

# LWV

# VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF INDIANA COUNTY

FALL 2024

## LWV Indiana County in Action for Fall Election Season

During this stirring election season, LWVIC is engaged in numerous activities intended to register new voters, furnish information voters need, and encourage voter turnout. Members have assisted voter registrations and provided information at community festivals, on the IUP campus, and in county libraries.

Following the naturalization ceremony that the U.S. Customs and Immigration Service will conduct in Indiana on October 11, League members Karen Ross, Joyce Rizzo, Sandy Whitson and others will be on hand to assist new citizens in registering and learning the voting process.

LWVIC has also been working with the county’s school districts to educate high school students about voting, encouraging them to register as soon as they are eligible. Anne Simmons and Kay Smith will meet in October with students in government and elections classes at Indiana Area High School, describing the history

and mission of the League of Women Voters in this country and the importance of citizens making their voices heard through the vote.

On October 28, Sarah Wheeler will represent LWVIC on a bipartisan panel of political science experts discussing voter engagement and topical issues in this presidential election. This session is one of the Six O’Clock Series programs on the IUP campus.

LWVIC is reaching out this fall through a variety of media—the *Indiana Gazette* and its weekly *Shoppers Guide*, local radio station WCCS, and electronic advertising on the IUP campus.

LWVIC members Barb Peace and Kay Smith recently discussed elections security with Todd Marino on his morning show at WCCS and recorded short ads to run 48 times in October. In September and October, LWVIC graphics on TV and exercise equipment screens in the HUB student union building at IUP are promoting election security and also steps that each of us can take to protect democracy. The ads include a QR code that links viewers to a page on the LWVIC website featuring this information.

Funding for these efforts through the year has come from member dues and donations, donations by community organizations, and grants from the Pennsylvania League of Women Voters. You can read more about many of these activities and events on the following pages. For additional details, consult the Calendar.



Left: Bookmarks LWVIC prepared for students at IUP and at the IASD high school provide voting information.

Above: A graphic on screens of exercise equipment at the IUP student union building links viewers to the LWVIC website and these lists: “Good reasons to trust local elections” and “How can YOU protect democracy?”.

**LEARN ★ THINK ★ VOTE!**

# LWVIC Partners with Libraries to Honor National Voter Registration Day

by Susan Welsh

National Voter Registration Day is an annual nonpartisan campaign to register voters across the nation. Embraced by bipartisan elected officials and organizations, the campaign involves thousands of community partners every year, including League of Women Voters groups, nationwide.

On September 17, LWVIC celebrated National Voter Registration Day by staffing a voter information and resource table at the Indiana Free Library. The day marked the kick-off of a month-long commitment to supply Indiana's community libraries with voter registration information and materials.

While the countywide drive was centered at the Indiana Free Library, the League is providing information and registration materials for patrons of the libraries in Blairsville, Burrell Township

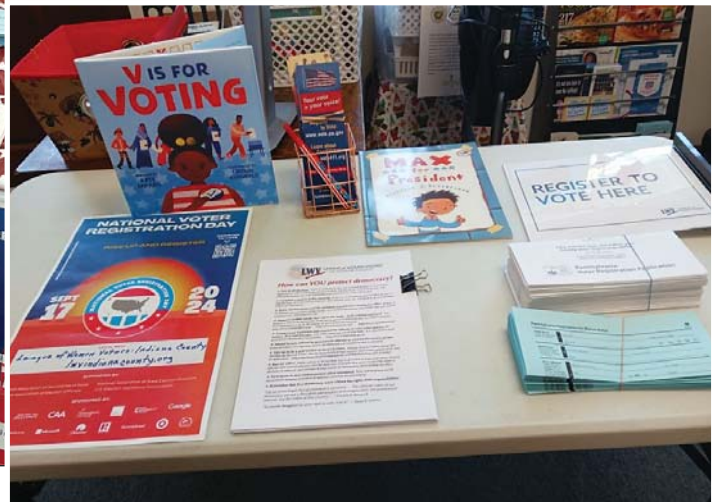
(Black Lick), Homer City and Saltsburg. The materials will assist voters who want to register to vote, update their registration if they have moved, or request a mail-in ballot. The paper materials and online resources will be available until the October 21 voter registration deadline.

It was a day for outreach to adults eligible to vote as well as children who may want to know why elections and candidacy are important in a democracy. As part of the outreach to libraries, LWVIC's Child Advocacy Committee on Education donated to each library two books for young readers: *V is for Voting*, an introduction to civic participation by Kate Farrell (illustrated by Caitlin Kuhwald), and *If I ran for President*, a story about the challenges of being a candidate in an election, by Catherine Steir (illustrated by Lynne Avril).



