seems obvious that decreasing food waste is a win-win: reduce global warming and reduce hunger.

But where to start? According to the New York Times “Households account for 39% of food waste in the United States, more than restaurants, grocery stores or farms.”¹ Start by planning ahead so that you don’t “overbuy” at the grocery store. Fruits and vegetables look delicious and healthy, but will you really eat ALL those greens, or will some end up wilted at the back of the crisper drawer? Inevitably, you will still have some food waste, but much of it can be composted.⁴ Unlike in landfill, where rotting produces methane, composting produces carbon dioxide. This is also a greenhouse gas but is far less harmful (causes less warming) than methane. Compost also returns vital nutrients and water to our soil, while landfill is literally wasted space.³

Restaurants can help do their part by providing “doggie bags,” which is common in the USA but not everywhere in the world. Or better yet, bring your own reusable containers with you. Restaurants can also divert food waste from landfill by composting themselves or using commercial services. Along with compost, food waste can be turned into animal feed or biogas.

What about food waste that is edible? Many cities and towns have volunteer programs to collect “leftover food” from grocery stores, which is then distributed to those in need. There is also legislation in several states. California has one of the most ambitious laws, *requiring* grocery stores to donate edible food headed for disposal, or face fines. In addition, every city and county in California must reduce the organic waste that goes into landfills by 75% by 2025, and compost it instead.¹

There is of course, a “third” win. Along with combatting climate change and hunger, reducing food waste saves money! In central Ohio, one program found that the average family spends \$1500 a year on food they don’t eat.² Also in Ohio, 14 elementary schools saved their District, the Hilliard City Schools District, \$22,000 in one year: they cut their trash pick-ups by 30%, recycling pick-ups by 50% and diverted 100 tons of food—at least five school buses worth of waste—from landfill! ² This was accomplished by elementary schools, simply by placing six “trash” cans in center of the cafeteria and teaching children what goes where.

Perhaps the most important “win” is one not yet mentioned: the incredible power of youth. Those elementary school children are likely to retain their new healthy habits regarding waste—and wonder why the adults aren’t doing the same!

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/13/climate/global-food-waste-solutions.html>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/01/headway/composting-food-leftovers.html>

³ <https://foodforward.org/food-waste/whats-the-deal-with-food-waste-and-climate-change/>

⁴ <https://www.epa.gov/recycle/composting-home>

LWVPA Webinar: Gun Safety Policy in Pennsylvania

by Susan Boser

On February 23, 2023, 6:00 p.m., the LWVPA is hosting a webinar on the status of gun safety legislation in Pennsylvania.

Panelists include: Shannon Flores, of Giffords Gun Owners for Safety, will provide an overview of gun safety legislation; Carol Latkowski, Southeastern Coordinator for CeaseFirePA will discuss advocacy work in Pennsylvania; and Sean Holihan, Giffords State Legislative Director will share his insight on the status of legislation in Harrisburg. Susan Boser, LWVPA, will be facilitating Q&A.

To participate, register at www.palwv.org. From the Menu (symbol), select Events. Scroll to the date of the event and register.

Equal Rights Amendment Ratified, Now in Legal Limbo

by Susan Boser

The Equal Rights Amendment, originally passed by Congress in 1971 and 1972, needed to be ratified by the 75% of states to become the 28th Amendment to the US Constitution. Two years ago, with Virginia's ratification, the ERA received the necessary 75% of states and it is now law.

Despite this, a technicality has left the ERA in legal limbo.

[According to the Brennan Center for Justice, "The ratification deadlines Congress had set after it approved the amendment have lapsed, and five states have acted to rescind their prior approval."] Advocates for the ERA have sued, and the issue is currently in litigation.

The League of Women Voters of PA will be offering a webinar in March with AJ Conrad, of the ERA Coalition, to discuss what has happened, the current legal issue and next steps for action.



LWVPA Webinar Series: Equity Initiative

Host: League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania
Monday evenings: 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

Register to participate at www.palwv.org. From the Menu (symbol), select Events. Scroll to the date of the event and register.

February 27 – Black History

March 27 – LGBTQ+ History

April 24 – Environmental Justice

May 22 – DEI and Belonging

League Members Invited to Attend Monthly Board Meetings on Zoom

by Anne Simmons

Any voting member of the LWVIC is welcome to attend the meetings of the LWVIC Board of Directors. These meetings are usually held the third Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m.

