

May 31 Meeting Explores Judiciary's Role in Our Democracy

Across the nation, all eyes are on the judiciary and how it is functioning as the federal government is being radically restructured and constitutional traditions are being challenged by actions of the Executive and Legislative branches. The League of Women Voters of the United States is in the process of forming a position on judicial reforms now that League chapters have completed a study of the judiciary and submitted their consensus statements to LWVUS in April.

This sets the stage for our spring Membership Meeting on Saturday, May 31, 2025. Guest speaker for the program is Dr. Gwendolyn Torges of the Political Science faculty at IUP. Timely and important, her topic is "Constitutional Checks and Balances: The Role of the Judiciary."

The meeting will take place from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m. at First Unitarian Universalist Church of Indiana, 285 Twolick Drive in White Twp. Luncheon begins at noon, a Salad Extravaganza featuring main dish salads, breads, beverages, and desserts. Tableware is provided.

Following Dr. Torges's presentation and some audience discussion, LWVIC members will hear brief reports on our chapter's work on recent projects. We will vote on a slate of board nominees and officers for a two-year term beginning July 1, 2025, and on a proposed budget for program year 2025-26. Please see page 8 for the budget and other program information.

This is an opportunity to invite people you believe might like to participate in the League's continuing work and learn what we do at the local level to empower voters and protect democracy.



The US Supreme Court building

Federal Judiciary Study Prepares LWVUS for Advocacy

League advocacy and action are based on positions formed through study and discussion of critical issues, which take place first at the local chapter level. To each chapter, LWVUS provides the same materials: links to policy briefs and other online resources for research and study, discussion prompts, and a set of consensus questions requiring thoughtful responses.

LWV of Indiana County took part in this process during the winter—a study of the Judicial Branch of the federal government initiated by LWVUS. Recent challenges to the appearance of propriety
(continued on page 2)

Federal Judiciary Study Prepares LWVUS for Advocacy

(continued from page 1)

and legitimacy of some courts prompted the League's study in preparation for adopting a position on enforceable standards for judges and justices at all levels of the federal judiciary.

The nationwide study was focused on the US Supreme Court and other Article III federal courts. It asked us to consider questions including judicial structure, accountability, standards of conduct, transparency, independence, ethics, financial disclosure, "judge shopping," recusals, and mechanisms for enforcement of standards. Our study concluded with a local consensus meeting—group discussion and recording responses to the consensus questions—on April 5.

Consensus is "the sense of the room," reached though discussion that aims to identify broad areas of agreement. Consensus is not a vote, but at times a vote might be necessary if there is substantial difference of opinion. Sometimes it's not possible to reach a consensus, and this is recorded in a chapter's response to the consensus questions. LWVIC was able to reach consensus in its April 5 meeting, and our report was filed online on April 14.

From that and other local consensus reports, LWVUS will adopt a position based on general principles instead of specific current issues. Issues change over time, and the ideal League position based in principles is as useful and appropriate to making decisions about League actions in the future as in the present.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR UNITED STATES JUDGES

A judge should uphold the integrity and independence of the judiciary.

A judge should avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety in all activities.

A judge should perform the duties of the office fairly, impartially, and diligently.

A judge may engage in extrajudicial activities that are consistent with the obligations of judicial office.

A judge should refrain from political activity.

Graphic: The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts

Vote411 Provides Nonpartisan Candidate Information

Voters seek information they can trust about candidates for election. Getting good information about local candidates can be difficult. The League of Women Voters aims to make that easier by publishing candidates' own responses to the League's invitation to educate citizens about their candidacies, on the website www.Vote411.org.

Letters prepared by LWVIC have been sent to all candidates for office in Indiana County races, inviting them to submit information about themselves, which will be published unedited. These letters include questions specific to the offices they seek, asking about their education and other qualifications as well as biographical background. If a candidate does not respond, that name is listed with the lack of response indicated.

The LWVIC Voter Services Committee is working hard to get all of the county races set up in the League's Vote411 website before the primary election on May 20. Joyce Rizzo and Paul Huntington have done the greatest share of the tasks involved in getting candidates' information onto the Vote411 website as it comes in.

