

LWW

VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF INDIANA COUNTY

WINTER 2024

League of Women Voters Celebrates 50 Years in Indiana County—Join the Festivities

Sharing her memories of our League chapter’s birth in 1974, founding president Jean Knowlton wrote in 1994, ...*a small group of women met in Sheila Miller’s living room to discuss whether we could interest enough women to join us in a study of current issues under the umbrella of the ‘League of Women Voters.’ We tried to think of reasons a person would not want to know where tax dollars were going, or about what might happen to our garbage after the landfills were full, or about our schools’ struggle for better education. We couldn’t think of any reasons why people would **not** want to know these things, so we forged ahead with plans to become a Provisional League....*

“I remember our long year’s work on the booklet [Know Your Town], on taxes, on acid rain, nuclear fallout, solid waste disposal, mine acid.... The focus of contemporary issues shifts, no matter the era, but what remains is our desire to be enlightened, contributing members of a world society.”

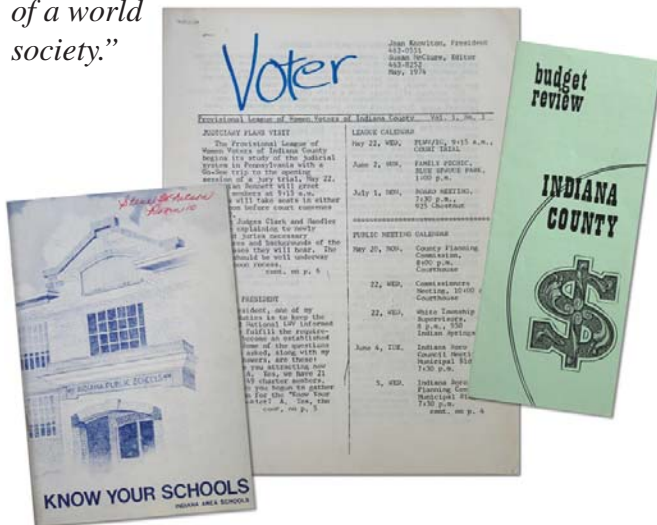
On Saturday, February 17, the League of Women Voters of Indiana County will host a celebration of the group’s 50-year anniversary. The luncheon program will take place in the dining room at St. Andrews Village/Bristol Court, 1155 Indian Springs Road, Indiana PA 15701. Event registration begins at 11:30 a.m. and lunch at 12:00 noon.



Join us as we remember our League chapter’s founding and the work its members have accomplished through these past 50 years. Following the buffet lunch, a lively review “Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow” will introduce our guest speaker, Dr. Amy Widestrom, Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania.

Dr. Widestrom is a graduate of Oberlin College and Syracuse University (Ph.D. in political science). As a Congressional Fellow of the American Political Association in 2008-2009, she worked for the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs on economic recovery efforts following the 2008 financial crisis. During her academic career (2009-2012 at California State University, Long Beach, and 2012-2023 at Arcadia University in Pennsylvania), she researched, published, and taught about American politics, policies, and institutions. *(continued on page 2)*

See page 2 for reservation information.



League Celebrates 50 Years in Indiana County *continued from page 1*

At Arcadia University she served for more than five years as chair of the Department of Historical & Political Studies. She also served as Judge of Elections in Cheltenham Township, November 2021 until January 2024, when she became the Pennsylvania League's executive director.

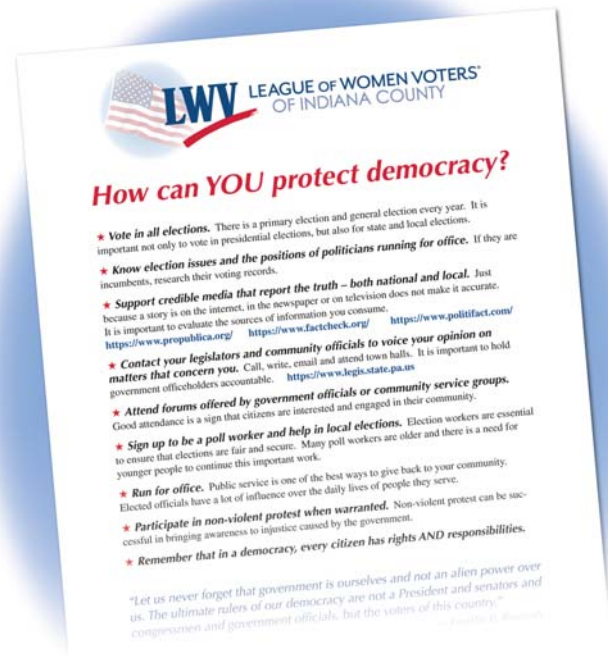
Reservations for the celebration luncheon are required by February 12, with pre-payment. Seating is limited, so we can't accommodate walk-ins or accept payment during registration. The cost per reservation is \$20 if paid by check, or \$22 if paid using PayPal accessed from the League website's Membership link: <https://lwvindianacounty.org/membership-dues-and-donations/>. Scroll down and click on the orange "Donate" button.

