LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEHIGH COUNTY

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League of Women Voters of Lehigh County VOTER

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President's Message

Dear League Members,

My last three letters to you began by noting the interesting times in which we are living. This issue's introduction will be no different. In the past 60 days, since our last VOTER edition, insurrectionists have stormed the US Capitol resulting in five deaths, a new President has taken office, Congress has held a second impeachment trial of Donald Trump for inciting the deadly riot, and we remain in the midst of a pandemic approaching 500,000 US deaths. We are still living in interesting times.

In this period of turmoil and deep partisanship, the League of Women Voters continues its fight for good governance and expansion of voting rights. The PA State League has set up an advocacy unit to closely follow activity in the PA legislature concerning redistricting, the judiciary, and voting procedures. It has also formed an Equity Initiative- a project which our league has joined - to encourage commitment to diversity and equality in our league work.

Locally, our league has been true to its mission of "Making Democracy Work." We have organized and presented a successful, well-attended virtual "Running for Local Office" Workshop. We are gearing up to produce the Government Directory and the Voters Guide. Our virtual Hot Topics lectures continue to provide important information on timely topics. Finally, members are scheduling to meet and interview our local legislators. You can read about many of these topics in this edition of the Voter.

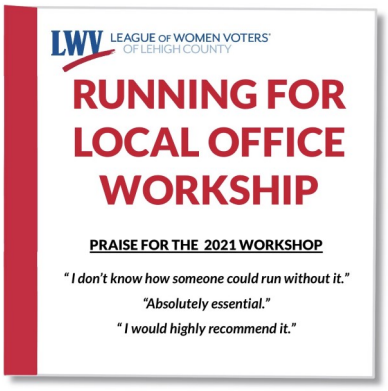
I look forward to the day when we can meet in-person and conduct our work face-to-face. But until that time, we will continue to be creative in our efforts to keep the public informed.

Yours in league,

Molly Faust , President

Successful Running for Local Office Workshop 2021

Candidates for many local offices attended our first "virtual" Running for Local Office Workshop Zoom Webinar on January 30th. Among the attendees were: candidates for local judgeships, judicial magistrates, school boards, school directors, county commissioners, and borough and township councilmen and supervisors. The total number of attendees was forty five, which is about the same number of attendees we have had at our in-person workshops in the past.



Ken Mohr started the day as our Keynote Speaker, using thirteen different cliches to help keep candidates on target. Peter Leffler gave our candidates great advice on how to effectively work with the press. Our local party chairmen, Glenn Eckhart and Ed Hozza, (Republican and Democratic County Chairs) shared their stories and counseled the candidates on many issues, like not running on just one issue. They also advised the candidates to learn about the issues and to develop a team to help with many of the tasks that need to be addressed. The Lehigh County Chief of Elections, Tim Benyo, pinpointed aspects of the paperwork that need to be completed correctly, including the critical petition forms.

After a much needed ten minute break, Mary Erdman facilitated a panel discussion among four local politicians from the two major parties who hold four different positions. Candida Affa (D), an Allentown City Councilwoman, Jeffrey Dimmig (R), a School Director, Dan Hartzell (D),

Continued on page 2

Board Notes

Since the last issue of The Voter, the Board of the Lehigh County League of Women Voters has met twice, on January 14 and February 11. Due to COVID 19, the meetings were held virtually. Here are highlights from the two meetings:

