LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEHIGH COUNTY

December/January 2021 Volume 68, Issue 8

League of Women Voters of Lehigh County VOTER

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Mark your calendar

- **Monday, January 11**-Hot Topics Zoom—Lehigh County Executive
- **Thursday, January 14**—Board Meeting
- **Saturday, January 30**—"Running for Local Office" Workshop
- **Sunday, January 31**–Membership renewals due

President's Message

Dear League Members,

The 2020 election is one for the record books.

An exceptional number of voters cast ballots in the 2020 presidential race, and this was done in the midst of a global pandemic, false news campaigns, and ever-changing voting rules. The League of Women Voters deserves credit for its role in making sure that a larger number of voters had the opportunity to participate in this election.

We have a busy year ahead of us. It appears that in January the Pennsylvania legislature will be introducing bills to challenge Act 77 and to create judicial districts. The state league is asking for our help in educating the public about these bills. You will find articles on these matters in our newsletter.

I want to thank you for all of your efforts this past year to "make democracy work." I also want to welcome Becky Hite to our board. She will serve as VOTER editor.

Yours in League,

Molly Faust

January Hot Topics Program

Our Hot Topic for January 11th, "Update on the State of the County," will be given by our Lehigh County Executive, Phillips Armstrong. This has been quite a year for our county. Besides putting together a budget that will not raise taxes, Armstrong has instituted major improvements at Cedarbrook, managed Lehigh County's response to the pandemic, and overseen distribution of millions of dollars in CARES aid. Our County Executive has probably been one of the busiest public servants!

Phil has graciously accepted our invitation to share the most pressing issues facing our county and how our county is faring during this pandemic. Phil has worked very hard at maintaining a bi-partisan approach to government with his philosophy that local issues transcend party politics. He has maintained a great working relationship with our County Commissioners as well as our local municipalities.

You will be receiving an email inviting you to this Hot Topics event and it will be recorded to watch on YouTube at your leisure. Don't miss this annual update.

Mary Erdman, Vice-President, Action & Programs

Board Notes

The Board of the Lehigh County League of Women Voters met twice since the last *VOTER,* on November 12 and December 10. Due to COVID-19, the meetings were held virtually. Here are highlights of the two meetings:

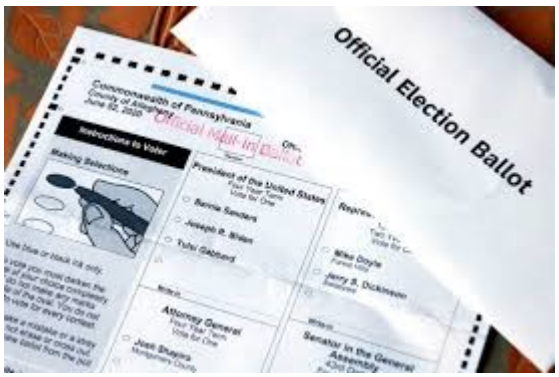
- Barbara Williams, Treasurer, reported that the League has a balance of $14,959.87 in assets for the month ending November 30.
- Molly Faust, President, appointed a committee to review the bylaws and update them as necessary. In addition to Molly, Rochelle Kaplan and Jan Little will serve on the committee. If you are interested in helping with the bylaws review, please contact Molly. This review will commence in January 2021.
- A "DONATE" button is now on our League's website under "Membership." Donations will be made via the PayPal app. While PayPal cannot be used to pay membership for this membership renewal period, the Board agreed to develop an online form for membership dues for the next membership renewal period. We encourage you to use PayPal to donate to our local League.
- Fundraising for the *Government Directory* is going very well. Jan Little and Cheryl Winters-Tetreau have been reaching out to businesses and government leaders for donations to defray the cost of publishing the *Government Directory*. As of the December meeting, the League is on track to have these costs fully covered.
- The Board members will be tracking their volunteer hours as of November 1, 2020. Each Board member will be submitting their hours to Molly Faust on a monthly basis. This will enable the national League to understand the activities in which we are spending most of our time and have metrics to track our progress on these activities. Any member who has volunteered time for the League should submit their hours to Molly Faust..
- A down-loadable flyer and a link to online registration for the "Running for Local Office" Workshop appear on the information web page on the League's website. Press releases have been sent to local Latinx and English-speaking media. A link to the RFLOW web page has been sent to all offices listed in the Government Directory, local political organizations, and nonpartisan organizations. Information has also been posted on the Facebook and the Instagram accounts.

