LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEHIGH COUNTY

League of Women Voters of Lehigh County Voter

August/September 2020 Volume 68, Issue 6

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Mark your calendar:

- **September 14** First day to receive Official Absentee or Mail-In Ballot Applications.
- **October 19** Last day an elector may register to vote or make changes to their registration data to be eligible for the General Election.
- **November 3** Election Day

President's Message

Dear League Members,

League activities continue during this COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2020 54th National Convention was held in June as a virtual event on the Zoom platform. I "attended" as an observer for the two-day plenary session; Mary Erdman and Rochelle Kaplan served as our League's delegates. Although this virtual convention didn't have the excitement that an in-person meeting would have had, it worked fairly well. There was opportunity for some discussion (pro and con) and only a few glitches with voting.

A benefit of the virtual meeting was that so many more League delegates could participate. The costs of attending a convention in-person can be prohibitive for some smaller Leagues. At this virtual convention, all 50 states were represented plus Washington, D.C. which totaled an impressive 1,241 voting delegates. This was far beyond the 20 percent quorum (350 delegates) and 25 states required to conduct convention business.

The main "take-away" from the national convention is that the League intends to continue its focus for the next two years on Making Democracy Work. The League will continue its work in empowering voters and defending democracy. This will include our work in redistricting – fairly apportioning voting districts.

Your board is working on education and voter outreach in this COVID-19 world. We are continuing with our popular Hot Topics Luncheons series but it will be on the Zoom virtual platform. Two practice sessions had been organized in August to give members the opportunity to practice working

Continued on Page 2

Tabling and Voter Registration

Efforts to assist citizens with voter registration and mail-in ballot applications have been the focus of our Voter Registration and Tabling Committee over the past months. Although we are unable to hold in-person events, our outreach has continued and intensified as interest in the November general election grows.

Letters sent to senior living communities outlined online voter registration procedures, mail-in or absentee ballots applications, and included a directory of helpful websites. Staff members at these communities are willing and anxious to help seniors, many of whom are super voters, continue to exercise their franchise. We have also been in contact with neighborhood senior centers and Meals on Wheels regarding mail-in ballots especially, knowing the desire to vote by mail has greatly increased. Thanks to all who help in these endeavors throughout the Lehigh Valley.

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President's Message (continued from Page 1)

working with Zoom before the main Hot Topics speaker event on Monday, September 14. A virtual presentation has been put together which explains the new voting options and can be shared with organizations. Advance planning has been started on organizing our Running for Local Office workshop held in late winter – again virtual. We are also exploring how to hold a candidates' forum virtually. It is a brave new world for many of us on the board.

Before signing off, I want to alert you to a new outreach for us to reach a younger audience of voters. We have started an Instagram account. Follow us at lwvlehigh.

Thank you for the work that you do. Stay safe and stay well.

Yours in League,

Molly Faust, President

Tabling and Voter Registration (continued from Page 1)

Fellowship Community of Whitehall sponsored a GoToMeeting on Thursday, June 25, to address mail-in voting and different ways of finding candidate information. Rochelle Kaplan and Barbara Connolly participated in the virtual event, which residents could access either by phone or computer.

Food banks in the Lehigh Valley have also participated in these efforts, providing clients with information, voter registration forms, and mail-in ballot applications provided by the Board of Elections and our local League. In the coming weeks we hope to expand our outreach with additional organizations and educational institutions in ways that match their needs and populations.

Public libraries have sought us out earlier in this COVID-19 era. The Parkland Community Library is sponsoring another Zoom event with our local League on September 22 at 7 p.m. to coincide with National Voter Registration Day. The program, part of Parkland Community Library's CHATs, is titled "The Importance of an Informed Vote." Information about how to register for this virtual event can be found at parklandlibrary.org.

Contact Barbara Connolly at email@lwvlehighcounty for additional information or suggestions for our committee.