LWVIC is supplying community libraries in Indiana County, including the Homer City Library, below, with voter registration forms and other informational resources. (Photo by Arlene Wanatosky)

Left: Sue Welsh hosted the League of Women Voters table on Voter Registration Day at Indiana Free Library. The deadline to register to vote in the November 5 election is October 21.



## LWVIC Members Join the “Founding Fathers” for Constitution Day

LWVIC participated in the Constitution Day Presentation at IUP on Tuesday, September 17. This is an annual event offered by the Political Science Department, hosted by Dr. Gwen Torges, which includes short lectures by “Founding Fathers” Benjamin Franklin (David Chambers) and James Madison (Joseph Mannard).



League members Susan Boser and Joyce Rizzo were there, handing out registration material and bookmarks with critical dates and websites for information on voting. In addition, Boser spoke with students at the beginning of the event. She emphasized the importance of their vote, noting that Pennsylvania’s popular vote for president in 2020 was extremely close, with a difference of only 80,555 votes. This number is about the same as the number of college students in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area, emphasizing that student votes truly matter. Boser then provided some critical information about the voting process to make sure that their ballots are counted.

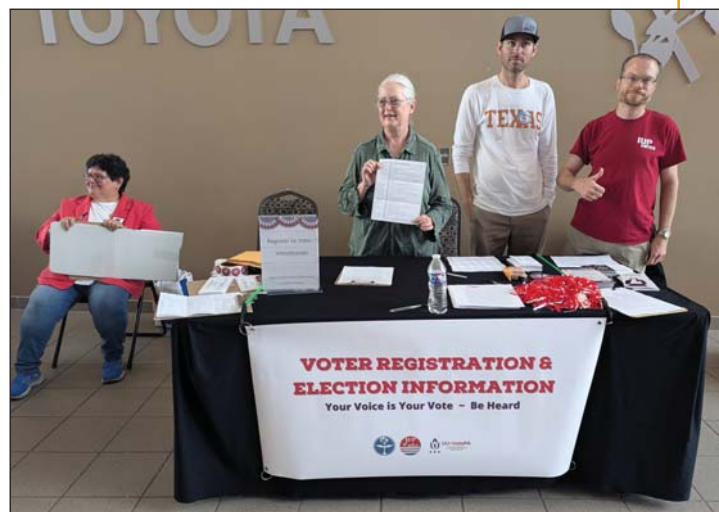
She closed her comments with a brief discussion of the League, noting that if Franklin, Madison, and others were the Founding Fathers, the League is descended from the “Founding Mothers”—the Suffragettes who worked for more than 50 years to obtain the right to vote for women. The League was founded by these women to educate all voters and protect their right to vote. The League welcomes members regardless of age, gender or political affiliation.

Above: Two of the Founding Fathers visited Leonard Hall on the IUP campus to discuss the U.S. Constitution and the process of writing it. Ben Franklin (David Chambers) and James Madison (Joseph Mannard) addressed the program audience. (Photos by Olivia Wanat)

## LWVIC Voter Registration Activities Continue

### *IUP Votes, and LWVIC lends a hand— IUP Campus, August 17*

LWVIC has assisted with registration events on the IUP campus, providing volunteers, bookmarks, posters, and other printed materials with information and instructions about voting. On August 17, LWVIC members Joyce Rizzo and Deanne Snavely helped register incoming IUP students. As of September 20, about 200 students had been registered on campus.



Above: Joyce Rizzo and Deanne Snavely of LWVIC worked on August 17 with members of the campus group IUP Votes and the Social Justice Team from First Unitarian Universalist Church of Indiana. (Photo by Deanne Snavely)

### *Northern Appalachian Folk Festival— Downtown Indiana, September 6 and 7*

The Northern Appalachian Folk Festival celebrates the history, culture, and diversity of our region. Each year LWVIC hosts a table there, inviting festival-goers to register to vote and offering information useful to voters. Special thanks to Ellen Chinn, Joyce Rizzo, Karen Ross, Vicki Stelma, and Sue Welsh for working at this year’s event.



