

LWW

VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF INDIANA COUNTY

FALL 2023

Vote411.org Provides Information County Voters Need

by Paul Huntington

If you haven't gone to www.vote411.org yet, it is time to take a look. The LWVIC Voter Services Committee has been working hard to get all of the Indiana County races set up in the website and to craft unique, community-focused questionnaires for the candidates of every race.

When you go to www.vote411.org, you are able to enter your street address and see information about every candidate and every race on your ballot including each candidate's website link, social media accounts and other biographical information.

Additionally, each candidate's answers to LWVIC's specifically crafted questionnaire are displayed. These answers provide every citizen of Indiana County with the opportunity to learn which candidates share their own beliefs and priorities rather than simply relying on a candidate's party designation.

Vote411.org puts the spotlight on local politics where each citizen's voice and every vote has the biggest impact on our community. As Ezra Klein writes in his book *Why We're Polarized*, "We give too much attention to national politics, which we can do very little to change, and too little attention to state and local politics, where our voices can matter much more."

Getting good information about local candidates is often difficult. Vote411.org makes that easy!

Please join us in spreading the word about www.vote411.org and encourage people to learn more about these local offices and the direct impact they have on us, our neighbors, our friends, and the community that we are building together.



Kay B. Smith, who chairs LWVIC's Voter Services Committee, displays a yard sign prepared by the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania. The QR code on the sign takes you directly to LWVPA's website, Vote411.org, where you can find official information about the candidates on your ballot in statewide and Indiana County races. Responses to LWVIC questions sent to each candidate are posted there unedited.

Start by entering your street address on the Personalized Voting Information page on the website. Select the candidates whose information you want to see, and scroll down for their responses. You can also check your voter registration and find your polling place when those locations are finalized.

LEARN ★ THINK ★ VOTE!

✓ LWVIC's Autumn Initiatives in Voter Registration ✓

Northern Appalachia Folk Festival, Downtown Indiana – September 8 and 9

The Northern Appalachia Folk Festival celebrates the history, culture, and diversity of our region. Special thanks to Ellen Chinn, Lizanne Porter, Joyce Rizzo, and Reese for distributing voting bookmarks and Vote411 cards at the festival, and to Sid Reger and Tom Simmons for taking responsibility for the tent and tables.



Above: Ellen Chinn in LWVIC's booth at the Northern Appalachia Folk Festival in Downtown Indiana
Below: John and Peggy Bomboy (standing), Joyce Rizzo and Ellen Chinn (seated) offered voting information to IUP students at the university's Community Involvement Fair.



Community Involvement Fair, Indiana University of Pennsylvania – September 13

The Community Involvement Fair is an opportunity for college students to learn more about volunteer organizations in the Indiana Community. Members of the League of Women Voters of Indiana County shared information about student membership in our local League as well as how to register to vote and learn about candidates for office. Our volunteers were Ellen Chinn, Joyce Rizzo, and Anne Simmons. John Bomboy and Peggy also volunteered at the Community Involvement Fair.

Constitution Day, Indiana University of Pennsylvania – September 18

The Constitution Day Program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania is led by the Center for Multicultural Student Leadership and Engagement in collaboration with the Department of Political Science. This event was an opportunity for the League of Women Voters of Indiana County to provide college students with information about voting and elections that helps to ensure their votes will be counted.

Voting bookmarks containing critical information for college students were distributed at the event and referenced as information was presented.

The League of Women Voters of Indiana County thanks Brianna Drylie for supporting our efforts to provide this information. Brianna Drylie is the Assistant Director, Program Coordination, Communication, and Assessment for the Center for Multicultural Student Leadership and Engagement.

National Voter Registration Day – September 19

National Voter Registration Day is a nonpartisan civic holiday that was first observed in 2012 and is celebrated every year on the third Tuesday in September. It celebrates democracy and involves volunteers and organization across the United States in a coordinated effort on a single day to encourage citizens to register to vote.

✓ LWVIC's Autumn Initiatives in Voter Registration ✓

On this special day each year the League of Women Voters of Indiana County encourages every resident of the county to register to vote.

This year LWVIC distributed voting bookmarks and flyers with information about National Voter Registration Day to the five public libraries in Indiana County including the Blairsville, Burrell Township, Homer Center, Indiana Free, and Saltsburg Libraries. This initiative was led by Joyce Rizzo.

In addition, an article and photograph were submitted and published in the *Indiana Gazette*. Thank you to League members Jeannie Broskey, Anne Simmons, Susan Wheatley, and Cheri Widzowski for helping with this project.

