

LWVIC Welcomes New Members, Reorganizes for 2025-26

Following the presentation and audience discussion that began the spring membership meeting on May 31, LWVIC conducted its annual business. Reports by the LWVIC secretary and treasurer, proposed changes in our bylaws, proposed programs for 2025-26, and nominations of board officers and directors were approved. The following members were elected to LWVIC's board for terms ending on June 30, 2027: Susan Boser as president, Deanne Snavely as administrative vice president, Ellen Chinn as treasurer, and Donna Cashdollar, Kathleen Drozdiak, Cathy Dugan, Elizabeth Ricketts Marcus, and Kay Smith as directors. Barb Peace, Joyce Rizzo, and Cindy Rogers are continuing as board directors through June 30, 2026. Susan Boser, Ann Rea, and Sarah Wheeler were appointed to the nominating committee for 2026.

Three of the directors just elected to our board are new LWVIC members.

Kathleen Drozdiak is a graduate of Mansfield State College and has a Master of Education degree from Penn State University. During the 1970s and 80s, she taught Home Economics in junior and senior high schools and worked as a Penn State Extension Agent in Blair County. While teaching, Kathleen conducted a study of boys' and girls' attitudes toward traditional household roles before and after their integration into the previously segregated Home Economics and Industrial Arts classrooms.

In the 1980s Kathleen joined Clymer Family Medicine as practice manager. During her time with the group, the practice was selected to participate in the Pennsylvania Governor's

Chronic Care Collaborative, a study of patients with chronic diseases and effective interventions to improve their outcomes. She also implemented one of the first electronic medical records in Indiana County. Under Kathleen's guidance, Clymer Family Medicine achieved Level 3 in National Committee Quality Assurance for Patient Centered Medical Home—the only practice in Indiana County ever to achieve that distinction, which it held for five years. Kathleen retired from Clymer Family Medicine in 2023.

Dr. Catherine (Cathy) Dugan is a longtime faculty member at IUP and director of Disability Access and Advising. Her career has been focused on student transitions to education, supporting under-represented and low-income students, and students with disabilities. Her passions include access to healthcare, policy development, and the power of international education. Dr. Dugan developed, built, and has grown the first disability access services department at IUP, helping *(continued on page 2)*

LWVUS Announces Its Position on the Federal Judiciary

Early in 2025 LWV of Indiana County took part in a nationwide study of the Judicial Branch of the federal government initiated by LWVUS. For a report on the local study, see pages 1 and 2 of the Spring 2025 Voter.

LWVUS has adopted a position informed by local consensus reports from across the nation. It is based on general principles instead of specific current issues. See page 4 for details.

Board Retreat Sets LWVIC Program Priorities for 2025-26

by Susan Boser

The Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Indiana County met at the home of Kay Smith for our annual retreat on Sunday, July 6, 2025. Susan Boser, newly elected LWVIC president, facilitated.

We welcomed three newly elected board members: Cathy Dugan, Kathleen Drozdiak, and Elizabeth Ricketts. They were joined by returning board members Cindy Rogers, Ellen Chinn, Kay Smith, Barb Peace, Joyce Rizzo, and Donna Cashdollar. Deanne Snively is returning to the board as Administrative Vice President, but was unable to attend the retreat. Other returning officers include Cindy Rogers as program vice-president and Ellen Chinn as treasurer.

Kay Smith will continue to lead Voter Services. Two new board members are picking up service responsibilities as well. Cathy Dugan is our new secretary, and Elizabeth Ricketts has agreed to serve as our new chair of the Child Advocacy Committee.

One key focus of the retreat was to agree on the LWVIC's priorities for the year.

Our top priority is expanding our reach throughout the whole county. In the past, our community events have focused heavily on Indiana Borough and IUP, and the board feels strongly that we must do more to engage citizens in the rural parts of Indiana County. We remain committed to engagement at IUP and in Indiana-White Township, and as such, *(continued on page 3)*

LWVIC Welcomes New Members, Reorganizes for 2025-26

(continued from page 1) develop and guide the university through ADA implementation after implementing one of the first access services programs for students with learning disabilities at a Maryland state university.