- Barbara Williams, Treasurer, reported that the League has a balance of $19,769.89 in assets for the month ending January 31. The budget committee will be meeting in the next few weeks for preparation of the 2021-2022 budget, to be approved at the annual meeting.
- Molly Faust, President, is the League's representative on the newly established LWVPA DEI Task force (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion). She also has assumed the role of diversity officer for the League. Molly will be attending the task force monthly meetings and reporting back to the Board.
- The bylaws committee met on February 15 to review and revise the bylaws. The primary changes focused upon the organizational structure, namely the officers and their terms in office. These revisions are necessary to align the bylaws with our current organizational structure. Changes to the bylaws will be submitted to the membership at the annual meeting.
- An ad hoc communications committee has started meeting to review the League's communications strategy. Specifically, the committee is reviewing the who, what, and how of our communication strategy. That is: (1) Who does the League currently communicate with, and are there other communities/groups with whom we want to communicate? (2) What information does and should the League provide? (3) How does the League communicate with our members and the public?
- The committee would love to hear from members regarding information they would like to have and in what format they would like to see it; for example, website, Facebook, Zoom meetings, Twitter, The Voter, and/or other means. Please email the League with your suggestions at email@lwvlehighcounty.org.
- Legislative interviews with our local representatives and state senator will be conducted in February and March. Anyone interested in participating should contact Molly Faust. Due to COVID-19, the interviews will most likely be conducted remotely.

Rochelle Kaplan, Secretary

Running for Local Office Workshop (continued from page 1)

a Lehigh County Commissioner, and Kathy Rader (R), a Supervisor from Upper Macungie Township. The office holders answered many specific questions. During this panel discussion, each member offered their views and advice based on their particular office, which participants found extremely helpful.

Many thanks to our committee who worked so hard to make this workshop a success. Jan Little as PR director who garnered a great front page interview in the East Penn Press with Ken and Mary; Michelle Graupner, who updated the handbook and made sure that everyone who registered received a mailed hard copy; Terri Purdy who mastered the technique of running a Zoom Webinar with help from college student, Aidan Levinson; Ken Mohr who mentored Mary as she took over for the retiring Ken as emcee; and Molly Faust, whose support and guidance was appreciated. Our team also had valuable input from former committee members Doris Glaessman and Ann Bartholomew as well as new member Ashleigh Strange.

This was a job well done and very much appreciated by all our participants and committee members. The next "Running for Local Office" Workshop" will be in January 2023. Hopefully, we will be able to meet in person for the next workshop!

Mary Erdman, Vice-President, Action & Programs

Honoring Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

The League of Women Voters of Lehigh County participated in the Allentown Art Museum's annual Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration in January. Abigail Simmons, Adult and College Program Manager, told us that the Museum planned to celebrate King's legacy virtually "by spotlighting the local people and places that are making a difference in our community" on its website. Barbara Connolly, Mary Erdman, and Jan Little were among the **"Hometown Heroes"** whose photos were accompanied by a short explanation of why they volunteered for the organization. You can find a link to "Hometown Heroes" on the homepage of our website.

Jan Little, Public Relations Chair

Hometown Heroes

Barbara Connolly

Mary Erdman

LWV and FDPA: Our Latest Challenge to Good Government

The Legislative and Congressional Redistricting Act (LACRA) bills, HB 22 and SB 222, will both be introduced by the end of February. Even though we were not successful in ending gerrymandering in Pennsylvania, our next efforts will be to create a more transparent and open process of how legislators create the new maps.The process is always done behind closed doors with no citizen input and no transparency at all.

The LACRA bill allows for:

1. All meetings in various regions of the state are to be public meetings in various regions of the state.
2. Public engagement at meetings and the ability to submit a map of your own.
3. The creation of specific criteria for the drawing maps, much of which is already in the PA Constitution.

We need you to do what you have been doing for HB 38 (judicial gerrymandering): call your legislators (both House and Senate), email your legislators, Zoom with your legislators, write letters-to-the-editor, and even offer to do Op-Ed pieces for the local newspapers. Please remember, these new maps, which will be drawn no earlier than late summer, will be the maps we use for the next ten years! Your activism is needed now. We are counting on you to do what you have been doing for HB 38. Remember our mission: "Defending Democracy. Empowering Voters."

Please go to: www.fairdistrictspa.com and click on: "How We'll Fix It," for a more lengthy discussion about LACRA and additional talking points. We can do this! You will be receiving an email inviting you to this Hot Topics event. It will be recorded to watch on our YouTube channel, "LWV of Lehigh County," at your leisure.

Mary Erdman, Vice-President, Action & Programs

Fair Districts PA - News You Should Know!

