

League of Women Voters of Indiana County

Program for 2023-2024

1. Child Advocacy Committee on Education – Susan Welsh: sbwelsh48@gmail.com
 - a. Public school funding
 - b. School safety
 - c. Citizen education
 - d. Youth vote
 - e. Informational community events
2. Communications Committee – Donna Cashdollar: donna.cashdollar@comcast.net
 - a. Voter – quarterly newsletter
 - b. Information for voters
 - i. Radio, print media, and social media
 - ii. Other media – banners, brochures, bookmarks, cards, handouts
3. Environmental Issues Committee – Cindy Rogers: rogers944@comcast.net
 - a. Climate change
 - i. Collaborations
 - ii. Educational initiatives
 - iii. Community projects
 - b. Plastics issues
 - i. Informational programs; Book donations
 - ii. Publications – “All About Plastics”
 - iii. TREX Community Challenge – recycling
4. Equity Committee: DEI – Sherene Hess: sherenehess@verizon.net
 - a. Build support and connections in our community
 - b. Act as an ally for all members of our community – “Defend Democracy for ALL”
 - c. Improve the accessibility of League programs
5. Public Policy Committee: Joyce Rizzo: rizzojoyce@gmail.com
 - a. Fair Districts and Fix Harrisburg Campaign
 - b. Government Policy
 - c. Safe and Secure Elections
 - d. Social Policy
6. Voter Services Committee – Kay Smith: kaybsmith06@gmail.com
 - a. Voter registration events
 - b. Voting and elections
 - c. VOTE411 – Information about candidates

Child's Advocacy Committee on Education (CACE)

Chair: Susan Welsh

Email: sbwelsh48@gmail.com

Overview

Advocate for children's well-being reflected in issues such as taxation and school funding, school safety, public health, and public school curriculum that provides student access to history and culture. The committee leads informational community events and participates in family-oriented events.

Accomplishments

Public School Funding: Since 2018 CACE has studied and informed the community about school funding needs. We continue this emphasis.

- Partnered with AAUW to plan the April Town Hall Meeting on the State of Education in Rural PA
- Attended webinars with Education Voters of PA to provide LWVIC with updates on the Public School Funding Lawsuit in PA Commonwealth Court
- Participated in radio interview on "Marino in the Morning" about Charter School Funding Reform
- Wrote Indiana Gazette Letter to the Editor on the need for Charter School Funding Reform legislation
- Gained LWVIC support for the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) "Resolution Calling for Charter School Funding Reform"

School Safety: Since 2018 CACE has studied and informed citizens about school safety and school mental health issues.

- Hosted three LWVIC webinars from Summer 2022 to Fall 2022 on the importance of gun control as a public health and youth mental health issue
- Attended a Bullying Awareness and Prevention meeting at ARIN IU 28; reported on "Life Safety Matters" that students reported to the Safe2Say Something Program in our public schools

Community Collaborations:

- **Indiana County Children's Advisory Commission (IC-CAC):** Held a seat on the commission (composed of 45+ representatives from the community and child-serving agencies, organizations, and civic groups).
 - Attended monthly meetings
 - Sponsored a LWVIC table and children's activities at IC-CAC's annual Family Fun Fest (March) and Nature Palooza (June)
 - Joined the IC-CAC subcommittee, Early Care and Education Committee (ECE) to facilitate advocacy for increased funding for ECE educators and providers.
- **CARE Center of Indiana County:**
 - Attended a ceremony initiating Child Abuse Prevention month (April) and donated to Pinwheels for Prevention installed on the lawn of the Indiana County Courthouse

Citizen Education

- Delivered 'voting bookmarks', voter registration applications, and information about voting and elections to the five Indiana County Libraries
- Donated children's books written for early and young readers about voting and elections to five libraries: Indiana, Homer City, Burrell Township, Blairsville, and Saltsburg

Youth Vote

- Encouraged voter registration events in Indiana County High Schools; Distributed ‘voting cards’ (business-sized cards) to the Class of 2023 and provided information about the Governor’s Civic Engagement Awards
- Sponsored a table at the Annual Student Leadership Conference, Armstrong, Indiana and Clarion Drug and Alcohol Commission to inform high school students about voter registration, the VOTE411 resource, and the work of LWVIC
- Sponsored a table at the Community Engagement Conference, Indiana University of Pennsylvania to inform IUP students about League activities and opportunities

Goals

- Continue to advocate for adequate school funding and charter school law reform
- Inform the public about the impact of “Education Tax Credit” programs on public education funding
- Advocate for gun control legislation as key to students’ life safety
- Support teacher-structured curriculum that provides student access to history and culture, and monitor against censorship

Time Commitment

- We meet once a month for about an hour.
- We follow Education Voters of PA research/webinars online as relevant.
- We prepare questions/information about education funding for discussion with our state legislators.
- We volunteer to participate in webinars/events as needed.