# Your Passion for Issues Can Influence Legislation

by Joyce Rizzo, Chair  
Public Policy Committee, LWVIC

Are you passionate about issues such as gun safety, reproductive choice, adequate funding for public schools, voting access and processes, open primaries for unaffiliated voters, and/or redistricting reform? If one or more of these topics is important to you, the League of Women Voters of Indiana County (LWVIC) Public Policy Committee could use your help and your fresh perspectives.

Right now you're asking, "What does the Public Policy Committee do?" We try to stay informed on important legislation happening in Harrisburg. We research the issues, simplify and communicate the League's position to our local League membership and to the citizens of Indiana County through letters to the editor and articles in *The Voter*. We encourage Indiana County citizens to communicate with their local government officials on issues important to them. We work to establish a relationship with our local legislators and inform them of the League's position on issues. We meet with them at their offices if their schedule allows it, but we also write emails and letters or call their staff to express our opinions.

## Learn What's Happening at the State League

League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania invites every League member across the Commonwealth to its Monthly Member Meetings on Zoom. At each meeting, you'll get updates from directors of several program committees of the League—Social Policy, Government Policy, Voter Services, and DEIBA. It's an opportunity to share ideas, ask questions, and learn from each other.

You can attend one or both of the remaining Zoom meetings of this year.

October 22, 2024, 7:00 p.m.

November 26, 2024, 7:00 p.m.

To request the registration link for the Monthly Member Meeting, email: [info@palwv.org](mailto:info@palwv.org).



You're also asking "How much of my time does this require?" We do not have a regular meeting schedule. We meet by Zoom or in person when necessary to address critical issues. Otherwise, we communicate by email. We research relevant legislation and keep up to date on the LWVPA stand on the issues. We take turns writing updates to share with the local League membership and the public. We inform League members and other organizations when action such as phone calls, emails and visits to legislators are needed.

**You do not have to be involved in all the different issues. If your passion is gun violence prevention, we would appreciate your efforts on just that topic.**

Your input and talents as a Public Policy Committee member would be so valued. Please consider joining. Contact me at [rizzojoyce6@gmail.com](mailto:rizzojoyce6@gmail.com).

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF  
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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: [lwwindianacounty@gmail.com](mailto:lwwindianacounty@gmail.com).

# Update on Mail-In Ballots and Pre-Canvassing

*The following information is collected from the LWVPA Communicator, Pennsylvania Election Code, SpotlightPA, and the September 25 meeting of the Indiana County Board of Elections.*

In spite of bipartisan support, the Pennsylvania Senate has failed to pass a bill enabling county election boards to begin processing mail-in ballots (called pre-canvassing) before election day. The state House had earlier passed a bill permitting pre-canvassing before election day. Local officials from both parties have pointed out the value of having additional time before election day to begin inspecting and opening ballot return envelopes, removing the ballots, and scanning those ballots. This would reduce the amount of time after polls close before voting results can be announced.

In a recent news interview, Secretary of the Commonwealth Al Schmidt called it “a technical problem with a technical solution that doesn’t benefit any party, doesn’t benefit any candidate, but would benefit the voters and would benefit our country to know the results earlier.” The time between the polls closing and announcement of results is the biggest opportunity for mis- and disinformation to spread. Forty-three states now allow pre-canvassing before election day.

In September the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania voided, on procedural grounds, a Commonwealth Court decision in August to require counties to count mail-in ballots with missing or incorrect dates on the ballot return envelopes. However, the Supreme Court left it to each county to decide whether or not to notify voters of disqualifying errors on their mailed return envelopes. Notified voters could then go to their polling places to cast a provisional ballot. Some Pennsylvania counties are taking that step and others are not. In the 2024 spring primary, hundreds of ballots mailed in this state were disqualified without the voters’ knowledge.

Indiana County’s policy remains that voters are not notified when their ballot return envelopes

show disqualifying mistakes. Therefore their mailed votes are not counted, and these voters do not know they could cast provisional ballots in person at their polling places.

So, carefully read and follow the instructions that come with your mail-in ballot. Be sure to seal your voted ballot inside the yellow Official Election Ballot envelope. Place the sealed yellow envelope inside the white Official Ballot Return Envelope and seal that. On that return envelope, sign your name and the date you are signing.

You can personally place your sealed and signed ballot return envelope in the drop-box in the lobby of the Indiana County Courthouse at 825 Philadelphia Street in Indiana, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. You can also deliver your ballot to the Voter Registration Office in the Courthouse from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on those weekdays. On Saturday November 2, the Courthouse lobby will be open from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and on November 5 (election day) the lobby will be open until 8:00 p.m.