Rochelle Kaplan, Secretary

LWVPA Advocacy Team

The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania (LWVPA) has created an advocacy team under the leadership of Carol Kuniholm, VP Government. The team consists of League members throughout Pennsylvania interested in researching and advocating on policy issues identified as critical to the mission of the League, defending democracy, and empowering voters. The team has met twice, December 5 and December 12, via Zoom.

The three top priorities for the team's work in the next six months are: preventing the rollback of Act 77 reforms, while supporting needed changes to the election process, such as pre-canvasing ballots; advocating for redistricting reform, in particular, supporting legislation for the Legislative and Congressional Redistricting Act (*LACRA*); and opposing the proposed constitutional amendment creating judicial districts. The National Popular Vote Compact and open primaries were also identified as issues that will be taken up by the team.



The advocacy team established several working groups to handle these issues. The working groups are research, communications, administration, and local league engagement. The research group will track legislation, legislator's sponsorship of bills, and act as an "early warning system" to the League on legislation to support or oppose. The communications group will create the training/educational forums, templates for letters to the editor, fact sheets, press releases and social media presence. The administration team will provide the technological backbone to all of this work. Finally, the local league engagement working group will be looking at ways to engage local league membership and partner with other organizations to advocate on these issues.

To kick off 2021, LWVPA advocacy team will be hosting a virtual reception for newly elected women legislators in January and will host a town hall on judicial gerrymandering in January/February 2021. Mary Erdman, Cheryl Winters-Tetreau, and I have agreed to participate in the work of the advocacy team. I urge any member of LWV of Lehigh County who is interested in working on good government policy issues to join this team.

The next meeting is Saturday, January 9, 2021 at 9:30 a.m. Please contact Rochelle Kaplan at email@lwvlehighcounty.org for the link to the meeting via Zoom or telephone number.

Rochelle K. Kaplan, Secretary

Voter Registration and Tabling

The November election set a record for voter participation with more than 7 in 10 of Pennsylvania's voting age citizens voting by mail-in ballot or in-person, a record 70.93 percent, according to Secretary of State Kathy Boockvar in a press release dated November 17 on the Pennsylvania Pressroom. Voter registration topped 9 million for the first time in October. This year statewide elections will be held on May 18, 2021, (primary) and November 2, 2021, (general election). Could this be the year that voter enthusiasm reaches beyond the Presidential election?

During the months of 2020 leading to the June primary and the November general election, the Voter Registration and Tabling Committee focused primarily on registering new voters and sharing information about changes in the voting process in Pennsylvania. While we will continue to explore unique ways of accomplishing this mission with the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 restrictions, a return to tabling and talking in-person safely will be a goal during the coming year.

Tabling events provide opportunities beyond voter registration and information. We are also able to share information about our mission, programs, and activities. These include monthly Hot Topics Luncheons, the production and distribution of the Lehigh County Government Directory, and a twice-yearly Voters Guide. Information regarding the effects of gerrymandering and the efforts of Fair DistrictsPA to encourage fair redistricting in 2021 has been available at all events. Information and resources about positions of the LWV on the environment, including the effects of plastics and shale gas extraction and public health are part of our on-going efforts to provide voter education. Please contact Barbara Connolly for more information or to request resources.

Barbara Connolly, Voter Registration and Tabling Chair

Membership

Our renewal membership drive is in full force. So far, I have received 32 renewal forms. We have 83 members, so we have a long way to go. If I have not received your renewal form by January, I will send you a reminder notice. We need to send our totals in by January 31st.

Also, we need you to contribute to our Education Fund. Only a small portion of your dues stay at the local League. The rest is sent to the State and National leagues. We have many programs and activities along with the publishing of the Government Directory that are paid for from the Education Fund.

We are trying to encourage younger members to join our League. If you know anyone 35 years or under, let them know what a great League we have and that they can join for half price- $35. The more members we have the greater power we have to encourage changes in our government.

Margie Dunn, Membership Chair

Becky Hite, Newsletter Editor

We are pleased to share information about our newest board member. Becky is Judge of Elections for Lowhill Township, Weisenberg Elementary School PTO board member for over 6 years, and sits on the Faith UCC Consistory board as President.