January and February have been really busy months for both the League of Women Voters and Fair Districts working together to protect and empower our voters. There are congratulations to be given to many FDPA and League members who made our grass roots campaign against a very controversial bill, successful for now. HB 38 would have created "judicial districts" for the top three appellate courts in Pennsylvania. The claim is that the judges need to be more "geographically diverse." Further study shows that they really are; however the main arguments against this bill are that:

1. Judges should NOT have constituents, only litigants.
2. Judges should decide cases ONLY on the RULE OF LAW and FACTS OF THE CASE, and not on where you live or work.
3. It is a form of voter suppression if voters are limited to voting for a statewide judge ONLY in the district in which you live.

Your emails and calls to legislators, your Letters-to-the-Editor and your Zoom visits with legislators caused not only legislators, but over 100 different statewide groups to publicly oppose such legislation. HB 38 has been tabled for now and will not appear on the May primary ballot. There is still a chance that it could be passed before the summer recess and be placed on the November ballot; but we will keep yo updated. But for now - job well done members!

We will also keep you posted on HB 25 - which plans to call for the complete abolishment of no-excuse mail-in ballots. That has been assigned to the State Government Committee with no action taken as of this writing. This is in response to the false claims that the mail -in balloting created fraud which benefitted only Democrats. There is no evidence of such claims.

HB 470 - has just been introduced and is a bi-partisan attempt to make the application and balloting process easier for both our voters as well as the County Voter Services Offices in each of the 67 counties. We will discuss this later as action or hearings take place.

One of our other topics of concern, was a change in the Rules of House Procedures, which are archaic and gives a very few party leaders complete control of the agenda and the passage of bills. The Speaker of the House is looking into a bi-partisan commission to study rules reform. Also, two Senators are circulating a memorandum of 10 specific rules changes; but are waiting to see what the Speaker does first. The grassroots actions of both the League and FDPA has also brought this issue to the forefront. Again, we congratulate you on your concern for good government practices! For more information go to: www.fairdistrictspa.com

Mary Erdman, Vice President, Action & Programs

January 2021 Hot Topics Program

County Executive, Phil Armstrong presented his "State of the County" report which is becoming a yearly event for which our members seem to be very grateful. This was certainly a challenging year for our Executive, Commissioners, and all Lehigh County employees.

The onslaught of Covid-19 has caused so much heartache from the deaths of over 500 Lehigh County residents to over 4,000 positive results just in the last 14 days. Armstrong reported how this has hurt so many businesses from restaurants to tourism to our airport and, especially, how our nonprofits have suffered as well.

Armstrong explained that the funds supplied by the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief & Economic Securities) Act, which was millions of dollars, was carefully divided into business, non-profits, and county needs decided upon by a committee of business leaders, the United Way and the Lehigh Chamber of Commerce. Funds were given in conjunction with Northampton County to both LVIA Airport and Arts Quest which benefits both counties. Funds were given to many businesses and non-profits to help them recoup monies that have been lost due to shutdowns. Armstrong was proud of the number of businesses that were helped by these funds, while hoping that there will be more CARES Act funds later this year.

Another big topic of discussion was the two elections that were held this year: the June primary and the November presidential election. Although the June primary was not problem free, Armstrong was very positive about the improvements that were made including the use of dropboxes, which were placed throughout the county in time for the presidential election in November. He was also proud of the fact that with observers from both parties watching the counting, not one ballot was contested in Lehigh County.

Armstrong also explained his management style of facing problems by bringing all partners to the table, discussing the problem, and working on finding solutions as a group. He explained that this is how they have been dealing with some of the recent problems at the Lehigh County Prison. He also described how, in attempts to prevent tax increases during this difficult time, discussions with department heads have stressed keeping the cost of running their departments to exactly what is needed.