Cathy earned her BA and MA (Student Development/Higher Education Management) at the University of Iowa and her D.Ed at IUP in Counselor Education/Managing Human Services. She is married (her husband is a professor of Nursing at IUP) and has two adult sons, one a professor of communications at Hofstra University and the other a faculty member doing sleep, cardiac, and obesity research at Columbia University Medical Center.

Dr. Elizabeth Ricketts Marcus has been teaching American History for 30 years at IUP. She holds a BA from the University of Texas in San Antonio and an MA and Ph.D in Liberal Studies from Emory University in Atlanta. Her dissertation studies coal communities in west-central Pennsylvania and how mining families in company-controlled towns found ways to pursue their economic and civil liberties.

While living in Florida before moving to Indiana in 1991, Elizabeth served on the boards of Sweetwater Episcopal Day School, the Florida Consumer Action Network, and the Orange County Affordable Housing Commission. She also volunteered with immigrant and migrant children to help them improve their English language skills.

At IUP Elizabeth also has taught in the Women's Studies program and served on its committee. She served as assistant chair of the History Department and on the Executive Council of APSCUF. Currently she teaches half time in the History program and half time in Cook Honors College. She has been faculty advisor for several student organizations, one of which is crocheting welcome blankets for immigrant children. Along with notes of welcome from the students who crocheted them, these blankets are distributed to the children through Catholic Services in El Paso, Texas.

With their varied interests and experiences in the fields of education and healthcare, our newest board members are bringing fresh insights and energy to the work of LWVIC.

Board Retreat Sets LWVIC Program Priorities for 2025-26

will continue to table at the Indiana festivals; participate in Constitution Day, Six O'Clock Series, and other IUP events; and visit classes at Indiana Area High School. However, to expand our outreach, we are committing to two strategies: 1) outreach to all high schools in the county, led by Elizabeth Ricketts and the Child Advocacy Committee, and 2) voter registration and tabling at county-wide fairs, festivals and farmers markets, led by Kay Smith and the Voter Services Committee. While these committees will take the lead in setting up these actions, the board as a whole will actively support this work.

These actions will also support work on our second key priority: growing and more deeply engaging our membership. The board as a whole will work on this throughout the year, exploring how we might use these events and other opportunities to actively engage and expand our membership with a particular focus on the rural parts of the county.

Based on a strongly felt sense of local needs, members proposed conducting a study. One group is interested in examining rural health care, already a critical local issue with the potential to grow dramatically with reductions in Medicaid.

A second group wishes to explore hunger in this region, again, already a significant issue in this region with the potential to worsen in the coming months. Leaders for each potential initiative were identified; Susan will work with LWVPA to identify the steps. This will come back to the board for further consideration.

Other priorities were discussed as well. Several board members have interest in literacy as a social concern; the board will come back to this issue in the fall. Others are moving forward with environmental work.

Several action items were also addressed. The board came to consensus for the fall membership meeting topic and a tentative date and location. In addition, they committed to hold a garage sale in spring 2026; a planning meeting was set up to lay out the plans for this. Joyce Rizzo along with Ellen Chinn and Cathy Dugan will organize voter services materials in the storage area in preparation for tabling later this summer and in the fall.

Board meetings will be on the third Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m., and will resume meeting in person, rotating among members' homes for as long as the weather permits.



Members of the LWVIC board of directors met in July to discuss priorities for 2025-26. Seated, left to right: Kathleen Drozdak, Susan Boser, Cathy Dugan, and Elizabeth Ricketts Marcus. Standing: Donna Cashdollar, Joyce Rizzo, Ellen Chinn, Barb Peace, Cindy Rogers, and Kay Smith
(Photo by David Brady)

LWVUS Announces Its Position on the Federal Judiciary

*Statement of Position on
the Federal Judiciary,
as announced by
the national board,
June 2025*



The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) believes that all powers of the US government should be exercised within the constitutional framework of the balance of powers among the three branches of government. The League believes that, within the bounds of the US Constitution, the overarching principles of transparency, accountability, independence, and ethics are essential to an effective federal judiciary. These principles are not only essential for a strong democracy but foster public trust in the federal judiciary and adherence to the rule of law, the essence of our constitutional democracy.