Communications Committee

Chair: Donna Cashdollar

Email: donna.cashdollar@comcast.net

Overview

In collaboration with LWVIC committees, the Communication Committee presents information the committees provide for the public including articles written for the quarterly Voter newsletter and information presented in other printed and digital formats. The information and photos are shared mainly through emails.

Accomplishments

Information for Voters

- 2022 primary and general elections: In radio PSAs and newspaper ads, we listed how election in Indiana County and Pennsylvania are safely conducted and votes are secure. The information also was published in newsletters of other community organizations.
- 2023 primary election: In the Indiana Gazette and the Shoppers Guide, we ran ads with the slogan “Your voice is loudest in local elections.” The ads promoted the importance of voting in local elections and explained the direct impact local officials’ decisions have on our communities.
- Bookmarks and business cards were distributed to libraries and school districts in Indiana County, providing important information about voting.

Social media – Facebook LWVIC posts, LWVIC website, other digital platforms

- Facebook posts and website content were updated regularly. A digital copy of each current Voter newsletter is posted on the website along with other important information.
- September/October 2022: The student union (HUB) at IUP presented voter information and promoted voting through The Penn, the HUB’s digital displays, and the HUB’s social media accounts.

Other Media – Advertisements, bookmarks, cards, brochures, banners, handouts

- Bookmarks targeting adult voters and voting-age youth provided essential dates for voters and promoted the website Vote411.org.
- Bookmarks aimed at younger children (and their parents) were provided to Saltsburg’s Library for its children’s program about voting.
- Business cards targeting adult and youth voters provided essential dates for voters and promoted the website Vote411.org.
- A large display banner promoting LWVIC and its activities was produced for use with our information table at community events. This was funded by a grant from LWVPA.
- Magnetic identification badges with the LWVIC logo were produced for use by LWVIC volunteers working at community events. This was funded by a grant from LWVPA.
- An ad in the Indiana Gazette special section observing Volunteer Month (April 2023)) thanked LWVIC volunteers and listed community events at which we have promoted voting.

Voter quarterly newsletter

- Newsletters were published in August 2022, November 2022, February 2023, and April 2023.

Goals

- The Communications Committee will continue to work with the other LWVIC committees as needed, and also suggest new activities as opportunities arise.
- Updating the 4-year-old membership brochure is one project we anticipate.

Time Commitment

Social media – Time varies.

- One member is currently managing LWVIC's Facebook posts.
- Two members manage the LWVIC website.
- A new member is working with LWVIC to post local candidate information on Vote411.org
- The special HUB digital program required about six weeks of planning and production for the two-month run of the program. Several people worked on this project.

Other Media – Time varies.

- One member uses her own template for new versions of the bookmarks and business cards. Updating these items usually takes an hour or less time.
- Time needed to create and produce ads and special projects varies with the complexity of the project.

Voter quarterly newsletter – Production time varies from one to three weeks after all content is submitted.

- One member currently edits and produces the Voter using her own template.
- Articles and photos are mostly submitted by other members and committees.

Environmental Issues Committee

Chair: Cindy Rogers

Email: rogers944@comcast.net

Overview

The Environmental Issues Committee studies and educates the public about climate change, environmental sustainability, the effects of Marcellus Shale drilling, and the impact of plastics on the environment, among other issues.

Accomplishments

Climate change:

- Designed, printed and posted 8 signs at **Tanoma Environmental Education Center** encouraging climate change conversations
- Attended meetings with the **Climate and Rural Systems Partnership/Carnegie Museum of Natural History** to research ways to encourage conversations around climate change issues
- Wrote articles for the **Climate Conversations** section of our VOTER Newsletter
- Built a water activity to present at tabling events that demonstrates **green ways to control pollution and damage from stormwater runoff**
- Trained with **Climate Reality Project**, Al Gore's organization, in ways to combat climate change. Collaborations with thousands of others, local and world-wide, in the fight against climate change.