Armstrong also discussed being the only small county to be invited to a Zoom conference call with the incoming Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg. All other participants were from much larger cities; however, Armstrong reported that it was comforting to hear that each county executive shared very similar problems of infrastructure, general funding, and planning. What a great opportunity to be able to interact with other county executives on the national level. This group will continue to meet and discuss issues affecting county governance, which will benefit the residents of Lehigh County.

An update on the Cedarbrook facility was also given. Construction will begin on a new wing, and the HVAC system in the older buildings will be updated this year. Cedarbrook remains a highly rated facility in Pennsylvania and the county has made a commitment to continue to improve and update this facility for our senior residents.

Executive Armstrong's commitment to working in a bipartisan manner is something he has been committed to since the beginning of his term. His rationale is that local issues and problems are not party issues, but issues which affect all citizens and should be approached in a nonpolitical manner.

This author, after attending many Lehigh County Commissioner meetings over the years, has witnessed a sense of cooperation among commissioners of both parties, more so than at any other recent time. It is reassuring to know that our Commissioners look to solve problems through compromise and discussion and don't resort to going to their party corners and coming out fighting. And that begins at the top. So hats off to County Executive Phillips Armstrong for setting a tone which should be an example to other political bodies.

We thank County Executive Phillips Armstrong for his time and his willingness to answer the many questions posed by our League of Women members.

Mary Erdman, Vice-President, Chair, Action & Program

Our League now has a YouTube channel. We are currently using it to post recordings of our Hot Topics meetings. Please take a look at our channel. You can find it by searching for "LWV of Lehigh County" on YouTube or you can click on the link below:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8zEgQAlFqj1ipNbUGl_rbA

February Hot Topics Program

Nani Cuadrado, Director of Valley Health Partners Street Medicine, gave us an inspiring presentation about the phenomenal program she runs. The program serves Lehigh and Northampton Counties and partners with the Lehigh Valley Health Network (LVHN). The goal of the program is to deliver healthcare to homeless people where they feel most comfortable.

The estimates of how many homeless people live in the Lehigh Valley vary widely. The point-in-time count, used by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide funding to localities, determined there are 29 homeless people living in the Lehigh Valley. An extrapolation of a LVHN study based on Emergency Room interviews in 2017 calculated that there are 9,300 homeless individuals in the Lehigh Valley. Clearly, improved estimation methods are needed to properly fund efforts in the region.

How you can help our homeless population

In addition to providing medical care for our homeless population, the Street Medicine Program tries to help with clothing and items for living outdoors such as tents and sleeping bags -often purchased with donations of Walmart, Target and Amazon gift cards.

The Board has decided to let League members contact Nani directly if they want to help. If you wish to do so, you can send an electronic gift card to the email address below or mail a gift card to the address below. We further suggest that you include a note stating that this is coming from a member of the League of Women Voters Lehigh County.

Nani Cuadrado, MSPAS, PA-C
Director, Valley Health Partners Street Medicine
1628 W. Chew Street, 1st floor
Allentown, PA 18102
Cell: 484-375-9203 Fax 610-969-2178
Hoonani.Cuadrado@valleyhealthpartners.org

The Street Medicine program provides a broad range of services. It provides healthcare services to homeless persons at clinics associated with soup kitchens and shelters as well as through street rounds in local encampments or other locations where the homeless live. It provides inpatient consult services in which homeless persons are contacted before they leave a hospital stay to find out what kind of services they will need when they are back out on the street. A pilot project for respite care was initiated for homeless individuals recuperating from surgery that provided housing in a hotel and services from Meals on Wheels. The Street Medicine program is currently trying to identify funds to sustain respite care in the Lehigh Valley. Telepsychiatry is provided to individuals in need, enabling them to receive psychiatric assessments and connect them to services. Mail services are provided, without which homeless individuals would not be able to receive Medicaid, food stamps, Social Security, and veteran benefits. The program provides survival support by dispensing items such as water, winter clothing, tents, and sleeping bags. In addition, free pet services have recently been added to the list of services provided by the program.

The Lehigh Valley is very fortunate to have the Street Medicine program to care for people who are experiencing homelessness. We are also incredibly lucky to have such a compassionate Street Medicine Director supporting our community.