For the federal judiciary, the League supports the essential principles of:

- **Transparency:** Federal court documents, proceedings, and rulings, including those in “shadow docket” cases, should be open and available to the public within the bounds of the law, recognizing the need for limited exceptions, such as legally protected sensitive information.
- **Accountability:** Federal judges and Justices should be held legally and ethically responsible for the integrity of their actions, with enforceable consequences for violations.
- **Independence:** Federal judges and Justices should act in accordance with the Constitution and statutory and case law, free from the influence of the other branches of government and free from shifting popular and political opinion.
- **Ethics:** Federal judges and Justices should adhere to ethical standards of conduct that apply universally at all levels of the federal courts. There should be a meaningful enforcement process with judges and Justices subject to penalties for failure to comply with the standards.

The League believes that standards of conduct for federal judges and Justices should include requirements to disclose non-judicial income; other financial benefits including, but not limited to, gifts and hospitality; and investment holdings. Federal judges, Justices, and their partners or spouses should be subject to penalties for failure to disclose accurately and in a timely manner.

The League believes that standards of conduct should include a process that requires a judge or Justice to recuse themselves upon evidence that a bias or reasonable perception of a bias exists for or against any party or issue raised in a case. A judge’s or Justice’s decision and rationale not to recuse, despite evidence raised in the court proceedings, should be disclosed in the court’s record.

The League believes that respect for precedent (stare decisis) under most circumstances contributes to a strong democracy and promotes predictability and stability of law. Stare decisis does not mean precedents cannot or should not be overruled, but that such instances should occur in exceptional circumstances.

The League believes that the elements of this position contribute to judicial integrity and are essential to a strong democracy. These elements exemplify what the League expects from the federal courts, building trust and buttressing the Courts’ legitimacy. Adherence to the principles of accountability, transparency, independence, and ethics ensures both a strong federal judiciary and a stronger democracy.

<https://www.lwv.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/LWVUS%20POSITION%20ON%20THE%20FEDERAL%20JUDICIARY.%20Final.pdf>



Political Scientist Reviews Constitutional Checks and Balances

by Donna Cashdollar

The presentation “Constitutional Checks and Balances: The Role of the Judiciary,” by guest speaker Dr. Gwendolyn Torges of IUP’s Political Science faculty, anchored the May 31 luncheon and annual business meeting. This vital, timely topic drew lively discussion from the audience, which included members of the general public.

Dr. Torges emphasized that, while the Constitution sets the rules by which the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches operate, it is trust, shared values, and civic habits that make the courts matter. As Alexander Hamilton observed, the Judiciary “has no influence over either the sword or the purse” and ultimately depends upon the Executive arm to enforce its judgments.

Current strains on the federal courts include executive defiance of court orders, arrests of judges as an intimidation tactic, and court-baiting—enacting popular but unlawful policies to provoke judicial rulings that feed public distrust of judicial impartiality. Congressional abdication of its constitutional role contributes to this situation. Congress has declined to exercise oversight and to challenge executive actions that overrun its own legislative and funding authority. Failing in its role, Congress leaves the judiciary isolated.

Trust in the judiciary, especially in SCOTUS, has declined as the public increasingly perceives partisanship in some judicial decisions. The lower federal courts continue to function independently, largely according to traditional legal norms. The



great majority of federal judges rule impartially regardless of who appointed them.

But, SCOTUS’s increased use of the emergency or

“shadow docket” (brief, unsigned rulings whose legal reasoning is not made public), has weakened protections for independent federal agencies. These and other decisions that appear to enable rather than constrain executive overreach have led to increased scrutiny of SCOTUS’s behavior. That includes a LWV nationwide study, conducted earlier this year, which informed the League’s new position on the Federal Judiciary.

Historically, shame has been a check on political transgression, but many of today’s leaders reframe scandal as persecution. Without shame to compel personal restraint, public opinion is the last curb on breaking political norms.

Public pressure and action can help to strengthen legitimacy of the judiciary and keep it strong. We can demand transparency and accountability (enforcing ethics codes) in the judiciary. We can revive and strengthen civic education and engagement. We can promote cross-partisan dialogue and listen to each other with empathy, curiosity, and humility. We can participate in the work of civil organizations such as LWV to advance this process. Ultimately, your vote is your voice.