Becky and her husband also co-own Hite Woodworking Inc. founded in 2017.

She lives with her husband, two boys and a collection of animals in Orefield.

2021 Government Directory Donors Welcome

We have been soliciting donors and sponsors to underwrite the cost of printing the 2021 Government Directory. We have learned that personal contacts yield the best results when soliciting donors to underwrite the cost of printing the Directory. If you are interested in becoming a donor or sponsor, or know of a business or organization that would be, please contact Cheryl Winters-Tetreau at email@lwvlehighcounty.org.

We welcome donations of any amount. Please help to make this effort a success by mailing your tax-deductible contributions, made out to LWV Education Fund, to: Barbara Williams, Treasurer, League of Women Voters of Lehigh County, P.O. Box 3275, Allentown, PA 18106.

Companies, organizations, agencies, and private citizens who make donations in the amount of $150 or more by January 31, 2021 will be listed as sponsors in the next printed directory. Sponsors will receive copies for their use. We will also credit you as a sponsor in our newsletters, and create a link to your business website on the Government Directory section of our web page.

There, you will see the logo and a link for County of Lehigh, Keystone Consulting Engineers, Inc., and Lehigh County Medical Society. Thank you to members Cheryl Winters-Tetreau, Bill and Mary Erdman, Dr. and Patricia Hudson for helping us by making these contacts.

Submitted by Cheryl Winters-Tetreau, 2021 Government Directory Co-Editor

Fair Districts PA Call to Action

Have you ever wondered why our Legislature has not solved the issue of Property Tax Reform, or why we still cannot fairly and adequately fund our schools (47th out of 50 states in fairness)? And why, after four years of tremendous grass roots and legislative support, Pennsylvania is still one of the most gerrymandered states in the nation? What about the inability of our legislature to raise revenue for necessary infrastructure programs? And finally, why is our State Legislature, which is one of the largest full-time and one of the highest paid legislatures in the country, about the least efficient and least productive of all state legislatures? This is an issue which should concern all citizens and all political parties.

The Brennan Center for Justice and Harvard Business School have studied many of these issues and say that Pennsylvania has three major but "fixable" problems contributing to our inefficiency. These problems are the need to:

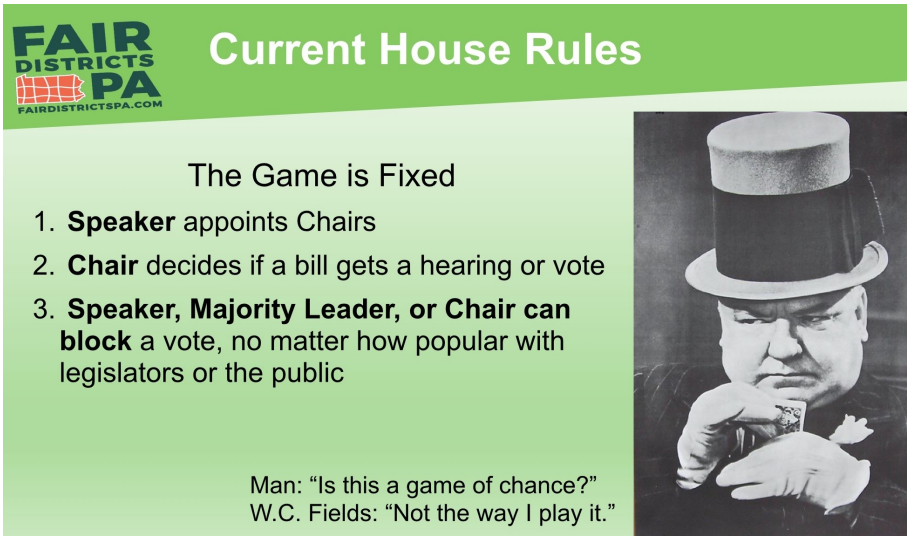
1. End gerrymandering of all districts (congressional, legislative, senate districts).
2. Limit the amount of campaign money, especially PAC money.
3. Reform archaic, procedural rules which give too much power to a very small group of majority leaders.