United States Citizen Naturalization Ceremony – October 20

Every year the Office of International Education at Indiana University of Pennsylvania invites the LWVIC to distribute information about voting and elections to our nation's new citizens. The U.S. Citizenship Naturalization Ceremony takes place at 11:00 a.m. in Toretti Auditorium, Kovalchick Conference and Athletic Complex, and League members are invited to observe the ceremony and welcome new citizens.

IUP Student Voters—How to Make Sure Your Vote Counts

The League of Women Voters of Indiana County wants IUP students to vote in every election and have your vote count! On election day in November 2022, some IUP students went to vote at the wrong polling location. As a result, their votes were not counted. With careful preparation, you can avoid this happening to you in November 2023.

Think of the voting process in multiple steps. Initially, you need to make two decisions:

1. Do you plan to vote using your college address or your home address?
2. Do you plan to vote in person or by using a mail-in ballot?



Above: On Constitution Day, September 18, some of the Founding Fathers visited IUP's Multicultural Center to answer questions about the U.S. Constitution and the process of writing it. Ben Franklin (David Chambers), Charles Pinckney (Mac Fiddner), and James Madison (Joe Mannard) addressed the the program audience at "What Would Our Founding Fathers Say?" (Photo by Olivia Wanat)

Below: Jeannie Broskey, Cheri Widzowski, and Susan Wheatley of LWVIC promoted National Voter Registration Day.

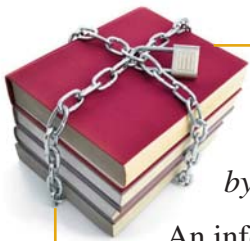


Check the website: www.vote.pa.gov.

- Register to vote or check your voter registration status. You may use your college address or your home address.
- Explore your voting options. Apply for a mail-in ballot, or plan to vote in person at your official polling place on Tuesday, November 7.

Before Election Day on November 7, use the following to prepare to vote:

- Website: www.pavoterservices.pa.gov – Check your voter registration status and the official location of your polling place. Or, mail your ballot.
- Website: www.vote411.org – Learn about the candidates who are on your ballot.



Censorship in Schools: What Can You Do?

by Donna Cashdollar

An informative webinar about the growing threat of censorship by school boards in this state was presented on October 3, sponsored by League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania. Moderated by LWVIC's Susan Boser, who chairs LWVPA's Social Policy Committee, the webinar included presentations by Susan Spicka of Education Voters PA (<https://edvoterspa.org/>); Ashli-Giles Perkins of the Education Law Center (www.elc-pa.org/); and Amy McGahran, a member of League of Women Voters of Bucks County, where censorship has been pursued and imposed by some district school boards.

Susan Spicka, who spoke in Indiana in April 2023 at AAUW's town hall meeting that examined education and school funding in rural Pennsylvania, emphasized that voters should learn what is happening within their district school boards and learn about candidates on their ballots, including who is paying for their campaign advertising. Across Pennsylvania, significant outside money has been flowing to school board candidates who support an agenda of censorship.

Ashli-Giles Perkins described the legal role of school boards and the power they have in setting education curriculum and other policies, and also the state regulations within which school boards must operate.

Amy McGahran reported that candidates who support censorship in school curriculum and the removal of books from school libraries have been elected to majorities in some Bucks County school boards. These candidates typically did not disclose their positions until they were elected. Their boards have successfully blocked teaching and banned books dealing with race and sexual/gender issues. Similar efforts are being pursued in other Pennsylvania counties.

Links to additional information about this issue can be found at: www.palwv.org/social-policy under the topic "Censorship in PA Schools."

A video recording of the webinar can be seen at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=wiaU_6da9cY.

What positions on this issue do the school board candidates on your ballot support? You can find out on the League of Women Voters website www.Vote411.org by entering your street address on the Personalized Voting Information page. Select your candidates of interest and scroll down to read their responses to questions asked by LWVIC.

Pennsylvania Offers Automatic Voter Registration at the DMV

A new policy at the Pennsylvania Department of Motor Vehicles makes it easier to register to vote while getting or renewing a driver's license in this state. According to an Associated Press report, "Prompts on the computer screens in driver's license centers now take the user to a template to register to vote. One must opt out if choosing not to register. Previously, prompts on the computer screen first asked if the user wanted to register to vote.

"Twenty-three other states and Washington, D.C. have varying models of what is called 'automatic voter registration,' according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.... States have been required to offer voter registration at driver's license centers since Congress passed the National Voter Registration Act in 1993.

"Researchers from the Public Policy Institute of California, the University of Southern California and the University of California-Berkeley concluded in a 2021 study that automatic voter registration increased registration by several percentage points in states where it was in effect, and boosted the number of people actually voting by more than 1%."