(Photos by Ellen Chinn)

Kay Smith Receives A.E. Strawbridge Award from LWVPA

by Donna Cashdollar

At the LWVPA Biennial Convention on June 14, Kay Smith was named to the Anna Estes Strawbridge Honor Roll in recognition of her energy and commitment to the League. Kay is the tenth member of LWVIC to be honored since 1994, joining Jane McGregor, Nancy Fricke, Beth Marshall, Sandy Whitson, Mary Ann Rood, Aida Shotts, Sherene Hess, Olga Platt, and Mary Beth Sweeney.

The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania established this award in honor of philanthropist Anna Estes Strawbridge, matriarch of the family that founded the historic Philadelphia department store Strawbridge and Clothier. Her ancestors sailed with other Quakers to Pennsylvania with William Penn. Strawbridge was president of the League of Women Voters of Philadelphia, director of Blue Cross of Greater Philadelphia, and served on the boards of many community and civic organizations. Her dedication to community service and civic reform is exemplified in the Honor Roll recipients whose names are prominently displayed in the Pennsylvania League's Harrisburg office.

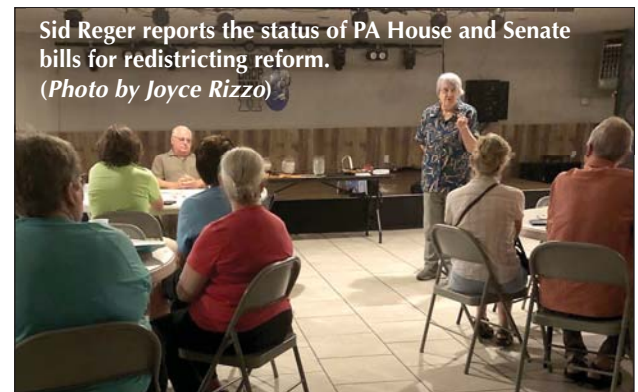


Although Kay was unable to attend the convention and receive her award in person, she was acknowledged there in remarks by LWVPA Executive Director Amy Widestrom, which Amy shared in a letter:

Kay brings the League's mission to life by championing tools like Vote411 and connecting our civic engagement efforts with environmental advocacy. She has a gift for making League resources more accessible and relevant—especially to new audiences—and for linking our democratic values to critical issues like climate justice. Kay's creativity, clarity, and commitment are helping shape a more informed and sustainable future for our communities.

Fair Districts Reviews Progress on Redistricting Reform

by Joyce Rizzo



On June 24 Fair Districts of Indiana County held an information session for county residents at the Rayne Drop Inn in Marion Center. Representing the county chapter, Stanley Chepaitis and Sid Reger reviewed the history of redistricting reform in Pennsylvania and the push to amend the PA Constitution to establish an independent redistricting commission to draw voting district boundaries. They discussed the status of legislative bills HB31 and SB131 in support of the amendment and encouraged voters to contact their state legislators. Hayden Johnston, a Fair Districts of PA intern, described the work he and other state interns are doing to reach out to young voters.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF INDIANA COUNTY • BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Susan Boser, President
Deanne Snavelly, Administrative Vice President
Cindy Rogers, Program Vice President
Ellen Chinn, Treasurer • Cathy Dugan, Secretary
Donna Cashdollar • Kathleen Drozdiak
Barb Peace • Elizabeth Ricketts Marcus
Joyce Rizzo • 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. LWVIC members are welcome to participate. To request the meeting location and agenda, please send an email to: lwvindianacounty@gmail.com.

LWVIC and Fair Districts Team Up for Lobby Day 2025



The following summarizes a report written by Jack Hanna of Indiana.

Kay Smith, representing LWVIC, and Jack Hanna, representing Fair Districts of Pennsylvania, participated in Lobby Day, May 5, at the Pennsylvania State Capitol.

Smith and Hanna met first with State Representative Jim Struzzi, focusing on two topics. First they expressed support for Rep. Struzzi's pending legislation HB990 and HB991 that permit certain municipalities to charge fees for stormwater management without creating a separate authority. This reduces the costs of stormwater management, addressing a local government problem practically and effectively. Hanna and Smith assured Rep. Struzzi that their organizations would assist in supporting the bills.