Plastic Issues:

- Worked with the **State LWV Environmental Committee** on current issues concerning plastic, including plastic bag and single-use-plastic bans
- Updated the *All About Plastic* booklet our League wrote in 2017. The booklet will be published electronically on all of the **PA State Leagues' websites**.
- Collected plastic film for the **TREX Community Challenge**. Donated the benches we earned to the community. Ten benches have been donated and over 6,000 pounds of plastic collected that has not gone into landfills.
- We are committed to **eliminating single use plastic**

Book donations for educating the public:

- *Life Without Plastic* by Chantal Plamondon & Jay Sinha
- *Coco's Fire* – a children's book - changing climate anxiety into climate action
- *A Poison Like No Other: How Microplastics Corrupted Our Planet and Our Bodies*

Goals

Climate change:

- Continue to write articles for the Climate Conversations section of our VOTER for each issue
- Table at various events to encourage conversations about climate change with cards and other activities.
- Advocate for ways to mitigate climate change/educate the public on this topic

Plastic Issues

- Continue to work with the State LWV Environmental Committee on current issues about plastic and microplastics

- Continue to partner with Evergreen Conservancy to collect plastic with the TREX community challenge and donate the benches we earn to the community.
- Complete the update to the *All About Plastic* booklet our league wrote which we will publish on all PA State League websites and make print copies for distribution to legislators and at events
- Advocate for the elimination of single use plastic.

Time commitment

Our committee meets once a month for about an hour.

We take turns writing articles for the quarterly Voter newsletter.

We volunteer to participate in workshops/events as needed.

Equity Committee

Chair: Sherene Hess

Email: sherenehess@verizon.net

Overview

The Equity Committee 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.

The League of Women Voters of Indiana County is endeavoring to build a coalition of allies in our community with the goal of “Defending Democracy for All.”

Accomplishments

- Awarded two grants from LWV Pennsylvania to support DEI initiatives
 - Purchased two children’s books on voting and elections for each of the five Indiana County Libraries (e.g., *Vote for our Future* and *The Night Before Election Day*); Collaborated with our League’s Child’s Advocacy Committee on Education
 - Purchased 46 books and donated the books to the five Indiana County Libraries (i.e., *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism and You*; Authors Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi and *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*; Author Ibram X. Kendi)
 - Displayed the accessibility initiatives of the LWV Indiana County on invitations, flyers, bookmarks, and cards with the goal of increasing the participation of citizens in League programs
- Provided training for the LWV Indiana County leadership team
- Facilitated the five-week “Community Conversations about DEI” program in collaboration with the Indiana Free Library; The aim of the community conversations was to increase our understanding of the principles of DEI with a focus on social justice issues as well as enable us to build support and connections in our community.
- Provided training for the LWV Indiana County leadership team

Goals

- Continue to build support and connections in our community
- Act as an ally for all members of our community – “Defend Democracy for ALL”
- Improve the accessibility of League programs
- Increase the participation of citizens living in our expansive, rural community in League programs
- Continue to increase our understanding of the principles of DEI with a focus on social justice issues

Time Commitment

The Equity Committee is a new committee. This newly formed committee will host planning meetings once a month for approximately one-hour. In addition, committee members may spend an additional three to five hours per month planning and leading informational community events.

Public Policy Committee

Chair: Joyce Rizzo

Email: rizzojoyce@gmail.com

Overview

The Public Policy Committee is a new committee and Joyce Rizzo has volunteered to lead this group. Since attending university many years ago, Joyce always considered herself to be politically aware. She voted in every election and kept up on issues and government officials who figured prominently in the national news.

More recently, Joyce has become involved with Fair Districts Pennsylvania and our local League. She is more aware of the importance of Pennsylvania state and local politics and the direct effect they have on our lives. It is critically important for us to be informed on what is happening legislatively in Harrisburg and locally, and to give our state and local officials our perspective on the issues that impact us every day.

The Public Policy Committee will focus on four areas:

1. Fair Districts PA and the Fix Harrisburg Campaign;
2. Government Policy;
3. Safe and Secure Elections; and
4. Social Policy.