Terri Purdy, Special Projects

March Hot Topics Program

The March Hot Topic will be presented by a familiar face who will be speaking to us about a subject that is near and dear to his heart and his work: "Climate Change and Public Policies." Usually, Chris Borick, Ph.D. speaks to us about his work as the Director of the Muhlenberg Institute of Public Opinion and the election trends that we see on a national and state level.

On Monday, March 8th at 12:15 PM, Chris will hold a conversation with us about climate change and how public policy has been developed through the years. Professor Borick has done extensive research on this subject and has published numerous articles about the formation of public policy. Some of the titles of these articles include:

1. "The Climate of Belief: American Public Opinion on Climate Change"
2. "A Reason to Believe: Examining the Factors that Determine Individual Views on Global Warming"
3. "American Federalism and Climate Change: Policy Options and Public Opinion"
4. "Climate Compared Public Opinion on Climate Change in the U.S. and Canada"

As you can see, this is a topic which Chris has spent a number of years researching. His knowledge and thoughts on this issue will be very interesting to our members, as this subject is one of the most important issues being discussed by most countries and at many levels of government in 2021. We hope you can attend our virtual Zoom Hot Topics discussion with one of our favorite annual speakers.

Legislative Redistricting Town Hall

On February 17, The Committee of 70, Fair Districts Pa, and Draw the Lines Pa held a town hall on "Redistricting State Legislative Boundaries: Drawing the Lines for the Next Decade." The primary focus of the town hall was to review the redistricting process for the state house and senate districts and to encourage citizens to participate in the mapping process. Speakers included: Justin Villere, Manager of Draw the Lines; David Thornburgh, President of the Committee of 70; Former Governor Dick Schweiker; Lauren Ban, University of Pittsburg graduate and citizen mapper; Michael Skors, Millersville University graduate and citizen mapper;Pat Beatty, Legislative Director, Fair Districts Pa, and Carol Kuniholm, Chair, Fair Districts PA.

Redistricting occurs every ten years after the US census is completed. There are separate processes for establishing congressional districts and state legislative and senate districts. Congressional districts are drawn by members of the majority party in the General Assembly. The maps are incorporated into legislation, passed by the legislature and signed by the governor.

A more detailed process is established in the Pennsylvania State Constitution for drawing of state legislative and senatorial districts. The constitution provides for the establishment of the Legislative Redistricting Commission (LRC). The LRC is made up of two members of the majority party, two members of the minority party, and a fifth member who is appointed by the other four. The fifth member is the chair of the commission. If the four members cannot decide on the fifth member, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court appoints that person. In the past, the Supreme Court has appointed a member who is the same party as the majority of judges on the Supreme Court.

The qualifications for the fifth member set forth in the constitution are simply that the person must be a Pennsylvania citizen who does not hold elected office. David Thornburgh suggested that the fifth member should also be: (1) Independent, respected, and focused upon adherence to law, transparency, and fairness; (2) Able to manage highly politically motivated individuals; (3) Familiar with how to draw maps, and (4) Steadfast in putting the interest of voters above elected officials and political parties.

The LRC draws the maps for 203 legislative districts and 50 senate districts. The Pennsylvania Constitution gives the LRC five months to approve a preliminary plan, hold hearings, consider objections from the public, and approve the final plan. Justin Villere and Pat Beatty suggested the following as a possible time line for the 2021/2022 redistricting process:

- The US government provides census data to the General Assembly by September 30, 2021.
- Late summer/early fall 2021- The LRC must certify the members within 60 days after the census is delivered. However, the LRC members could be certified as early as this spring, since the four members have been identified: House Majority Leader Kerry Benninghoff, Senate Majority Leader Senator Kim Ward, House Minority Leader Rep. Joanna McClintock, and Senate Minority Senator Jay Costa. These members could start the process of selecting the fifth member as soon as they are certified. In that way, the LRC would be in place when the data is delivered.
- October 2021- the LRC holds public hearings to solicit input from the public as to how the districts should look.
- Mid-November 2021-the LRC drafts a preliminary redistricting plan and submits it to the public for review. (The public has 30 days to submit feedback to the maps).
- December 2021/January 2022- the LRC produces a final redistricting plan. (There are 30 days to file a court challenge).
- February 29, 2022 is the deadline for approving the final plan which will be used for the 2022 elections.