Please make checks payable to **LWVIC** and mail to the treasurer: Ellen Chinn, 156 Wine Avenue, Indiana PA 15701.

We look forward to seeing you at the celebration!



Above, some of the LWVIC charter members. Top row, left to right: Ruth Newhill, Clarice Reber, Kathy Quirk. Center row, left to right: Olga Platt, Sandra Whitson, Lori Rittle. Bottom row, left to right: Jane McGregor, Susan McClure, Sheila Miller

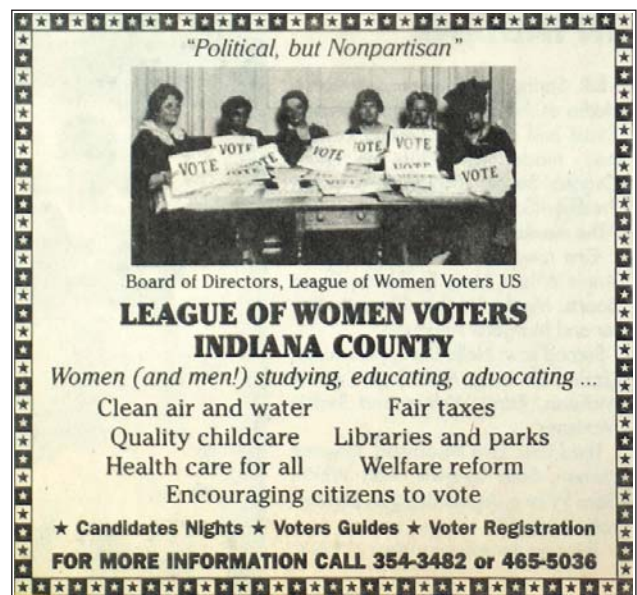


MISSION: Empowering voters.

Defending democracy.

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

— League of Women Voters of the United States



During an early membership drive, LWVIC promoted its work as a local chapter of League of Women Voters of the United States. Men have been welcomed as members since the 1970s, but the original name is retained to honor the women who struggled to win the vote. (© Indiana Evening Gazette, c. 1987)

LWVPA Advocacy and Action Priorities in 2024

Each year, LWVPA produces a policy one-pager to guide action and advocacy throughout legislative sessions. Committed to fostering a resilient and inclusive democracy, our focus revolves around critical policy areas that shape the foundation of our democracy. During this year, LWVPA will direct its attention toward key policies, encompassed broadly by:

- Election Administration and Funding
- Voting Integrity
- Representation
- Social Policy
- Environmental Sustainability

This is intended to be a summary statement of the priorities we expect to focus on at this time.

However, this list is not exhaustive, and does not disallow LWVPA from taking action on other issues. These priorities are a reflection of what LWVPA expects to be a focus of our time and effort.

To read the complete statement, visit:

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/612fcbe71d4091159942be60/t/65a00d87ed630408762d9daf/1704988039121/2024+Policy+Priorities.pdf?link_id=12&can_id=52cafe0fdd2e60b5851f5cd1019c7aef&source=email-the-communicator-january-updates-from-the-state-league-2&email_referrer=email_2167641&email_subject=the-communicator-january-updates-from-the-state-league

Redesigned PA Mail Ballot Materials Ready for 2024

*by Rochelle Kaplan, Co-Director,
LWVPA Voter Services*

With updated mail ballot materials, Department of State is instituting more uniformity across Pennsylvania's 67 counties and working to reduce voter errors and confusion.