Barbara Connolly, Chair, Tabling Registration and Tabling

The Voter Newsletter Editor and Layout Editor Positions Available

Jan Little is willing to train one or more members now to serve as Newsletter Editor during the next membership year. As you know, there are six bimonthly editions. The Editor oversees the entire process of creating the newsletter so that members can access the final draft on our website and by mail in a timely basis.

Many of our supporters and local legislators receive the paper copy by mail.

We are also in need of a Layout Editor to design the newsletter.

We are fortunate members Ann Bartholomew and Jan Landis proofread the drafts.

Please email Jan Little at email@lwvlehighcounty.org if you would like more information about the positions or would like to help with the October/November edition.

Hot Topics Luncheons Go Virtual

Welcome back to the Hot Topics Luncheons Season! We are happy to be back, even though we will be conducting our Hot Topics Luncheons virtually on Zoom instead of at The Superior Restaurant. We are working very hard to make these Zoom events interesting and as easy as possible for all to manage.

By press time, we will have had two practice sessions with our members and hopefully solved any problems and worked out any lingering issues. We hope you will find this year's topics and speakers interesting and informative and will join us as we Zoom into a new season of Hot Topics. The only difference is you get to eat the lunch of your choice at home and wear your most comfortable clothing in which to Zoom! We are hoping for a good turnout as we each learn more about this virtual platform while remaining safe in our homes.

You will be delighted to hear from our first speaker in September - Bill White! His topic "You'll Miss Us When We're Gone," is a tribute to local journalism and how unfortunate that local journalists are becoming more rare with time. He is anxious to be with us again and share his thoughts.

October brings a familiar face as I will finally be giving our membership a full presentation about the work of Fair Districts PA and our last attempt to make redistricting more fair before the new 2021 maps are drawn. It has been an educational and eye-opening experience to learn so much about the nature of the political culture of Pennsylvania. I am anxious to share that with each of you.

November brings Vicky Kistler, the director of the Allentown Bureau of Health. You will be amazed at the many interesting facets of her work from overlooking COVID-19 regulations for food establishments to childcare facilities as well as protecting the public health of our citizens and the creation of the AVMRC, the Allentown Volunteer Medical Reserve Corps.

We finish the calendar year with a visit from Professor Chris Borick who will give us an interesting evaluation of the November election and what it means for our state and our country. Professor Borick always has a fascinating analysis and this year should be as interesting as ever. We will dive deeper into our other speakers in a later issue of The Voter as we re-evaluate our situation of in-person versus virtual Hot Topics Luncheons for 2021.

See you at the September 14 Hot Topics Luncheon. You will be receiving an invitation via email to join us on Zoom. Don't forget to register! The email will come from member Terri Purdy… so be on the lookout for her email.

And to reassure you, Zoom is very safe to use on your computers. They are constantly updating their security. Zoom is used by our county, the state court system as well as the PA State Legislature, just to name a few. We want you to be safe and healthy and Zooming is the way to go right now!

Mary Erdman

Vice President, Action & Programs

Hot Topics Luncheons

September 14, 2020

"You'll Miss Us When We're Gone"

October 12, 2020

"The Defeat of Gerrymandering Reform What Can WE Do Now?"

November 9, 2020

"The Allentown Health Department, from Environmental Health Services to COVID-19"

December 14, 2020

"Election Trends"

January 11, 2021

"State of the County and Impact of COVID-19"

February 8, 2021

"The Street Medicine Program of LVHN"

March 8, 2021

"Climate Change: Opinion and Policy"

April 12, 2021

"TerraCycle - Eliminating the Idea of Waste®"

Board Notes

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF LEHIGH COUNTY

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· www.facebook.com/LeagueofWomenVotersLehighCounty/ · www.instagram.com/lwvlehigh

The Board of the Lehigh County League of Women Voters met twice since the last VOTER on July 9 and August 13. Due to COVID 19, the meetings were held virtually. Here are highlights of the two meetings.

Barbara Williams, Treasurer, reported that the League has a balance of $18,572,42 in assets for the month ending July 31, 2020. The Fourth Quarter Final Treasurer's report as of June 30, 2020 showed $10,637.56 in income and $9,669.83 in expenses.