The LRC has full discretion to make the process as open or as secret at it wants without specific legislation requiring it to do so. Thus, even if LARCA is not passed, citizens could still demand that the LRC: 1) Provide a meaningful opportunity for the public to participate in the process; (2) Create an open and structured process to consider public comments and maps. (3) Provide public access to all data used to create the maps in a format easily usable, so that maps can be analyzed for compliance with the standards set forth in the Pa Constitution.

Lauren Bans and Michael Skros discussed the ease with which they were able to draw maps and suggested that it should not take the LRC much time to create fair maps. David Thornburg asked everyone to sign the petition at www.drawthelinespa.org/petition to demand that the 2021 LRC establish a true public application process for its fifth member.

Rochelle K. Kaplan, Secretary

Jane Harrington - A 64 Year Member of the League of Women Voters

Last year when our committee was putting together our 100 Year Display for the Liberty Bell Museum, Jane Harrington's daughter-in-law, Kathy, and son, Tom, offered a WWI helmet and a spent shell from an early version WWI machine gun. We were collecting items that were part of the culture around the same time women finally earned the right to vote in 1920. I came to know Jane through our exchanges of thank you notes, birthday greetings, and her donations to our League. This lead to her sharing stories about her life and career.

Jane was a college graduate at a time when women were more encouraged to get a "MRS. Degree," as opposed to a B.S. Degree. Despite this, she graduated from Simmons College in Massachusetts, the state where she had been born in 1930.

Jane's husband worked for Bethlehem Steel. Over the years and four children later, they moved from Massachusetts, to New York State, Indiana, and finally to Pennsylvania. Every time they moved, Jane joined the local League of Women Voters. Jane said, "I never expected when I joined the LWV in 1957, that this organization would be part of the rest of my life." And indeed it has been. She also shared that, "Each time we moved to a new community, I found that by joining the League I became acquainted with women who were the 'movers and shakers' in their community. Few women with children were working, so we had a wealth of bright, competent members."

It was interesting to have Jane share some of the projects she studied and worked on over the years. Some of those projects included: starting a Family Court in New York State, conservation issues concerning clean air and water, establishing a Youth Services Bureau for placement of teenage runaways, and studying biowaste issues in Massachusetts, where she now resides.

Jane also participated in a silent protest on the Capitol steps in Washington, DC while attending the League's National Convention in 1970, following the killing of four Kent State University students. Upon returning to Indiana and meeting with college students concerning this tragedy, Jane realized that, "Surprisingly, the League members in their seventies and eighties were more radical than the students."

Jane, who recently turned ninety, continues as a League member and is keenly aware of current political issues. Her volunteerism peaked when she was elected president of her League, which had over one hundred members and five units throughout the county. Her sense of service has definitely rubbed off on her family. Her son, Tom, is president and CEO of the Valley Youth House. Tom's wife, Kathy, runs a progressive organization in the Lehigh Valley (LV4ALL), and Jane's grandson, David, is a Lehigh County Commissioner and an attorney who has dedicated his career to immigration law.

Jane, we are as proud of you as you must be of your family. We are excited to still call you a member of The League of Women Voters after all these years. You are an inspiration to us all!

If you would like to correspond with Jane, please contact me for her address at email@lwvlehighcounty.org

Mary Erdman, Vice-President, Action & Programs

2021 Government Directory

Our League's Government Directory is always available online at the website lwvlehighvalley.org. We are in the process of updating this information. This information will appear in the full directory for 2021.

Throughout the year, the online directory contains the most up-to-date contact information for state and local governments and school districts. The 2021 Election Calendar for voters and candidates is also included. There is also the option to download a copy of the latest printed directory.