Thousands of mail ballots are rejected each election due to minor voter errors, like so-called "naked ballots," voters writing their birth date instead of the current date, or voters forgetting to sign their ballot.

Harrisburg, PA – In keeping with Governor Shapiro's commitment to strengthening our democracy and keeping our elections safe and secure, Secretary of the Commonwealth Al Schmidt announced redesigned mail ballot materials that will be rolled out in the 2024 primary election. The redesigned envelopes and instruction sheets have revised language to better inform voters how to properly fill out and return their mail-in ballots, with the goal of decreasing voter confusion that can lead to completed ballots being rejected and assisting county election workers in efficiently processing mail-in ballots.

"Governor Shapiro has made it clear that the Commonwealth should help people succeed, not get in their way. In each election cycle since 2020, we have seen thousands of mail ballots not be counted because of unintended technical errors voters made when completing their ballot," Schmidt said. "The Shapiro Administration is committed to giving every eligible Pennsylvanian the opportunity to cast their vote and make their voice heard. Our hope is that these new materials will better assist voters in making sure their completed mail ballot packet is filled out correctly and can be counted."

The Department of State is prescribing more uniformity in county mail ballot materials to aid both voters and election officials. Voters can expect to see mail-in ballots that incorporate the following requirements, based on counties' current best practices:

- New, more easily identifiable secrecy envelopes on a yellow background, with water-marking to discourage stray marks
- Coloring to make it easier for voters to distinguish the inner and outer envelopes
- Clearer instructions

Rethinking Rubbish: Shake Up Your Approach to Plastic

©World Wildlife Magazine, winter 2023



The average US citizen generates roughly 300 pounds of plastic waste per year. Even when we toss our plastic containers in the recycling bin, only a fraction get recycled. Because our recycling system cannot

keep pace with our growing waste output—and because of high levels of contamination—much of the plastic collected still winds up in our oceans, piles up in landfills, or is incinerated.

Yet with a few simple changes, you can make a difference.

Check your local recycling rules so you know

what kinds of plastic can be recycled in your jurisdiction. Minimize your own plastic footprint in your day-to-day life by shifting your mindset from single use to reuse. For example, switch from drink-it-and toss plastic bottles of water to a reusable water bottle. Look for sustainable plastic-free options, like buying products in bulk or from the local farmers market, opting for soap bars over bottled soaps, and storing food in beeswax food wraps instead of plastic wrap.

Equally important is your voice. You can support Extended Producer Responsibility in the US—a proven policy solution designed to transform our country’s recycling systems by shifting the financial burden of recycling from taxpayers to plastic manufactures.

To add your voice to this cause, visit:

www.worldwildlife.org/PlasticReform2023

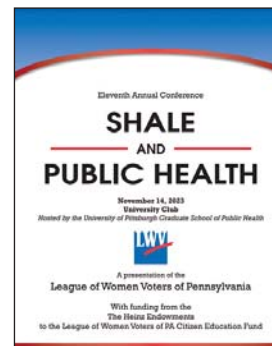
LWVIC Environmental Issues Committee Gave Us *The Straight Scoop on Shale Drilling*

by Ellen Chinn

The Marcellus shale area is the largest source of natural gas in the United States. In 2009 the LWVIC studied all issues around hydrofracking of shale. From the League study a consensus opinion was formed that hydrofracking of shale was detrimental to the environment. The Indiana County League observed the issue and brought it to the attention of Leagues across PA at our state convention in June 2009. Twenty-seven League chapters organized study groups, sponsored public forums with experts representing various viewpoints, visited drilling sites, participated in webinars and other presentations at various colleges and universities and reached consensus on this important issue.

The LWVIC Environmental Issues Committee, sponsored by the LWVPA Citizen Education Fund, wrote “*The Straight Scoop on Shale Drilling*” in 2011, which was subsequently adopted by LWVPA and LWVUS. Its purpose is to educate and engage the public regarding natural gas extraction from Marcellus Shale, its impact on our water and communities, and how

government is involved through permitting, taxation and regulation. As part of this commitment, *The Straight Scoop on Shale Drilling* organizes a yearly conference “Shale & Public



Health” featuring a large variety of experts speaking to topics related to shale drilling. To further educate the public about environmental topics, *The Straight Scoop on Shale Drilling* supports other organizations by promoting their events.