FDPA was unsuccessful in ending gerrymandering, not for a lack of support, but because majority leaders had no interest in ending it. We had more support for our bills than any other bill in the last two sessions (four years)! Almost half of the General Assembly co-sponsored our bills, including almost 40% of Republicans. Nearly 400 counties and municipalities (of both parties) supported these bills through resolutions. These bills were never given proper hearings, debates, committee votes or floor votes, except for one in the Senate when an unfair amendment was added that would basically create gerrymandered judicial districts. These were very good bills that deserved votes; yet, a State Government Committee Chair, the Speaker, and the Majority Leader absolutely ignored 65% of the citizenry that wanted redistricting reform. An almost equal percentage of both urban Democrats and rural Republicans also wanted to see change. (Taken from a survey conducted by Franklin & Marshall, Center for Opinion Research, October, 2019). Essentially, the will of the people was totally ignored with no reason given.

We have good legislators from both parties that go to Harrisburg with the intention of helping their constituents and solving som*A survey conducted by Franklin & Marshall, Center for Opinion Research, October, 2019 e of Pennsylvania's problems, and they find that most of the good bills they author or sponsor go absolutely nowhere, unless these three positions support them! Legislators are frustrated, and citizens are frustrated because those in leadership do not listen to the will of the people. This is not how a representative democracy should work.

Right now, FDPA has committed to work on three areas:
1. Reforming the rules.
2. Preventing the drawing of judicial districts.
3. Redrawing the districts by opening all meetings as proposed in our Legislative and Congressional Redistricting Act (*LACRA*) Bill.

Please go to www.FairDistrictsPA.com and click on "Take Action" then click on "Reform the Rules" for an in-depth discussion. Basically, our archaic, procedural rules, for example: allows a committee chair, the Speaker of the House or the Majority Leader to kill a bill, or push a bill through with no hearings or debate, based on what they want, regardless of what the citizens request.



We are asking that "good bills deserve a vote" especially if they have a decent amount support. Or if a bill has 20 sponsors from each party, require that it gets a floor vote. There are many other changes that legislators from both parties would like to see. Many legislators want to see a commission to study the rules. This idea was presented by Rep. Gene DiGirolomo (R) last Session and was completely ignored for two years. We are encouraging legislators NOT to vote for the rules on the first day of the Session, unless they are written as "temporary" and a commission is created to finally study the topic of rules reform.

Continued on page 5

Fair Districts PA Call to Action Continued from Page 4

We will not be able to reform the bills by the first day of this new Session (2021-2022) which occurs the first week of January; but, we need to let our legislators know we intend to shed light and attention on this important issue. Let's write some letters to the editor as well as to our representatives!

The other issue that deserves our immediate attention is to discourage our Legislators from voting for a bill that would create judicial districts for the top three courts in Pennsylvania: the Commonwealth Court, the Superior Court and the PA Supreme Court. First of all, this would be an infringement by the Legislative Branch into what should be an independent Judicial Branch of government. This would bring more politics, campaign money, and special interests into electing judges which is just wrong. If there is a need to rethink how we elect judges, this is not the answer. This is simply a "political" move and not at all an issue for which there is any citizen support.

Organizations such as: the State Bar Association, Why Courts Matter PA for Modern Courts, The Committee of 70, and the ACLU all object to this bill. This would require a constitutional amendment, and so far this bill has already passed once without adequate hearings, testimony or debates. This is a perfect example of how a few leaders can push a change through, even if most people and legal organizations object. If it passes this year (it will be pushed to be voted on almost immediately), it will most likely be on the ballot in May.
We oppose this bill and, again, we encourage all of our members to write Letters to the Editor and contact your local representative and senator to vote "NO" when this bill comes up for committee or floor vote.

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November Hot Topics Review

Vicky Kistler, the Allentown Health Bureau Director, was the guest speaker for the League's November Hot Topics Luncheon. Vicky's presentation, "The Allentown Health Department – From Environmental Health Services to COVID-19", provided an overview of the Bureau's vast and varied programs as well as detailed and insightful answers to questions. The mission of the Allentown Health Bureau is "to prevent disease and injury and to protect and promote the public's health." The Allentown Health Bureau is responsible for programs such as nutrition, cancer control and prevention, maternal and child health, communicable diseases, safe and health home inspections, restaurant inspections and now COVID-19 in Allentown.