The printed directory for 2021 will be ready in March and will be mailed to our members.

In addition, copies of the printed directory will be available to the public at the local offices listed in the directory and at local libraries and community centers.

Cheryl Winters-Tetreau, Co-Chair, Government Directory

Membership Report

Our membership drive went very well. As of February 18th we had 79 members in our local League. We lost a few members, but gained 10 new members. Six of these joined this month and are listed below. Our exposure on the website, The Voter newsletter, Facebook, Instagram, and media press releases has attracted a lot of interest to our League. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to our Education Fund. The money will be used to pay for the publishing of the Government Directory, Zoom meetings and other projects.

The Members Handbook for 2021 should be completed shortly. We hope to mail it and the 2021 Government Directory together to every member in March.

Please add the following to your membership booklet.

Sayra Tineo- Bethlehem
Rachel Lower- Macungie
Julie Ambrose- Allentown
Joan Strong- Coplay
Cathy Layland- Allentown
M.C. Brennan- Bethlehem

Margie Dunn, Membership

Voter Registration & Tabling

LWVUS National Day of Action

The Leagues' in-person voter registration activities after March 2020 were those most affected by Covid-19 restrictions. In response, we shifted to virtual events and partnered with community organizations to reach citizens through a variety of venues. Our messages focused on the 'how-to's of voter registration, voting options, and accessing candidate information.

At this time, it is unknown when and to what degree we will be able to resume in-person registration events. Community partnerships will again be key to getting out the word and communicating with our diverse wider community. In addition, many of our graduating high school seniors will be eligible voters for the first time in 2021.

The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE)* notes that, while historically, young people vote at lower rates than older adults, there were major increases in youth voter turnout in 2018 and 2020. We especially want to connect with young voters in the coming months. League members can be especially helpful in this endeavor. If you have ideas, suggestions, or contacts, they would be most welcome and appreciated.

The LWVUS National Day of Action on April 29, 2021 will focus on voter registration and redistricting. Designated a "People Powered Day of Action," the events are designed to draw attention to the importance of the redistricting process and why it matters. More information about the National Day of Action and how we can participate will be shared as it becomes available.

Contact Barbara Connolly at email@lwvlehighcounty.org if you have questions about voter registration or educational activities, ideas, or have a willingness to help.

Barbara Connolly, Chair, Voter Registration & Tabling

*CIRCLE, the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement, is a non-partisan, independent research organization focused on youth civic engagement in the United States. Contact at circle@tufts.edu

A Few Good Volunteers Needed

The Publications Distribution Committee is looking for a few good volunteers to help deliver Government Directories tentatively toward the end of March, 2021. This will involve delivering prepackaged brochures to public entities throughout the Lehigh Valley.

If you are available and willing to help in the distribution process, please contact **Charles or Donna Barker** at email@lwvlehighcounty.org

2021 Annual Meeting

Due to the pandemic, our annual meeting - traditionally a luncheon meeting held in May - will be a virtual event.

More information will be sent later.

Equity Initiative

The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania is launching a new Equity Initiative program. This is an outgrowth of the national league's commitment to reject systemic racism, hatred and discrimination of any kind. The Equity Initiative is looking to engage local Leagues across the state.

I will be representing our league on the Equity team. Team members are expected to participate in monthly Webinars where issues of racial justice are explored. The Webinars also provide an opportunity to see what other leagues in our state are doing to address these issues in their organizations and in their communities.

Molly Faust, President

Instagram

We currently have 621 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 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

April Hot Topics Program

Our league has had a tradition of offering topics about the environment at our spring Hot Topics programs. We have also participated in "The Straight Scoop on Shale," a project of the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania Citizen Education Fund. One of the goals of the project is to educate the public about environmental impacts of plastics year-round by identifying speakers for local Leagues. Maame Mensah, US Account Director, Brand Partnerships, TerraCycle US, LLC will present "TerraCycle - Eliminating the Idea of Waste®" at 12:30 p.m. on Monday, April 12 via Zoom webinar.