Citizens may think local and state elections are less important than national elections and candidates. But local officials make decisions that have the most direct impact on our daily lives, and local elections are where our voices have the most power.

✓ **Your Vote is your voice.**

Your voice is loudest in local elections.

LWVIC Meeting Our Legislators on Lobby Day *by Susan Boser*

On May 5, 2025, the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania is holding a Lobby Day in Harrisburg. Members of local Leagues from all over Pennsylvania will be at the Capitol to meet with the elected officials that represent their own districts.

The League of Women Voters of Indiana County is participating in Lobby Day in Harrisburg again this year, represented by Kay Smith and Ellen Chin, both members of the Board of Directors. Jack Hanna of the local Fair Districts Committee will accompany them. Patricia Berezanky, Superintendent of the Purchase Line School District, will participate in one of the meetings as well through Zoom.

The group will meet first with Senator Joe Pittman. They will appreciate Sen. Pittman for his recognition that more work is needed for reforming cyber charter schools. They will request his support for additional significant reforms for cyber charter tuition, transparency and accountability, as well as adequacy funding for underfunded schools in Pennsylvania—which include all of the schools in Sen. Pittman’s district. Patricia Berezanky will present the impact these reforms would have on Purchase Line, as well as the risks to the district if it does not receive the adequacy funding or cyber charter reform.

Smith, Chinn and Hanna will then request Sen. Pittman’s support for Senate Bill 131, which amends the state constitution creating an Independent Redistricting Commission to draw both congressional and state legislative districts. Currently, district lines are determined by the political party in power in the state government. The goal of the legislation is to put that power to choose back into the hands of citizens.

The group will then meet with Rep. Jim Struzzi. They will begin by appreciating his leadership in the House in sponsoring House Bills 990 and 991, which authorize municipalities to develop storm-water systems and create a dedicated funds



system to pay for projects without a dedicated storm-water management authority. The bills were approved by the House Local Government Committee on April 10, 2025. They go next to the House Appropriations Committee, of which

Rep. Struzzi serves as Republican Chair.

They will discuss two additional issues. They will request Rep. Struzzi’s support for HB31, which creates the Independent Redistricting Commission. They will also ask for his support for the Governor’s Budget for fair funding of all schools in Pennsylvania, and for reforms to cyber charter school funding and accountability.



Pennsylvania LWV Convention

The LWVPA Biennial Convention is scheduled for June 13 - 15, 2025, at the DoubleTree Resort in Lancaster, PA. The weekend’s events include a keynote speaker, break-out sessions, and fun social and art activities. Several LWVIC members plan to attend.

Convention ticket prices are as follows:

- Ticket price (May 3-June 13, 2025): \$170
- Student ticket price: \$35

Register and purchase tickets securely at:

<https://www.palwv.org/2025-convention>

Hotel accommodations: LWVPA has reserved blocks of hotel rooms:

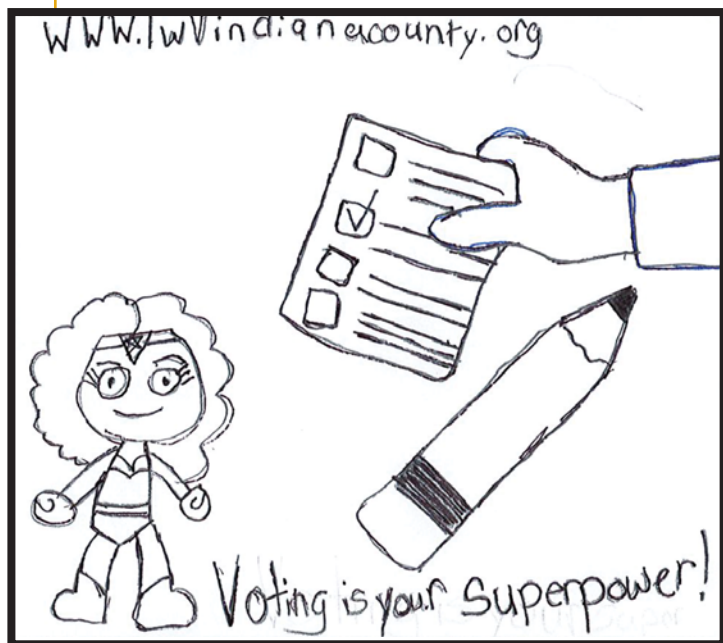
- Rooms at the DoubleTree, with rates ranging between \$199 - \$219/night
- Rooms at the Marriot, with rates of \$239/night