As of November 9, 2020, the Allentown Health Bureau has put its public health emergency plan into effect due to the increase in COVID-19. Eighty percent of the Bureau's work has been suspended in order to focus efforts on the investigation and prevention of COVID-19 cases. The Bureau's staff members contact everyone diagnosed with COVID-19 and turn the information over to a contact tracing team. In the March to June timeframe, COVID-19 diagnoses were primarily associated with nursing homes, health workers, warehouse workers and factory workers. The Latinx community was disproportionately impacted. Due to updates in workplace guidelines for COVID-19 the source of COVID-19 diagnoses is now small gatherings (family gatherings, school gatherings, birthday parties, weddings, funerals, etc.). Vicky stressed that there is not a protective bubble around family members and that transmission at these small gatherings is possible and the primary driver for current COVID-19 cases in Allentown.

COVID-19 was not the only topic Vicky discussed. She talked about lead exposure in Allentown. Lead in Allentown water is not the primary source of lead poisoning. The corrosion in Allentown's old water pipes actually prevents lead from leaching. Lead-based paint is the primary source of lead poisoning in Allentown.

Vicky also talked about the source of funding for the Allentown Health Bureau. Based on Act 315, Pennsylvania's Local Health Administration Law, the state provides $4.35 per capita, which is matched by the city of Allentown. The budget is supplemented by funding from grants thanks to the Bureau's positive measureable outcomes resulting from these grants.

Vicky made a strong case for wearing a mask to prevent the spread of COVID-19. She pointed out that data supports the value of wearing a mask, so please heed her plea and wear a mask!

A recording of Vicky's presentation is available on YouTube at https://youtu.be/noO1b8Ks4WY as "LWVLC November Hot Topics Luncheon." You can find a schedule of all of our Hot Topics Luncheons on the "Hot Topics Luncheons" web page under "Upcoming Events" on our website. You may click on any title in blue font color to go to its recorded presentation posted on YouTube.

Terri Purdy, Special Projects

The "Running for Local Office" Workshop Update

Our league is holding a Zoom Webinar on Saturday, January 30th, from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm. If you are thinking of running for office or know someone who is, this workshop is an invaluable experience and a great opportunity to learn all about running a campaign. You will have the chance to learn from the best sources and voices of experience. Expect to learn about the required paperwork which needs to be completed, the petition process, organizing your campaign, speaking with the press, dealing with your party, and general advice from a panel of experienced campaigners and office-holders.

This year we honor Ken Mohr, who has organized and emceed this event for the last 20 years. He will be our Keynote Speaker whose speech is entitled, "Prepare Yourself to be a Candidate."

Tim Benyo, Chief Clerk of Lehigh County Election Board, will explain all the requirements needed from each candidate. We will have a representative from the press, the Democratic and Republican County Chairmen, and a panel of four experienced office holders who know how to run a political campaign.

The four panelists include:
Candida Affa (D), Allentown City Councilwoman
Jeffrey Dimmig (R), Saucon Valley School Board
Dan Hartzell (D), Lehigh County Commissioner
Kathy Rader (R), Upper Macungie Board of Supervisors

The cost is $45.00 which includes a binder with the complete handbook on running your campaign and copies of the paperwork you need to complete. Register early so we can mail this handbook to you before the Webinar. We will also supply a digital version of the handbook as well.

Enjoy this workshop in the safety and comfort of your home! Register online and use PayPal/credit card to submit your fee. Please register soon by going to the workshop's web page in the "Upcoming Events" section of our website, www.lwvlehighcounty.org, and clicking on the phrase "Click Here to Register."

This is open to candidates from Lehigh as well as other surrounding counties. Please share this information with any possible candidates. There is an attractive flyer on the web page available to download and print.

Mary Erdman, Vice President, Action & Programs

Reform the Rules Virtual Town Hall

You can view "Reform the Rules Virtual Town Hall" that took place on December 2 on FDPA's YouTube channel. The Town Hall was very well attended.

More was explained about why rules matter and attendees heard from legislators about their own experience of this.

Please contact Mary Erdman or Rochelle Kaplan at email@lwvlehighcounty.org if you have any questions

February Hot Topics Program

Just a quick mention about our February 8th Hot Topics Event when Nani Quadrado, MSPAS, PA-C, Director of the Valley Health Partners (VHP) Street Medicine Program, will explain the goals and the work of this project to our membership.