The Board conducted virtual social gatherings on August 17 and August 24 to familiarize members with the Zoom platform prior to the first Hot Topics luncheon in September.

The Voter Registration and Tabling Committee, through the leadership of Barbara Connolly, Chair, is reaching out to food banks, neighborhood centers, and Meals on Wheels for distribution of voting information and mail-in ballots to their constituents. Barbara made a virtual presentation to Fellowship Community residents on voting and will speak at a Parkland Library virtual program on election security, mail in ballots, and making an informed decision.

Jan Little successfully moved the League's email system from squirrel mail to round cube.

The "Running for Office" Workshop will be held January 30, 2021. While the committee hopes to provide the workshop in person at a local venue, should it need to be virtual because of COVID-19, the committee is considering the use of the Zoom webinar platform as the venue for the workshop. Mary Erdman will be looking into the costs for this platform.

Michelle Graupner established an Instagram account for the League. Our Instagram handle is @lwvlehigh. This will provide an opportunity for the League to reach out to a younger audience about our events and programs, and to provide information on voter registration and voting. We encourage all our members to set up an account and follow the League on Instagram.

Mary Erdman and Rochelle Kaplan attended the virtual LWV 2020 54th National Convention held the last week of June.

Rochelle Kaplan, Secretary

Membership

We may not have been seeing each other for a while but people are definitely using their computers. We have had three inquiries about our League and membership last month. Hopefully others will view our website and become interested in joining.

We need to talk about our League to friends, family and colleagues. We also have Facebook and Instagram@lwvlehigh for them to check out.

As of August, be had 81 members in our League. I am pleased to announce Megan Beste, of Bethlehem, joined our League. We welcome her to our League.

Margie Dunn, Membership Chair

Statement from U.S. Census Bureau Director Steven Dillingham

Delivering a complete and accurate 2020 Census count

The U.S. Census Bureau continues to evaluate its operational plans to collect and process 2020 Census data. We are announcing updates to our plan that will include enumerator awards and the hiring of more employees to accelerate the completion of data collection and apportionment counts by our statutory deadline of December 31, 2020, as required by law and directed by the Secretary of Commerce.

Complete count

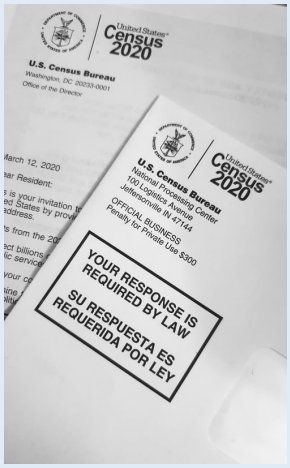
A robust field data collection operation will ensure we receive responses from households that have not yet self-responded to the 2020 Census.

- We will improve the speed of our count without sacrificing completeness. As part of our revised plan, we will conduct additional training sessions and provide awards to enumerators in recognition of those who maximize hours worked. We will also keep phone and tablet computer devices for enumeration in use for as long as possible.
- We will end field data collection by September 30,2020. Self-response options will also close on that date to permit the commencement of data processing. Under this plan, the Census Bureau intends to meet a similar level of household responses as collected in prior censuses, including outreach to hard-to-count communities.
- Accurate data and efficient processing: Once we have the data from self-response and field data collection in our secure systems, we plan to review it for completeness and accuracy, streamline its processing, and prioritize apportionment counts to meet the statutory deadline. In addition, we plan to increase our staff to ensure operations are running at full capacity.
- Health and safety: We will continue to prioritize the health and safety of our workforce and the public. Our staff will continue to follow Federal, state, and local guidance, including providing appropriate safety trainings and personal protective equipment to field staff.

We are committed to a complete and accurate 2020 Census. To date, 93 million households, nearly 63 percent of all households in the nation have responded to the 2020 Census.

The 2020 Census belongs to us all. If you know someone who has not yet responded, please encourage them to do so today online at 2020census.gov, over the phone, or by mail.