An update published in *Pennsylvania Spotlight* (October 16) quotes State Sen. Dan Laughlin (R., Erie) reporting that since the policy was implemented, 14,903 new Pennsylvania voters have registered through the DMV.

CALENDAR OF FALL EVENTS

October 20 – Catalyzing Economic Development in Pennsylvania’s Energy Communities, 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Sponsored by the Interagency Working Group on Coal & Power Plant Communities & Economic Revitalization. Registration required: www.energycommunities.gov

October 23 – Deadline to register to vote in the November 2023 election

October 31 – Deadline to apply for a mail-in/absentee ballot

November 7 – Election Day, polls are open 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Mail-in ballots must be received by the Indiana County Board of Elections by 8:00 p.m. that day. (Postmark date does not count.)

Climate Change Signs Spark Conversations

by Cindy Rogers

The LWVIC Environmental Committee partnered with Evergreen Conservancy to design and create a series of signs to encourage conversations about climate change. Many people believe climate change is really happening but will seldom talk about it. We hope to promote conversations between people about all the issues related to climate change. Topics include how climate change affects agriculture, ocean water temperatures, flooding, drought, wildlife, sustainable practices, and things we can do that could make a difference.

Information on these signs recently was shared at the Indiana County Conservation District’s Junior Envirothon at Blue Spruce park. Junior Envirothon is a contest for 7th and 8th grades in Indiana County schools in which students learn about and are tested on their knowledge of the local environment.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS HAPPENING BUT YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

What is climate change?

Weather is what is happening on a day-to-day basis.

Climate is long-term averages in weather measured over a long period of time.

Climate change refers to the change in the climate system as a result of the increase in the global average temperature

So what if our temperature rises 1 degree?

What does it really mean? It does not mean the temperature today in Indiana went up one degree; it means the temperature of the entire planet is up one degree. If one degree causes all these effects, imagine what will happen if the temperature goes up 2 or even 3 degrees! And we are warming faster than in the past!



Wherever you look, you can see the **effects of climate change**. The changes include rising sea levels, warming oceans, rising global temperature, changing migration patterns of birds, growing zone changes, more hurricanes, more frequent droughts, more wildfires, and more extreme & frequent weather events.



What is causing climate change?

99% of climate scientists agree that the observed warming of the Earth over the last century stems primarily from humans burning fossil fuels, which produce heat-trapping gases. Natural cycles CANNOT explain the rapid climate change we are seeing today.



For more information on climate issues

Some Questions to Ponder

- ❖ What kind of energy sources do you see here? Have you noticed them at other places?
- ❖ What are some differences between renewable and fossil fuel energy?
- ❖ With more large and heavy rain events, what would happen here at Tanoma?
- ❖ How do forests/trees help slow down climate change and help prevent flooding?
- ❖ Do your allergies seem to be getting worse?

Microwave + Plastic = Microplastics

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T MICROWAVE YOUR FOOD IN PLASTIC

- When food or beverages are microwaved in plastic containers, chemical additives from inside the plastic migrate into the food and tiny flecks of plastic known as micro- and nanoplastics are also shed into the food. Both of these can present health risks.
- Thousands of chemicals are added to plastics to give them color, texture, softness, or rigidity. Of the 10,500 chemicals known to researchers, 2,300 are considered “substances of concern” because they are known to cause cancer, disrupt neural development, and hijack hormonal signals throughout the human body.
- Even at room temperature, many of the chemicals in plastics migrate into food.
- Micro- and nanoplastics also shed from plastic packaging into food at room temperature.
- The process of chemical migration and the shedding of microplastic both speed up when plastic is heated.
- As early as 2003, investigators published articles demonstrating that the “use of commercial plastic packages for repeated microwaving is associated with the risk of increased migration of volatile substances into food.”
- Researchers testing baby food containers from two mainstream US brands found that polypropylene (#5) labeled as “microwave safe” released 4.2 million and 1.2 billion particles per square centimeter of plastic each, after being heated in a microwave.
- Many of the chemicals that leach out of plastics into food or are consumed as microplastics are endocrine disruptors (EDCs) meaning that they “disrupt” the hormonal signals that regulate vital body processes.
- As with other environmental toxicants, endocrine disruptors pose greater health risks for children than adults. They are particularly dangerous for newborns, toddlers, pregnant people, and the developing fetus.