Student Ad in *Indiana Gazette* Tabloid Promotes Voting

The *Indiana Gazette's* annual supplement "Newspapers in Education" was published on March 27. The supplement showcases the writing and artistic skills of Indiana County school children in kindergarten through 12th grade. This year LWVIC sponsored an ad by fifth-grader Julie Hutchenson of Blairsville

Elementary School, which graphically promotes the theme "Voting is your Superpower!"

Image: © 2025 The Indiana Gazette



Making Donations to LWVIC

by Ellen Chinn, Treasurer

The new League of Women Voters membership system is up and running but not without issues. LWVUS recommends paying dues through their online portal ChapterSpot via Stripe, a secure and trusted payment system. Donations to LWVIC can also be made via Stripe.

You may also pay dues by sending me a check made out to LWVUS.

However, if you would like to make a donation to LWVIC by check, a separate check is necessary. When both dues and the donation are combined in one check to LWVUS, we do not receive the donation. I am requesting that **any donation to LWVIC be mailed directly to me at 156 Wine Avenue, Indiana 15701, and the check made out to LWVIC.**

Renewing Your Membership

by Sandra Whitson

If you haven't yet renewed your membership for 2025, you can now renew through the LWVUS online portal ChapterSpot at www.portal.lwv.org. In the portal, when you complete a form with your email address, you are given a unique log-in code—valid for a short time—to use for registering as a member.

ChapterSpot uses two-factor identification for security. Each time you wish to access your member account, ChapterSpot emails or texts a new log-in code to you. Once you are registered, LWVUS will notify you to renew one year from your last payment of dues.

Dues are now on a "pay as you wish" plan. LWVUS recommends dues of \$75 but you may pay as little as \$20, the minimum amount. From the amount you choose to pay, LWVIC receives 20%. LWVPA gets 43% and LWVUS gets 37%. Family dues and "free for students" are no longer available options.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF INDIANA COUNTY • BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ann Rea, President

Deanne Snavelly, Administrative Vice President

Cindy Rogers, Program Vice President

Ellen Chinn, Treasurer • Sarah Wheeler, Secretary

Susan Boser • Donna Cashdollar • Barb Peace

Joyce Rizzo • Aida Shotts • Kay Smith

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.

Preparing Youth to Vote — High School Classes of 2025

by Anne Simmons

For five years, LWVIC members Donna Cashdollar, Joyce Rizzo, Anne Simmons, and Susan Welsh have worked together to provide materials to high school students to prepare them for the voting process. Students who participate in the voting process while in high school often become “super voters.” A super voter is someone who votes in every election once they become eligible to vote, including primary and general elections, presidential elections every four years, and congressional races that follow two years later. Super voters vote in local, state, and national elections.

On April 25, Cashdollar, Rizzo, Simmons, and Welsh traveled to the following Indiana County School Districts: Apollo-Ridge, Homer Center, Indiana Area, Marion Center, Penns Manor, Purchase Line, River Valley, and United. League members delivered voting cards and information about the Pennsylvania Governor’s Civic Engagement Awards Program. The voting card provides links so that the high school students can easily access information about voting, local elections, and candidate qualifications. A Quick Response Code (QR Code) on the card takes students to the LWVIC website’s information about election security and ways each of us can help protect democracy.

In addition, the high school seniors were also encouraged to participate in the Pennsylvania Governor’s Civic Engagement Awards Program. Students can host a voter registration event at their high school and/or serve as poll workers during the general election. Since 2018, three Indiana County High Schools have won Gold Level School Awards for voter registration efforts led by their students and teachers (i.e., Indiana Area, Purchase Line, and United).
Link: <https://www.vote.pa.gov/Resources/Pages/Governor’s-Civic-Engagement-Award.aspx>



Above: The two-sided voting card was designed by Donna Cashdollar for high school students in the Class of 2025.