Census 2020 Announcement



The U.S. Census Bureau has announced that census takers will be visiting non-responding households between August 11 and September 30, 2020, to ask a few questions and will enter the answers on their secure Census Bureau smartphone. The September 30 deadline is a month earlier than the previous deadline of October 31.

If a family member is not home when the census taker visits, the census taker will leave a notice of their visit with information about how to respond online or by phone. As necessary, the census taker will make additional visits to collect responses from the household.

Census takers will follow social distancing protocols and all applicable state and local requirements with regard to health and safety

The Census Bureau is working to complete data collection as quickly, and safely as possible while ensuring a complete and accurate count as it strives to comply with the laws and statutory deadlines. The statutory deadline for completion of the census is December 31, 2020.

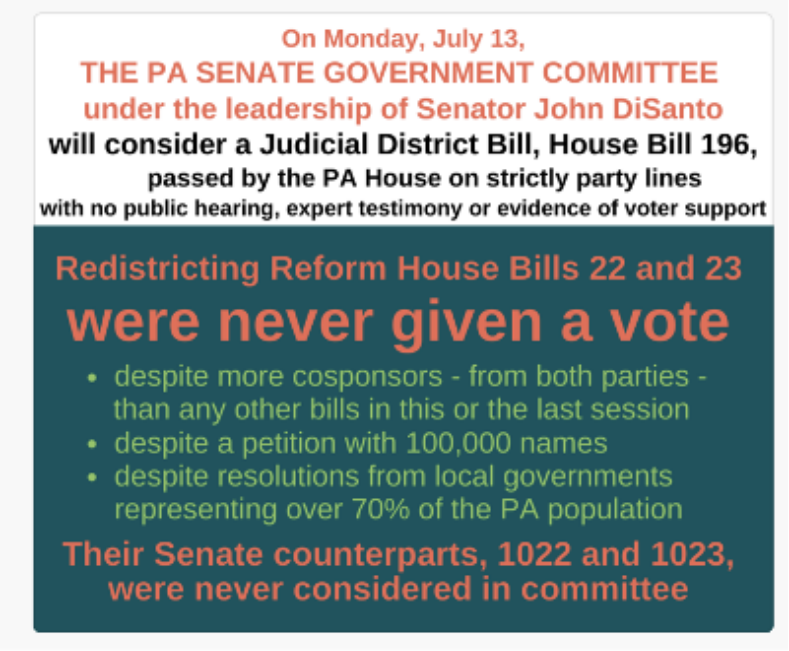
Rochelle Kaplan, Secretary

PA Legislators Fail to Enact Redistricting Reform; Expect Gerrymandering For At Least 10 More Years

This past June I had the opportunity to attend the League of Women Voters National Convention. Although it was held virtually, there was still a great deal to be learned and discussed, especially heading into a presidential election season.

One talk that has stuck with me revolves around the quote of our mission: "Defending Democracy - Empowering Voters." Part of that discussion was the challenge to remain nonpartisan while at the same time pointing out deficiencies in governing that lead to a damaged democracy. Our charge is to call out that which harms our democracy and the ability to protect the guaranteed voting rights of all citizens, while striving to make each vote count. I have attempted to do that here.

You have all followed the work of Fair Districts PA over the last three-and-a-half years. With the blessing of the LWVPA, we have lobbied legislators, educated voters, held workshops, given presentations, worked at the polls to get voters of both parties to sign our petitions, attended rallies, written letters-to-the-editor and worked to get municipalities to support us through resolutions.



Our numbers were amazing. For two legislative sessions our bills had the most co-sponsors from both parties of any legislation that was proposed in either session. FDPA had over 386 municipalities and 24 counties create resolutions supporting our bills as well. Many municipalities are divided into two or three districts and getting funding becomes increasingly more difficult and less efficient when answering to more than one legislator.

One rally in Harrisburg was so well attended that only one other recent rally (when legislators tried to give themselves a raise near midnight) outnumbered ours. The grassroots outcry was enormous!