Or, you can drop off your ballot return envelope in any US Postal Service mailbox. If you use the postal service, be sure to place a first class stamp on the envelope.

## LWVIC Co-Sponsoring 2024 Sustainability Summit VII

On October 18, a day of presentations at the KCAC will show how sustainability-oriented development can spur significant cost savings for local governments, area businesses, county agencies, and homeowners. Co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Indiana County, this Summit features a keynote address by Cindy Adams Dunn, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, with panels on creating opportunity from environmental challenges, collaborating for effective community revitalization, and advancing community based economic development. To register, contact [www.sustainableindianacounty.org](http://www.sustainableindianacounty.org).

# Webinar Addresses Women’s Reproductive Health in PA

by Joyce Rizzo

The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania (LWVPA) is presenting “What You Need to Know About Maternal Health Care in Pennsylvania,” a webinar on October 16 at 7:00 PM which will update League members on current legislation regarding reproductive choice and maternal health in PA, the disturbing trend of the growth in numbers of “crisis pregnancy centers” throughout the US and our state, and the existence of “labor and delivery deserts” particularly in the rural and northern areas of PA. The presenters will also discuss what can be done to make our voices heard on these issues.

The Black Maternal Health Caucus in the PA House of Representatives has introduced a comprehensive legislative package of bills to confront the rate of Black mortality and morbidity in the Commonwealth. The bills address critical disparities in maternal health care and include measures that would improve access to essential services and eliminate maternal health deserts.

## Voter Aids Funded by LWVPA

Thanks to the Pennsylvania League of Women Voters, LWVIC has been able to expand its outreach to voters in Indiana County this fall. We’ve made a variety of voter aids available at community festivals, at incoming student events and Constitution Day on the IUP campus, and at National Voter Registration Day observances at five libraries in the county. Our local League was awarded \$500 to pay for printed materials during the fall election season.

In addition to LWVIC’s bookmarks targeting young children, youth of high school and college age, and adults, we were able to print extra copies of our handout “How can YOU protect democracy?” to share at various events and in libraries. LWVPA provided three documents that we also printed in hundreds of copies: detailed instructions for anyone completing voter registration and mail-in ballot applications and instructions for college students deciding to vote in person or by mail.



A reality for thousands of women in PA is that they live in a maternity desert. The March of Dimes updated a report in 2022 stating that six counties fit this description: Elk, Cameron, Forest, Clarion, Clinton, and McKean. These are places where maternity care services are limited or nonexistent. In addition, many urban and suburban areas have seen hospital closings or obstetric units eliminated due to financial reasons and staff shortages. According to the Center for Rural PA, out of the 67 counties, 19 have hospitals that don’t provide obstetric services. This agency states that there are, or may be, as many as 18 rural counties that have become maternal health care deserts. When this happens, access to prenatal care is limited and women in labor have to travel long distances to deliver their babies.

Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs) are anti-abortion organizations that seek to reach low-income people facing unintended pregnancies to prevent them from accessing abortions and abortion information. CPCs have expanded in the last 20 years and have sometimes managed to use taxpayer money even if they are not legitimate health care facilities, therefore not subjected to transparency rules and regulations that are mandated for legitimate health clinics. There are 156 CPCs operating in PA. They outnumber abortion care clinics by a ratio of 9:1.

These issues will be addressed by Representative Mary Jo Daley, PA House District 148, Montgomery County, and Tara Murtha from the Women’s Law Project. Don’t miss this important webinar. To request the registration link for this webinar, please email to: [info@palwv.org](mailto:info@palwv.org).

# Vote for Leaders Who Will Preserve the Natural World

by Ellen Chinn

As we all know, a major election is looming. With many issues on the table—issues on but not limited to the economy, immigration, protecting democracy, women’s health care, and the climate crisis—this is a key election. While all these issues are critical and deserve attention, work to address the climate crisis is “a long-term endeavor, requiring a sustained, collective effort to confront what many consider to be the greatest existential threat to life on earth.” We are still in the window of opportunity to begin reversing climate change but, without concerted collaborative effort from governments, scientists, organizations and individuals, that window of opportunity will soon close.

There are those who feel that catastrophic climate change is inevitable when confronted with air, water and soil pollution, droughts, rising temperatures and oceans, coral bleaching, out of control wildfires, more severe and frequent hurricanes, and loss of habitat and biodiversity. People are understandably overwhelmed, but it is not too late. However, the need to protect our planet and the natural world must be elevated to a top global priority.