<https://www.palwv.org/straight-scoop-on-shale>

In 2023 the Shale and Public Health Conference took place in Pittsburgh on November 14 and was also offered virtually. As usual, it was a very successful conference with topics including birth impacts, radiation and waste, fracking and water contaminants, abandoned wells, PFAS, and a panel discussion on Blue Hydrogen.

This annual event is free and open to the public.

Ceremony Welcomes New Citizens to Indiana County



Thirty-five individuals from 28 nations became United States citizens on October 20, 2023, at a naturalization ceremony hosted by IUP in the Kovalchick Convention and Athletic Complex. Dr. Michael Driscoll, president of IUP, welcomed these new citizens and representatives of the U.S. Customs and Immigration Service presented each person with citizen documentation.

LWVIC members were prepared to offer the new citizens voter registration information and applications. Left to right: Karen Ross, Sallie McCombie, Judy Clack of LWV of Greater Pittsburgh, Sandra Whitson, and Joyce Rizzo (photos courtesy of Sallie McCombie)

LWVIC members Sallie McCombie, Lizanne Porter, Joan Rittenberger, Joyce Rizzo, Karen Ross, and Sandra Whitson were on hand to encourage the new citizens to become voters and to provide voter registration applications. On this occasion they were joined by a representative of the LWV of Greater Pittsburgh, Judy Clack.



**LWVIC Dues
Are Due!**

Your 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. We support a critical presence in Harrisburg and in Washington, D.C., to influence public policy through advocacy. Our dues support the League's mission 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. The organization's original name is retained 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.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF INDIANA COUNTY • BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Cindy Rogers, Program Vice President
Deanne Snavelly, Administrative Vice President
Ellen Chinn, Treasurer • Susan Welsh, Secretary
Susan Boser • Donna Cashdollar
Lizanne Porter • Joyce Rizzo • Aida Shotts
Kay Smith • Deanne Snavelly • 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.

Consider Becoming a Poll Worker in Pennsylvania



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Elections in Pennsylvania are made possible by

thousands of regular citizens serving as poll workers across the Commonwealth. We all depend on responsible workers to run smooth elections. You can help your community by getting involved in this way.

The Pennsylvania Department of State's general requirements for becoming a certified poll worker include:

- You must be registered to vote in the county where you wish to work.
- Government officials and government employees are not allowed to serve as poll workers. Exceptions exist for district judges, notaries public, and members of the Pennsylvania National Guard.
- You are not allowed to serve as a poll worker if your name appears on the ballot.

• Poll workers generally work for the entire day on election day, from before the time the polls open at 7:00 a.m. until after the polls close at 8:00 p.m.

• Counties train poll workers on their election day duties. Training is mandatory.

All poll workers are paid for the time they spend working on election day.

If you are interested in becoming a poll worker, you can fill out the Poll Worker Interest Form at: <https://paebprod.powerappsportals.us/EBR/DOS/Votes-PA-County/>

After you submit the form, Indiana County's election office will contact you. You may also reach out to the election office to follow up by contacting the Chief Clerk at: rmariyai@indianacountypa.gov or by phoning (724) 465-3805.

Upcoming Events – Winter/Spring 2024

**LWVIC Dues
Are Due!**

FEBRUARY

LWVIC 50-Year Anniversary Celebration

February 17 – 11:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Bristol Court Dining Room, St. Andrews Village

LWVIC Monthly Board Meeting

February 19 – 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

CRSP Summit: Climate and Rural Systems Partnership

February 27-28
Carnegie Museum of Natural History,
Pittsburgh PA

MARCH

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

March 2 – 11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.
Indiana Mall

LWVIC Monthly Board Meeting

March 18 – 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

APRIL

April 8 – Last day to register to vote in April 2024 Primary Election

LWVIC Monthly Board Meeting

April 15 – 7:00 p.m. via Zoom

April 16 – Last day to apply for a mail-in/absentee ballot for the April 2024 Primary Election

April 23 – Primary 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.)

JUNE

Nature Palooza: Children's Advisory Commission of Indiana County

June 1 – 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.
Blue Spruce park