Franklin & Marshall surveyed Pennsylvania citizens from most geographic areas and almost 70 percent, whether they were urban Democrats or rural Republicans, wanted to see the end of gerrymandering. A University of Pittsburgh survey resulted in an even higher percentage of our citizens wanting an end to gerrymandering. The people had spoken, a large majority of the electorate wanted to see gerrymandering ended and a more fair process instituted by 2021.

What was the result? Republican leadership totally ignored the citizens of Pennsylvania by never granting more than one hearing, no debates, no testimony, and no voting on these bills. Representative democracy lost at the end of this session and politics as usual was the winner. And that was wrong.

Many studies have determined that gerrymandering, along with archaic procedural rules and some of the most lax campaign funding laws in this nation, create an atmosphere where only special interests have the ear of our legislators in Harrisburg. We have one of the largest, well paid, full-time legislatures with one of the least efficient problem-solving records in the entire United States.

Ending gerrymandering would have been the first step in fixing the other two issues preventing our legislators, from both parties, in getting things done for Pennsylvania. And we have many dedicated legislators from both parties who are equally frustrated with the actions of leadership in Harrisburg.

While FDPA was working on Plan B, which is a bill to incorporate new criteria into the old process of allowing legislators to draw the lines, Republican Party leaders were passing two bills which had no grass roots demand, held no hearings, scheduled no expert testimony or debates, and passed these bills quickly in order to further enrich the power they enjoy from gerrymandering.

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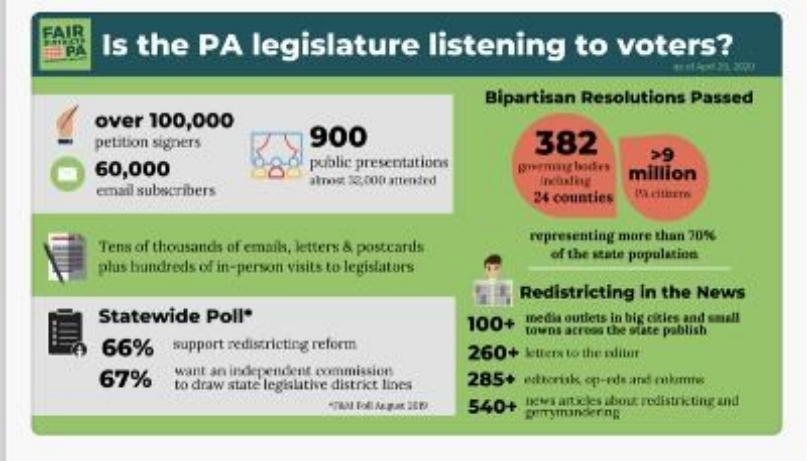
PA Legislators Fail to Enact Redistricting Reform; Expect Gerrymandering For At Least 10 More Years (continued from Page 6)



One bill, House Bill 196, calls for "judicial districts" across the state in an effort to put more Republican judges in the courts. The false logic of this bill is that judges should never judge cases based on where they live; but their decisions should be made based on the rule of law and the merits of the case. This will only prove to politicize the judiciary.

The second bill, Senate Bill 1166, would limit the power of the governor to declare an emergency and have it last more than 30 days. After 30 days, (under this bill) the legislature must approve a continuance by a two-thirds majority.

In the case of COVID-19, this would allow the governor to declare an emergency for only 30 days based on science and medicine. But if it continues, the vote to end a declaration would most likely be based more on politics than the science and medicine that have been guiding the decisions of the governor. If this was already enacted and the legislature denied an extension, unemployment insurance, postponing evictions, and mortgage forgiveness plans would all be ended as well. And that is wrong.

This is the challenge for the LWVPA as well as for Fair Districts PA. We are to "Defend Democracy and Empower Voters," and still it is our duty and our mission to call out that which hurts our democracy and does not empower the voters.

It is a fine line to walk; but in this case, we must ask the Republican leadership to consider legislation that makes this process of drawing new maps in 2021 as fair as possible.

This would require restrictions on who could be on this commission; how counties and municipalities are split, planning for more civic engagement in the process and allowing each meeting to be a public and transparent meeting as new maps are determined, whether they are Congressional, State Representative Districts or State Senate Districts.