Dr. Jane Goodall celebrates her 90th birthday this year and is traveling the world to spread her “Vote For Nature” campaign of hope. For the

first time, Dr. Goodall is advocating and promoting a call to **vote** for candidates who prioritize the future of our planet and our children. When Brazil elected a leader who prioritizes the environment, laws and policy changes were quickly enacted, preserving 1,500 square miles of rainforest in less than six months. This is a win-win for Brazil and the world and demonstrates the impact environmental leadership can make.

Here are 12 of many ways governments can make a difference: enact climate laws, protect natural ecosystems, conserve biodiversity, promote sustainable agriculture, advance environmental justice, invest in clean energy, create green jobs, reduce pollution, champion global agreements, enhance climate resilience, support green innovation and engage the public.

As many countries head to the polls this year at this critical time, the world has a chance to vote for candidates who prioritize the environment and are committed to the preservation of the natural world and the fight against climate change. How will you vote?

<https://time.com/6554410/climate-change-democracy-2024-elections/>

<https://time.com/climate-change-solutions/>  
<https://www.voteornature.com>

## Become a Poll Worker in PA



All elections in Pennsylvania are run locally, even presidential elections. Thousands of regular citizens serve as poll workers across the Commonwealth, with oversight by each county’s Board of Elections. Poll workers might be your neighbors. The Pennsylvania Department of State has requirements for becoming a certified poll worker, which are listed on the Poll Worker Interest Form at:

<https://www.pa.gov/en/services/vote/apply-to-become-an-election-poll-worker.html>

Poll workers generally work for the entire 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 online. 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 by phoning (724) 465-3805.

# LWVIC Fall Calendar

**October 11 – Naturalization Ceremony**  
11:00 a.m., Toretti Auditorium, Kovalchick Convention and Athletic Complex, IUP

**October 15 – LWVIC meeting with classes**  
Indiana Area High School

**October 16 – Women and Public Health Webinar**, 7:00 p.m. on Zoom. To register and receive the Zoom link, see the article on page 6.

**October 18 – Sustainability Summit VII**  
8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., Kovalchick Convention and Athletic Complex, IUP  
([www.sustainableindianacounty.org](http://www.sustainableindianacounty.org))

**October 21 – Deadline to register to vote** or to update registration ([www.vote.pa.gov](http://www.vote.pa.gov))

**October 21 – LWVIC Board Meeting**  
on Zoom, 7:00 p.m. To receive the Zoom link, email: [lwwindianacounty@gmail.com](mailto:lwwindianacounty@gmail.com)

**October 28 – IUP Six O’Clock Series: “Elections and Voter Behavior”**  
6:00 p.m., Elkin Hall Great Room, IUP, Bipartisan panel with Sarah Wheeler representing LWVIC

**October 29 – Last day to apply for a mail-in ballot** ([www.vote.pa.gov](http://www.vote.pa.gov))

**November 5 – General Election**  
7:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m., polls are open. Mail-in and absentee ballots must be received by the Indiana County Board of Elections Office by 8:00 p.m.

## Overview of Changes Coming in League Membership



In January 2025, LWV is switching to a new member online portal for all Leagues across the country.

There is no action that members need to take right now, but we want to provide you with an overview of what these changes mean for you.

When the new system launches in January 2025, you will receive an email to log in to the portal, but you will not be asked to renew your membership until a year after your most recent renewal. You will have the option to sign up to auto-renew annually, and your membership will last a year after your last renewal. Once you have access to the portal, you will be able to update your own information, including contact information. When it's time to renew, you will get an email reminder.

Dues will no longer be a fixed rate but will be pay-what-you-can. The recommended dues for all members across the country will be \$75, but members can pay any amount with a minimum of \$20. (Student memberships will no longer be

free.) The higher recommended amount allows LWV to offer the option of lower dues, making membership possible for more people and increasing our ability to empower voters and defend democracy.

Under the current system, LWVIC pays a fixed rate per member to LWVPA and to LWVUS. Under the new system, a percentage of dues you pay will go to the state and national League. Some of our members choose to contribute a specific amount directly to LWVIC, and this will be separate from choosing a higher dues amount.

There will still be the option to renew by check for members who don't use the internet, but members who are able to access the portal and renew that way are encouraged to do so.

The September 2024 issue of the LWVPA *Communicator* has published a FAQ section about the new membership system that will be in effect starting January 2025. To request a link to Frequently Asked Questions and other information about the changes in membership, please email: [membership@palwv.org](mailto:membership@palwv.org)