Beyond Plastics is a project based at Bennington College | www.BeyondPlastics.org

LWVIC Works on Environmental Issues—Join Us!

by Cindy Rogers

The LWVIC Environmental Committee is looking for new members to help continue our work. Some of our accomplishments over the last year include:

- Encouraging conversations about climate change through signage on self-guided paths at Tanoma Wetlands. Signs also will soon be at the new Conservation District pathways.
- Attending training with CRSP (Climate and Rural Systems Partnership with Carnegie museum of Natural History).
- Publishing articles in the VOTER about the effects of climate change on our local environment and how we can address plastic waste.
- Partnering with Evergreen Conservancy to collect plastic with the TRESX community challenge and donating the benches we earn to the community. We have donated 10 benches and collected over 6,000 pounds of plastic that has not gone into landfills.
- Updating the *All About Plastic* booklet our League wrote. We are a partner with “No Plastic Please.”

LWVIC continues to collaborate on environmental issues with the Pennsylvania LWV Environmental Committee on a variety of current issues. We are willing to tackle any new environmental issues and need your help to do so. Please contact Cindy at rogers944@comcast.net if you are interested in joining our committee.

Informing and Encouraging Student Voters

DATES TO REMEMBER
October 23, 2023
Last day to register to vote in the November municipal election.
November 7, 2023
Municipal Election Day
Polls are open 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

vote.pa.gov
Provides official information about voter registration and voting.
The first time you vote in PA, you must bring a photo or non-photo ID. Review the list of approved forms of ID.
For college students:
Give whether to vote using your college address or your home address. Explore voting options including a mail-in ballot.
Check your voter registration status. (update status on pa.elections.gov)
Find your polling location.
pa.electorservices.pa.gov
Update your voter registration if you change your address. Your polling location may change if you move from an on-campus address to an off-campus address.

LWVIC programs are not open to the public. We make every effort to be sure they are accessible to all. Please contact us at lwwindianacounty@gmail.com to discuss how we can help you with special accommodations.

Voting is your Superpower!
Register to Vote: vote.pa.gov
Learn about Candidates: vote411.org
Making Democracy Work
LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF INDIANA COUNTY
lwwindianacounty.org

The Penn News Culture IUP Sports Editorials Photo Gallery YouTube Contact

LWVIC shares important information about voting for college students

Summit on Sustainable Economic Development in Indiana County Reviews Projects Underway

Sustainable economic development projects countywide were featured topics of the sixth annual Indiana County Sustainable Economic Development Summit on October 13 at the Kovalchick Convention and Athletic Complex.

Funded partially through the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania Citizen Education Fund, the summit focused on solar energy projects, renewable natural gas (biomethane) produced from the county’s dairy waste, broadband expansion, electric vehicles, environmental restoration, and outdoor recreation.

For more information about the Sustainability Summit and the topics discussed at the event, see:

www.IndianaGazette.com/eedition/

<https://icopd.org/assets/0906-press-release---informational-meeting---air-liquide---119-business-park-20230911.pdf>

www.dcnr.pa.gov/Communities/Grants/pages/default.aspx



✓ Convenient Options for Registering to Vote ✓

You can register to vote in any of these ways:

- Online at www.vote.pa.gov
- In person at the Voter Registration Office in the Indiana County Courthouse
- By U.S. Mail after obtaining or downloading the paper application
- At PennDOT and some other government agencies

Use the online website: www.vote.pa.gov to access and complete the “PA Online Voter Registration Application.” This website also provides information for first-time voters as well as how to apply for a mail-in ballot, locate your polling place, and update your voter registration.

You can register in person at the Voter Registration Office in the Indiana County Courthouse,

825 Philadelphia St., Indiana. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. You can also register at PennDOT offices.

You can register using a paper application.

If you prefer to use a paper form, download and print the Pennsylvania Voter Registration Application from the website www.vote.pa.gov. Then, print, complete and sign the application, and mail it to the address provided. You can also get paper forms of the application from the Voter Registration Office in the Indiana County Courthouse.

Important: Before Election Day on November 7, 2023, remember to check your voter registration status and the location of your official polling place at: www.Vote411.org or at www.pavoterservices.pa.gov.

Your League Membership Supports Work for Good Government

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

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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.

to keep the public informed and provide non-partisan information to voters at: www.vote411.org.

All persons age 16 and older are welcome to join the League of Women Voters. Membership has been open to men since the 1970s; we keep the name to honor the women who struggled to win the right to vote.

Membership dues are collected annually during the month of January:

- Individual Membership is \$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**. Just send contact info to Sandy Whitson, Membership Chair, at: swhitson8@comcast.net.

Please write checks to **LWVIC** and mail to: Ellen Chinn, Treasurer, 156 Wine Avenue, Indiana, PA 15701. Or, you may pay online at: www.lwvindianacounty.org/membership-dues-and-donations by clicking on the **donate** button.

For additional information or to provide a gift of membership to a friend or family member, please contact Sandy Whitson.