Accomplishments

- Fair Districts this year concentrated on the Fix Harrisburg Campaign – a statewide initiative whose purpose was to bring attention to procedural rules in the General Assembly and how rules that are set on the first day of a legislative session often obstruct the passage of important bipartisan legislation. Members of our local FD and League wrote a lengthy opinion piece published in *The Hawkeye* about the lack of reform on cyber charter school funding and how that affects taxpayers in Indiana County. We also addressed this topic on the morning local radio show with Todd Marino.
- In reference to Government Policy, the League of Women Voters reacted quickly to the PA House's late night passage last summer of a proposal to add five unrelated amendments to the PA Constitution. Our local League formed an Ad Hoc committee, met with a local legislator, educated the public about it at local organizations, and wrote a "The Way They See It" opinion piece in the *Indiana Gazette*.
- The Safe and Secure committee organized a campaign on the importance of voting in off-year, municipal elections. We published a Letter to the Editor and placed ads in the *Indiana Gazette* and in *The Shopper's Guide*.
- Our Social Policy organized a series of webinars on gun violence and child safety in collaboration with the Pennsylvania State Police and our local League's Child Advocacy Committee on Education.
- Awarded a \$1,000+ grant to support our voter services and public policy initiatives

Goals

There is much overlap among the various committees of our League. We always strive for good communication and collaboration.

In the coming year, the Public Policy Committee will:

- Continue to monitor the work of the General Assembly in Harrisburg;
- Research the issues, simplify and communicate the League's position to our local League membership and to the citizens of Indiana County and encourage citizens to communicate with their elected government officials;
- Establish relationships with our local legislators and inform them on the League's position on issues;
- Continue our focus on gun violence and child safety, reproductive choice, fair funding of our public schools, voting access including for voters who do not have a party affiliation, broadband connectivity as well as transparent, impartial and fair redistricting.

We would welcome your input and talents as a Public Policy Committee member.

Time Commitment

- Meet by Zoom or in-person when necessary to address critical issues. Otherwise, communicate by email.
- Research relevant legislation and keep up to date on the LWVPA stand on the issues.
- Take turns writing updates on issues to share with the League membership and the public through letters to the editor and articles in *The Voter*.
- Inform League members and other organizations when action such as phone calls, emails and visits to legislators are needed.

Voter Services Committee

Chair: Kay Smith

Email: kaybsmith06@gmail.com

Overview

The Voter Services Committee conducts voter registration events, informs the public about voting and elections, and provides information to voters about candidates for office using the VOTE411 platform. A member of the LWV Indiana County - Voter Services Committee participates in monthly, statewide LWV Pennsylvania Zoom meetings to discuss voting and elections.

Accomplishments

- Voter Registration
 - Organized the “Voter Registration Table” at the following events held in September and October:
 - Northern Appalachian Folk Festival;
 - IUP Community Involvement Fair; and the
 - United States Citizenship Naturalization Ceremony
 - Provided information about National Voter Registration Day to the Indiana Gazette and Renda Broadcasting
 - Delivered information about online voter registration and paper voter registration applications to the five public libraries in Indiana County
- Voting and Elections - Attended public meetings at the Indiana County Courthouse to learn how mail-in ballots and provisional ballots may be counted following an election
- VOTE411 – Participated in statewide LWV Pennsylvania informational meetings

Goals

- Voter registration events
 - Continue to provide information at community events, local businesses, and the five public libraries about online voter registration and paper voter registration applications
 - Continue to organize the “Voter Registration Table” at community events
 - Continue to provide information about National Voter Registration Day to print media and radio
- Voting and elections in Indiana County
 - Continue to participate in public meetings about voting machines and the counting of mail-in ballots and provisional ballots

- VOTE411
 - Support the formation of a new LWVIC VOTE411 group.
 - LWVIC will populate the VOTE411 platform for the first time in preparation of the November 2023 General Election
 - The LWVPA is responsible for event numbered years – 2024, 2026 and the LWVIC is responsible for odd numbered years – 2023, 2025.
 - The VOTE411 platform is prepared twice each year, May Primary Election and November General Election
 - Participate in VOTE411 training provided by LWV Pennsylvania
 - Some committee members will use technology skills to manage the platform and other community members will help populate the platform (e.g., Request candidate questions from LWVIC committees, and encourage candidates to respond to questions so their answers are displayed on VOTE411)

Time Commitment

- Voter Registration Events – 1-1.5 hours/event prior to the May Primary Election and November General Election
- Voting and elections - Attendance at one-hour public meetings following an election at the Indiana County Courthouse to learn about the counting of mail-in and provisional ballots
- VOTE411
 - There will be an initial time commitment of multiple hours to build and manage the platform
 - Organizational meetings of approximately one-hour will be held in August and September 2023 to discuss candidate questions
 - “Populating the platform” responsibilities will be approximately two-hours per week during the month of September