Below: Donna Cashdollar and Joyce Rizzo, front, and Susan Welsh and Anne Simmons, back, delivered voting cards to Indiana County School Districts on April 25, 2025.



What Is Microhydropower?

Hydropower, energy generated by the flow of water, is one of the oldest forms of renewable energy. It is well known that water wheels powered the mills along rivers in days past. Although hydropower, or hydroelectricity, is now most associated with large dams, this renewable and clean energy source comes in all shapes and sizes. Dams are not required to harness the power of the natural flow of water in a river or stream, and the water source does not need to be large; it can even be as small as an irrigation ditch. Smaller setups, called microhydropower systems, can be used to generate enough power by homeowners or small business owners to run a large home or small resort. This can be especially useful for off-grid properties and people in countries where access to an electrical grid is limited or nonexistent.

by Ellen Chinn



Pennsylvania currently generates less than 1% of its electricity from hydroelectric sources but the potential amount is much greater. PA has many natural rivers and streams that could be tapped for energy via smaller hydropower systems which are relatively inexpensive to install, less expensive to maintain and have a longer lifespan, compared to other renewable energy installations. They are also environmentally friendly, having little impact on the water source and surrounding ecosystems, without emitting greenhouse gases or other pollutants.

If you'd like to see an example of a microhydropower system, head over to Evergreen Conservancy's Tanoma Wetlands Environmental Center where one that is "suited for good, fast-flow in a shallow stream with no 'head'—that is, water flowing with no significant drop in elevation" is installed. The energy generated runs pumps that supply oxygen to the ponds, allowing more dissolved oxygen to flow through the system, which helps to precipitate the dissolved iron from the mine discharge. This is part of the passive system used to clean up the discharge before it flows into Crooked Creek.

Additional information on Hydropower Basics can be found on the Evergreen Conservancy's website: <https://evergreenconservancy.org/projects-acquisitions/remediation/tanoma-amd-wetlands/>

LWVIC Spring Calendar

May 5 – Last day to register to vote in Municipal Primary (www.vote.pa.gov)

May 13 – Last day to apply for a mail-in or absentee ballot (www.vote.pa.gov)

May 20 – Municipal Primary 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.

May 31 – LWVIC Membership Meeting
12:00 noon - 2:00 p.m., First U.U. Church. Salad lunch followed by Dr. Gwen Torges, professor of political science at IUP, presenting "Constitutional Checks and Balances: The Role of the Judiciary." Free to the public.

June 7 – Family Nature Palooza
10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m., Blue Spruce Park

June 13-15 – LWVPA Biennial Convention
Doubletree Resort in Lancaster, PA, featuring keynote speaker, breakout sessions, social and arts activities. See page 3 for registration information.

LWVIC Energy Forum Examines Indiana County's Future

by Donna Cashdollar

Transitioning to energy sustainability in Indiana County was the focus of the program LWVIC hosted at its general membership meeting in February. Three panelists active in the fields of energy production, climate change, and community revitalization described the opportunities and challenges we face.

Andrew Bockis, an environmental attorney in Harrisburg, represents companies that are active in the energy industry in Pennsylvania. He outlined technical considerations of transitioning—the necessity to understand how systems work and to maintain energy system balance. “It is impossible to have a meaningful conversation on energy without the context of how the energy grid works and interacts with all forms of energy. Western Pennsylvania holds an important place in this dialog given its longstanding infrastructure, and it will play a pivotal role in shaping our energy future.”

Jonathan Smith, an Indiana Borough Councilman, is inspired by his family's fossil fuel legacy and his work with the organization Indiana County Thrives to empower community self-direction and foster sustainable economic development with equitable outcomes. Successful transition “requires us to change and challenge what we know. [In Homer City and Center Township] we are challenging an entire social structure built around fossil fuels and power generation. We are taught that progress is measured by efficiency, but we need a system that works for people and not just for industry.”

Pennsylvania is one of the largest producers of energy in the United States. “We can't just turn off fossil fuels now but we can't ignore the science of climate change. We must start taking steps to control carbon dioxide,” said Jonathan

Warnock, a climate scientist and paleontologist at IUP. He commented that the students he sees are adamant about the need for action as climate changes threaten their futures.