Basically, this program provides primary medical care to people who are experiencing homelessness. The basic premise of this group is that everyone matters and their model reaches out to our homeless community wherever they are comfortable. This may be a clinic, a soup kitchen, under a bridge, or in an encampment in the woods.

This program is an amazing example of how our community, through this program, cares for those who are already suffering through homelessness. This program is an invaluable and life-saving service to these community members. This is a feel-good story at a time when there has been a lot of incredibly sad news with COVID-19. Don't miss this event when Ms. Quadrado explains our local VHP Street Medicine Program.

This is a remarkable and heartwarming story.

Mary Erdman, Vice President, Action & Programs

Instagram Update

We currently have 545 followers of our Instagram account @lwvlehigh.

We started the venture of creating an Instagram account in August 2020. Our intention is to continue to encourage community engagement and to appeal to citizens in Lehigh County.

If you have not checked us out, please do so and tell your family and friends!

Michelle Graupner, Instagram Coordinator

LWV EDUCATION FUND

It's that time of year again for membership renewal. When renewing your membership for the upcoming year, please consider a donation to the League of Women Voters Ed Fund.

Your donation will help support the many citizen education programs that our Lehigh County league sponsors. Among these are the Government Directory, Hot Topic Luncheons and Naturalization information.

Donations to the Ed Fund are accepted throughout the year and checks can be made payable to **LWVEF.**

The League of Women Voter's Education Fund is a 501C(3) organization and all donations are tax deductible.

Barbara Williams, Treasurer

The Eighth Annual Shale & Public Health Conference

This online conference was held over two days, Tuesday, November 17 and Wednesday, November 18, 2020. The conference was presented by the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania and hosted by the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health. The recording of the conference will be posted on *The Straight Scoop on Shale* web page https://www.shalepalwv.org/ From there, you can link to more information about the conference and how to order the Resource Guide.

This link appears on the Shale > Special Interests section of our local League's web site followed by a list of the presentations. There will be more information about the sessions in the next issue of The Voter.

Say NO to Judicial Gerrymandering!

A Virtual Town Hall on Judicial Districts

Start: Wednesday, January 6,2021 at 4 pm EST
End: Wednesday, January 6, 2021 at 5:30 pm EST

Host Contact Information: info@fairdistrictspa.com.

To register, go to www.FairDistrictsPA.com and click on "Take action" then click on "Plan to attend our Judicial Districts Town Hall on January 6, 2021" found under "Our immediate focus:"

Join Fair Districts PA, League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania and Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts for a town hall about judicial districts. Carol Kuniholm, Chair of Fair Districts PA, will give a presentation on the issue followed by a panel discussion with Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts President Deborah Gross and others.

Delaware River Basin Commission Information

The recap of the Delaware River Basin Commission's December 9, 2020, 4th Quarter Business Meeting is available at http://www.nj.gov/drbc/meetings/archive/recent-drbc-mtg.html.

Included in the recap are links to items discussed and resolutions and dockets approved.

Best wishes for a safe and healthy holiday season and a Happy New Year!

Thank you and regards,

Kate Schmidt

Communications Specialist

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West Trenton, NJ 08628-0360
P: (609) 883-9500 x205 **currently working from home; email is best contact*
F: (609) 883-9522

Fair Districts PA Call to Action Continued from Page 5

Let us remember that judges don't, nor should they, rule on cases based on where they live. Cases should only be decided based on the rule of law and the facts of the case. It is faulty logic to think that we need to recreate judicial districts.

We will discuss our LACRA bill in the next issue of The Voter. Please shed some light on these issues by writing letters and letting your legislators know we are looking for support right now for reforming the rules and objecting to gerrymandered judicial districts. Again, I remind you of our mission: "Empowering Voters - Defending Democracy."

If you have any questions, please contact the League at email@lwvlehighcounty.org.

Mary Erdman, Vice-President, Action & Programs

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MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEHIGH COUNTY

Name _____

Street _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

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 2021

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

$35 if 35 years or younger

Please make check payable to LWVLC and mail to:

LWVLC
c/o Margie Dunn
8411 Carpet Road
New Tripoli, PA 18066