If you would like to receive the Zoom link, an agenda, meeting minutes, or a treasurer's report, as well as suggest an item for inclusion on the monthly agenda, please contact Anne Simmons at lwvindianacounty@gmail.com.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF INDIANA COUNTY • BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Anne Simmons, President

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Lizanne Porter • Joyce Rizzo • Aida Shotts

Kay Smith • Deanne Snavelly • Kay Snyder

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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.

LWVIC Promotes Citizen Information and Engagement

Ceremony Welcomes New American Citizens



On October 21, 2022, new citizens of the United States were welcomed in a naturalization ceremony at the Kovalchick Conference and Athletic Complex in Indiana. Representatives of the U. S. 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 to provide voter registration applications.

Left: Sandy Whitson and Joyce Rizzo greeted this new citizen.

Business and Professional Women Discuss Legislative Actions

In November 2022, LWVIC members Joyce Rizzo and Anne Simmons spoke at a meeting of Indiana County's Business and Professional Women. The presentations and discussion were focused on two good-government topics: the process for amending the state's constitution and the Fix Harrisburg Campaign for legislative rules reform that would end partisan gridlock.

Right: Joyce Rizzo explained how current procedural rules prevent action on bills with bipartisan citizen support, such as gun violence, adequate school funding, wage equity for women, redistricting reform and childhood lead exposure.



NAACP Freedom Fund Banquet Promotes Racial and Social Justice



Above left: Lizanne Porter, Deanne Snavelly, Anne Simmons, Susan Boser, and Lillian Clemons represented LWVIC at the 35th Annual Freedom Fund Banquet of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored people (NAACP) on Saturday, November 12, 2022.

Above right: NAACP-Indiana County Branch President Carolyn Princes chatted with the group. The event's theme was "This Is Power! Art, Culture, and Fashions in Forging Racial and Social Justice."



Volunteers Needed for LWVIC Activities—Engage and Enjoy!

• **Join the LWVIC Nominating Committee** to help with the election of a new board of officers and directors at the spring membership meeting. (Date and location TBA) Contact Anne Simmons at lwvianacounty@gmail.com.

Get Ready for the Garage Sale

Spring is approaching—time for the LWVIC Garage Sale. Someone is surely looking for stuff you're ready to part with. The sales proceeds of your donated items fund LWVIC programs year-round. Date and location of the sale will be selected and announced soon.

• **Engage with high school students at the Student Leadership Conference**, Friday, March 3 in the HUB at IUP. LWVIC members discuss voting and elections with students attending from three counties. Volunteer time commitment is 1.5 hours. Contact Anne Simmons at lwvianacounty@gmail.com.

• **Family Fun Fest**, Saturday, March 25 at the Indiana Mall, has the theme “World Adventure.” LWVIC volunteers will encourage children to “vote” for their favorite animal as they learn about Nigeria, the country LWVIC will represent. Volunteer time commitment is one hour. Contact Sue Welsh at sbwelsh48@gmail.com.

Upcoming Events – Winter/Spring 2023

**LWVIC Dues
Are Due!**

FEBRUARY

LWVPA Webinar – Gun Policy in Pennsylvania

February 23 – 6:00 p.m. via Zoom

LWVIC Monthly Board Meeting

February 27 – 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

MARCH

Student Leadership Conference: Armstrong-Indiana-Clarion Drug & Alcohol Commission

March 3 – 8:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
Hadley Union Building, IUP

Multi-Age Book Group Discussion Series: Community Conversations about DEI

March 20 – 7:00 p.m.
Indiana Free Library

Family Fun Fest: Children’s Advisory Commission of Indiana County

March 25 – 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.
Indiana Mall

LWVIC Monthly Board Meeting

March 27 – 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

APRIL

Multi-Age Book Group Discussion Series: Community Conversations about DEI

April 3 • April 10 • April 17 – 7:00 p.m.
Indiana Free Library

Fair Districts Book Discussion

April 12 – 7:00 p.m., Indiana Free Library

MAY

May 1 – Last day to register to vote in May Primary Election

Multi-Age Book Group Discussion Series: Community Conversations about DEI

May 1 – 7:00 p.m.
Indiana Free Library

May 16 – Primary Election Day

JUNE

Nature Palooza: Children’s Advisory Commission of Indiana County

June 3 – 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.
Blue Spruce park

LWVPA Convention

June 16-18
Crowne Plaza Hotel, Harrisburg