Following these presentations, probing questions and informational comments came from the audience. A League member reported on progress with the local biogas plant that will convert farm waste to fuel gas. A representative of the organization Union Energy described the work of that nonpartisan labor coalition toward an innovative and sustainable energy economy that preserves union jobs.

In summary statements, Andrew Bockis commented, “We need to share ideas—to talk with people we don't agree with.” Jonathan Smith remarked, “We need to tweak the familiar to build systems that work to the benefit of all.” Dr. Warnock emphasized that “...we need to assign rights to people born in the future. We can't make decisions just based on what is good for us today.”



Presenters Jonathan Warnock; Andrew Bockis; forum moderator Deanne Snavelly, LWVIC board administrative vice-president; Jonathan Smith; and Ann Rea, LWVIC board president

LWVIC Members to Vote on Bylaws and Program Budget

Sections of our bylaws have been updated to align them with LWVUS policy. Changes are confined to Articles I through Section 1 of Article 4, the sections printed below. A complete draft was approved at the LWVIC Board meeting in January 2025. Our current bylaws can be seen on our website at www.lwvindianacounty.org.

BYLAWS

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF INDIANA COUNTY, PA

Revised and Adopted May 1996, May 2008,
May 2016, May 2021

ARTICLE I. NAME

Sec. 1. Name. The name of this organization shall be the League of Women Voters of Indiana County, hereinafter referred to in these bylaws as LWVIC. This local league is an integral part of the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) and the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania (LWVPA).

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE AND POLICY

Sec. 1. Purpose. The purpose of the LWVIC shall be to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government, and to act on selected government issues.

Sec. 2. 1. Political Policy. The LWVIC shall not support or oppose any political party or any candidate. It may take action on local government measures and policies in the public interest in conformity with the principles of the LWVUS.

2. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Policy.

The LWVIC is fully committed to ensure compliance—in principle and in practice—with LWVUS' Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy.

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP

Sec. 1. Eligibility. Any person who subscribes to the purposes and policies of the LWVUS shall be eligible for membership.

Sec. 2. Membership. The membership of the LWVIC shall be composed of voting members. Voting members shall be persons at least 16 years of age. Those who have been members of the League for 50 years or more shall be honorary life members of the LWVUS, excused from payment of dues.

ARTICLE IV. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sec. 1. Number, Manner of Selection, and Term of Office. The Board of Directors shall consist of the

officers of the League, up to twelve elected Directors and not more than seven appointed Directors, for a possible total of nineteen board directors. At least two of the elected Directors shall be elected by the general membership at each Annual Meeting and shall serve for a term of two years, or until their successors have been elected and qualified. The elected members shall appoint such additional Directors, not exceeding seven, as they deem necessary to carry on the work of the League. The term of office of the appointed Directors shall be one year and shall expire at the conclusion of the next Annual Meeting.

League of Women Voters of Indiana County Budget July 1, 2025 — June 30, 2026

I. INCOME

A. Dues (20% of Stripe payments)	\$ 750.00
B. Contributions	\$1500.00
C. Projects/ Other Sources	\$342.00
D. Savings + Checking Balance	\$9500.00

TOTAL INCOME

\$12,092.00

II. EXPENDITURES

A. General Administration	
1. Board Tools/Expenses	100.00
2. Membership/Activities	200.00
3. Operating Costs	
a. General Supplies	100.00
b. Insurance	400.00
c. Web Page	500.00
B. Delegates/Travel/Affiliations	
1. State/National Conventions (virtual)	500.00
2. Annual Meeting (Local)	150.00
C. Financial Support	
1. National \$32/member, \$16/family member	2272.00
2. State \$20/member, \$10/family member	1420.00
D. Program and Activities	
1. Bulletin: <i>The Voter</i>	400.00
2. Media/Publicity/Communications	3500.00
E. Committees	
1. Environmental Issues	100.00
2. Education	200.00
3. Voter Services	1000.00
4. Fair Districts	200.00
5. Public Policy	100.00
F. Misc.	500.00
G. Awards <i>Peggy Clark</i>	100.00
H. Fundraising	350.00

TOTAL EXPENSES

\$12,092.00