The second topic discussed was HB31, which creates an independent redistricting commission to draw state legislative and congressional districts. The bill establishes clear and fair criteria for drawing maps with district boundaries that are compact and geographically contiguous, and requires transparency and public engagement in the process. Rep. Struzzi was attentive to the presentation and noted there is bipartisan sponsorship for this measure, but he did not express a position on the bill.

Smith and Hanna met next with State Senator Joe Pittman, starting with a discussion of school funding. Sen. Pittman expressed his firm position favoring school choice. Having no objection to that general policy, Smith and Hanna emphasized that current funding and administrative systems

for cyber/charter schools are failing and their funding excesses threaten the quality and viability of the remaining 90 percent of Pennsylvania schools, which are public. Backed by the Auditor General's February 2025 report, Smith and Hanna outlined their recommendations for reform:

- Cap cyber/charter school rates at a maximum of \$8,000 per student.
- Fund cyber/charter schools consistently in a manner that reflects the lower costs of that type of education.
- Establish a tiered funding system for special education students based on the student's needs.
- Require transparency and accountability of cyber/charter schools that are applied to traditional public schools.
- The current funding system threatens the financial viability of rural schools in our county.

Sen. Pittman responded that some reform was included in last year's budget and he had reservations about court decisions and public school board resolutions on adequacy formulas. He was receptive to additional budget reforms regarding truancy and special needs. He pointed out the need to consider also reduced school enrollments and school board size and composition based on outdated census demographics in funding reform.

The second discussion focused on reapportionment and redistricting in their review of SB131. Sen. Pittman was concerned about the composition of an independent redistricting commission and how it could be impartial and free from potential conflicts of interest. Hanna pointed out that while SB131 addresses these concerns, there also are models of alternative selection systems in other states to consider as the bill makes its way through the legislative process. Hanna also stated that passage of SB131 results in both parties having confidence that an impartial reapportionment process occurs without inordinate costs in time, expense, and political capital expended by both parties in a partisan redistricting process.

Smith and Hanna thanked Rep. Struzzi and Sen. Pittman for hosting their lobbying efforts and for the substantive exchange of ideas.

Naturally Transforming Methane Into Organic Fertilizer

by Ellen Chinn

In the Winter 2025 “What On Earth Is Happening” article, I talked about methane as a powerful greenhouse gas, 80 times more potent than carbon dioxide. Methane is emitted at a much lower level and is much shorter-lived than carbon dioxide, but it accounts for about 30% of observed global warming. As stated previously, reducing methane emissions could quickly and substantially slow the increase of global temperatures.

Farmers today rely heavily on expensive carbon- and energy-intensive synthetic fertilizers to produce the greatest possible amount of food on limited land for a growing world population. However, more than 50% of the nitrogen in these fertilizers is not absorbed by crops but instead gets lost to the environment through leaching, runoff and volatilization which, in turn, contributes to degradation of soil health, algal blooms and aquatic dead-zones. The production of synthetic fertilizer also forms nitrous oxide, a greenhouse gas 265 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

A company called Windfall Bio is tackling this problem by transforming methane into organic fertilizer by utilizing a family of naturally-occurring soil microbes which “eat” methane, referred to as “mem.” The company selects the most effective mem strains, creating a proprietary mixture of the microbes, without the need for any genetic modifications. Nitrogen and other compounds are released by the mems, providing valuable nutrients for plants and soil microorganisms, i.e. a natural fertilizer, that remains in the soil instead of washing away.

With the mem technology utilized by Windfall Bio, methane can be captured from sources such as dairy barn exhaust, manure lagoons, slurry pits and anaerobic digesters, then transformed locally into bioavailable fertilizer by the mems. This provides a source of fertilizer for farmers who previously couldn’t afford or did not have access to synthetic fertilizers, decreases the use of synthetic fertilizers and the problems associated with its use, and creates additional sources of revenue for a variety of industries which support local economies. Windfall Bio’s purpose is to help farmers be sustainable, save money and resources, and improve local food security, especially in developing countries. Its efforts will also slow global warming by removing harmful methane from the environment. A win for everyone!

<https://www.windfall.bio/>