"TerraCycle® is a social enterprise Eliminating the Idea of Waste®. In 21 countries, we tackle the issue from many angles. We have found that nearly everything we touch can be recycled and collect typically non-recyclable items through national, first-of-their-kind recycling platforms. Leading companies work with us to take hard-to-recycle materials from our programs, such as ocean plastic, and turn them into new products, and our new Loop platform aims to change the way the world shops with favorite brands in refillable packaging offered with convenience and style. With your help, we've diverted millions of pounds of valuable resources from landfills all over the world, and we're just getting started."

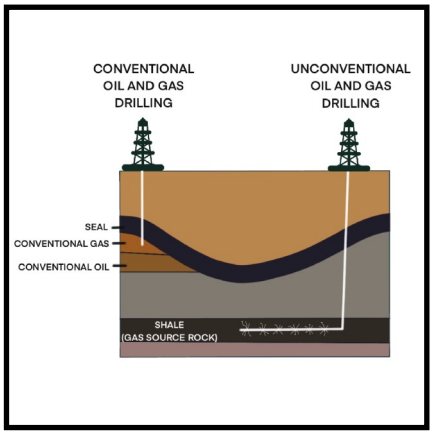
Look for the e-invitation to the Zoom webinar early in April. You can also peruse the Special Interests section of our website to learn more about "The Straight Scoop on Shale."

Jan Little, Public Relations Chair

Eighth Annual Shale and Public Health Conference

The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania held the eighth annual Shale and Public Health Conference on 11/17/2020 and 11/18/2020. The focus of the conference was on impacts of unconventional oil and gas (UOG) development on water and air pollution, health, and climate. UOG is a term used for the extraction of shale gas using hydraulic fracturing (aka fracking).

Several studies presented used new approaches to study impacts of UOG development. Previous epidemiological studies used proximity-based exposure metrics (e.g., distance to the nearest well) to study impacts of UOG development. One of the newer approaches adds directional dispersion (e.g., wind direction, water flow) to the proximity-based exposure metrics. Another new approach leverages satellite data. These new approaches enable studies to better identify impacts on quality of life associated with UOG development.



Other research presented looked at the association of UOG development on adverse birth outcomes such as fetal growth, pre-term birth, and low birth weight. It was determined that there is not a strong correlation with inactive wells, however highly productive wells in rural areas present greater risk. In another study, burning of excess gas (aka flaring) correlated with higher pediatric asthma hospitalizations. This correlation was stronger in non-white populations. The outcomes of both of these studies raised concerns that disadvantaged environmental justice communities (i.e., race and rural vs urban) may be disproportionately burdened. In general, several studies determined that increased UOG infrastructure and facilities resulted in increased health impacts.

Climate change and plastic pollution associated with UOG development was also discussed. Five years ago the UOG industry entered a bust cycle caused by the collapse of prices due to a global overabundance of oil and gas, which has been exacerbated by the lack of demand for oil and gas due to COVID-19. The UOG industry turned to plastics to monetize production during this bust. Ethane, a by-product of fracking, can be broken down into ethylene to produce polyethylene, the most common form of plastic. More than 340 new or expansions of existing plastic plants are planned in the US by 2050 due to this abundance of ethane. This new production is adding to the global plastic pollution problem. The climate change discussion centered on methane, a potent greenhouse gas. Global methane emissions are rapidly increasing. There is concern that some of the methane is coming from UOG development and adding to a warming climate.

The takeaway of the conference was that it is essential that studies on the impacts of the UOG industry continue. In addition, the results of the studies should be used to evaluate current regulations and identify the need for new regulations.

Terri Purdy, Special Projects

NOTE: The recording of the conference is posted on on LWVPA's The Straight Scoop on Shale webpage. From there, you can link to a webpage with more information about the conference and how to order the Resource Guide. These links appear on the "Shale" webpage in the Special Interests section of our website. There, you will find more information about the relationship between the UOG industry and plastics.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF LEHIGH COUNTY

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

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