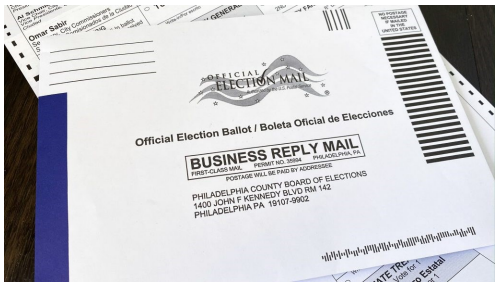
Finally, in the spirit of non-partisanship, we ask all residents to support our criteria bills, which would make the process of redrawing districts after reapportionment both fair and much more democratic for each and every Pennsylvania voter.

Our bills, House Bill 2638 and Senate Bill 1242, will create a more fair and open process and both of these bills have a Republican as the primary sponsor. House Bill 2638 has been sponsored by state Rep. Wendi Thomas, R-178th and Senate Bill 1242 has been sponsored by state Sen. Tom Killion, R-168th.

In the future we will be describing how you can help to get these bills passed. We will be depending on our members to help improve representative democracy in Pennsylvania. One action you can take now is to ask your legislator and state senator to co-sponsor these bills to show their support of a more fair and open process. As we move forward, let us remember - "Not red, not blue, just fair!"

Mary Erdman
Vice-President, Action & Programs

Voter Registration and Election 2020



Board members have answered questions concerning voter registration and participation in the election on November 3 from the public. Here is an example that may benefit readers.

Q. I live in Lehigh County. If I request a mail-in ballot for Nov 3, can I later decide to vote in person instead? Or, am I then committed to vote by mail-in ballot? I would rather vote with mail-in, but sometimes I get concerned that it won't be delivered by the post office or that President Donald Trump will somehow interfere with the post office's ability to do their job. I want to keep my options open.

A. Thank you for the question. Once you receive the mail in ballot, the Lehigh County voter registration office notes on the voter rolls that you have received a ballot. If you then show up at the polls on November 3, when you check in at the polls, your name will not appear/or it will appear that you received a ballot. You will not be permitted to vote using the ballots and machines at the polls. You can ask for a provisional ballot and your request cannot be denied. Provisional ballots are kept separate and counted after all of the other ballots are counted.

We advise that as soon as you receive your ballot, you complete it and either mail it immediately. Or, hand deliver it to Lehigh County Voter Registration office at 17 South Seventh St., Allentown, immediately but no later than 8 p.m. on November 3.

Running for Local Office Workshop 2021

To many, running for local office can be a daunting task. In order to assist candidates through this complex process, the League of Women Voters of Lehigh County is pleased to announce that we are planning to hold our 10th biennial "Running for Local Office Workshop" on Saturday, January 30, 2021, tentatively at 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. This date is prior to the deadline to circulate petitions to run in the municipal primary, usually in mid-February.

We are NOT holding the workshop at a venue as we have before. Due to COVID-19, THE WORKSHOP WILL BE VIRTUAL ONLY. As this is the first time we have offered the workshop virtually, we are researching the best way to do so. Finalized information including date, time and how to register will be included in the next issue of The Voter.

Timothy A. Benyo, Chief Clerk, Registration and Elections, Lehigh County, was one of the speakers at the Workshop we held at DeSales University in January 2019.
In the photo on the right, he is speaking about the forms candidates for offices in Lehigh County must complete. During our 2021 Workshop, this information will be shared virtually.

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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City, State, Zip _____

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Membership dues include membership in the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) and the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania (LWVPA) and a subscription to the local and state *Voter*.

League dues and contributions are not tax-deductible as a charitable donation.

Contributions to the LWV Education Fund (LWVEF) are tax-deductible.

Membership in the League of Women Voters is open to all citizens. Voting members must be at least 16 years old.

ANNUAL DUES 2020

$70 individual $105 household $25 full-time student

After July 31:

$35 individual $52 household $25 full-time student

Please make check payable to LWVLC and mail to:

LWVLC
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